

Northwest Territories   
Legislative Assembly

5th Session Day 41 16th Assembly

HANSARD

Thursday, February 17, 2011

Pages 5903 - 5942

**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

**Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories**

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Paul Delorey

(Hay River North)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Glen Abernethy

(Great Slave)

Mr. Tom Beaulieu

(Tu Nedhe)

Ms. Wendy Bisaro

(Frame Lake)

Mr. Bob Bromley

(Weledeh)

Mrs. Jane Groenewegen

(Hay River South)

Mr. Robert Hawkins

(Yellowknife Centre)

Mr. Jackie Jacobson

(Nunakput)

Mr. David Krutko

(Mackenzie Delta)

Hon. Jackson Lafferty

(Monfwi)

*Minister of Justice*

*Minister of Education, Culture and Employment*

Hon. Sandy Lee

(Range Lake)

*Minister of Health and Social Services*

*Minister responsible for the*

*Status of Women*

*Minister responsible for*

*Persons with Disabilities*

*Minister responsible for Seniors*

Hon. Bob McLeod

(Yellowknife South)

*Minister of Human Resources*

*Minister of Industry, Tourism*

*and Investment*

*Minister responsible for the*

*Public Utilities Board*

*Minister responsible for*

*Energy Initiatives*

Hon. Michael McLeod

(Deh Cho)

*Minister of Transportation*

*Minister of Public Works and Services*

Hon. Robert C. McLeod

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

*Minister of Municipal and*

*Community Affairs*

*Minister responsible for the*

*NWT Housing Corporation*

*Minister responsible for the Workers'*

*Safety and Compensation*

*Commission*

*Minister responsible for Youth*

Mr. Kevin Menicoche

(Nahendeh)

Hon. Michael Miltenberger

(Thebacha)

*Deputy Premier*

*Government House Leader*

*Minister of Finance*

*Minister of Environment and*

*Natural Resources*

Mr. Dave Ramsay

(Kam Lake)

Hon. Floyd Roland

(Inuvik Boot Lake)

*Premier*

*Minister of Executive*

*Minister of Aboriginal Affairs*

*and Intergovernmental Relations*

*Minister responsible for the*

*NWT Power Corporation*

Mr. Norman Yakeleya

(Sahtu)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Tim Mercer

Deputy Clerk Principal Clerk Principal Clerk, Law Clerks

of Committees Operations

Mr. Doug Schauerte Ms. Jennifer Knowlan Ms. Gail Bennett Ms. Sheila MacPherson

Ms. Malinda Kellett

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca

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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PRAYER 5903**

**MINISTERS' STATEMENTS 5903**

107-16(5) – Updated Diamond Policy Framework (B. McLeod) 5903

108-16(5) – Minister’s Cultural Circle (Lafferty) 5904

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS 5904**

Eligibility for Seniors Home Heating Subsidy (Menicoche) 5904

GNWT Affirmative Action Hiring Policy (Krutko) 5905

Housing Issues in the Sahtu (Yakeleya) 5904

Hay River Participants at the Canada Winter Games (Groenewegen) 5906

Employment Rates in Tu Nedhe (Beaulieu) 5906

Giant Mine Remediation (Bromley) 5907

Distracted Driving and National Year of Road Safety (Bisaro) 5907

Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission Draft Regulations (Abernethy) 5908

Firefighters in Small Communities (Jacobson) 5908

GNWT Contracting Practices (Ramsay) 5909

V-Day North Campaign to Stop Violence against Women and Girls (Hawkins) 5909

Recognition of Pages from Kakisa (M. McLeod) 5910

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY 5910**

**ORAL QUESTIONS 5911**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS 5921**

**TABLING OF DOCUMENTS 5921**

**NOTICES OF MOTION 5921**

36-16(5) – Joe Greenland Centre (Krutko) 5921

**CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS 5922**

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE 5940**

**ORDERS OF THE DAY 5941**

**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

**Thursday, February 17, 2011**

**Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:33 p.m.

# Prayer

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Welcome to all our guests in the gallery today. Item 2, Ministers’ statements. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

# Ministers’ Statements

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 107-16(5): UPDATED DIAMOND POLICY FRAMEWORK

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, mining and diamond mining, in particular, is a cornerstone of the economy in the Northwest Territories. Today I would like to highlight a significant achievement of this government, the updating of the Diamond Policy Framework. This updated framework will continue to support and encourage the growth of the diamond manufacturing industry in the Northwest Territories by providing a more streamlined and flexible approach, including reducing the red tape associated with the approval process for gaining approved northern manufacturer status.

Diamond, mineral exploration and production has brought significant economic opportunities to our Territory. But it’s not just exploration and production that provides employment opportunities to Northwest Territories residents and increases the world-wide recognition of northern diamonds. The secondary diamond industry also plays an important role in diversifying and developing the economy of the Northwest Territories, a key goal of this Assembly.

In 1999 the Government of the Northwest Territories implemented the first Diamond Policy Framework, a policy that facilitated the establishment of a diamond manufacturing industry in the Northwest Territories. We have learned a lot during the past decade. We have learned what works, what doesn’t, what we can offer, and perhaps most importantly, what we want from a secondary industry for the people of the Northwest

Territories. The diamond industry has changed a lot since the first diamond came out of the ground at the Ekati mine in 1998 and this policy framework has been updated to reflect current operational realities and lessons learned.

Updating this Diamond Policy Framework was a major accomplishment for our government and it required consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. I want to thank the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure, Government of the Northwest Territories departments, the operators in the Northwest Territories diamond manufacturing industry, the Northwest Territories diamond mines and the City of Yellowknife for their input and involvement.

The diamond value-added industry does not only include the cutting and polishing. Valuing and sorting the rough diamonds produced from the Ekati, Diavik and Snap Lake mines is also an important part of the industry. Diamond tourism also has a lot of potential. For example, the cutting and polishing demonstrations you see at the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre. The updated Diamond Policy Framework supports the secondary diamond industry by endorsing the production of cut and polished diamonds here in the Northwest Territories and promotes diamond tourism and jewellery production.

We know that diamond manufacturing operations must be sustainable and they must be well capitalized and follow sound business practices. The Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to provide support to the secondary diamond industry through programs provided by the Business Development and Investment Corporation and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, such as the Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development Policy.

We have the building blocks for a sustainable industry: the Approved Northern Manufacturer Program, a 10-year-plus supply of high-quality diamonds from our mines, and arrangements with the mines to provide a portion of their rough diamonds to our approved northern manufacturers. We also have our Northwest Territories Certification Program, which is highly sought after by manufacturers, and our Polar Bear Diamond brand trademark. These are all things that we know work well and are still included as part of the updated Diamond Policy Framework.

The updated Diamond Policy Framework enhances the efforts of this government to build a sustainable diamond manufacturing industry, diversify our economy and maximize benefits for Northwest Territories residents and we look forward to seeing the long-term benefits of this policy.

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

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 108-16(5): MINISTER’S CULTURAL CIRCLE

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is pleased to announce the launch of the Minister’s Cultural Circle.

This circle recognizes those who contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultures and heritage in the Northwest Territories. The circle aligns with this Assembly’s goal to strengthen awareness of our northern identity and uniqueness by promoting our successes, our culture, our arts and our languages with a proud and unified voice.

It highlights achievements and commitments of local cultural leaders, practitioners and groups. It also recognizes grassroots community-based projects as well as regional and territorial initiatives. The welcome of ideal candidates into the Cultural Circle stems from a public nomination process to identify people, groups and organizations who are recognized and respected in their communities or regions for their wisdom and cultural contributions.

Nominees will be welcomed into the Minister’s Cultural Circle annually. Consideration will be given to any project, organization or person residing in the Northwest Territories who demonstrates a high level of commitment and makes an outstanding contribution to the promotion of culture and heritage.

There are three categories of recognition that are proposed:

* elders respected for their contributions of practice, promotion, guidance, teaching, leadership, vision and hands-on participation in the areas of culture, heritage and language;
* any organization, corporation, institution, organizing committee or social club that plays a lead role in the development and support of community-based events that celebrate, promote and preserve culture and heritage;
* youth under 25 years of age who demonstrate a strong commitment to engaging in cultural learning and practice.

Mr. Speaker, the Cultural Circle will help build awareness among all Northerners about the importance of promoting, protecting and preserving our unique culture, heritage and ways of life. I look forward to welcoming inductees into the Cultural Circle at this year’s award ceremony. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members’ statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

# Members’ Statements

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON ELIGIBILITY FOR SENIORS HOME HEATING SUBSIDY

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to return to an issue that I’ve raised before and spoke on in Committee of the Whole yesterday. I want to speak about eligibility issues with the seniors home heating subsidy that was raised during my tour of the constituency in January.

It is not uncommon for an adult son or daughter of an elder to live in their parent’s home, and it can be very helpful as it means there will be someone in the house who can help them in difficult situations. Also, I do have an instance where a family member does not actually live in the home but does stay there for a few days a month, and not every month, Mr. Speaker.

When a family member moves in, even temporarily, the guidelines affect the amount of fuel a senior receives. They then have to pay for fuel at their own expense. This is a large expense for a person living on old age security. Also, fuel support is denied because of paperwork required for household income. If some has genuinely had no work in the previous year, I believe that having use of a statutory declaration document should be sufficient until they complete their income tax, which can take time. Today is when the elder needs fuel, not one month from now. They need fuel at the start of the winter season, not in February or March when taxation forms arrive.

I have a frustrated constituent of an elder who believes that our system is broken if we cannot be flexible and understanding. It used to be that elders received five cords of wood for the winter and there was no taking it back if someone moved in. In some cases elders are taking in homeless relatives and addressing a problem that our Housing Corporation identifies as one of its greatest challenges. Also, it does cost our government money to house the homeless. If a senior is generous enough to share his or her home with a homeless relative, surely we can change the policy to reflect this. We should make an exception where elders’ needs are better met living in their own home with a family member.

I urge the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to review the strict guidelines of household residents and requirements of taxation notices of assessment and find a better alternative to take care of the needs of our elderly and seniors. Mahsi cho.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON GNWT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HIRING POLICY

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We tried to build a prosperous Territory, but, Mr. Speaker, as always, some people are left behind and are better off than others. I’m sorry to say that it’s a pattern that is continued to be followed and it even applies to the employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is not respective of the people that we serve in which 50 percent of our population are Aboriginal but only 31 percent of the government employees are Aboriginal. In Yellowknife only 16 percent of the employees are Aboriginal and I wonder to what extent that there are twice as many women as men in government occupations were Aboriginal workforce.

It gets worse, Mr. Speaker. There are only 31 Aboriginal senior managers in this government, which makes up 16 percent of senior managers. If that makes you think that Aboriginal employees are at the bottom of the pay scale, Mr. Speaker, you are right. The average salary of a P1 employee is under $69,000 a year compared to that of a P2 employee which are non-Aboriginal Northerners, the average salary is more than $84,000 a year. Not only is there a huge pay difference, but in most cases Aboriginal employees have their money spread further because 67 percent of them live in small urban communities or regional centres where the cost of living is generally higher than Yellowknife. I ask, Mr. Speaker, how fair is this?

This government brags about true equal opportunities for employers, but is it really? What are we doing as a government to improve this? More importantly, what are we doing to add to the skills and opportunities of Aboriginal employees? How many years of residential schools and government-run schools here in the Northwest Territories have had an opportunity to build on the employment opportunities of the Aboriginal workforce that really reflects the people it serves but not simply having a backseat to everyone else in their homelands? Mr. Speaker, again, I think it is very important to realize that we have high unemployment rates among Aboriginal people here in the Northwest Territories. Even...

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Krutko, your time for Member’s statement has expired.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. KRUTKO:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we have to be fair to all residents of the Northwest Territories, especially the ones that this is their homeland. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, by getting to the point of unemployment rates in Aboriginal communities that it is the highest in the Northwest Territories of any other ethnic group, again, I would like to get this issue out there on the table and get some serious debate on exactly what are we doing to improve the number of Aboriginal people in the government workforce.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT HOUSING ISSUES IN THE SAHTU

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier and I met with the Sahtu people the other day in Deline, we heard leaders talk about housing. It is still in the minds of our elders, Mr. Speaker, when the government came to our communities and asked our people to move off the land and into government houses, and that they would only have to pay $2 a month for their house. It is very clear to our elders when the government told this to them. Why would people ask to move into government houses? More importantly, what was told to them and promised to my people by the government about housing?

Mr. Speaker, there are many stories about the high cost of living in a house. As a homeowner, we pay for all the costs to maintain a house. Nothing is free. As a renter in public housing, we pay the maximum rent or pay as little as $32 a month, depending if you have a job or not.

Mr. Speaker, my people in the Sahtu want jobs. Mr. Speaker, for example, a young man who graduated from Chief Albert Wright School is working with a company to build houses and lives in a one-bedroom unit and is paying $1,800 a month. Now, we have not yet added the food, household items or just entertainment. This job may last up to six months.

As you know, food prices are sky high in the North. It costs us a lot to travel outside our communities. We need to give our people, especially young people, a good chance in life. Hopefully with the recent announcement by the Minister of the Housing Corporation, we will be able to fill all of these 82 empty units in the North at a reasonable price.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government is cutting back on housing money each year and the federal government says by the year 2038 there will be no more funding for housing in the Northwest Territories. What kind of government do we have in Ottawa? Don’t they know a promise is a promise, Mr. Speaker? Now we are asked to hold the bag and help our people.

I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON HAY RIVER PARTICIPANTS AT THE CANADA WINTER GAMES

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first Canada Games was hosted in Quebec City in 1967 where 1,800 athletes came together to participate in sport. Today, as we speak, 2,700 competitors from 800 Canadian communities are taking part in 20 sporting events at the Canada Games in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to encourage and support our athletes and volunteers who attend this event representing their home communities and the Northwest Territories.

In addition to being an unforgettable experience for our athletes, the Canada Games are an important component in the development of high performance athletes. Mr. Speaker, at the Vancouver Olympics last year, 63 percent of the Canadian athletes who won medals had competed previously at the Canada Games. Our athletes are living their dream at the Canada Games and I would like to name the Hay River participants who are in Halifax this week: Gavin Broadhead, hockey; Connor Goudreau, hockey; Carter Hill, hockey; Mason Bruneau, judo; Ilona Gyapay, cross-country skiing; Skylar Horton, badminton; Joseph Lirette, biathlon; mission staff Stephen MacKay; our hockey coach, Curtis Broadhead; and biathlon coaches Doug Swallow and Chuck Lirette.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to quote one of Hay River’s promising young athletes, Joseph Lirette, who has been training and competing for seven years. He is a lifelong Northerner and is 17 years old. On the Canada Games official website each athlete has a participant’s page where they can post their biography and comments. In response to the question to athletes, what will you bring to the Halifax 2011 Canada Games, Joseph Lirette’s answer is: “I will bring a desire to represent the NWT with pride and to race well in a national level competition.” This is an amazing example of the fine young athletes we have representing us at these games. I congratulate all of our participants and wish them the best of luck at the games, and, yes, we are very proud of you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON EMPLOYMENT RATES IN TU NEDHE

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

Mr. Speaker, time and time again I have asked about the issue of very low employment rates in Tu Nedhe. In other words, Mr. Speaker, I’m talking about people in Tu Nedhe that do not have work. Mr. Speaker, I have drawn comparisons to the larger communities in the NWT which have employment rates twice that of the small communities.

Mr. Speaker, if this government does not develop an employment strategy for smaller communities, things will not change. Employment development in the smaller communities will not impact the larger communities in a negative way. In fact, the more employment created in the smaller communities, the better it will be for the larger communities.

Mr. Speaker, if the government has to develop a strategy with a goal of increasing employment rates in the small communities by 20 to 25 percent, meaning that we plan to raise the employment rates from around 40 percent to 65 percent, we would have many positive impacts throughout the North, including in the larger communities. Mr. Speaker, if these small communities had employment rates comparable to the rest of the North, this government would see savings in income support, health, social services and housing.

Mr. Speaker, currently there are several programs run by both the GNWT and the federal government that could be coordinated and incorporated into an employment strategy led by Education, Culture and Employment. This will take a real effort, but the benefits will be well worth it.

Mr. Speaker, people with jobs have good child care options, will show a renewed interest in their children’s education. Currently, people show signs of hopelessness in the small communities. It is difficult for people to get up day after day and get their children off to school when they themselves have nothing to do, no job to go to, no productive choice to make.

I cannot lay out what the...

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Beaulieu, your time for your Member’s statement has expired.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. BEAULIEU:** I cannot lay out what the Employment Strategy could consist of, but I feel that the very first step to providing much needed employment and income into the small communities is a strategy for the betterment of the entire NWT.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON GIANT MINE REMEDIATION

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. DIAND’s recent decision to fund participation by outside groups in the environmental assessment of the Giant Mine Remediation Project is good, but late in coming. I want to congratulate DIAND for finally offering participant funding for federal environmental assessment, something that southern Canadians have enjoyed since the 1980s.

