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Wednesday, October 24, 2012

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**The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker**

**Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories**

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Jackie Jacobson

(Nunakput)

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Hon. Glen Abernethy

(Great Slave)

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*Minister of Human Resources*

*Minister of Public Works and Services*

*Minister responsible for the*

*Public Utilities Board*

Hon. Tom Beaulieu

(Tu Nedhe)

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*NWT Housing Corporation*

*Minister responsible for Youth*

Mr. Kevin Menicoche

(Nahendeh)

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

(Thebacha)

*Government House Leader*

*Minister of Finance*

*Minister of Environment and Natural*

*Resources*

*Minister responsible for the*

*NWT Power Corporation*

Mr. Alfred Moses

(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Mr. Michael Nadli

(Deh Cho)

Hon. David Ramsay

(Kam Lake)

*Minister of Industry, Tourism*

*and Investment*

*Minister of Transportation*

Mr. Norman Yakeleya

(Sahtu)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

**Wednesday, October 24, 2012**

**Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackie Jacobson, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

# Prayer

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson):** Good afternoon, Members. Item 2, Ministers’ statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

# Ministers’ Statements

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 66-17(3): OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, languages are about identity: who we are and how we understand and interact with each other. Promoting our languages harmonizes with a connection to cultural values and provides a sense of identity and belonging.

In our ongoing commitment to the preservation and revitalization of language, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment provides professional training for Aboriginal language specialists in partnership with the University of Victoria. We continue to develop language resources to promote Aboriginal language use in the home, community and schools. We are exploring legislative options to change roles and structure of the two existing Aboriginal language boards. We are also taking steps to establish an Aboriginal Languages Secretariat.

The Aboriginal Languages Secretariat will be a critical first step towards the full implementation of the shared vision, goals and objectives of the Northwest Territories Aboriginal Languages Plan.

To recognize another milestone in our official languages mandate, I intend to table the Strategic Plan for French Language Communication and Services today. The strategic plan is the product of many years of hard work. It is a consensus document and I am pleased to say that we have accomplished our mission.

Mr. Speaker, the plan outlines three broad frameworks that are necessary to support implementation:

* a legislative and regulatory framework;
* an administrative framework; and
* an operational framework.

The plan will guide all of our departments, the Legislative Assembly and the agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, offices and other bodies designated in the government regulations in the development, provision and offer of French language services across all territorial government offices.

Languages strengthen our greater NWT community, Mr. Speaker. They create an identity for all of us. Language and culture are a priority for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and we will continue to further those initiatives that help us preserve, revitalize and support those important pillars of our society. Merci beaucoup, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 67-17(3): 2012 WILDFIRE END-OF-SEASON

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, the 2012 forest fire season is officially over.

This year a total of 298,000 hectares of land were affected by 279 wildfires. The majority of these fires, 241, were lightning caused, 25 were person caused, four were caused by industry, two arose from a coal seam near Tulita and the cause of seven fires were unknown.

There were also eight fires in the NWT section of Wood Buffalo National Park, eight fires in Nahanni National Park and a fire at the Great Bear Lake National Historic Site.

Action was taken on 89 fires or about 32 percent of the reported wildfires. The only known damage to any values at risk was some trapping areas that were burned over.

Core support to the fire program this year included five helicopters, four air tanker groups and 28 Type 1 wildland fire crews across the NWT. Several additional resources were brought on over the fire season to help with ongoing fires and initial attack, including emergency firefighters and other resources from Canada and Alaska.

The fire season began for crews in late May and continued until Labour Day. Weather stations were reporting high to extreme drought codes into late September. The extreme drought codes are an indicator of the level of seasonal drought.

The wildland fire season normally runs from May 1st until September 30th in the Northwest Territories, but this year we were still monitoring fires in the Deh Cho region into October.

While it was a typical year in terms of number of fires in the NWT, the early start to the season with lightning-caused fires is not typical. Normally lightning-caused fires are being detected in late June or early July. This year there were six fires caused by lightning in May alone.

Mr. Speaker, a number of fires were larger than normal and burned for an unusually long time. There was little precipitation and long periods of hot, dry weather throughout the Northwest Territories which prolonged the length of time fires burned and increased their size. In addition, every region in the NWT experienced at least one major fire event this season.