As Member’s know, DIAND is again in the conflicted position of being both the project proponent and the regulator. GNWT is a co-proponent under the 2005 cooperation agreement. To further complicate matters, other federal and territorial departments, who would normally appear as interveners in a public review if this were a private firm’s proposal, are working with DIAND to develop the project, so the work by these departments takes place behind closed doors and without any scrutiny.

Now, for the first time in the NWT and after a decade of process, DIAND has approved participant funds under the MVRMA, Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, to three outside bodies: the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, North Slave Metis Alliance and Alternatives North. This allows for informed public oversight of the process and project. The groups have stepped forward to act as the public’s defence attorneys. Without them, the whole kit and kaboodle would be done without hearing a critical outside word.

All of this raises a number of issues. First, rather than being exceptional, such funding should become standard practice. As Mr. Pollard continues on his review of our regulatory system, he has the opportunity and responsibility to listen to our northern boards and see this practice included in his recommendations. These developments also provide a timely commentary on the underfunded and piecemeal resource management regime we are inheriting under the devolution agreement-in-principle and highlights a key issue: Given the costs of an adequate territorial system, does the AIP deal sell us short or does it meet these needs?

Let’s be thankful for such committed guardians of the public interest as Alternatives North, the Yellowknives Dene and North Slave Metis. Hopefully the gains they make on our behalf will be carried forward diligently from now on and after devolution.

I will be asking the Minister questions with respect to the GNWT’s role in participant funding.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON DISTRACTED DRIVING AND NATIONAL YEAR OF ROAD SAFETY

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January I read a GNWT press release that indicated that 2011 is the National Year of Road Safety. As part of the press release, our Minister of Transportation stated that the NWT traffic collision statistics are on a 20-year downward trend. That’s good news, but society is still plagued by people who drive with their judgment impaired or distracted by alcohol, by eating, through inattention to the roads, by kids in the back seat, and my pet peeve, talking on cell phones or texting with them.

The Department of Transportation has run a safe driving campaign for a number of years now, a program called Drive Alive. The campaign slogan for 2011 is: Safety is No Accident. The campaign seems to be working, because our traffic collision statistics are going down and I’m most happy to report that there is a shift in the focus of the Drive Alive program for this year.

For 2011 the number one Drive Alive initiative will be a pledge campaign intended to reduce the number of people using their cell phones while driving. This campaign, called Leave the Phone Alone, specifically targets drivers who use their phone while driving. It’s an easy task; a simple on-line pledge which takes only a few moments and then the pledgee gets a reward for this action: a sticker for your car window to proclaim your Leave the Phone Alone commitment to everyone who looks at your car.

I have taken the pledge and I look forward to seeing many more pledge stickers -- including Mrs. Groenewegen’s -- like mine on NWT vehicles. I want to congratulate the Minister and the department for putting the pledge initiative in place.

If I’m happy with the pledge campaign -- and I am -- then I’m overjoyed that the Department of Transportation will soon introduce amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act; amendments which will legislate penalties for distracted drivers and ban the use of cell phones while driving. I am so glad that the Minister has finally seen the light and that this change is coming forward. As I’ve said many times before, it will create safer NWT roads and provide protection for our residents.

I will have some questions for the Minister of Transportation at the appropriate time.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON WORKERS’ SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION DRAFT REGULATIONS

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Improving workplace safety is not an easy task but is a crucial part of all of our lives. Every one of us knows somebody who has been seriously hurt or even killed at work. When it happens, it can be a heart-wrenching tragedy for the worker, the family, co-workers and the businesses involved.

Northerners have been working under our current Safety Act and the current regulations since 1990, with only a few minor changes in 1992. It’s high time that we revisit them. In 2008 the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission’s Minister appointed a Safety Advisory Committee to do just that. A special construction industry representative was added this January. The committee reviewing the regulations has done a tremendous amount of work.

There have been concerns raised in the public with respect to the draft regulations that have been released for discussion. Some members of the public have felt that the proposed regulations are not in the best interest of northern businesses or employees. This is a public process and input from stakeholders is critical to ensuring that the final product and final regulations are in the best interest of the public, employees and employers.

There are many improvements proposed within the draft regulations that will bring us in line with advances across Canada. There will be a single set of regulations where there used to be a handful. Worksite health and safety committees will be stronger and deal with more issues firsthand. Prevention will be emphasized. Requirements for personal protective equipment will be updated. The regulations should be better and easier to enforce. Yes, standards for cold weather work need to be sorted out. Concerns need to be addressed. Yes, definitions should be clear, such as what constitutes construction, maintenance and so on. I have confidence that the Safety Advisory Committee, with feedback from the people of the Northwest Territories, will get the job done.

The deadline for input into these regulations is now March 31st, extended from October. The deadline has been extended twice now. I urge everyone with an interest in workplace safety to take a look at the draft regulations on the WSCC website and take the time to share their knowledge and insight. Our workers and employers deserve the best.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON FIREFIGHTERS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There’s a one-of-a-kind community volunteer that stands out from them all and that’s the firefighters that are asked to conduct exercises in gruelling conditions and asked to risk their lives in the name of community protection. In addition, they are asked to fundraise for their equipment. In a world where firefighting equipment is becoming more costly, hamlets all across the Territories, such as Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok and Paulatuk, have not had increases in specific firefighting budgets in the last five years.

As I expressed during previous statements in this House, our small and remote communities are still ill-equipped to fight fires. The approach that our departments are taking to let the fires burn is just to control it. Our communities are not on the offensive, they’re always on the defensive. This is unacceptable, considering all the small and remote communities are the most susceptible to house fires and have the highest number of deaths per capita in Canada. You’d think this government would be working with our local fire marshals in the communities to get this sorted out.

Tuktoyaktuk alone will need to replace eight Scott Air Packs and 12 bunker suits. My office did a quick search regarding the cost for standard firefighting equipment. To replace one Scott Air Pack is $6,000. Every cost to the community government is too expensive. It’s $20,000 to replace those Scott Air Packs. The protective suits are $2,000 each. Replacing one would be $6,000 and I’m not even mentioning the related fire truck. I’m not a certified accountant, but I can see that all these add up to the community.

Other hamlets and fire chiefs told me that they’re still experiencing major technical problems with the fire truck, in addition to the garage and keeping their equipment heated and always under repair. Why is this government continuing to place fire services for small and remote communities on the backburner? Why are they always playing the blame game and saying the responsibility is the local government?

I’ve visited Nunakput communities enough to know that each community desperately needs a complete overhaul of their halls.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. JACOBSON:** We need to desperately overhaul completely the fire halls in our remote communities. What I’m especially concerned about is the lack of equipment and resources for community firefighters to enter a house and search for people trapped in the fire. I hope no community or firefighter in the NWT will have to experience this, but if they do, we must equip them. They’re risking their lives to service and protect our communities. At least we can train them and equip them accordingly.

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

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON GNWT CONTRACTING PRACTICES

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of last year I made a statement in this House in relation to the Government of the Northwest Territories contracting practices. Today I’d like to follow up on that statement.

The number I cited last year of roughly $53 million being handed out through sole-sourced means has gone up by nearly $5 million, to $58 million in the government’s latest contract registry.

Going through the latest contract registry leads me to the same conclusions I made last year: one, we have an addiction to consultants; two, our staff are taking on too much contract management and administration duties; three, we hire far too many former employees; and four, we sole source way too often which clouds transparency in contracting.

Some highlights of this year’s report on contracting include almost $6,000 spent on a sole-sourced contract for a local lodge to record the daily weather -- that’s ENR; $45,000 sole sourced to set up a camp in Baker Lake, which is in Nunavut -- that’s ENR; $8,000 to Prince Albert Grand Council community observers to look at the Beverly caribou herd; and $23,000 sole sourced for what is called photo interpretation. ECE is also spending $6,500 on an air charter to the Tahera mine site, again located in Nunavut. Strategic advice coming in with a $56,000 price tag in the Executive; $120,000 spent on telecommunications regulatory expertise in the Executive. There was $43,500 spent on what is called the Neutron Activation Analysis by ITI.

I always find it interesting in going through the contract registry both by what is in there and what is not in there. For example, the Deh Cho Bridge contract with Ruskin. If it was signed prior to March 31, 2010, should it not show up in that contract registry? It’s nowhere to be found. Also, if North Slave Correctional Centre has been without a clinical psychologist for the entire reporting period, where is the evidence in this registry that we contracted those services? There’s a little bit, but there’s not very much. As was suggested by the Minister of Justice just the other day, we have been contracting that service. Where is it?

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON V-DAY NORTH CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, rates of spousal abuse in the Northwest Territories are 5 percent higher than the national average. In 2007, 88 percent of Northerners said that they are concerned about family violence in their community.

Since 2008, the V-Day North Campaign has worked to combat this trend. V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. In 2010, volunteers produced 5,400 V-Day events in over 140 countries and educated millions of people about violence against women. V-Day North is a group of Yellowknife men and women who put together creative events to create awareness and raise money for anti-violence organizations.

I’d like to take this opportunity to encourage the public to attend any or all of the upcoming events in Yellowknife. These include a live comedy event on February 19th at the Top Knight; a documentary film screening on February 28 at the Capitol Theatre; a play, A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer, by Eve Ensler, that runs from March 10th through 12th at the Top Knight.

Mr. Speaker, 90 percent of the proceeds from ticket sales are divided between the Alison McAteer House and the Centre for Northern Families in Yellowknife. The remaining portion goes to the 2011 Women and Girls of Haiti Spotlight Campaign that helps address the high levels of sexual violence against women following the earthquake and devastation back in January 2010.

Violence is a destructive force in our community and ignoring it will not make it go away. V-Day brings the issue to the front and centre and I encourage all Northerners to get out and support the people who are working to change that. Mr. Speaker, this is not a legacy we wish to leave our young people. Accordingly, it’s time to distinguish ourselves as leaders in the struggle against violence against women.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve certainly not given up hope on this particular issue and, in turn, let’s not remove the hope of our future generations that we can work to stop violence against all women. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister for Deh Cho, Mr. Michael McLeod.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON RECOGNITION OF PAGES FROM KAKISA

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take the opportunity today to thank two hardworking Pages that are here from the biggest little school in the Northwest Territories, the Kakisa Territorial School. The school is a very small school. It has nine students this year. It has a very high standard for their students. They work hard to support them.

Today we have Dalton Simba and Joey Lacorne-Chicot with us. They’ve been here all week. They’ve come in with their chaperone, Patrick Chicot, on Sunday. They’ve had the opportunity to take in the sights of Yellowknife and enjoy Chinese food and pizza and movies. They’ve been working very hard and they’re doing a very good job.

I had an opportunity to go visit them during the Christmas holidays during the Christmas concert and, certainly, the whole school put on a very entertaining two-hour solid performance, with singing and dancing and a lot of fiddle players. I think every student in that school has a fiddle and they all are learning to play. On a per capita basis, they probably have the most fiddlers around the Northwest Territories.

I wanted to say thank you to them. They both came all spiffed up for this occasion, both wearing the traditional garb of new moccasins, and if you look close, one of them has an NWT crest beaded on the front of it. They’re dressed very appropriate for today and all week.

I wanted to wish them a safe trip home and also say thank you to yourself, Mr. Speaker, and all your staff for accommodating them and allowing a program such as the Paging Program to get them into Yellowknife and do some work for us and see how our sessions are conducted. Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. 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 Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

# Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I do have several people to recognize, so if you indulge me. First of all I’d like to recognize in the gallery the Northern Teachers’ Association who is here with us: Mr. David Reid, president of the NWT Association; Dave Roebuck, the executive director of the NWT Teachers’ Association; Emile Hatch, executive director of the Nunavut Teachers’ Association; and Katherine Mackwood, president of the Yukon Teachers’ Association.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also recognize the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board and Official Languages Board here with us today. If I can read out their names: Nadine Koe from Yellowknife; Beverly Amos, Sachs Harbour; Margaret Leishman, Kakisa; Betty Hardisty, Fort Simpson; Tammy Steinwand, Behchoko; Wendy Mantla, Behchoko; Lucy Lafferty, Behchoko; Rosa Mantla, Behchoko; Vance Sanderson, Fort Smith; Dorothy Desjarlais, Fort Smith; Dora Grandejambe, Yellowknife; Ann Kochon-Orlias, Colville Lake; Dolphus Tutcho, Deline; Theresa Etchinelle, Tulita; and Georgina Biscaye, Fort Resolution; and also with us, Albert Canadian, director of official languages. Mahsi.

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

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy that my older sister Elizabeth “Betty” Hardisty is in the gallery here today. She lives in Fort Simpson. I’d like to recognize her and thank her for her support all throughout the years. Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take advantage of the opportunity to recognize two constituents already recognized by the Minister of Education, but they’re from Thebacha: Vance Sanderson and Dorothy Desjarlais. I would like to thank them for their work with the Aboriginal languages and welcome them to the House.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too want to recognize constituents from the birthplace of ice hockey in Canada, the Sahtu region. I’d like to recognize Ann Kochon-Orlias from Colville Lake, Dolphus Tutcho from Deline and Theresa Etchinelle from Tulita. I’d also like to recognize Dora Grandejambe. I know her heart is in Fort Good Hope but her work is here in Yellowknife. I’d like to recognize some family and friends here also.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to welcome Margaret Leishman, who is a strong proponent of the Aboriginal languages in the Deh Cho, to the House today. I also wanted to recognize a former resident of Fort Providence, Mr. Albert Canadian, who recently published a book called Leshamie. I encourage everyone to buy it. It’s good reading. I also wanted to recognize Percy Hardisty from the Deh Cho region. He’s done a lot of work with MVERB, and, of course, his wife, Betty Hardisty, who’s here to check on her little brother. So he’s on his best behaviour. Welcome. Thank you.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure, as well, to recognize members of the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board and the Aboriginal Languages Board, and particularly a Frame Lake constituent, Dora Grandejambe, whose heart may be in Good Hope but she’s here now. I’d also like to recognize Nadine Koe, a friend who I worked very hard with on Arctic Winter Games in 2008. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to acknowledge Nadine Koe, a constituent of Yellowknife Centre, who sits on both the Official Languages Board and, of course, the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board. Her contribution will be great and greatly appreciated. Thank you.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize individuals on the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board and Official Languages Board: Georgina Biscaye from Fort Resolution and Vance Sanderson from Fort Smith. Thank you.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour for me today to recognize Beverly Amos. She’s from Sachs Harbour. Welcome to the House, Beverly. She’s also with the Aboriginal Languages Board. Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. If we’ve missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. We hope you’re enjoying the proceedings. It’s always nice to have an audience in here.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

# Oral Questions

## QUESTION 471-16(5): WORKERS’ SAFETY AND cOMPENSATION COMMISSION WORKPLACE SAFETY REGULATIONS

**MR. ABERNETHY:**  Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister responsible for the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission. They’re related to the workplace safety regulations that are currently being drafted and developed by the commission.

The original release of those drafts was earlier in the fall, last year, and at that time there were some concerns raised by industry, businesses, the construction industry, about the regulations. They’re very concerned with what was written in them. I know some work has been done to alleviate some of those concerns but I am wondering what the Minister can do to ensure public confidence in the final product. What is being done to restore some of the confidence that some people out there may not have as these regulations, these draft regulations move forward to their final product? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had the original date of October as the cut-off date. We heard concerns from across the Northwest Territories, industry, and a lot of other folks involved. They had some concerns with the length of time they were given to look over the draft regulations. We extended it, as the Member said in his Member’s statement, twice. The date we have now is March 31st for them to get their input in on the regulations. I can assure the Member that ultimately the final decision will rest with my office and I can assure them that we will make sure that there is a quality product before we even release it out to the NWT. Thank you.

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, I would like thank the Minister for that, in particular the assurance that it is not going to go past his desk until everything has been considered. I am wondering, though, as far as the next steps are concerned. What is the Minister going to do to ensure that the people who have had input get feedback so that they know that they have, in fact, been heard and that what they said has been incorporated where appropriate? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns we did hear was about the representation on the Safety Advisory Committee that was drafted in the regulations, and we appointed another member recommended by the NWT Construction Association to that committee. I can assure the Member and all those out there that all inquiries that we have had, I have responded to a lot of the inquiries and a lot of the technical questions that they had. The Safety Advisory Committee will be responding to them. They will be taking their concerns and advice when they draft the final regulations and the final product before it reaches my office. Thank you.

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, once again, thanks to the Minister for that. I am wondering if the Minister could outline for us what the next steps are. I know that the deadline for input is March 31st, but where are we going from there? What are the deadlines for the drafting, the consolidating the information, going through it, making sure they capture everything? For the public, what is the follow-through? What is the process and how long until the regulations reach the Minister’s desk? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, after the March 31st deadline, the Advisory Committee will review all the input that is received from across the Northwest Territories. They will then come up with a set of regulations. As far as the time frame, I am not even sure the exact date when I would be getting it in my office, but I do know shortly after the March 31st deadline the Safety Advisory Committee will be meeting to review all the input that they have had from across the Northwest Territories and putting together their final product and then it will reach my office. Thank you very much.

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

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will there be any more opportunities for input on the final draft or will this be the one that ends up... I guess what I am asking is, is there another opportunity for feedback on the final product? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, once the committee has reviewed all the input that they receive, then it will come to my desk and I will be sure that I won’t release a product that is not one that is beneficial to employers of the Northwest Territories and employees. As far as more input, I suppose it is something that we would have to take into consideration once we reach the final product. If maybe there is another opportunity for some input before a final decision is made, I can assure the Member and I can assure all Members that I have made it a priority to not release a product that is not beneficial to employees and employers in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 472-16(5): CONTRACTS FOR PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES AT NORTH SLAVE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Getting back to my Member’s statement and I suppose I could ask questions to any one of my colleagues across the floor on the contract registry, but I am going to zero in, if I could, on one item in particular that just is not in that contract registry, Mr. Speaker. It is something that I brought up in this House time and time again and that is the lack of psychiatric services at North Slave Correctional Centre. Mr. Speaker, looking at the contract registry that goes from April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, if you look at the Department of Justice, apparently they had a request for proposal of $20,000 to psychiatric services, Doctor Smith, and that would appear to be it. Mr. Speaker, can I ask the Minister if that was the entire budget for psychiatric services for the North Slave Correctional Centre for that period of time? Thank you.

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

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I don’t have the detailed information with me here, but I can find out from my department exactly where things stand with that particular contract. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to do is come up with some idea of what services are provided to inmates in that centre for that period of time. Mr. Speaker, if they are without a clinical psychologist and the department would apparently... It looks like they spent $20,000 on a contract to one psychiatrist. Is that the limit of psychiatric services that were provided to inmates at the North Slave Correctional Centre for that period of time? I would like to ask the Minister again that question. Thank you.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, that contract has been awarded to provide those clinical services within the corrections. Again, I would have to get back to the Member on that, but we do provide those services at the corrections to deal with those inmates that require those special services.

As I stated in this House, we do have an individual that is under training. The individual will be completed this summer. She will be a qualified psychologist within a facility. We are looking forward to that, but there is a contract being provided. The services are being provided to the inmates within the corrections. Mr. Speaker, that is what I can relate to the Member at this point, that services are being provided. Mahsi.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, what it appears like to me is that for that period of time there wasn’t a clinical psychologist and it would appear that the department spent $20,000 on a contract to one psychiatrist. Mr. Speaker, we are having repeat violent offenders walking out of that facility, recommitting crimes in our Territory. Mr. Speaker, I want to know how it is possible without a clinical psychologist that the Department of Justice could only spend $20,000 on services to inmates at North Slave Correctional Centre. That is what it looks like, Mr. Speaker. Where is the evidence of any other psychiatric services that were provided to inmates at that facility? I would like the evidence of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, I did commit in the House I will provide that information. Mahsi.

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

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, I am not talking about what is going to happen in the future or what is happening right now. I would like to know what is happening right now, too, but this period of time, Mr. Speaker, if we didn’t have adequate services for inmates that were at that centre, which would appear to be the case, I would like to know about that. I would like, again, to get a commitment from the Minister that he is going to include that period of time, April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, and if he wants to throw in what is happening today and going forward for psychiatric services in there, I would appreciate that as well. Thank you.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Again, I commit in the House to provide that information, Mr. Speaker. The $20,000 the Member is referring to, the length of time the service was provided, we can provide that information to the Members. Mahsi.

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

## QUESTION 473-16(5): PARTICIPANT FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister who is responsible for environmental assessment. I want to start following up my Member’s statement by asking this question. Has the GNWT insisted that Mr. Pollard bring policies on participant funding up to snuff similar to southern jurisdictions for environmental assessments? Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The discussions we’ve had with Mr. Pollard in regard to regulatory reform and the work he’s doing and some of our concerns have focused on other areas. Though we have talked about properly funding the processes that are currently there that haven’t been funded, things like cumulative impact. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you. That certainly is an area that needs attention. I think these boards have been underfunded, but all of the northern boards have spoken out repeatedly, calling for participant funding, Mr. Speaker. So I understand, from interviews of Mr. Pollard recently and so on, the process of environmental review process is ongoing. So will the Minister provide that input to Mr. Pollard? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you and I appreciate the Minister’s commitment there. That’s a good one. I’m wondering if the GNWT actually contributed any of the funds for this precedent-setting move where Giant Mine interveners finally did get funding, and with GNWT being a co-proponent, would they consider topping up the available participant funding, because they certainly got less than they had applied for and obviously need. Mahsi.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you. We will listen carefully to the Member’s suggestion and request. The issue of a top-up is one I will check. Our responsibility is mainly to do with the surface remediation and, of course, we’ve already contributed $27 million that we’ve booked for our share. Thank you.

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

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for his remarks there. My last question: did the Minister ensure that his legitimate expense under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act should be accounted for in the AIP negotiations, was it accounted for in the AIP negotiations to date and will he be ensuring that they are part of the final agreement? Mahsi.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you. The AIP negotiations have yet to start. We’ve signed an agreement to start the negotiations and there is a section on remediation of sites and I will check whether Giant Mine is within that particular process or not, but the main point being that we’ve just initialled the document and the actual negotiation process has yet to start. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 474-16(5): LEAVE THE PHONE ALONE PLEDGE CAMPAIGN AGAINST DISTRACTED DRIVING

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I’m trying to keep the issue of drivers using cell phones, and the fact that they shouldn’t be, front and centre in people’s minds. It’s definitely not something we should be doing. I’m looking for a bit more information from the Minister of Transportation in regard to the pledge campaign that is now part of the Drive Alive program. So I’d like to ask the Minister if he could elaborate a little bit on the Leave the Phone Alone pledge campaign, what the department is doing to put the campaign in place. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m glad the Member has raised the issue of safety for our travelling public, whether it’s on our roads or our trails or our waterways. It’s an issue that you have to be constantly promoting.

This past couple years we’ve initiated a Drive Alive activity list program that focuses on different areas. Last year we had a number of things that we worked on. This year we want to continue that. We’ll be providing advertisements and also asking some of our colleagues from the MLAs to participate. We have developed a helmet safety program through posters and other means. We’re also doing a lot of work in other areas of creating awareness with the bison and issues around bison on our highways. We’ve committed to hiring summer students and we’ve also incorporated a website and developed that over the last while and we’re doing some displays at our airports.

As part of the Drive Alive activities we’ve also started the program Take the Pledge – Distracted Driving and we have a number of activities. I can’t specify what the response has been. We’ve invested some dollars so far and plan to do another 13 or 14 thousand dollars worth of investment to promote the program. As soon as we get some summaries, I can provide it to the Member. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister. The more we can do to publicize the negative aspect of driving and using cell phones and texting, the better. I’d like to know from the Minister if he knows at this point -- I understand it’s a little bit preliminary for this campaign -- whether or not the department is working in conjunction with any other groups that also work to get people to not drive distractedly. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** We had planned to contact the MLAs, if we haven’t done it already, to ask them to participate and do some promotional ads on this area. We have worked with the Students Against Drunk Drivers, I believe, and some of the municipalities, and of course we are always in contact with the RCMP, the municipal workers and the different sports organizations across the Territories. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister. I guess if the Minister is going to contact MLAs, I hope that he would publish how many MLAs or how many do not take the pledge. I’d like to know from the Minister -- I mentioned in my statement that there are some amendments coming forward -- whether or not the Minister at this point can provide more information about what those amendments will be. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** I’m not sure whether we’re going to threaten the MLAs to take part. We would expect most MLAs would want to be involved with the program to providing advertisements on the different radio stations and television stations. Also, I’m sure that many would want to sign up for a Take the Pledge Program.

The legislation for distracted driving has gone through the process. We have done the due diligence on it and provided our findings to standing committee. The legislation is now in the process of being drafted. We’re working with Justice on this. We’re hoping that we’ll have the draft legislation prepared for final review. It still has to go through a number of checks and balances here before we’ll provide it, but we would expect that we would have that ready, if all goes well, at the tail end of this session or more than likely it would be the May-June session. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister. I definitely don’t want to threaten anybody, but we’re called leaders and I would hope we would be leading in this particular aspect of not driving with our cell phones in use. Thanks for the information on the amendments.

To the Minister, I guess I’m just wondering, knowing that the legislation is coming forward sometime and will be passed sometime in the next four or six months, any idea when the legislation will take effect? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** There’s still a number of internal review processes, as I mentioned earlier, to go through. Of course, I can’t give a 100 percent guarantee that it’s going to pass. We’ve already had one motion on the floor that didn’t get the full support. The details are all in the bill, including the timing. I don’t have that information in front of me. Certainly it will come forward as we move this document forward. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 475-16(5): EMPLOYMENT RATES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. In my Member’s statement I again spoke about employment rates in small communities. To get a feel for whether or not this topic is on the government radar, I’d like to ask the Minister of ECE if there is any dialogue between departments specifically on the low employment rates in the small communities.

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

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This particular area has been discussed amongst the departments and through the Rural and Remote Communities committee that has been dealing with this particular initiative. Through that we have identified funding for small employment into the communities. That’s an area that we have targeted and we continue to push forward with that.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Over and above the money allocated for employment programs in rural and remote communities, what is the plan to address the issue of low employment rates in small communities as it pertains to this department and other departments?

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** The other departments probably have their own plans to deal with employment in small communities. We deal with apprentices, local employment and various GNWT NGOs in the different areas. Within ECE I can speak specifically to that information we have, that we do have regional training centres in the communities. Committees are being established to deal with those matters at hand. We’re identifying the priorities on the hiring and training where it’s needed based on community needs. These are the coordinators at the community level and regional level that deal with those matters. We do have a plan in place within our department to deal with the employment and training and so forth. We always promote career opportunities into the communities as well.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** I’d like to ask the Minister if the government has done what’s referred to as a 360 evaluation to determine all the benefits that could be accrued by raising employment rates in the small communities.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** This may have been addressed by the Rural and Remote Communities committee along with other departments. I can follow through within Education, Culture and Employment on what kind of dialogue has been transferred in that area and transpired in that area. I’ll have to get back to the Members on that. Specifically if there has been discussion on what the Member is referring to.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have any documented objectives to address this issue of low employment rates in small communities?

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** I think we have goals and objectives to deal with employment in small communities. That’s the very reason why we have these initiatives on the way since last year and moved into this year’s budget. We’ll continue to address that matter. It is important to us to deal with the high unemployment in the communities. We’ll have to work closely with the communities, the regional training centres and the regional committees as well. It has to be hand in hand. They’re linked in all capacities, whether it be the band council, the corporations, the municipality, NGOs and so forth. There are a lot of partnerships that need to come into play.

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

## QUESTION 476-16(5): GNWT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HIRING POLICY

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Human Resources. It’s in regard to my Member’s statement where I showed a wage disparity between P1s and P2s somewhere in excess of almost $20,000. These are employees of the government.

We just went through a major court case on pay equity across the country between the federal employees and Government of the Northwest Territories employees. It seems there’s a discretion between P1s and P2s. I’d like to ask the Minister of Human Resources why there is such a discretion between the P1 employees and P2 employees of an excess of $20,000.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Bob McLeod.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We don’t pay employees based on race. The way we calculate the remuneration for jobs is we have a job evaluation system that’s consistent throughout the Government of the Northwest Territories.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Again, the whole argument under pay equity was because there was such a discretion between gender from the wages that men were getting compared to women and they tried to bring that in line with the reality of the time. From what the information being provided is, there is a $20,000 difference between two classes of people that are employed in the government under the different classification of P1 and P2. I’d like to ask why there is such a discretion. Is it because of education levels? Is it because of where they’re located? The majority of these individuals under P1 are located in the smaller communities. Why is there such a discretion on the base? You can call it race, you can call it whatever, but there’s a difference of almost 30 percent wages between one group and another.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** The Member is trying to make an issue that is complex into a very simplistic one. I think you have to understand what pay equity is all about. When you compare pay equity that was undertaken by this government with regard to female employees, it was for work of equal value. People with degrees, doctors, what have you, it was based on comparing job skills of equal value. When you take P1, P2 and you compare salaries, well, it’s based on the merits and requirements of the job. For example, anybody will tell you that the level of education you have determines the type of job that you have, your ability to get a job and the remuneration that you get. That’s how the evaluation of jobs works. It’s based on the job requirements, the educational requirements, and we’ve done all kinds of things to eliminate systemic barriers in hiring. We’ve put in equivalent experience, we’ve evaluated all of the different jobs.

**MR. KRUTKO:** I’d like to ask the Minister what this government is doing to enhance Aboriginal employees in the government so that they can see their wages increase by offering them education and skill development so they are able to move up the ladder, be on the same wages as the people they’re working with in the same room, yet we don’t have this discretion between one level and another. How much money are we spending to enhance the Aboriginal employees in this government to make sure they are getting the fair treatment as everyone else in the government services?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** I think the Member is asking a very timely question following up on the questions asked by his colleague MLA Beaulieu. The way I see it is a good economy provides for the land and for the people. I think what we need is an economy that will create jobs. As a government we are spending a lot of money on education so that people in the Northwest Territories, young people will be able to get good jobs, good paying jobs. In order to do that, you have to have an economy that creates jobs.

As a government we have an Affirmative Action Policy. We’ve identified an Affirmative Action Advisory Group that will help us to improve on it. We are taking a number of different steps to increase the percentages so that we have a representative public service. We have more Aboriginal people working for our government. As you said, we’ve been flat-lined at 31 percent for over 10 years. Obviously we have to take a different approach. We’re also spending money to put Aboriginal people into senior management positions. I’m hoping as we go forward that we can put more money into that area so that we can move from 14 percent to 50 percent. Those are the kinds of things that we’re doing as a government.

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

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to ask, the majority of government employees reside here in Yellowknife but only make up 16 percent the workforce as Aboriginal. I’d like to ask the Minister why so few Aboriginal people are working here in Yellowknife, headquarters, where the majority of government employees are, but they only make up 16 percent of the workforce here in Yellowknife. What are we doing to get more people working in headquarters and increase that 16 percent number here in Yellowknife so that it actually reflects the people that we serve?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We’ve been working on a territorial-wide system when we calculate our statistics. We haven’t looked at having a representative public service in every community. I think if you look at Yellowknife, probably the percentage of Aboriginal people in Yellowknife are probably, I don’t know if it’s 16 percent but it’s probably not that high. That’s a different approach to calculating our employment statistics.

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

## QUESTION 477-16(5): ELIGIBILITY FOR SENIORS HOME HEATING SUBSIDY

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions on the seniors home heating subsidy that I raised earlier in my Member’s statement. One of the issues I had was when an elder had applied and the issue was that her daughter was staying with her and couldn’t get her income tax assessment and the alternative is to find another means for her to declare that she didn’t work the previous year. What avenues can we look at that situation?

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

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This has been brought to our attention within my department and we did raise this issue in the House yesterday. I’ve committed in the House that I’d like my department to look at this area and how we get around it so that the elders are not penalized. We talked about the residence issues where individuals may be there for short periods of time. We also talked about other areas where elders are probably 90 years old and more, and how we can get around the system. I will follow through with this within my department.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Another issue is who determines who lives in the household. Another instance of where the nephew comes in two or three times a month and not every month and they’re saying that he’s actually a resident of that house. I need the definition of a resident, because I don’t believe that’s residency at all. I’d like to ask the Minister if the department will look at that or at least provide me with a definition of residency.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** That would include us looking at the whole issue about the seniors home heating subsidy. When we talk about the residents, these individuals where they sleep and eat. These individuals have been considered that they’re staying at their grandparents’ place. Those are areas that have been brought to our attention that they don’t actually live there. We need to look at the policy itself.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Those two issues, I’d certainly like to follow up with the Minister. He spoke about reviewing the Income Support Policy. Is it specific to the seniors home heating subsidy or else is it the whole income support programming that they have? Thank you.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, with any request that comes forward to our attention, we do look at our policies and we make changes to the effect where it benefits the communities. This is an area respecting the seniors fuel subsidy. I made a commitment to look at that piece of work. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** I certainly support a review of the program guidelines and criteria. I think what people were really saying to me is there’s got to be some flexibility when you’re evaluating this criteria and not just be so stern and be by the book. That’s what the people are looking for. I’d like to ask the Minister: can he direct his department to start to have a heart there, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, this is an area that is always before us every fall time and the winter season. We prepare our client service officers to deal with this matter in advance. As I stated, whenever there is a challenge or issues that are being brought to our attention, we work on the policy and if we need to change the policy. If that’s the case, I will give the Members a heads-up. Mahsi.