Notable fires this season included a fire 15 kilometres south of Behchoko and another south of Hay River that were started by lightning on May 31st and burned until they were finally put out in September. Both fires required extensive action. Several fires near Inuvik, Trout Lake, Gametì and Deline were also started by lightning in June and burned until September. Fires that started in August near Fort Liard and Kakisa presented problems into late September.

Mr. Speaker, the 2012 forest fire season was difficult and costly in terms of the length of the season, the size of the wildland fires in proximity to values at risk and the time it took to put these fires out.

In addition, the supply of AV gas fuel in the NWT is becoming an issue. The supply is dwindling as more and more companies switch to jet fuel. There was very little AV gas available in Norman Wells and Inuvik during the forest fire season, preventing us from moving our aircraft into those areas. This required us to bring in CL-215 T’s and a Lockheed L-188 from Alberta, at an additional cost, to manage the fires in these regions. As a result, we are conducting an aviation fleet review this winter to determine next steps.

A Wildland Fire Management Program Review, conducted between October 2009 and January 2011, was initiated to align current and future wildland fire management activities with the policy objectives, the needs of Northerners and the principles of ecological integrity. A number of actions were identified to consider. As we continue to implement these actions, and with better knowledge of key program requirements, we are better equipped to protect values at risk, improve coordination and manage wildland fire seasons.

Given the conditions, the 2012 fire season could have been much worse. A review of this season will be done this fall and winter and included in planning for the 2013 season. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 68-17(3): GEOSCIENCE

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our mining, oil and gas industries rely on modern, accessible geoscience information to make investment and land use decisions. The Northwest Territories Geoscience Office provides governments, industry, Aboriginal organizations and many other stakeholders with up-to-date, easily accessible geoscience information. This information is key to encouraging investment in mineral and petroleum exploration.

Reliable geoscience data is vital to encourage exploration in areas with high resource potential, which in turn contributes to the sustainability of Northwest Territories industries, which translates into opportunities for our businesses and jobs for our residents. It is estimated that for every dollar invested in government-funded geosciences in the NWT, five dollars are in turn spent by mineral exploration companies.

This year is an important one as it marks the 10th anniversary of the NWT Geoscience Office in its modern, purpose-built location, as well as the 40th anniversary of the Yellowknife Geoscience Forum, both notable achievements.

The vision that created the NWT Geoscience Office – one of strength through partnership – has clearly been successful, and the relationship between federal and territorial geoscientists remains healthy to this day. Much of this stems from the vision of a new building to house everyone under one roof.

I want to thank the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada colleagues for committing to that important step more than 10 years ago.

The experiment has been a success and we now have a group that provides us with insights on our post-devolution world. Staff provide coordinated and efficient government services.

The 40-year longevity of the Geoscience Forum is also a remarkable achievement and I want to congratulate the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines in reaching this historic milestone this year. The forum is many things to many people: a meeting place, a place to exchange information and ideas, a social event, a place to do business and an opportunity for our southern neighbours to understand Yellowknife winters. There is no other conference quite like it and newcomers continually marvel at all that is offered. It is the biggest conference in the North. Last year saw over 800 people registered for the event and this year promises to have the same high turnout.

The technical program has expanded this year with the inclusion of non-research-oriented presentations on topics related to exploration, mining, and petroleum development in Canada's North. This will provide another means for us to learn about some of the products and services and work that contribute to our northern economy.

I would also like to thank both the Chamber of Mines and the NWT Geoscience Office for all their work in hosting this annual event, and congratulate them on a successful 40 years.

I am also pleased to announce that the NWT Geoscience Office, through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, will soon be hiring its first permafrost scientist. We all know that understanding how permafrost responds to climate and environmental change is an important topic for our future. Not only do we need to understand these changes, we also must know how to mitigate the resulting effects on our infrastructure and the environment.

The permafrost scientist will help to lead these tasks in close coordination with other GNWT departments, and will influence the work of other mainly southern-based permafrost researchers, so that real and costly issues are being addressed. Especially when it comes to research, the NWT remains a land of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, investing in geoscience programs attracts investment to our territory and creates spin-off exploration projects that will provide employment and business opportunities for NWT residents. We will continue to support the work of the NWT Geoscience Office, which supports this government’s goal of creating a diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities that benefit our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Abernethy.

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 69-17(3): SERVICE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, effective human resource management of the NWT public service relies on partnerships between the Department of Human Resources and other government departments, boards and agencies.

I am pleased to announce, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Human Resources and its partners in the Department of Health and Social Services and the health and social services authorities recently launched a Service Partnership Agreement pilot project. Service partnership agreements are a common tool for defining the relationship between a shared services provider and its clients. Partnership agreements outline the responsibilities of both parties, set service standards and identify the unique needs of each partner. These agreements are often used in HR, IT, financial and procurement settings to establish system-wide performance indicators that help create effective reporting and public accountability.

This work addresses recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General and the Standing Committee on Government Operations.

The health and social services system is an ideal segment of the public service to pilot a service partnership agreement. It provides a good mix of headquarters and regional operations in remote, small, and large communities, each with a variety of human resource needs. We have set performance measurements for the next year and reporting needs have been discussed and agreed upon. Working with our health partners through ongoing evaluation of service levels throughout the pilot year will allow us to continue to develop the agreement and will help us implement service partnership agreements with other departments and agencies.

Mr. Speaker, developing service partnership agreements is part of our work to implement 20/20: A Brilliant North, the Public Service Strategic Plan. Our efforts towards fixing and maintaining the foundation of human resource management through system upgrades, expanded recruitment tools and streamlined business processes has guided our work on developing service partnership agreements. Our focus now is on effective performance measures and reporting so that we can identify what is working and what needs to be improved.

Mr. Speaker, the staff at the Department of Human Resources and I are committed to partnership and collaboration to ensure the public service meets the needs and aspirations of all residents and supports this Assembly’s vision of Believing in People and Building on the Strengths of Northerners. I look forward to updating Members as the pilot progresses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

## MINISTER’S STATEMENT 70-17(3): TOBACCO CESSATION

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Smoking rates in the NWT are double the national average. In 2009, 36 percent of NWT residents 15 and older smoked, compared to 17 percent nationally. Smoking contributes to chronic diseases affecting the heart and lungs, and also causes cancer.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that within the next six months, three of our health and social services authorities will be smoke-free. The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority and the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority have both established new tobacco policies, and the Stanton Territorial Health Authority has been smoke-free since this spring. Patients don’t have to quit smoking, but they can only smoke off the grounds. If they need extra help to quit smoking, they can get it from their doctors and nurses.

In recognition of Aboriginal cultural practices, tobacco use for traditional spiritual purposes continues to be allowed*.*

I applaud the initiative shown by our health and social services authorities. They are providing a healthier environment for patients and staff and they are sending a clear message that tobacco has no place in an institution dedicated to improving health.

Mr. Speaker, by setting a positive example and providing a supportive environment, we hope to encourage residents of the NWT to tackle their tobacco addictions. Change is not always easy.

Eliminating tobacco use in our health and social services authorities is one way to reduce our smoking rates. We are going beyond treatment to truly promote health.

We also offer additional supports to help people quit smoking. Our Quitline provides toll-free telephone counseling support for smokers who would like to quit. The service features trained cessation counsellors and personal call-back programs to support smokers at a time that fits for them.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of smoking cessation aids is covered for all residents, even those that are not covered under a health benefit program. The GNWT will provide up to three months’ worth of prescription medication or nicotine replacement therapy, such as the patch or gum.

Smoking is very addictive. It’s best not to start at all. We are re-launching the Don’t be a Butthead campaign this January with new on-line prevention modules. Youth can continue to make a promise to be smoke-free each year. Students in our Smoke Screening program watch 12 of the best anti-tobacco ads from around the world and vote for the one they think is most effective.

Mr. Speaker, smoking will continue to be one of our health system’s biggest challenges. We have made some progress in reducing our smoking rates, but we have room to improve. I encourage all residents to make healthy choices every day. It’s never too late to quit smoking and our government can help.

Our goal is to get smoking rates down to the national level. It can be done if each of us can convince one person that smokes to quit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Item 3, Members’ statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

# Members’ Statements

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF MIDWIFERY SERVICES

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a good friend in the gallery and I would like to speak about midwifery.

Heather Coakwell arrived on Sunday. She’s here in Yellowknife to deliver her third child. She’s here three weeks before her due date. Her husband, Jason, is in Hay River keeping food on the table, working hard. He’s waiting to get a call to fly over or drive over for the delivery. Their two daughters, Keira and Danika, are waiting in Hay River to hear the news on their new brother or sister. They know that they will have to stay with grandma while mom and dad are gone. But Grandma Rourke has no problem with that and is happy to have the girls visit for a few days, maybe even a week.