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

## QUESTION 478-16(5): VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member’s statement was on volunteer firefighters in the community. Mr. Speaker, we need to get an integrated approach where all small communities can develop a standardized system service model to maximize the limited technical expertise in the Territory. This must be coordinated at the regional level to work so it can work in each different community and each fire department. Will this government implement this model before the end of this term? Thank you.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member makes a very good point and it’s a concern we’ve heard from a lot of small communities in the Northwest Territories. Recognizing that, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs -- and I think we’re going to be debating it when our budget comes forward -- have identified funding to start a training process, because we see our responsibility as being able to get out there at the regional level, have regional training workshops, get into the communities, work with the firefighters in the communities in identifying their needs and their shortcomings as far as training goes. The department has taken it upon itself to put forward this initiative and -- we’re looking at after the budget’s past on April 1st -- being able to get out in the communities and start working with them identifying their firefighting needs. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Considering small and remote communities are more susceptible to house fires -- we have the highest number of deaths per capita in Canada -- this government will work with the local fire marshals in finding funding sources to develop real capacity in each community with the funding Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** [Microphone turned off] …to use this funding to identify capacity in the community and work with the communities to improve it where we’re able to. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Mr. Speaker, considering the volunteer firefighters are risking their lives to protect the communities that they live in, can we implement a comprehensive checklist and systems whether everything is proper, valves functioning, breathing apparatuses, heated fire truck facilities, and proper safety gear and training? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, that would be the goal of the department, too, is to ensure that all local firefighters are well trained and the fire marshal and assistant fire marshal would be able to go through the equipment with them and do a checks and balance of all the equipment they have, to make sure things are working properly. It is our goal to ensure that we work with the communities as best we can to ensure that their fire departments are properly trained. Thank you.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to thank the Minister for that. The firefighters in each community... Can we look forward to getting some help in regard to getting new bunker gear and new breathing apparatuses and heated garages in some communities, please and thank you?

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to make sure that the Minister commits to me today that he comes in to the small and remote communities all across the Territory and makes sure our firefighters are protected and properly equipped. Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we would go into the community and work with the community to identify the shortcomings as far as their firefighting ability goes. As far as equipment goes, we’ll help them to identify the equipment that they need and then they would have to work with the municipal government to ensure and they would have the ability to purchase the equipment. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 479-16(5): HOUSING ISSUES IN THE SAHTU

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the Minister of the Housing Corporation in terms of working with the home ownership of the housing in my region. We seem to be running into a lot of issues with land tenure on the Commissioner’s lots and sometimes that prevents applications from being looked at or being seriously considered for approval. I want to ask the Minister if, in his strategy, would there be some movement in terms of how do we deal with the land tenure issue, especially for the elders in my communities.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Land tenure does sometimes get to be a hindrance as to people’s ability to access some of our programs. However, we’ve been very fortunate lately that we’ve been working with a lot of the band communities and they’re making band land available to their constituents so that they’re able to access the home ownership programs, which helps the Housing Corporation quite a bit, but more importantly, it helps the residents of the community quite a bit because they will be assured they have land tenure and they’re able to put their house on it.

As far as Commissioner’s land goes, I mean, there’s a process where they can apply for the purchase of Commissioner’s land within the community and it’s one that would go through the proper process and then they’d be able to purchase the land if it’s available for sale. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, sometimes these seniors and these elders that do have land in the community and sometimes when they make an application they find out that they owe money on this land here and sometimes that prevents them from being eligible for an application to fix up their houses there. I want to ask the Minister: is his department looking at how do we look at issues around arrears or outstanding bills that elders have without them knowing and, of course, they need their houses fixed and it stops them from being repaired?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we are coming forward with a slight change in policy to address some of the Member’s and other Members’ concerns. It is one that we would have to bring before committee and have the discussion with committee, but we do recognize that it has been a problem across the Northwest Territories and we’re taking the necessary steps to do what we can to help homeowners access some of the programs we offer. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, certainly I look forward to the new policy. I’m so happy I just about choked on it here, Mr. Speaker. I’m very pleased to hear what the Minister has said. I wanted to ask the Minister, there are 600 families in the Sahtu and 330 families make less than $75,000. I want to ask the Minister in regards to the public housing units in the Sahtu. Will the Minister also be coming forward in terms of rent scale adjustments so that families do have an equal chance to make it in society in terms of adjusting their rents that is liveable in the public housing units?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we are, as Members know, reviewing the rent scale right now. The work is still ongoing. We are hoping that we are able to come forward soon with some recommendations and a discussion again with committee. But as to the number that the Member mentioned, the amount of money that is made in communities, these are the type of people that we want to graduate out of public housing and into the home ownership side and we are doing what we can as a corporation to try and accommodate them and try to get them into home ownership.

I believe we have made a lot of progress in the last little while. We have been able to see more and more people getting into home ownership and with some of the gap analysis that we are using, we are able to get some of those that are just slightly over the threshold into home ownership. I think there have been some innovative solutions put forward here. I think we are seeing more and more people get into home ownership. Thank you.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his strategy, is the Minister considering looking at a communication strategy also? Mr. Speaker, there is an elder in Fort Good Hope that somehow we missed this elder here in terms of communicating between the elder and the Housing Corporation. This elder had his house frozen up for over a month here and nothing happened in terms of Housing looking after him. He was in the bush. The technical advisor was on holidays. Just nothing happened to help this elder here. Now it is finally being looked at and still not a done deal. Is the Minister looking at the communication strategy to work with elders such as this kind of incident?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, if it was a home ownership issue, then it would be the homeowner’s responsibility to ensure somebody is watching over his house. Having said that, though, we still continue to try and work with folks that find themselves in situations like this, to see if there are ways that we can assist them. At the end of the day, the ultimate responsibility I would think would have to be on the homeowner to ensure their place or units don’t freeze up. In the cases where it does happen, we do what we can to work with these folks to try and repair some of the problems. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 480-16(5): GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES TO COMBAT FAMILY VIOLENCE

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member’s statement today I was very proud to speak to the issue of V-Day North here and the campaign to work to stop violence against women. My questions will be to the Minister who would be responsible for the Status of Women. Mr. Speaker, one of the statistics I highlighted which was the rates of spousal abuse in the Northwest Territories are 5 percent higher than the national average. What strategies does the government have in place that will combat this problem and what has shown results on dealing with this terrible statistic? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Ms. Lee.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member knows, this government has been involved with the Family Violence Action Strategy and we work with the coalition to address this issue. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be able to highlight some of the resources they have committed directly to the V-Day North campaign or any other campaign that has gotten out there to stop the violence against women? Thank you.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Mr. Speaker, specific to that event, the organizers had asked me if I could attend and say a few words. I was happy to accept that invitation and participate in the event. Mr. Speaker, under the NWT Family Violence Action Plan, which is now in phase II, we fund shelter stabilization enhancement funds. We fund funding for non-shelter regions. We also work with Justice and we have contracted YWCA to deliver a program on children who witness violence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, what programs does the ministry support for men, specifically to help curb this terrible trend where we have a 5 percent increase above the national average which is directed at violence against women? What programs does the department have specifically targeted at men to bring down this terrible, horrible statistic? Thank you.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Mr. Speaker, as the Member knows, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Status of Women are part of the coalition that works on family violence issues. One of our initiatives that Strategic Investments committee Building Our Future has approved is a program for men who use violence. That program is being delivered by the Department of Justice. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister able to point towards any specific statistic that shows and demonstrates that our terrible average of being on the national worst list of abuse against women is coming down? Is she able to point specifically at any numbers or statistics that definitely define us as working towards that goal of ending violence against women? Thank you.

**HON. SANDY LEE:** Mr. Speaker, I believe through the work that the government has been involved in, we are better able to keep track of stats, and the stats do not show a downward movement. We still stay at the high end of the increasing numbers of family violence and domestic violence and other violence in the Territories per capita. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 481-16(5): GNWT CONTRACTS REPORT

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some more questions following up on my Member’s statement today. The other mission in the contracts report over $5,000 is the contract between the Government of the Northwest Territories and Ruskin to build the Deh Cho Bridge, Mr. Speaker. It is not every day that the government signs a sole-source contract for over $92 million. I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation where that contract is and how come it is not in the registry. Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contract for Ruskin was signed with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation in March of 2010 with the approval of the GNWT, of course, so it would not appear in the GNWT contracts report for the 2009-2010 year. Thank you.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, didn’t the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation hand over control of the project prior to March of 2010? If so, why is the contract with Ruskin between the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation and Ruskin and not the Government of the Northwest Territories and Ruskin? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, the GNWT assumed the contract through and as part of the letter of agreement that was signed between the GNWT and Deh Cho Bridge Corporation in 2010-11 fiscal year, so it will now start to show up in our books once we do the appropriate changes. Thank you.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to certainly take a longer look at the timeline and how this all happened, but that is pretty alarming if the contract is between Ruskin and the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation and not the government. We supposedly took over that. Mr. Speaker, have the assets of the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation been transferred over to the Government of the Northwest Territories and when did that happen? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, the assets, the contracts, all the dealings with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation were transferred to the Government of the Northwest Territories and they will now start to be part of our public accounts, that is including the long-term debt. It will also be included in our non-consolidated financial statements. There is going to be some requirements for some legislative changes to the act that will require us to now not put the revenues into a special fund, but will now go into general revenues of the government. So there are minor changes to that. That will be forthcoming as we move along here, but now, for the comfort of the Member, all assets, all components of the bridge project are now under the Government of the Northwest Territories.

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

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the timing is pretty good. The Minister and his staff are going to be providing a briefing to Regular Members next week on the Deh Cho Bridge Project. I was wondering if the Minister could commit to have his department staff, when they come to the briefing next week, provide the committee with an overview of the contract itself, especially with an eye to eligible costs and where responsibility lies for eligible cost overruns on that project. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you. We’re always pleased to provide the Members of this House with information and updates on what is happening with the project. There’s a lot of interest, of course, as the project moves forward.We have committed to provide a briefing to the Members and we certainly will bring all the information we can. Of course, I indicated earlier that we will not be giving the Members a copy of the contract. That would be something that would require some approvals from other people that are involved in this project. But we will certainly give the dates. When this was transferred over I think we signed a letter of agreement and agreed to transfer this portion of it over in April and all of the dealings are no different than any other government project and the reporting will be done accordingly. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 482-16(5): PROPOSED NEW WILDLIFE ACT

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are directed to the Premier in regard to the long-outdated Wildlife Act provisions that have been waiting in some cases some 17 years. By way of minor amendments to the Wildlife Act it was 1994. Those small amendments were more in line with the Inuvialuit Agreement. The Inuvialuit Agreement has been in place for some 27 years, yet a lot of the elements of those agreements have not been enacted and I think it’s more important that... People have been waiting a long time to see the Wildlife Act revisions take place and take hold and come before this House and go out to the public domain so we can have consultations on the revisions for the Wildlife Act. There’s a lot of work and a lot of effort has been put into this. So I’d like to ask the Minister when can we see the revisions to the Wildlife Act come before this House so we can put it out into the public domain and start the public consultation process to get that legislation through during the life of this government.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If all goes according to plan, the intention is to give notice for first reading on the 7th of March.

**MR. KRUTKO:** We are running out of time here. I believe we only have a little less than seven months in the life of this government and I think we have to do everything we can to get it into the system. So again, I’d just like to ask the Minister in regard to the legislation. Like I stated, since the Inuvialuit claim it’s been over 27 years, the Gwich’in claim has been about 20, the Sahtu is just under 20 years. It’s been a long time coming for a lot of the Aboriginal groups that have land claim agreements, to implement those provisions of those agreements, to enact them, bring them into legislation and bring them into force and effect. I think a lot of people out there are saying, well, no consultation is taking place. This thing has been around for 30 years. So I’d like to get the Minister to maybe get it in here. I don’t know if he can get it in here any faster than the 7th, but where there’s a will, there’s a way. So I’d like to ask the Minister to get this legislation into this House so we can get it on the road and allow for public consultations. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you. The government shares the Member’s interest and concern in moving with this act. It’s been identified by this Legislature and the government as a priority piece of legislation. We are taking it down to the wire. So the intention, as I indicated, is to bring it forward into this House to give notice in the last week, from the 7th to the 10th, give it first and second reading, hopefully, and get approved, and then it will become the property of the committee to be able to do their consultation and either in May or August bring it back for third reading. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The time for question period has expired. Item 9, written questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

# Written Questions

## WRITTEN QUESTION 23-16(5): TRAINING AND PROMOTION OF GNWT EMPLOYEES

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Human Resources.

1. How many of the government’s, including boards and agencies, indigenous Aboriginal employees received training within the last two years?

2. How many of the government’s, including boards and agencies, P2 and P3 employees received training within the last two years?

3. How many indigenous Aboriginal employees were promoted to or successfully competed for senior positions, in 2009-2010?

4. How many P2 and P3 employees were promoted to or successfully competed for senior positions in 2009-2010?

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. 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 responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

# Tabling of Documents

## TABLED DOCUMENT 141-16(5): DIAVIK’S COMMUNITY LEGACY PROJECTS: HIGHLIGHTING OUR FIRST DECADE OF INVESTING IN THE NORTH

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Diavik’s Community Legacy Projects: Highlighting Our First Decade of Investing in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## TABLED DOCUMENT 142-16(5): POSTER FOR V-DAY NORTH EVENTS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table the poster for V-Day North events. Thank you.

## TABLED DOCUMENT 143-16(5): SUMMARY OF MEMBERS’ ABSENCES FOR THE PERIOD FEBRUARY 27, 2010 TO FEBRUARY 1, 2011

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Pursuant to Section 5 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the summary of Members’ absences for the period February 27, 2010, to February 1, 2011.

Item 15, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

# Notices of Motion

## MOTION 36-16(5): JOE GREENLAND CENTRE

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that Monday, February 21, 2011, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends the Department of Health and Social Services reverse its decision and continue to provide long-term care service as it currently exists for elders at Joe Greenland Centre. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: 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 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 103-16(5), GNWT Contracts Over $5,000 Report, Year Ending March 31, 2010; Tabled Document 133-16(5), NWT Main Estimates 2011-2012; Tabled Document 135-16(5), Response to the Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act; Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act; Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Conflict of Interest Act; Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act; Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Evidence Act; Minister’s Statement 65-16(5), Devolution Agreement-in-Principle, Impact on Land Claims and Protection of Aboriginal Rights; Minister’s Statement 88-16(5), Sessional Statement, with Mr. Abernethy in the chair.

# Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and other Matters

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, committee. I’d like to call Committee of the Whole to order. Before us today are tabled documents 4, 30, 38, 62, 75, 103, 133, 135; Bills 4, 14, 17 and 20; and Ministers’ statements 65 and 88. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Committee wishes to continue the review of Tabled Document 133-16(5), NWT Main Estimates, 2011-12, and today we’re going to start with the Housing Corporation, and if we get through the Housing Corporation we may be ready for opening remarks for Municipal and Community Affairs.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Is committee agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Agreed. With that, we’ll take a short break and come back to Tabled Document 133-16(5) with NWT Housing Corp.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** I’d like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to going on break we agreed to go forward on the main estimates with the NWT Housing Corporation. To the Minister for some opening comments.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation’s main estimates for the fiscal year 2011-2012, which requests a total GNWT contribution of $61.175 million. This is an increase of 64.7 percent from last year, due to the transfer of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Including other revenue sources primarily from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the NWT Housing Corporation will have approximately $112 million available to invest in housing in the Northwest Territories in this fiscal year.

Since 2006-2007 the federal government has invested $114 million in new housing and repairs in the Northwest Territories, or an average of $22.9 million per year. The 2011-2012 fiscal year represents the first year without this significant level of federal investments. However, the federal government remains an important funding partner through its support of our Public Housing Program as well as CMHC specific programs. As well, the NWT Housing Corporation and its provincial and territorial counterparts have been involved in recent discussions with CMHC on the future of funding previously provided through the federal Affordable Housing Initiative and Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. We will continue to work with our provincial and territorial colleagues to encourage Canada to make long-term funding commitments for new construction, operation and maintenance of units, and to reverse the continuing decline of federal support for the operation of social housing.

Over the past five years we have delivered approximately 600 new housing units and completed repairs on a significant portion of our housing stock. In 2011-2012 we will be returning to our historical level of housing delivery. This is not to say that we will not be making important housing investments in our communities this year. However, given current needs in many communities and the lack of federal funding, our primary focus in 2011-2012 will be on improving existing social housing through public housing replacement and completing major modernization and improvements.

In 2011-2012 we will invest $7.1 million to replace 28 public housing units, and an additional $10.4 million to modernize and improve public housing with 126 units scheduled to undergo major upgrades. These investments are critical to enhance the long-term sustainability and energy efficiency of existing social housing, which will in turn lower operating costs and lessen the impact of declining CMHC funding on our local housing organizations.

Improving our public housing stock also means identifying older units that require disposal or demolition and, where possible, replacing them with more energy-efficient homes. NWT Housing Corporation is removing these units and replacing them with higher quality homes that will not only provide better housing options to residents but will contribute to improving the overall quality of life within our communities.

The NWT Housing Corporation will also provide $9.7 million to assist current and prospective homeowners under Housing Choices and other programs. This funding includes $1.6 million for construction and material purchases for delivery under the Homeownership Entry Level Program, HELP, and $1.5 million to support home purchases under the Providing Assistance for Territorial Homeownership Program, PATH.