I’m happy to see Heather here today, but my story is an example of the difficulties that expectant families from the communities have to deal with. The stress of childbearing is difficult at best, and the families have challenges being away from home, the stress of earning an income, and family members worrying about how the big day will happen.

The Coakwells will not be together for this special day. Heather’s co-workers at the Hay River hospital and other friends will not be close on this big day as well. This is just a shame. Heather was born in Hay River but her three children will not be.

I would like to see the Department of Health implement midwifery sooner than later. The department has studied this issue. Midwifery is recommended. Now we need to find a way to implement it in the NWT. We need this essential service in the communities.

Good luck to the Coakwells. I hope it’s a boy.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON GNWT STRATEGIC PLAN ON FRENCH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIONS AND SERVICES

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll be addressing the House in French, followed by English.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I address my Francophone colleagues around the North. Today we are celebrating an unbelievable event with the announcement of the first…(inaudible)…plan on service and communication in French by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

This plan will make it easier to improve communication and the provision of services is to provide for more effective government. This would not have been possible without the relationships with the Federation Franco TeNOise cooperating with the GNWT. Now, with the development of a strategic plan on the French language, we can now look at culture to improve services in our official languages and to build bridges between the northern cultures.

I am proud to be a francophone today living in the North, and thanks to the cooperation between and partnerships with francophone groups, I am confident that our government will continue to improve its ability to develop and provide services to our multicultural community. I would like to conclude by pointing out the excellent work by the Minister of Education to meet our northern francophone residents. [Translation ends]

…and that I am extremely proud that the Federation Franco TeNOise who, in partnership with the GNWT, have come up with the first ground-breaking strategic plan for French language service. As a francophone, I look forward to all the possibilities and opportunities that will be available for northern French-speaking residents in the years to come.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON IMPORTANCE OF HOME CARE WORKERS

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An aspect to health and social services that is provided in the Northwest Territories, home care workers, is an essential component of this system. They provide the necessary services to clients, especially to those living in communities that lack adequate staffing and infrastructure.

Home care workers play a vital role in helping people gain or maintain their independence in their homes and community. This is very important as this territory is seeing an increase in the seniors population.

The program itself assists people to stay in their homes, rather than going to a hospital or long-term care facility, which may or may not be located in their communities. This can be very difficult for families as this becomes a long-distance relationship with an important and loving family member and, furthermore, can add financial restraints to the family as well as emotional and psychological.

In some of our communities, we do not have the facilities to house some of our senior residents. As a result, home care is the next logical step. In Inuvik we have two positions for home care as well as a home care nurse. We are very fortunate. These individuals work tirelessly in sometimes a very thankless job, for going above and beyond, in most cases, to attend to the residents of Inuvik. I thank them for that. Some of their job duties include foot care, palliative care, respite care, nursing, and support and maintenance of personal care for the client, among many other duties. I can only imagine the workload for home care workers in those communities with limited nursing resources as well as those living without long-term care facilities.

As a government, we need to create services that are accessible and responsive to the needs of our residents of the Northwest Territories. More importantly, home care services that provide support to the communities which enable people to stay in their homes safely, and with dignity and a good quality of life.

I brought this up today because I heard of the concerns that are going on in Hay River, and the concerns that we have in Inuvik where our two home care workers are working very long hours nonstop to work for the people that need that assistance. It is a very important matter and I will have questions for the Minister of Health later on today.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the harvests are in and the news is great from across the NWT for healthy growth in our building agricultural sector. Since 2006, support from the successful Growing Forward agricultural agreement has helped extend community gardens to most of our communities. NWT-produced eggs are now available in the territory. Norman Wells brought in a 35,000 pound spud crop this year. Hay River producers have launched a mobile commercial kitchen, enabling residents to process local fish and produce across our roaded system.

Here in Yellowknife, long-established community gardens have been extended to two new locations in Weledeh and in Frame Lake ridings. We have a proposal coming forward for an urban farm, local birch syrup production is well established, interest in cultivated berry production is germinating, and gardens in at least Inuvik and Yellowknife contribute to social support programs.

As recently announced by our Industry Minister, a five-year extension of the Growing Forward Program will inject $1.2 million of welcome support a year into programming, an increase of $500,000 per year and totalling $6 million. We are looking forward to the introduction of that agreement this March.

The Territorial Farmers Association recently welcomed the Growing Forward news at its annual general meeting in Hay River. The board was invited to comment on program improvements and new program needs. Producers have stressed that programming should be designed to fuel their self-reliance, and this makes sense. The TFA will contribute comments, but would also like the opportunity to comment on the draft programming before it’s finalized. I’ll be looking for the Minister’s commitment to provide that important opportunity.

Growth in the agricultural sector is a grassroots success story. Funds provided to date have catalyzed the steady development of local economies and growing family self-sufficiency. Fruitful partnerships between local residents and the Territorial Farmers Association, Ecology North, the Arctic Energy Alliance, the GNWT and many others has yielded highly successful projects in many communities.

Ecology North’s fall fair event last month attracted incredible produce displays and participation from Hay River, Lutselk'e, Fort Simpson and other communities. Agriculture is demonstrating its long-term promise as an engine of community enterprise for lowering the cost of living and for providing quality jobs, nutrition and healthy lifestyles to the benefit of us all. Mr. Speaker, this is sound investment.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking all of the people – some workers, some volunteers – who are helping motivate this new industry and starting to realize the incredible potential we have across the Northwest Territories. Mahsi to all of them.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON REBUILDING THE NAHANNI BUTTE ACCESS ROAD

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The flood in Nahanni Butte may be over but the community is still not the same. Much work has been done; however, their access road is still under water. That is a bigger problem than ever, now that snow is flying and the river is freezing up. In an effort to save costs, residents are risking their vehicles by driving in just over two feet of water so that they can once again have a boat ride to their vehicle on the south side of the river and drive to Fort Simpson or Fort Nelson for their groceries.

Boating at this time of year can be extremely dangerous due to high winds, freezing temperatures and limited hours of daylight. The water levels are continuing to drop, but not fast enough.

The community has been told that the access road will not be rebuilt until winter and supplies to repair the road will not arrive until January. The community has already made an effort to drain the road, but there’s still too much water for their work to be successful.

As I had indicated, recently people have started driving through water over the road bank. You need nerve, four-wheel drive and a vehicle heavy enough to break the ice that is forming overnight. You have to stay within the routes marked out with orange flagging tape, otherwise you end up deep in the ditch. The solution is hazardous and temporary, to say the least, but the residents feel it is necessary. Flights are costly and we can’t expect everyone to drive through the river to get from A to B.

The people of Nahanni Butte have put up with enough. Some are already driving 320 kilometres to Fort Nelson for groceries and other supplies because of the general road conditions in the Deh Cho region. The houses and buildings have been ruined. Water, sewer, electricity and other basic services were totally disrupted. People are trying to rebuild their lives. Not only does the community need and depend on the access road to transport regular goods and services, but they need to bring in building supplies, appliances and other major items.

If winter wasn’t coming on, a family of beavers could do a better job of repairing our road.

The people of Nahanni Butte have proven and are determined to find solutions and repair damage caused by the flood. We need to apply some of their innovation and resilience in finding a way to rebuild an access road at this critical time for the community. I don’t want the community to wait until February for repairs. We must plan now and get as much as we can now for the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CO-OPERATIVEs

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Nation’s general assembly on December 18, 2009, passed a resolution declaring 2012 the United Nation’s International Year of Co-operatives.

A co-op is a business owned by its customers or its workers. Besides saving money for their members, co-ops are attractive to people who like the idea of a business being owned and managed by its members.

Co-ops have been around for a long time. The first successful co-op was started in Rochdale, England, in the 1840s.

Canadian co-operatives and credit unions have more than 18 million members, and there are about 9,000 diverse kinds of co-ops in Canada. There are:

* more than 2,200 housing co-operatives, home to about 250,000 people;
* more than 1,300 agricultural co-ops;
* more than 650 retail co-operatives;
* nearly 900 credit unions and caisses populaires, with close to 11 million members between them;
* about 450 co-ops offering child care or early childhood education;
* more than 600 workers, that is employee-owned co-ops, with a total membership of over 13,000; and lastly, but not least,
* more than 100 health care co-operatives.

Co-operatives, including credit unions, have an estimated $252 billion in assets. More than 155,000 people are employed in the co-op sector. The survival rate in co-ops is higher than that of private sector companies. A study in 2008 found that 62 percent of new co-ops are still operating after 10 years, compared with 44 percent for other traditional businesses.