On the repair side, we will provide $4.7 million for repair projects under our Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancement Program, CARE, $654,000 in CMHC repair programs and $938,000 in preventative maintenance assistance for seniors and other lower income residents. The remaining $250,000 represents funding available to community groups to develop housing that would be suitable to rent to essential service providers through the GNWT Housing for Staff Initiative. Our home ownership programs are designed to ensure that the housing programs and services that we provide foster independence and respond directly to client needs in a manner consistent with our resources.

We also recognize that there may be gaps in and between our programs. In 2010 we undertook an internal review of our programs focused on those applicants with household incomes that exceeded our program thresholds by 10 percent or less. Following the review, the NWT Housing Corporation tested a mechanism that would address these applicants who do not qualify for assistance under Housing Choices because their incomes marginally exceeded the threshold but who fulfill all other program requirements. We have included additional funding under our PATH program in 2011-2012 to provide home ownership options for those who fall into this category. We believe that through this kind of analysis we will identify individual applicants who can be successful homeowners.

We will realize further opportunities to provide housing to our residents through our vacant unit strategy. Under the first half of 2011-2012, the NWT Housing Corporation will utilize a series of options to ensure that available housing units in communities are serving a housing need for residents. These options include our recent Housing Choices yearly intake, secondary intakes in selected communities where there are available housing units, and other uses as identified through dialogue with communities. This also includes the conversion of some vacant units to public housing as it is recognized that rental housing is the best option for many residents in need. The conversion to public housing will also extend to some communities where public housing does not currently exist, marking the first time since the early 1990s that the NWT Housing Corporation has added to its public housing inventory.

As always, the Housing Corporation’s largest expenditure is related to the delivery of the Public Housing Program in our communities. The approximately 2,400 units in our public housing inventory cost $41 million to operate each year, of which $5 million is recovered through tenant rents and which means that $36 million is funded through a government subsidy. This amount is provided to local housing organizations by the NWT Housing Corporation to subsidize tenant rents and to support the operation and maintenance of our public housing stock. This also includes $669,000 to fund the hiring of apprentices at local housing organizations.

Once again, federal funding for the operation and maintenance of public housing will decline in 2011-2012 and it will continue to do so until lapsing completely in 2038. The annual impact of this decline is beginning to be felt more severely. The GNWT and the Housing Corporation recognize this problem. In order to minimize the risk and sustainability of our existing housing stock in light of the federal government’s lack of commitment to long-term funding, the GNWT has committed $300,000 to allow the Department of Executive and the Housing Corporation to collaborate on a Shelter Policy review. This review will consider a number of challenging issues related to housing in the Northwest Territories, including declining federal funding for social housing and the ongoing housing issues in our communities. Included within this review will be an evaluation of the Housing Choices programs that were introduced in 2007 as well as a review of the current rent scale for the Public Housing Program. The Shelter Policy review will help us to build on our own capacity to address these challenges as well as providing a strategic framework for the next Legislative Assembly to make decisions about future housing approaches by the GNWT.

In this time of fiscal restraint it is important that the NWT Housing Corporation collect outstanding mortgage and rent arrears in order to reinvest them in our communities. The collection of this outstanding revenue is a key strategic consideration for the NWT Housing Corporation. It is critical that outstanding mortgage payments be made in order for homeowners to fully meet their obligations and so that revenue collected through the process can be used to enhance programs and service delivery. Public housing tenants have a role to play in the financial viability of local housing organizations, given the reliance of local housing organizations on the rent revenues for the operation and maintenance of public housing stock. Our officials continue to work with clients in mortgage arrears and tenants with rental arrears to put in place repayment plans that address their arrears so that they can continue in the Housing Corporation’s programs. However, in cases where mortgage clients have consistently resisted, efforts to resolve their mortgage debt files will be sent for legal action.

We rely on the strength of partnerships in providing housing to our residents. Within the GNWT, the Housing Corporation works closely with departments such as Health and Social Services; Municipal and Community Affairs; Education, Culture and Employment; as well as the Department of Executive to promote interdepartmental approaches and collaboration in policy, planning and coordination. Our work with these departments is about more than just housing; it is about using our scarce dollars in the most effective way, given the clear linkage between quality housing and areas like health, education and community development.

The need for strong partnerships extends to the community level as well. Our local housing organizations work closely with us to ensure that our delivery reflects community needs and interests. Tenants are also considered our partners as they make a vital contribution to the viability of public housing through timely payment of rent and by ensuring that their units are well kept. The Housing Corporation’s role in these partnerships is clear: providing quality energy-efficient housing and ensuring that our programs and services are easily accessible and are communicated properly to those who stand to benefit from them.

Through these partnerships, we can move forward together into a future where quality, affordable housing is the norm in our communities and where our housing stock is sustainable for generations to come.

That concludes my opening remarks. At this time I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Do you have witnesses that you would like to bring into the House?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Yes, I would.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Is committee agreed that we allow the Minister to bring witnesses into the House?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Sergeant-at-Arms, could you please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Thank you, Minister McLeod. Can I please get you to introduce your witnesses for the record.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m joined today by, to my right, Mr. Jeff Polakoff, president and CEO of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, and to my left I have Mr. Jeff Anderson, vice-president of finance with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. As with previous departments, we had allowed all Members to make general comments and have the Minister respond at the end. Is committee agreed that we proceed with this same process?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Okay. We’ll now go with general comments. Is committee agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** First on my list is Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to this department and its portfolio, yes, we have challenges, but I think also we have to work together to find solutions to some of our challenges. I think that in regard to the area of finding revenues in regard to CMHC, again, that’s a national problem. I think it’s a $3 billion problem across Canada, and I think we’re all in the same boat on that one, and I think it’s just going to take a national outcry to get the federal government to admit that they have made a mistake.

Again, I think we do have to be cognizant in the North that we have to find offsetting revenues, and I think one of the areas that we have to look at is that we do have rent subs with the private sector. I think, whenever possible, those dollars should be expended first with the Housing Corporation assets before we allow those rent subs to be spent in the private sector. I think we generate $5 million by way of what we collect by way of rent, but I think we also have to look at how much money the government spends in other agencies in regard to rent subs, regardless if it’s the Department of Health and Social Services or even through income support, that we have to be able to use other government agencies to provide that investment in the Housing Corporation before you go to the private sector.

I think that in most cases what you usually find are people do get evicted from housing and they’ll end up going to one of the agencies, and in most cases it’s income support or social services in which they’ll find them an alternative place to stay. But again, I think that whenever possible we have to work with the clients and work out payment plans and try to find a way that we’re able to recoup those dollars in most cases, that people do have hardships or people do lose their jobs, they do get laid off, and because in most of our small and isolated communities we do have a seasonal economy and right now the economy is down in most regions throughout the Northwest Territories.

But again, I think it’s fundamental to look at a holistic approach to housing and not just look at housing as a place that you rent houses, but look at it as a place that residents, children, parents, grandparents grow up, grow old, and eventually pass on. We have to look at housing in the lifecycle of the people we serve, from single individuals to married couples, to couples with families to the transitional process as we go through life, and we have to be aware that at some point we’re going to have to look at the possibility of investing more money into either social care or secondary or seniors’ care, and we have to be able to work with those different components.

I think that’s one thing that we’ve sort of slipped here in the North. Looking at other jurisdictions in the country, they do have plans in place where they look at the holistic approach of housing from hard to house people to homeless people to seniors facilities to transitional housing. So when you look at the whole gamut of housing right from the time someone gets into the market to actually when you exit out of the market and in most cases you end up going into a long-term care facility and that’s part of that. I think it’s something that we have to look at in the North with the amount of challenges we’re seeing with homelessness. But in most cases those are people problems and people issues and program issues that we have to work on and working with other government agencies and ourselves to work around that. I think it’s important that we look at that but, I think, also, we have to work with families and individuals to make the transition from the public housing dependency to eventually home ownership to eventually being able to maintain their own needs.

That’s an area that I’d like to focus on, because I know that in my riding there have been issues that I’ve raised with the Minister and the department on individuals who have tried to transition into home ownership but because of one reason or another, basically because most of the clients that have got into home ownership work in a seasonal economy but at least they’re making their payments, they’re maintaining their commitment, but yet, in some cases, they were told that they had to vacate the premises because they didn’t have full employment.

In most of our communities you might have 13 percent or even 15 percent of the people that are fully employed in our communities. The other 80-something percent depend on seasonal work. I think we have to be realistic to the economic times of our communities and the realities people face. But people still, at the end of the day, make ends meet. They are able to maintain their facility. They’re making their payments. They’re not in arrears. I think that, if anything, we should credit them for trying whichever way they can to bring in whatever revenues they need from trapping or fishing or subsidizing their wages somehow other than having a full-time job, because we can’t discriminate individuals based on the employment levels that they’re at. I think that’s something we have to be realistic about when we’re talking about communities and community services.

I think the other area that we have to really look at is the whole independency side of elder care and the elders care programs and sustaining them as long as we can in their own homes and working with themselves, their families. Because as they age, their requirements change also from being mobile individuals who were basically self-sufficient, they’re able to cut their own wood, pack their own wood, but as you age it gets a little harder as you progress in life. I think we have to be realistic that those people are going to need some assistance by way of changing their heating systems or looking at some sort of equipment to assist with their disabilities, regardless if it’s ramps on their facility or, basically, having better access to their showers and their washrooms so that, basically, they’re able to sustain that independence as long as possible. Again, I think we have to work with the private sector in regard to groups that do provide different types of housing, regardless if it’s the private sector.

I know one of the issues that has come to light is the whole area of professional housing. I know that the Minister made a statement in the House yesterday in which they’re allocating a bunch of the vacant units for professional housing, but I think we have to be aware that you’re dealing with a segment of our workforce that’s transient. They come and go. You don’t know how long they’re going to be there for. But again, those units at some point will eventually be empty again. I think you have to be realistic of how those units will be required over a period of time and making sure that you identify the occupants so that when you basically have those transitional periods of cycles where, in most cases, the RCMP, for instance, most of them do a two-year turnaround in most of our communities, and then basically they have to go out and rehire or refocus their efforts to get other people in there. Sometimes that takes a little bit of time, so those units, again, will be sitting empty for some period of time and, again, we have to be aware of that.

But again, we also have to ensure that’s there’s fairness in the process. That we don’t provide a subsidy to one group and yet people are basically paying $1,500 or in some cases $1,800 a month in regard to maintaining a home ownership program but yet we’re allowing the professional housing to be subsidized. I think that that’s a concern from residents in our communities, is how come they’re subsidized and I have to pay, you know, 30 percent or 25 percent of my income based on income testing. So is there going to be income testing also provided by way of the rent that’s being charged to the professional staff in our communities? In most cases the teachers and other people, they try to get it as cheap as they can and they don’t want to pay $1,500 a month. If they can get it for $600, they’ll try to get it for $600. I think we have to be fair to all the residents in our communities when it comes to providing these different types of services.

The other area I would like to talk about is the whole area of capacity building, especially in the area of tradespeople in our community. This department has an important role to provide that opening for a lot of young people to get into the trades. I know we are looking at that in the Housing Corporation and local housing authorities are taking on more people. I think we also have to develop that into the actual construction and the maintenance and repairs that are going to take place so that you offer the student, especially summer students, that opportunity. For most of them, that is their first job that they will receive, so they are able to do that.

I think also we have to be aware of community unemployment rates where we have high unemployment rates. We have to allow for some of this work to remain in our communities. I know that this department used to be wide open to negotiated contracts with bands and development corporations in trying to find that opportunity and keeping those resources and job opportunities in our communities. Again, I think we have to be open to that and ensure that the policies and procedures this government has to offer are being used, especially in departments such as Housing Corporation, which is a very important infrastructure department in the government. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Are there any other Members who would like to make general comments? Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think my biggest concern now for the future of social housing is the CMHC declining fund. To me, it doesn’t appear as though the federal government... Basically from their position on their stance seems to be that they are into providing short-term stimulus-type money or short-term affordable housing strategy types of money because they seem to get a better bang for that buck than they would to continue long-term investment in housing. It is long-term investment in housing, I think, is something that has been in place. It was agreed to some time ago that the federal government would be withdrawing from that type of housing, essentially public housing program under a couple of CMHC sections. That is something that is worrisome for me, not because I am afraid that the public housing will be sitting there and we would not be able to operate public housing, but because I am afraid that if we don’t have a good strategy to address the public housing that we have on inventory, that it would take all of our money out of other essential areas, specifically maybe in housing but could possibly be in other areas to backfill what is needed to continue to operate all of the public housing units.

There is a slight growth in public housing announced by the Minister yesterday. Again, it is only about $15,000 per year to operate a unit, maybe $20,000 a year to operate a unit. That is the additional 50 units is not that significant that it would have an impact, but the withdrawal fund is what I find very significant. I think lobbying Canada to ask them to stay in is something that we should continue to do, as all provinces are doing, but I don’t think it is going to be an effective strategy. I think what we need to do is actually develop a strategy to reduce the amount of public housing we have on inventory. If the Housing Corporation, from one end of selling a house that is worth $300,000 to $400,000 on the market in the city of Yellowknife for $300,000 to $400,000, not to disrupt the market, but to get the capital out of it and to reduce the amount of public housing in market communities where public housing really doesn’t add to the market is essential. I recognize that, but there are other ways of providing public housing. I am saying that public housing can be provided on a short-term basis in the market communities by renting or leasing. You could sell 20 houses in market communities at an average of $300,000 per unit and I think that adds up to $6 million or something like that. That could be then, in turn, put back into the home ownership side of things or being put back into leasing public housing in market communities and reduce our inventory so we don’t have long-term commitments by virtue of ownership.

Right now, if we don’t reduce the amount of public housing we have, we are going to be in it for the long term, and as the money from the federal government dries up, we will have to backfill with GNWT dollars. I am a bit afraid of that. That kind of leads me to where...

I am trying to get the Housing Corporation to see if they would consider... I would ask the Minister if they would consider developing a housing plan in each community; maybe a housing plan that considers all of the factors. I use the term today: a 360 evaluation. I would still use that term to have the corporation look at the communities from a community-to-community perspective and have a plan that says our public housing situation in Fort Resolution is this. The home ownership situation for Fort Resolution is this. This is what we have on the market. This is the total value of what we have on the market and the total value of what is on the market in that community and, in essence, move away from having a lot of public housing to maybe creating some sort of a quasi-housing market in these smaller communities that allows individuals in that community to have equity. So you would essentially work towards accumulating some sort of market so that individuals have equity.

We all know that there is a significant difference between putting money into a house in Inuvik and Fort Smith and Yellowknife than there is putting money into places like Lutselk’e, Nahanni Butte and even in Tulita or Fort Resolution, for that matter, because those communities don’t have a market. That is why I think the houses there are essentially lifelong houses. If you have a community where you have a market, then a lot of people will invest in the market then upgrade, sell their unit and upgrade and so on. In a sense, it kinds of creates a little market in itself in the communities. I think the Housing Corporation needs to look at that in part with their programs and make sure that they are trying to move forward and achieve that objective, and that is an area that should cover the effects of what is happening with the CMHC withdrawal.

The other area that I am very interested in is the home ownership units in the communities. Really, I am looking at units now that are older units. The Housing Corporation built several hundred HAP units across the Territory and many of those units are now getting to a stage where they are moving to a state where they could be getting close to being beyond economic repair. I would like to see the corporation... I think it would be positive if we could repair those units andsave them from going to a dilapidated state where they cannot be fixed. Then I think we really have a big price tag, government period would have a big price tag.

Those individuals have to live somewhere, they’re going to either go into new houses built by the corporation or go into residential care, which is very expensive, I suppose. Most people know that.

I think the one big factor in the Public Housing Program is that the corporation should develop some sort of a maximum rent. I recognize the fact that the Housing Corporation, under the program, has an obligation to recover at least the economic cost of that unit if that person is working, but that’s not working in the small communities, that type of program. So I’m suggesting that the corporation develop some sort of maximum rent. I really do think that there are long-term benefits to that as well. People may work if their rent maxes out at $700, they may work, even though maybe the cost to operate that unit is more, but it’s better than them only paying $32. So I’m on time, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Are there any more general comments? Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Chair, I wanted to say to the Minister here and the staff here that the housing units that we have in our communities, I certainly look forward to the Minister’s suggestions in his opening statements in further detail as to how we’re going to help people in those units, help people get into those units. We were in Deline and a statement was made at a leadership meeting with the Premier. Again, there are 100 units, I think, and there were 50 percent that were vacant. A lot of people were out of those units. That was just a statement in the meeting. I just want to clarify that and close that number. So I want to see how we can get people into those units.

I read with interest the Minister’s statement yesterday on a strategy to fill those units up. There are 82 units that are vacant in the Northwest Territories. On average you can put four to a family, that’s 82 units. That’s about over 300 people that the Minister wants to put into public housing. So I’m very interested to see how we could help the Minister put people into these vacant units. It means doing some creative policy writing and some support. I look forward to working with the Minister on that.