There are a surprising number of co-ops in Yellowknife. We have retail or consumer co-ops: the Yellowknife Co-op, Yellowknife Glass Recyclers Co-op, Arctic Co-operatives, Northern Images and two housing co-ops, Borealis Housing Co-op and Inukshuk Housing Co-op.

In this year of the co-op, I congratulate all NWT co-ops on their success as a business enterprise. I thank them for their service to our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON SHIPPING AND POSTAL RATES IN THE DEH CHO

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People of the North and other rural and remote communities have long relied on mail orders to get necessities like clothing or furniture that are so readily available in cities down south.

Programs like Food Mail have helped quite a bit, but we need to look at ways to generally reduce shipping costs to northern communities. On-line services have made goods even more available in remote communities, where people can buy things they would never have known about in the days of the mail order catalogue. However, shipping costs can easily double the price of these items, making them totally unaffordable. Many automated systems fly XOE postal code as isolated. As a result, some retailers are unwilling to ship to the Northwest Territories even if a community is on the highway system.

We pay more for freight than any other areas of Canada, and we have less service from the rest of Canada. Delivery takes longer. Postal rates continue to climb. Remember when it only cost 30 cents to send a letter or a birthday card? Now it is 51 cents just between Fort Providence and Yellowknife or anywhere else in Canada. If you are sending something to the States or overseas or anything bigger than 30 grams, you will pay more than a dollar. Parcels are even worse. I looked into sending a large 30 kg package, the maximum size you can send from Edmonton to Fort Providence. I paid a base rate of $62.29, fuel and oversize surcharge and tax, for a total of $81.30. If I sent the same parcel with guaranteed delivery via Express or Priority Post it would cost me as much as $218. I could buy a plane ticket to Edmonton for less.

In Fort Providence we are fortunate to be on the road system and people can drive to Yellowknife or cities in the South to purchase furnishings or other goods. Yet trucks go right past Deh Cho communities and we’re still charged additional shipping fees.

As a recent example, to ship two cases of ice back from a remote town in Ontario to anywhere else in Canada costs $40. To send a similar shipment from Fort Providence it will cost a steep $250. Most goods are transported by truck to communities on our road systems and it may be possible to take advantage of shipments going to the towns or the highway systems. We could look at ways to formalize a process with local businesses in trucking or large companies, so that people can take advantage of any extra space.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. NADLI:**  We can look at ways to formalize a process with local businesses and trucking or large companies, so that people can take advantage of extra space or purchase space at a reduced rate to bring items into their communities. This solution does not have to be costly or bureaucratic, but simply a local service based on helping people in our small communities. Thank you.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON HOUSING CONCERNS IN THE SAHTU

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have come a long way since the ‘70s when the federal government, at that time through the Indian agent, told many of my people in the Sahtu that if you move off the land and you move into a community, we will give you a house. We would also have you pay rent of $2 to $5 per month and that would be for a lifetime.

This was told through oral stories through my grandfathers and through the elders that I have talked to within the Sahtu communities and other communities. They say this story is what the federal government told. Today that story has gone out the window with the new rent policy, the threshold, the public housing, and people are having a hard time with the conditions of the houses they have now in our communities.

For example, in Deline they have nine units that are 42 years old and the condition of these units are not kept up to the value that they are paying for their rent. I mean, even if you want to rent a house in Deline, you have to make a certain amount of money. If you don’t, then they will have a hard time even getting into home ownership. If you’re making $8,050, Housing will tell you that you need to go to the bank to mortgage a house to get that house, and sometimes it’s very difficult because of the location.

We’re still waiting for a road into the Sahtu region, so the only time it makes it through is on the winter roads or through the barging system.

The conditions of a house in Deline… There are 101 units, people are having a hard time getting into them, and if they do get into them, there are so many policies. There are so many barriers for them to get into a house, which means that they have to live with their parents or their brothers and sisters and that causes a lot of overcrowding.

I think we need to remove some of these barriers in the Sahtu communities, especially Deline and any other community that would get people into a house. That would help them not deal with such issues as overcrowding, health issues and social issues. We need to make some radical changes and give people back their homes like they used to before the 1970s, where housing was an issue for the federal government to get people off the land. We need to make some changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON CHILDREN’S HEALTH CARE INDICATORS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ontario physicians have recently issued a call for higher taxes on junk food and graphic warnings on food with no nutritional value. While I’m sure that they mean well, I don’t think junk food taxes or warning labels get at the real cause of childhood obesity and I would hate to see us go down that road. I personally hope that bags of chips and chocolate bars don’t start to look like those cigarette packages with the scary faces and scenes on them.

Although the message is important, we all know that obesity, of course, directly relates to what children eat and there’s no mystery to that. It is the cornerstone of one of the bigger issues of the problem. In the North the reality is that junk food is far cheaper than healthier food and a tax on junk food won’t close that gap. I ask: Is junk food really the problem or are we fighting the right fight with the right resources? Or are healthy foods so darned expensive that many people in the communities and in the North just can’t afford it? I know that is a contributing factor that is a real factor.

Obesity, as I’m sure the Minister will agree, is one that is closely related to the physical activity that people have, which has been significantly dropping since the invention of video games and access to TV. My house is absolutely no exception to that reality. This discussion got me thinking, of course, with asking ourselves if we are spending too much time on the assumption of anecdotal evidence. But how much time do we spend on gathering true evidence to make fact-based decisions for our programming and future programs in the government? Should we tax or create regulations?

Do we regulate or collect data on children’s indicators such as obesity rates, prevalence of Type II Diabetes, and things like physical activity? What about immunization rates, number of visits to the hospital centres, emergency care rooms, dentist visits, treatment for acute illnesses, prevalence to asthma and allergies? The list goes on. What I’m getting at is the fact that we need regular reporting on children’s health indicators like these that would be an invaluable resource for decision-makers such as ourselves to determine where our scarce and sacred resource programming dollars must go.

What I’m calling for is an annual NWT state of children report that, although it may not be annual in the context of year to year, this government could look closely at producing something every five years. It’s facts and data like this that could help us plan and invest our limited resources. Yes, the other night I went to Mr. Miltenberger’s budget dialogue, but the fact is the Lego was great for visual but we need the facts behind us to know where we need to spend our priorities and focus our attention on resources.

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

## MEMBER’S STATEMENT ON BLIZZARD IN HAY RIVER

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s good to be back in the House today. I don’t often miss a sitting of the Legislative Assembly, but the last three days have been like Groundhog Day for me. It’s the same thing: get up, get ready, get stuck in the driveway, go to the airport, find out that the plane is cancelled, and go home.

It’s unbelievable for you up here in Yellowknife to even think about the condition of the South Slave right now in terms of the snowfall. I, in my 38 years in Hay River, have never seen anything like that. We heard reports of it coming in from north, south, east and west on Saturday, but it was just overcast and very windy, and the lake had the moderating effect of it not turning into anything serious. Monday we had sleet, all day and on top of six inches of slush we got six inches of snow. Of course, it’s a mess and it goes from there.

I would like to recognize and thank all the people who are doing their hardest to keep up with it and keep ahead of it. There have been many, many power bumps and power outages because the lines are all coated with ice and heavy, heavy snow. The people at the runways and airports, the town streets, I mean, everybody is doing their utmost and working around the clock to try and stay ahead of it. When I checked the forecast this morning, it was heavy snowfall warning again for today. It is indeed an unusual circumstance.

I thought since we were talking about fire and flood, I’d tell you about the snow in the South Slave. It hasn’t been in the media so I know you people probably find it really, really hard to believe that it’s that bad, but it is. I hope everybody has it all cleaned up and the planes are flying. I’ll be home tomorrow night.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

# Returns to Oral Questions

## RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 173-17(3): FINANCE COSTS RELATED TO NUNAVUT DEBT

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a return to oral question asked by Mr. Dolynny on October 17, 2012, regarding finance costs related to Nunavut debt.

The amount receivable which was over 120 days past due to the Government of the Northwest Territories from the Government of Nunavut was $890,965.77 in June 2012. The current amount due between 90 and 120 days is $2,262.18, and the amount due over 120 days is $13,034.30.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 5, 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. It gives me great pleasure to recognize some of the people in the gallery here today on a special event. Mr. Leo-Paul Provencher, executive director of the Federation Franco TeNOise; Mr. Jean-Francois Pitre and Andreanne Laporte, both from Conseil de developpement economique des Territoire Nord-Ouest. Also Benoit Boutin, who is here with us as well. He is the executive director of Francophone Affairs Secretariat. Also Lorne Gushue, who is here with us also from Francophone Affairs Secretariat. I would just like to say welcome and I hope you’re enjoying the proceedings.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

**MR. BOUCHARD:**  Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to recognize a good friend, Heather Coakwell from Hay River and one of the Coakwells expecting here in the near future a new child. Also my constituency assistant, Myrtle Graham. Thank you.