The public housing in our communities, as Mr. Beaulieu had alluded to, is something that needs to be looked at. I made earlier comments in my Member’s statements about a young man that is doing his best to make it in life and he’s working hard. However, because of the current policies right now, he’s paying $1,800 a month for a one-bedroom unit and it’s very stressful for him because he’s working to try to make it. He doesn’t have much furniture in his house; groceries are very high in Tulita. So if we can help these young people a little bit, as you know the unemployment is very high in some of our smaller communities and if we could somehow manage to make it worthwhile for these young fellows to work and stay in a job, I think we’d be doing a lot of them a lot of good.

I also wanted to let the Minister know that I talked to another constituent of mine in the small communities. This constituent is a long-term employee of the Department of Education through the Sahtu educational board. Actually, she’s a cultural teacher. This person has lived in the housing units for a bit. It’s one of those old units that were built in the late ‘70s and because of that, he’s paying the maximum rent of $2,400 and at the same time is looking after her mother who is in her 90s. She’s doing her best to keep up with the rent. However, it’s costing her quite a bit and she’s putting just about half of her rent payment down and Housing is causing her a lot of stress by telling her that she needs to pay up or she’s going to be asked to move out or be evicted. Her mother is in her 90s and she doesn’t know if her mother will be around today or tomorrow or next month. She doesn’t know. That’s a lot of stress on her. She’s one of these long-term employees with education. She’s not going anywhere. She said if it wasn’t for my mom, I would have told housing, yes, I’ll be out of there and find something, but she says her mom is bedridden just about. She says where would I go and it’s causing me a lot of stress with Housing calling me. She says I’m doing the best I can, and she doesn’t drink. This lady has almost 20 years with education. She comes from a generation of when you have a job, you keep a job and you go to work and you have to go to work. So she’s saying why is Housing doing this to me. I’ve been living in this unit for a long time. You know, she’s one of these tenants that lived in these houses and raised her family. Now all of her children are gone. So I think we need to look at some of these situations with some tender loving care for some of these people in our houses.

Then you swing to the other end of the spectrum where people are living in these units and they’re not taking care of them. You see them in our communities. So how do we deal with that too? People are telling me that some of the young people are ruining these units and we’re paying for them and we’re not penalizing strong enough or we’re not doing them any favours. How are these young people getting into these units? You know, someone told me that they can’t even fix the doorknob. They had to call Housing to come over and fix a doorknob for them. Now that is really, really sad when we’re teaching young people not to take care of themselves or help themselves.

I hope with the Minister, we can work on some of these things. Housing is very important to us. You have an important job for us in our community. So how do we do things to help these young people and let them know that other people need these units? If I was to wreck my house, I would have to pay out of my own pocket, but somehow we tell them is it okay to kick the doors or smash the windows because we’ll come by and we’ll fix it for you. Maybe not today, but maybe in six months. We need to change that and Housing I think is in the position to do that.

It may seem hard and it may seem harsh for us as leaders and it might even cost some votes if we’re looking at an election, but let’s not worry about that. Let’s worry about our assets, let’s worry about what kind of houses we have and take pride in them. Like you said, it costs $41 million and we are paying for it as taxpayers. Society at large is paying for it. We have to look at that too.

The last part is to help some of these older seniors that are in their 90s and 70s and 80s because in the 60s and 50s they talked about units, in the 70s they should be in public housing. They have a different recollection of houses as compared to 2011. We have a wide range of interpretation of housing. We’re doing our best to help them.

I want to say to the Minister that I look forward to working with you. I look forward to how you deal with the vacant units in my region, how you deal with the public and home ownership units, how we get these people back into these units and work with them to look after their place. We need to do that. That may require more and more meetings face to face. I look forward to the Minister coming to the Sahtu to talk to the Sahtu people and sitting down and putting some solutions together. He’s got a big job ahead of him. I look forward to going through the budget detail by detail.

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

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I named a number of suggestions and highlights of issues and frustrations in my Member’s statements and I just want to go through the Minister’s opening remarks here and point them out, and there are a good number of areas where I think things are going in the right direction or at least good now. We’re starting to take some good steps.

I want to acknowledge that in the past, prior to this year, we did get the 600 new units on the ground with some major completion of repairs. That’s a huge piece of work and curiously enough it’s presented some challenges that are unique and I’m glad to see that those are being addressed. I’ll mix that in in a bit here.

I am in concurrence that the primary focus for this fiscal year, this coming fiscal year, should be on improving existing social housing. To that end, I support the intent to deal with a number of replacements of public housing units, but especially modernizing and improving existing units. I think 126 was mentioned with the perspective that these investments are critical to enhance the long-term sustainability and energy efficiency of existing social housing which will, in turn, lower operating costs and so on. Lessen the impact of the CMHC funding and there’s no end to that drought in sight so I think we have to face the realities there. I’m glad to see this focus.

I also appreciate that the corporation has identified this new category of people who have income marginally exceeding the threshold and have come up with a plan to take advantage of the potential for home ownership there. That’s good work. They went out and found this category and they’re putting policies in place to address that.

The vacant strategy was obviously needed. This is getting back to my earlier comment about really having an unusual situation where we have some problems because of the rapid provision of these units. This strategy has been needed. We’ll now see how well that’s carried out. I have to say that I’m absolutely stunned, to coin a phrase used by an apparently unknown colleague of mine, that we haven’t had any new inventory to our public housing since the early ‘90s. This to me is absolutely astounding. I think it is indeed appropriate that some of these vacant units be rolled over into that and start addressing that gap. I realize we have operational costs associated as well.

The next point I want to talk about here is the apprentices. This is a key program with relatively modest funding, but a key program. I think the Minister’s got that message that we’re very supportive, I’m certainly supportive of this. My understanding was there were about 11 established I think this fiscal year, ten or 11. Some adjustments and the intent is for another... Is that 2011-2012 or is that this fiscal year? Anyway, we can get into that in details. I’m very supportive of that.

I mentioned earlier to the Minister of ECE that there’s a huge need for apprentices in our communities -- no news there -- especially for oil burner mechanics. This would be a real service to communities which would help save on fuel bills and so on and also have some environmental benefits. Mostly it’s just practical, easy with the available skills thing that could be done with some real focus. I’m hoping to see that focus brought through the Housing Corporation’s Apprenticeship Program.

I guess the biggest thing in the association with the next item is the shelter policy review. The Minister I’m sure is aware that we fought hard to keep this fully funded because we see a real priority for this. We see a huge need to get it done. I guess, getting into my next point related to that, I support the department’s interdepartmental approach and collaboration of policy, planning and coordination. These are good words. We want to actually see this in a practical sense on the ground and reflected through the shelter policy review product.

The other thing we really want to see, and I should speak for myself here, is we want to be involved. We have made many suggestions that we think would fall into this and I think the Minister would recall that we had a good discussion of that in committee.

Throughout our term we have made quite a number of suggestions that have been either simply ignored or with very little follow-up or uptake. Surely we understand that we do need to do things a little differently given the realities that we’re facing here, and if we’re going to have a sustainable housing program, we need to do some things differently. I think the biggest thing is the strength of partnerships that mention need to be extended to the strength of partnerships with our clients. We have a number of red-blooded, able-bodied people out there who do not have jobs that are in public housing and we need to do the job of figuring out how we can put those people to work in a way that addresses some of our costs. I have mentioned this before, but distributed energy systems where tenants are expected to provide a cord of wood a week or something like that for six weeks a year or whatever it might be, you know, a simple chainsaw and some training programs would take care of energy costs, a huge part of the energy costs of our housing programs. We know the forced policies are being worked on to allow this sort of thing and there are sustainable potentials here. These are where the potentials for gain are and they require a cross-departmental approach as the Housing Corporation is committing to follow. They’re not easy and I don’t have a lot of examples of them being done successfully yet in this government, despite the Premier’s pointing at these committees that he’s organized.

I’ll be looking for how this turns out at a practical level, but in the meantime I’m looking forward to discussing some of the detail and bringing out some examples here. Just by way of that, if I can offer the Minister this little tobacco for his pipe until we get around to the detail, the $925,000 small community dollars for hiring people, that in my mind should be directed through the Housing Corporation to hire public housing tenants and put them to work and develop their housing maintenance skills, wood cutting skills, whatever might be there. Where are our costs and where can we put the sort of skills that we can expect to be available with a minimal amount of training perhaps to address some of our costs here and get a long-term program going that builds on the savings and those sorts of things. Anyway. Enjoy your smoke. That’s all I have.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today I speak on housing. I’d like to see if we could get a rent scale. We’ve been bringing this up steady. I know that the Minister and the department have been looking into a three-tier system of dropping our rents down. We own these units outright by now. They’re very old units but well maintained. Most of them. If we could put a three-tiered system in from, say, your max rent would be $1,200, your minimum would be $800, and your low would be $600, and then not penalizing people who go and get part-time work. In the smaller communities people don’t want to go out and work because you’re being penalized for working and when the cheque comes in, a percentage goes to the corporation. I think if we worked at that I think we’d do a lot better for our people if we could put that into place.

The arrears, I know that meeting with the Minister numerous times with regard to moving in and talking with the communities, I know the Minister was working hard towards getting the arrears sorted out. He always says sort equity, people got to pay. And it’s true, but at the end of the day if they’re over a certain amount in so many years, the arrears for people who passed away, people and family members are being penalized for that. They’re still having to pay that and I think we should really look at that as well.

The people that are being evicted and are hard to house I think we should really look into and get that looked after. Some people in the communities are having 10 to 15 people in a four or five-bedroom house. That’s not right. I know it’s the client’s responsibility to pay, but I think if we could work with them with a little bit more open-handed approach and not make our guidelines ‘because the Minister is the boss and we could do that’ and work together with the people to keep their units and make minimal payments, for example, work with the Housing Corporation clearing steps over the minimum wage or something like that. Like I said, if the units are in not bad shape, but the windows and stuff, we could work towards that too.

Sachs Harbour, again I’d like to let the Minister know that we do need units in Sachs. We have young families coming back home that are trying to get into the community. I wish we could get one or two units in there for private home ownership. If it’s possible to look at getting a pilings and fuel tank program for private homeowners across the Territory, because in the smaller communities the pilings are rotting and the fuel tanks are leaking, which is causing people a lot of money to clean up, between $140,000, I heard, on the high end, and smaller at the lower end. It’s costing people a lot money if they don’t have home insurance.

For seniors repair, the program and maintenance program that we could give them for the windows and that, checking them every year. We have a list in the community, the LHOs should have a list of who are the private homeowners. Tuk did the Arctic Alliance. They went in and the kids did the windows this year. It was really good that the kids did that, the plastic wind covering for the windows for the draft coming in. That was a really good thing that the Tuk youth did in the community. We should get our maintenance staff to go and see if we can do that and fix that up, as well, once a year. The same with checking their furnaces and stuff, because we do have the harshest weather in the Territory.

Mr. Chair, the biggest thing is just working together. I know the Minister has a tough job and just working together to provide homes for our people that we represent and to be a little bit lenient. I look forward to the page by page of this department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Let me tell you about housing in my riding. Mr. Chair, as I travel throughout my constituency I’ve heard lots of the issues repeated time and time again. I’m pleased to say that we are making steps forward; however, in some areas we just seem to be stalled. A lot of constituents come to me and they’re really upset that they’ve been refused by Housing for programming and/or trying to get into a new HELP unit or the PATH program, and it’s all about arrears, about past arrears, past issues, and even accessing programming dollars, they have arrears. A lot of them can be managed with the new program to work with the clients and come up with a different management plan. However, many of my constituents really dispute the arrears because they are very old, some of them up to 20 years old but it’s still on their file and some of them even recent, as much as five years old. They’re disputing them, saying the work was incomplete or they weren’t satisfied with the housing, just for a number of reasons. This is the reason why I continue to ask the Housing ministry to look at an independent appeal system.

Constituents are frustrated because the way the system is now, they’re actually appealing to the person that told them no in the first place. It’s just not working and that’s the reason they’re getting frustrated. However, in some of our other departments, namely Education, Culture and Employment, if someone’s not happy with the program, they got rejected or something, then they’re allowed to look at an independent appeals process to plead their case and have somebody review it. I think this will go a long way in addressing their concerns, because I really do believe that some of their concerns are real. They had a house built up to $150,000, $200,000, they’ve had it turned over to them and the corporation wants them to pay full mortgage but at the same time there are lots of deficiencies. I’m not too sure a way around it. Sometimes it could be up to looking at a forgivable loan or else say, yes, you have a deficient house, it’s not worth $200,000, it’s not worth $150,000. Let’s work around that. But as it is now, the mechanism that we have in place is it’s $200,000. It’s $200,000 on the books and perhaps the Housing Corporation is obligated to stay firm on that, but at the same time I believe in the clients, I believe in my constituents that they felt they’re wrong, so we should have a real good look at it and I believe that establishing an independent appeals system in the NWT Housing Corporation will go a long way.

Another more recent issue that came up was there was an elder in one of my communities. His furnace broke down. His hot water tank broke down. It was just last month when it was very, very cold. It just so happened, Mr. Chair, that he had exhausted all his programming choices. He had exhausted his RRAP, his CARE, every other program that’s out there. He exhausted them all. He’s on old age security and fixing a furnace in a remote community means somebody’s got to fly in and he just doesn’t have the means to repair his house. Fortunately, there was a quick solution. I believe the Housing Corporation had actually planned to go there the next day anyway and they were able to bring in someone to repair the furnace, so they managed that, but he still has a hot water tank that needs replacing but he’s exhausted all programming areas.

I think what used to work is we used to have a seniors repair program and that’s exactly what it was used for, was to help the seniors repair their homes in emergency cases like this. He’s not asking for very much. He’s asking to repair his furnace and replace his hot water tank, up to $2,000, and if there’s a tradesperson around doing work for the Housing Corporation, there could be a further savings there. That’s a missing component. It’s not only in that community I’ve seen it. I’ve seen it in other areas. I’m advocating on behalf of our seniors and the elderly and we really don’t have a program for them. We used to have it. I really think that we should bring that back. In fact, it’s probably something I’ll be working on here next week and have a debate of that nature in the House, Mr. Chair, as I’d certainly like to see a return to that.

Something that was curious was we got a HELP program and then we got a PATH program and I had thought when we go from the HELP program to the PATH program that the client actually builds credit. You know, he’s paying for two to three years into this house and I thought he gets a credit when he actually becomes eligible for a PATH program towards the purchase of his new house, but that doesn’t seem like it’s true, because I checked it out and a couple of clients were asking me about it. I really had thought that that was the case there, Mr. Chair.

As we deliberate the budget for the next nine days there, Mr. Chair, and I don’t want to beat the Health Minister’s record, but as we deliberate the budget today and perhaps tomorrow as well, I certainly will ask the Minister... As well, he’s free to comment on this issue too. I know it’s not there, but can it be there? Can we look at ways of having it there?

Housing and mould is always a big issue. People are coming to me. The reason they are wanting new houses or new rental places is because the home that they exist in right now is full of mould. It’s that black mould. It causes respiratory diseases not only to the adults and many of them have children. In fact, I ran into a family from Fort Liard that actually had to travel to Yellowknife for respiratory problems with their children. That’s what they told me. They said my house is full of black mould and the furnace just moves all those spores around and around that unit. We do have a bit of a mould program but I would urge the Housing ministry to continue to see how we can mitigate it and best manage that. I know that I think they had a pamphlet, they say just go around and splash around some solution, but at the same time I think that maybe we should have a program, maybe a summer works program and kick into employing our Small Communities Employment Program contribution to extend them for another week or something, but if you get into these homes and do some of this cleaning and help the homeowners.

I did a Member’s statement a couple of weeks ago after I was inspired by seeing Holmes on Homes. Mr. Minister can invite him up to Tuktoyaktuk again publicly. Again, I was impressed that there was mould-free construction techniques and methodologies out there that does not add to the cost of new home construction. That is something that I raised with the Minister and I still think that Housing should have a good look at that, make it policy, make lots of things policy.

I think that when we are buying wood, I think I indicated to him that it was BluWood, this is becoming the standard now, and to investigate that further and report back to the House that yes, okay, it may be feasible to have mould-free construction guidelines and policies within the NWT Housing Corporation without causing additional costs. I truly believe that the NWT Housing Corporation should at least investigate that. It would just help our people, help our communities and help our homes, making every place a better place to live.

Maybe just in closing, Mr. Chairman, I do want to say that I am happy with the working relationship with the front-line workers in my region. I want to give them a pat on the back and everybody is doing their best. We had lots of challenges out there and the constituents as well. We are working very hard and trying to do our best. I think the best example, I had one constituent, after seven years finally got the programming that they want. It takes a long time to work through the issues of arrears, et cetera. But I believe that having an independent assessment to have a good look at those hard arrears cases out there, the constituents and clients deserve that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):**  Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I have nobody else on my list. Does committee agree that we have concluded general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):**  I will go to the Minister so that he can respond to the general comments that he has heard so far. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There were a lot of good comments around the table and I appreciate some of the extra positive comments that we heard. There was a couple of kudos to some of the work that has been going on in the NWT Housing Corporation, so that, compared to last year or maybe the year before, shows me that we are making progress.

We try and work with committee as close as we can to keep them up to date on some of the initiatives that we have. We recently had a strategy briefing with committee, so it has always been my intent to take the feedback from committee and see if we are able to try and incorporate that into some of the future decisions that we make. I think we have had a fairly good working relationship. When it comes to housing, we all have an opinion and sometimes you listen to those opinions and they make very good sense. It helps us do our job a lot better.

Mr. Krutko had raised and a few other Members had talked about the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation declining funding, and that is one we continue to have a struggle with. We have been working hard at trying to engage the federal government in coming to the table. Mr. Krutko said it was a country-wide problem and it really is. We have been trying to engage the federal government to come to the table and have a discussion on that. We have been talking to our counterparts in some of the other regions across the country and they are all feeling the pinch, too, and we try and do what we can to address some of the shortfalls. We are going to a lot of multi-unit type units that share services, so we are looking at ways that we could try and reduce some of our operating costs.

I think it was Mr. Bromley and Mr. Krutko talked about the apprentices. We are very pleased with the support that we have from Rural and Remote that identified some funds to bring on an apprentice. I think we have 15 on the books right now with an additional 10 more that we are looking at bringing on stream for this fiscal year, so we are quite pleased with that.

If you look in the communities with the folks that we have working at the LHOs and in some communities the LHOs will actually do a lot of the repairs on the units themselves, the modernization and improvements, so some communities have been able to build up a real good little base of regular people that they use every year. They may bring 17 folks on during the summer to do a lot of this work and then a lot of the LHOs will hire students for the summer. I think the Housing Corporation and the LHOs in particular contribute greatly to employment in the communities. We’d like it to be better and that is why we have 15 apprentices, we have 10 more coming on board and it is going to benefit the communities, too, because we are going to have folks in the communities that are going to actually have the training to do furnaces and things like that, so you don’t have to have expense of flying somebody in.

Mr. Yakeleya talked about the number of vacant units that we have. We actually have 135 vacant units across the Northwest Territories right now, but I think I gave all the numbers. The 82 were those that we have identified that are potential homeowners that we can get into those units.

Speaking of the homeowners, Mr. Menicoche had raised when a client is in the HELP program and he transitions into the PATH. There is actually a $10,000 credit, so we may have to follow up on that if your client feels that they didn’t qualify or they didn’t receive the credit.

The rent scale we are continuing to work on as part of our Shelter Policy review and we are looking forward to having that work completed soon. We hear the argument all the time about penalizing people that go to work, and Mr. Yakeleya had mentioned a constituent of his, I am not sure if it was $1,800 he was paying or if he was assessed at $1,800, and those are the type of people. We recognize the concerns of committee and getting seasonal workers, as one Member pointed out, we recognize that and we have been looking at going at a regional type of rate. I think in one of the Members’ ridings, they talked about a community 20 minutes away from another community and the difference in the economic rent was unreal. So we feel if we go to a bit of a regional type rate, then that may bring the rates down in some of the higher communities. That is something that we are looking at rolling out and seeing how that will work.

I particularly like Mr. Yakeleya’s comments on the folks needing to look after their units. It is something that we struggle with. I have been to a few communities, I have been down the street in one community and I was disappointed at what I saw there. Every window on that street, practically, was boarded up. It is not acceptable. We had a public meeting that evening and I actually told them how disappointed I was at the number of boarded up windows that were on that street.

Part of the dollar figure that you see in the arrears amount is, a lot of it, we have over $2 million in tenant damages. We have to change that and it is an educational thing. Folks have to start looking after their units. They have to realize that there are shelter costs and looking after their shelter should be a priority. With a lot of folks out there paying mortgages, shelter is obviously your number one priority, because the banks are not as kind as the NWT Housing Corporation. If you don’t make your payment, the banks don’t care if you’re working or not. They just come and take it away.

I have really been encouraged by the number of folks that have entered into repayment plans. I have numbers. I am really encouraged. It might be $18 a month, but that is a commitment and they are meeting it. It goes up to $400 a month. That is another commitment and they are meeting it. I find that very encouraging. Somebody said Housing is not an easy portfolio to have. I think that is very true. Every once in a while you hear a story about the lady that has been paying on her arrears for a few years, just a small amount a month, but she got it cleared off. I find stories like that encouraging.

I appreciate Mr. Menicoche’s comments about his working relationship with the front-line staff. I will be sure to pass that on. It is important to us to try and work with the MLAs and keep them up to speed on what we are doing. Even in my office, I feel that I need to consult with the MLAs on a regular basis and let them know what we are up to and seek their input.

Seniors are our priority. We continue to work very hard with the seniors and I think Mr. Menicoche talked about a senior in one of his communities. We do have a Seniors Preventative Maintenance Program where, in the fall time, the seniors get their furnaces serviced and any other minor repairs that are needed around their house. There are times where we run into situations like the one he spoke of. I was glad that it was able to be resolved, because we do what we can to help seniors.

People are refused for some of our programs because of arrears. We try very hard to fit as many people into the programs that we can. The HELP program allows you to carry up to $5,000 in arrears and you can still qualify for the HELP program. So that is good faith on the Housing Corporation’s part in trying to fit people into units.

I think Mr. Bromley had spoken to the gap in the program, trying to get more people that are just over the threshold into home ownership. This year I think so far we have identified about 20 clients that fit that category, so that is 20 more that we are able to get into home ownership because of the gap. We are quite pleased with that.

We are also quite pleased with the fact that the word is getting out there that Housing needs to work with the people in the communities but also the people in the communities need to work with the Housing Corporation. We talk about working together all the time. That is fine in theory, but we can’t always be the ones trying to initiate everything. We need folks to start buying into it. I think we are starting to see that. A lot of it is an educational thing.

As far as the evictions go, and I have said this on a number of occasions, eviction is not a one-week process. Housing didn’t just wake up one morning and decide that somebody was going to get evicted today. They start with a termination and they are given opportunity to come to the board. Actually, first they come into the LHO. They can work on a repayment plan. Some people may not honour those. They get an opportunity to go to the board and sometimes the board will say, okay, we will give you another chance. Work out a repayment plan. As long as you honour that repayment plan, you continue to remain a tenant of the local LHO. It is just when they have exhausted all avenues, then that is when it goes to an eviction.

Going back to Mr. Menicoche’s issue on appeal, we are looking at April 1st of rolling out an appeals board that folks across the Territories home ownership, if they feel they have been slighted, they have an opportunity to appeal it.

I will stop there, Mr. Chairman. I am sure the Members are looking forward to getting into the page by page. I appreciate all the comments that we have heard today. I appreciate some of the compliments that we got. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. What is the wish of the committee? Detail? Alright. Housing Corporation starts on page 5-41 but it is the summary page so we are going to defer that page and turn to page 5-43 for consideration of detail. Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the issues that always comes to our attention is how we make a determination or evaluation of where houses should go. Over the years we have had core housing needs surveys done in regards to different core needs in different communities. Especially one thing that we find is, where we don’t have LHOs it seems to be a real challenge. I think that with the government’s decision to allow those units that were built in the communities where we don’t have local housing authorities, I think that we should continue to have some type of community, I wouldn’t call them LHO, but you can call it some sort of a community cooperative of some sort.

I know this issue was around in regards to Fort Liard in which it was sad for myself to go in there and see the amount of money that was put into that community to deal with the Kotaneelee housing project and then I actually see houses boarded up because the windows were smashed and yet we spent a million dollars there. But yet the community was pushing for an LHO.

I know Tsiigehtchic has asked for the same thing. Again, at the end of the day when we make those determinations or evaluations, we have to keep going back to these core needs studies, looking at the core needs in those communities and where the highest needs are, and more importantly, realizing that we have a lot of aging infrastructure. We have to look at the lifecycle of those facilities. How do we follow the core needs survey, identifying those communities that have high core needs, and more importantly, requirements for housing on the basis of those studies and surveys that are done every so many years that gives us that sort of clear direction of the status of those housing units that are in our different communities?

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Chairman, one of the basis for the capital allocation in the communities is the community survey. Housing needs survey is the component of that. I think we try to tailor this coming up infrastructure delivery on part of the core need. There are also things that are taken into consideration, the priorities of the community leadership, whether it be homeownership or public housing.

The Member is right; we do have some communities that don’t have LHOs. We are finding that with some of the units that we are going to convert into public housing are in communities that have no LHOs. We are always open to partnerships.

We have had some discussions with some of the communities where the Aboriginal government there are able to provide us with some services, be it administration if they are able to do some of the maintenance, we will enter into a partnership agreement with them. That way it is easier for us as a corporation because we don’t have to be bringing people into that community. The opportunity is there to work out partnerships with communities and there are a few other factors we take into consideration. Land is always another huge factor. The program intake, some communities may have more applicants than others. The needs survey plays a large part. I know the numbers in the past needs survey didn’t reflect very well. It went from 16 to 19 percent, but I have said a couple of times I am quite confident that if we were to do another needs survey, then I think we will see a decline in the numbers. I am quite confident in that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Chairman, I know in the past, one of the ways we try to work with communities that didn’t have LHOs is work out what we call community service agreements with them that they have sort of a... Give them $10,000 or $15,000 and let them hire somebody internally that work with the local regional staff. When they come in, they have somebody there that they can talk to, sort of a liaison position for those communities.

I think that communities, if they realize that they have a say and they basically have a stake in the infrastructure that is in their communities, you will see them take better care of it, knowing that they are responsible, they are going to have a say who is going to go in there, what repairs have to be done to the different units, where people can come to and I think it’s something that we’re looking at through the small community initiatives in regard to the one-stop shop sort of thing where we have program officers now in different communities. I think the same concept can work with the Housing Corporation where we don’t have LHOs, and I think it’s because of those units and those communities we hear a lot of outcry of why they’re not being required or why they’re being boarded up and a lot of it is because you’re so far from the regional centres that you don’t have people on the ground that you can actually talk to unless you physically fly in there. In most cases that does not work for most communities.

Again, I think that’s something that we should be looking at to try to embrace the communities and get the communities to take some ownership of these units in their communities where we don’t have LHOs, but work out a relationship where we can work in conjunction with either the local band governments or whoever the government structure is in that community. Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** The Member makes a very good point, because it is our intent to try and work with those communities that don’t have LHOs and try to come up with some kind of a service agreement as the Member had mentioned. We find that lately we have been making some good progress. We have some communities where there is actually quite a large number of vacant units in there and we’ve kind of entered into an agreement with them to keep an eye on those units. So we’re making progress on that front and we’re looking forward to, as we converge some of these units into public housing, working with the local band or local government. Well, the local band is the local government in this particular community. So we look forward to working with them to come up with a partnership agreement where they would look after probably administration and the maintenance, because they have the qualified people to look after the maintenance of these units. So it will be beneficial to the community and beneficial to the NWT Housing Corp. Thank you.

**MR. KRUTKO:** One of the issues, just in response to the Minister’s response earlier in regard to the questions raised by the Members, is the whole area of the seniors repair programs. I think a lot of challenges we’re seeing in our communities is we wait for a lot of these contracts to be let and you’re only talking $1,000 or $2,000 of any emergency repairs that have to be done. I think if we could work out arrangements with the local maintenance staff through the local LHOs and give them the money and ask that they include those seniors in those communities as part of their ongoing maintenance anyway, because every LHO does their maintenance in the summer months, they hire extra staff to come on side, they hire summer students. Again, I think this is one way that you can keep those revenues in the communities, but also achieve the results of offering that service to the seniors that are eligible for the programs, and we know who they are. Again, that money stays in the community; it generates employment during the summer months.

In most cases somebody will clean out someone’s water tank or clean the furnace, servicing type of work. I think that could be done locally through the LHO maintenance staff. Again, I think the seniors would greatly appreciate that, because it seems like, you know, they hound you all summer as the MLA because they applied on it and they didn’t hear back from anybody. Then by the time the person comes around, it’s usually they show up in the fall time when it’s getting cold and they come in and they’re gone again, but if anything happens, they’ll come running back to the MLA and say, look, they didn’t do it right. At least if it’s the LHO, it’s in the community. They’re there, they can come back and finish off whatever repairs have to be made. So I think that’s something that we should consider in regards to offering that to the LHOs and, personally, I don’t think the LHO maintenance staff have a problem with that. If anything, they’re probably glad to help the seniors in their communities, especially dealing with their maintenance issues. Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Where there’s opportunity for us to maybe work with the local LHOs and maybe add these seniors units onto preventative maintenance schedule that they do in the summer, there’s opportunity. I mean, there is a good option that I could commit to the Member that we’ll discuss with a lot of the LHOs. Where some communities may have a local contractor that’s able to do the work, we don’t want to cut the feet out from under him, so we’d have to give him an opportunity maybe to give us a price. But in some cases where they can’t do it, then it’s a good option and we’ll work with the local LHOs, because I don’t think in most communities, especially the smaller communities, it’s going to add a lot onto the work that they already do and they probably appreciate it, and the seniors probably appreciate it a lot more because they’d have somebody there that they’re quite familiar with doing the work. So I’ll commit to working on that. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Next on my list, Mr. Beaulieu.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask questions on the needs survey on this page. I don’t know where else or what other area. I know it’s in programs, but I thought this would be an okay spot under the corporate summary to ask about the needs survey.

Mr. Chairman, I’m wondering if the Minister could provide some detail on the needs survey, and by that I’m referring to some sort of work plan I suppose as a result of the needs survey, because I want to see if there’s an intention to not use the numbers. I know that if we’re just using numbers, the greatest need by number would be Yellowknife, but, rather, using percentages, the fact that in some communities the percentage and need is half the community. So I’m wondering if the Minister could tell me if there’s a community-by-community strategy as it pertains to the last needs survey document, and by that I mean is there any intention to address the communities that have the greatest need as a priority.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Minister of Housing Corporation.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We recognize as well as the Member that the biggest need percentage-wise obviously is in some of the smaller communities. So we recognize that and we try to tailor our infrastructure plan to that. We continue to try to adjust this on an ongoing basis and we continue to work with the other departments. So I think we’re finding ways that we can incorporate the needs survey into how we allocate units and it’s something I think we’ll continue to do in the future. We have to, I mean, we hear it as well as most people that, especially from the MLAs and I think we heard the Member for Nunakput talk about one of his communities. It’s even information like that that’s helpful to us, because he said we need a unit or two in our communities. So we look at all those factors and try and tailor our infrastructure and make sure that we distribute our resources evenly and fairly into those communities that are in most need. Thank you.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Staying with the needs survey, I’m wondering if the Minister is looking at the need incidences, and by that I’m referring to affordability, adequacy and suitability. I’m assuming that we address suitability by adding bedrooms. By adding bedrooms I mean adding units. I’m assuming we address adequacy by fixing houses. I’m assuming we fix affordability by providing affordable housing. So I’m wondering if the needs survey document or this corporation is using its own needs survey document to ensure that they’re addressing suitability issues with the appropriate resources and adequacy issues with the appropriate resources. So I’m saying that in small communities, including Fort Resolution and Lutselk’e, that our issue is adequacy. I feel like we have inventory, but the inventory is not in good shape and I’m not talking about the Housing Corporation’s own inventory. Public housing is in fine shape as far as I’m concerned. They’ve got money to fix it and they maintain and they have good staff to maintain the units in both of the communities I represent. My issue is that the units that are privately owned have serious adequacy issues. I’m wondering if the needs survey is also tweaked in that way to follow what the actual incident of need is. Adequacy, suitability or affordability.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We do try and make sure that those communities that are in the most need are talking about the adequacy of the home ownership programs or the private homeowners. When the Member first started his statement I kept thinking he was referring to our public housing stock, not realizing until he clarified it that he was talking about some of the home ownership issues. Obviously we put a lot of money into the care in the last few years and a lot of the communities were looking at the needs survey. Where there was an adequacy issue, we tried to tailor some of the resources and put more resources into some of these communities. Obviously the homeowners would have to qualify. Again, that’s another big issue. We try to distribute the resources fairly and make sure that some of the communities that are in highest need get a closer look, because we would want those folks in those communities to have their units fixed up. Again, the key issue is that they qualify for the program and the unit will get fixed up.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** The last area I’d like to talk about in the needs survey is the area of groups. I’m wondering if the corporation has put more resources into evaluating or assessing the needs survey in the sense that you’re putting seniors, couples, singles, and families of three or more in the family, if the Housing Corporation has done that type of grouping from the 2010 needs survey. I’m wondering if that grouping has happened since the needs survey document was presented to the House.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Polakoff.

**MR. POLAKOFF:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Over the next couple of years, just to the Member’s question with regard to more resources, over the last year we’ve asked CMHC to take a look at the needs survey as we had originally developed it. It’s been in place for quite some time in the NWT, but to look at our methodology and provide some comments. They did provide some comments on how the needs survey was put together. We’ve also been working with the NWT Stats Bureau and asking them for their input, because, as the Member is aware, there can be a close relationship between the needs survey and the NWT census information. In looking at things like groups, for example seniors, we feel that we can combine our resources in working with the Stats Bureau in coming up with better information on need overall and look at coordinating our efforts with the Stats Bureau when they’re developing census information.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** That’s it for questioning on this page.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Page 5-43, NWT Housing Corporation, information item. Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask the Minister with regard to the federal funding for social housing that’s declining each year. Can the Minister inform me as to how much money each year the federal government is declining its funding to the Northwest Territories?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In 2010-2011, and I’ve used this figure a couple of times, we lost $676,000. In 2011-2012, this upcoming year, we’re looking at $754,895 that we won’t be getting from CMHC. I think cumulative to date we are about $11 million that we’ve declined from CMHC and that’s from 1997-1998 up until now.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** That’s quite a considerable amount of money that’s declining. I want to tie this into the core needs housing survey that was done in 2009. Some of the high communities in the number were my area. Listening to the Minister, I was hoping we could match some of the funding that would address some of the core needs in the Northwest Territories. I’m hoping what the Minister’s wishes were if we were to do another survey, I hope to see the numbers come down. That’s what I’m hoping for. I know that won’t happen within the life of this Assembly, again, to do another needs survey.

With this in mind here, the houses that I know that the inadequacy, suitability and affordability is really high in my region. With the decline of the funding, by the year 2038 the funding should be zero from the federal government. Of course, between now and then, other things could happen. I want to ask the Minister about addressing the needs in the Sahtu, because I know the previous core needs survey was supposed to look at that high number and when we did the one in 2009 it was still the highest, close to Nahendeh.

Are we putting enough funding, I guess, to meet the needs to drop the core needs of my region? That’s what I want to ask.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We’re quite confident that with the investment that was made by the federal government and matched by the NWT Housing Corporation I think once we get to the point where we do another community needs survey I think we’re going to see the numbers come down drastically. I keep saying I’m quite confident, so they’re going to have to come down, because we’ve had a lot of investment into all communities and the community needs survey that was just completed here in 2009, as I’ve responded to Mr. Beaulieu, I was saying we’re trying to use some of the numbers from there to help us allocate our resources to those communities that are in higher need so we can bring some of that need down. I think overall if we were to do another needs survey at the end of this construction season or next construction season, I’m very confident that the numbers will come down, because I don’t know if these numbers truly reflect the number of units that were put on the ground with the investment from the federal government. I don’t think it addresses those at all.

We had put a lot of money into home repairs through the investment that we had from the federal government and matched by the GNWT. I believe once we do another community needs survey we’re going to see quite a difference in the numbers.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** I’ll have to hope that between now and the end of August we could do a quick look at those, the core needs survey, to see if it’s there, to see the numbers come down. The Minister is confident, so I hope that the Minister does make sure the numbers come down in my region, because we certainly want to see that.

I want to ask the Minister about creating programs for the core needs. One of them that other Members talked about was the seniors program. Some of the programs that used to be in the communities for the seniors, and I like what the Minister said that there’s possibly some discussion around maybe having the local housing authorities actually have somebody in the organization to look after just primarily the seniors. You’re also up against some qualified people in the communities that could take that on as a job. There’s a fine line in terms of how do we work that. For me what I want to make sure is that the seniors are being taken care of, either by the contracting from housing or the local housing authority themselves. Seniors should have somebody going around to their places and checking off that their furnaces are being checked, their water lines are being checked, their fuel tanks are being looked after. Things like that they know they can rely on one Steady Eddy coming around the units and saying this is what we’re going to do and this is what we’re going to look at and take care of themselves. That’s what I’m focusing on. Who does it? Well, work out the funding that will hire somebody to do that. That’s a real big movement forward to looking after seniors in our small communities. That’s what I’m thinking about in terms of a seniors program. There are other programs out there, but really the seniors are asking for somebody to help them with some of the maintenance of their building.

They are also programs out there that the seniors are not really being told about or being explained well enough in their languages to apply for them or look for them. The Minister and I had a little bit of an exchange earlier on the land claim tenure in terms of helping the seniors. They sometimes just want to know why they’re not being looked after. They don’t know if their application has been rejected or if they really understand why their applications are being rejected. I’d like to see something here that really dedicates their time to our elders, because most of our elders speak their first languages, which are Aboriginal languages. We need to sit down with them and talk to them about it.

I’m hoping that the Housing Corporation could look at a way to put together a seniors program for all seniors to be taken care of. That will be a big boost for the Housing Corporation with our seniors.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We do what we can to try and accommodate our seniors in any way possible. The Preventive Maintenance Program -- when I was responding to Mr. Krutko -- when the opportunity arises, we’ll use folks from the community. It will be a Preventive Maintenance Program and it will be a contract that we would work out for certain types of work. We would have to make sure that the seniors are well aware of that. We try to -- and I think I committed to Mr. Beaulieu during question period at one time -- work with some of the seniors in their first language. We’d be able to so they understand exactly what they’re getting into and what some of the options are. I think we go to great lengths to try and accommodate our seniors as best we can and try to assist our seniors as best we can.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under corporate summary I’m going to strive for a policy-type question but it obviously will get into the areas of specifics that are further along. My concern is about collections and policy. Is the Minister able to provide some information which is what is the collection rate at the departmental level of the corporation level, sorry, on mortgage rates and, of course, rental rates? What is the collection rate? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Minister of Housing.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The mortgage collection rate is about 40 percent and the rental collection rate is about 76 percent right now. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Does the Minister have a dollar amount attributed to that 40 percent and that 76, respectively? So that would be for mortgage and rental. Would he be able to attach dollar amounts to what is collected and what is outstanding? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Both rental arrears and mortgage arrears are about $13 million, so we’re looking at $26 million total. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Does the department have a policy on the threshold that defines what’s considered to be a reasonable rate of return or I should say a reasonable rate of collection? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Chair, we ask our LHOs to have a collection rate of about 90 percent, and I think for the mortgage we look at about the same amount too. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Speaking directly about the LHOs, what is the policy if an LHO is falling behind on the compliance of 90 percent on either/or? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Chair, obviously, if the LHO falls behind on the 90 percent, that takes money away from their O and M and their ability to operate. We would have to work with those LHOs very closely, because we do have some LHOs that are in a bit of a deficit and we have to work with them to come up with a debt recovery plan. It’s to their benefit to try and have the 90 percent rate, but at the same time we can’t put all of the onus on the LHO. The tenants have to come up with their share of it too. This puts LHOs into a bind because it affects sometimes their ability to do the maintenance and the O and M, so we’ve had to work with these LHOs quite closely to make sure that they don’t get into dire financial straits. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** How long is the collection rate for mortgages been at 40 percent and the rental rate collection at 76 percent? How long has that been? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** The 40 percent for the mortgage is fairly consistent. The 76 percent, I think as we move back into the LHOs doing the assessments and that, I think we’re going to see a bit of spike in the collection rate. I think we’ve already seen a bit of a spike. It may have been at 64 percent at one particular time, if not lower, and so the number is starting to climb and I’m sure as more and more folks are going into their LHOs to get assessed and then being able to pay their rent right there, I think we will see that 76 start moving up. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** What’s the plan of the department, corporately that is, to start picking up the 60 percent of our mortgages that are still left outstanding when we’re referring to payments? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Chair, we’ve given people an opportunity to enter into a mortgage repayment plan and we have had fairly good uptake. We have 139 who have chosen one of the options, the mortgage payment plan. We’ve had some that have refinanced through the bank. We have some that have refinanced through the NWT Housing Corporation. We have some that have entered into repayment plans. We’re quite confident and, as I said in my opening remarks, we will get to the point where we will take legal action on some of the folks that are further behind on their payments.

This is one that we struggle with and I’ve said a few times, part of the onus is on the NWT Housing Corporation because we should have gone after these folks a lot sooner to prevent them from getting into the situations that a lot of them find themselves in now. Part of the onus is on us and we accept that, but a lot of the onus is on the tenants because they signed an agreement to make a payment plan and too many times shelter costs are not one of their priorities. We’ve kind of fostered that by not being as forceful as we should have and we’ve allowed them to accumulate their arrears, and now we’re finding ourselves in a position of where we’re having to go and make all these folks accountable for the amount of arrears that they’re in. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** In the last, we’ll say, five years, how many mortgages have been under the scrutiny of legal action to pay? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** All the new programs we have now are all forgivable. The ones that are mortgages... I mean, we’re starting the legal proceedings just this particular year. Within the last five years, we really haven’t done much towards being...(inaudible)... We try as hard as we can to work with the clients and legal action is the last resort. Unfortunately, that’s where we find ourselves today having to take legal action against those that are in most arrears. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** I take it from the Minister’s answer that there’s never been anyone evicted or forced out if they have not been making their payments in the last five years. Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** I was just making sure I got the correct information here before I responded to the Member. In the last five years we have had some foreclosures and now we have some that we’re working on, we’re taking legal action, and we have about 50 more pending. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** How many mortgages does the NWT Housing Corporation have at this time that are what I would define as active? So whether they’re in arrears or they’re in good standing. Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Really lots. We have 428 active files, number of clients. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** We have a little more than 400. Am I correct by saying that we have approximately, rounding numbers off, we only have 160 clients paying their mortgages within a reasonable time or on time, and we have the remainder, we’ll guesstimate at about 240 or more, who are not paying their mortgage? Is that correct? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Those numbers the Member has quoted, they are pretty close.

**MR. HAWKINS:** As my last question, seeing as how my time has reached the end on the clock, when can we expect to see… I think the Minister had indicated that there are some foreclosures and there is paperwork, it sounds as if there are 50 people. When can we expect some paperwork of that nature to be filed and, furthermore, if you are closing these files through a legal process, how much money is that outstanding, those 50 files? What is that worth to the government? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We have, I think, served some notices right now that we have as part of the 50. There are still a number of them that are pending right now, but we do have some that have already been served, so that process has already been started. As far as the actual number, the total value of our mortgage portfolio is $86 million and the value of our forgivable loans is $45 million. The value of our repayable loans is $41 million dollars. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Is the Minister able to inform us as to what those 50 outstanding mortgages that it sounds like they are pursuing legal action on, the value of those particular mortgages once we foreclose and put those up for sale? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I see that your time has run out but I will allow that question. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will have to get that information and relay it on to the Member. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Okay we are on page 5-43, corporate summary, agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Information item. Moving on to page 5-44, information item, active positions by region.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Moving on to page 5-47, information item, executive, operations summary, Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A quick question here, I am just wondering what all is being covered under contract services here. I see it is 70 percent up from last year and I wonder if perhaps that has something to do with the shelter policy or something, but I would like to find out. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is correct; that is the money for the shelter policy. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Given all the homegrown experts on the Standing Committee on Social Programs, I don’t understand why EDI would want to contract anything out, Mr. Minister. But seriously, though, the Minister has a lot of in-house expertise. What is contemplated here that is extra in terms of contracting out?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Polakoff.

**MR. POLAKOFF:** There is a combination of resources that we are looking at or that we are actually engaged in. While there is money that is identified for the consultants’ work, there are Housing Corporation personnel involved, as well, through policy and programming, both the policy area and the programming area. There is also participation, and very significant participation, by the Department of Executive, as well as the program review area. We also anticipate that we will have some participation through the NWT Statistics Bureau.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Can I get confirmation that those agencies are charging the NWT Housing Corporation for their contributions to the work?

**MR. POLAKOFF:** In some cases that would be correct. For example, the NWT Statistics Bureau we would anticipate would be billing the Housing Corporation, but in other cases it would be participation by staff.

**MR. BROMLEY:** I was just under the illusion that we were all sort of one, so why would they be charging the Housing Corporation?

**MR. POLAKOFF:** That is typically the way in which reimbursements are provided to the NWT Statistics Bureau, they do it on a contract basis.

That would be a similar approach for utilizing the staff from the Statistics Bureau when we do the needs survey, the community needs survey. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** I will leave it at that but if the Minister has anything he can provide, I would appreciate it, just for my understanding. But that is all I have on this page. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Minister, if you have any materials that could be provided to the Member in regards to his questioning.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are actually looking at trying to nail down a date where we can provide the committee with an update with the work that is going on and some of the issues that Member Bromley had spoken of. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to ask the Minister, in terms of the federal, provincial and territorial levels, are the Ministers coordinating a strong strategic position to continue hammering the federal government on the other ways that they can support them with their housing declining dollars that they need to keep the federal government on those? Right now it seems like they are offloading the social housing to the communities, or to the Territories, and for us it is going to be hundreds of millions of dollars if we take on this role here.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is correct; if we were to take this all on, it would cost the Government of the Northwest Territories a lot of money and obviously we are concerned with the declining funding. We have been trying to engage the federal government in sitting down with all jurisdictions in Canada to find ways where we could convince them that this is a program, the CMHC funding obviously is something that we seriously need otherwise all jurisdictions are going to have to start dipping into their own funds. This is one that I think that we need to continue to be very aggressive in trying to engage the federal government and I have invited them up here. I have invited the Minister up here, I have invited the president of CMHC up here to show them firsthand some of the issues that we are challenged with, so it is an ongoing battle. It is an ongoing struggle, but we need to keep pushing them to realize that they need to keep this funding flowing. At the same time, we can’t just sit on our hands and wait for them to give us an answer. We have to find ways, as a corporation, of trying to be proactive in dealing with what we obviously know is coming, unless they change their minds, and that is a decline in funding, so we have to try and cut back on our operations and maintenance, design and build newer, more energy-efficient houses, which would then cut back on all the expenses. So we continue to do what we can to alleviate some of the pressures that we are going to face, but at the same time we continue to try to be fairly aggressive with the federal government to get them to see the light. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Certainly if there is anything that you can do with your counterparts, Mr. Minister, to let the federal government know the importance of their support. You talked about the energy-efficient homes that we want in the Northwest Territories. That means working with your other colleagues in government here to put these types of houses in our communities. I hope you have luck with the president coming to the North. Certainly we welcome him to look at some of the homes that we have in our communities, in Colville Lake to look at some of the situations that people have to live there. He may have a little more sympathetic heart there to look at ways they could support us.

At the same time, we are educating our people, the true meaning of home ownership in terms of taking care of their homes. We really are in a trap to not depend on the government so much to change a light bulb for us or have things done for us if we are in homes. There is a lot of work to do. I hope we will work with the other departments and that there is a new program that comes out on being truly self-reliant. That is one of our goals. People who do own their own homes know that it costs a lot of money to maintain it, to fix the pipes or fix the washroom facilities or the furnace. They are unable to pick up the phone to call Housing. You have to call the contractor. Sometimes the contractor is another community away, or the parts, materials and supplies are here in Yellowknife or Inuvik or the Wells. It costs a lot of money. It really makes you think about how easy it is for people who live in some of these housing units to operate. I am going to leave it at that and let the Minister respond briefly.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** With that, I will allow the Minister to respond and then I will recognize the clock. Mr. Minister.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with Mr. Yakeleya 100 percent. It is about educating those out there and making them realize it is quite a privilege to have a roof over your head and make sure that you look after it. It is a message that I have been trying to get out there. I know in some of my travels around the Territories and meeting with some of the community leaders or regional leadership, I mentioned that to them that we, as leaders, need to make our people aware of how fortunate they are to live in these units. A lot of these units were brand new when they moved in and they don’t take care of them as well as they should. I believe the message is going to start getting to them.

The LHOs are starting to take a harder stance on the upkeep of the unit and how you look after it. I think if we make people accountable, I think we should hopefully see the change in attitude. It is one that we continue to work on, but I always have been fairly confident that the message will get out there and we will have folks out there that will actually start looking after their units.

As homeowners, as most of us are, we realize the importance of looking after our units. This is something that I believe that most folks in the Territories are going to realize, especially a lot of the clients in the public housing units where it is easy to just pick up the phone and phone the LHO and say my doorknob is broken. There is no toilet paper on my holder. It is a work in progress.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):** With that, I will recognize the clock and rise to report progress. I would like to thank the Minister and witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out. I will rise and report progress.

# Report of Committee of the Whole

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

**MR. KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 133-16(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2011-2012, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

# Orders of the Day

**PRINCIPAL CLERK OF COMMITTEES (Ms. Knowlan):** Orders of the day for Friday, February 18, 2011, 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 35-16(5), Successor Strategy for the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships Program

1. First Reading of Bills
2. Second Reading of Bills
3. 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 103-16(5), GNWT Contracts over $5,000 Report, Year Ending March 31, 2010
* Tabled Document 133-16(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2011-2012
* Tabled Document 135-16(5), GNWT Response to CR 3-16(5): Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act
* Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act
* Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Conflict of Interest Act
* Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act
* Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Evidence Act
* Minister’s Statement 65-16(5), Devolution Agreement-in-Principle, Impact on Land Claims and Protection of Aboriginal Rights
* Minister’s Statement 88-16(5), Sessional Statement

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 18, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:07 p.m.