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

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to recognize a constituent, Mr. Jeff Corradetti.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize my constituency assistant and elder and chief from the Shuhtagot'ine people from Tulita, Mr. David Etchinelle.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Ramsay and I are fighting over a constituent. I would like to recognize Mr. Corradetti. Jeff has recently moved from Mr. Ramsay’s riding to mine, so you get double recognition, Jeff.

I’d also like to say hi to Heather. We should be golfing again without your big belly next summer.

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

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to recognize David Etchinelle, as well, who is an active Member of the Dehcho First Nation.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Minister of Education for recognizing two constituents of mine. First, Lorne Gushue, who is a very well-known advocate in the city of Yellowknife and I thank him for joining us here today. And, of course, Benoit Boutin, who provides such exemplary work here in the GNWT. I want to thank him for his generous contribution to our public service.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I’d like to welcome all visitors here in the public gallery today. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

# Oral Questions

## QUESTION 221-17(3): STATUS OF MIDWIFERY SERVICE

**MR. BOUCHARD:**  Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member’s statement today I had indicated the need for midwifery in the communities and I would like to ask the Minister of Health where the department stands on the implementation of midwifery in the Northwest Territories.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The goal of the Health and Social Services is to develop a midwifery program across the Territories wherever we feel that midwifery would fit well into the health care system.

**MR. BOUCHARD:**  I’d like to get some details on when this development would happen and why we need to redevelop it. My current understanding is it’s being implemented in Fort Smith. Why would it not be able to be implemented from the study they just completed?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** In order to bring midwives into the system, we have to have a location for them to work from. We have to have midwives. We need the money to pay the midwives and a program that they will run that fits into the overall health system of the territory.

**MR. BOUCHARD:**  I don’t think we’re talking about anything that’s new here. I think they had midwives back several hundred years ago, so I’m not sure why the department’s taking so long in implementing this type of thing. We’re not reinventing the wheel.

I’d like to ask the Minister about the funding that he’s talking about needing. I know, in the community of Hay River, we are trying to locate doctors. Are we able to use the funding for doctors currently to implement midwifery in some of these communities?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** According to the report that we received, Hay River would be the next area that we expand for midwives at a cost of just under half a million dollars. After that, the report asks us to expand into the Beaufort-Delta at just under a million dollars and then the overall territorial program would be about $1.7 million. We have to be able to get all of that funding together before we launch into providing midwife services in areas. In addition to that, we are incorporating the ability for midwives who work into the new health centre in Hay River, and at this time, we don’t have a place for them to work out of.

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

**MR. BOUCHARD:**  Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is leading into my next question. I understand the new facility in Hay River is being constructed as we speak. I would like to see the department implement this in a phased-in approach. If we have a new birthing room being designed in the new facility in Hay River, I’d like to see it implemented even in other communities where maybe we aren’t able to deliver the babies currently in those communities. But could we have the prenatal, could we have the post-delivery services provided in those communities sooner than later?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Although the program is not scheduled to begin until after we have the finances and after the health centre is finished sometime in 2014-2015, we are doing the planning activities for midwives for Hay River in 2013-2014. So the plan is that if it’s possible that we could do some pre-midwifery type of activities, then we will look at doing that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

## QUESTION 222-17(3): FUNDING FOR YOUTH CENTRES

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House here, I had asked some questions on dealing with youth and the criminal activity that was going on. We got the reactive approach when I asked the Minister of Justice what they do when youth do go through the Criminal Code.

Today I want to take a little bit more of a proactive approach on that. I want to ask the Minister of MACA as well as the Minister of Youth, what kind of activities and funding are available for youth throughout the Northwest Territories. Specifically, for the youth centres and friendship centres that deal with a lot of youth, after-school programs, evening programs, weekend programs, I’d like to ask the Minister of MACA what type of funding for these youth centres are available. How much is this funding and has that funding been reviewed?

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories, back in the 16th Assembly, made a commitment to increase youth funding throughout the Northwest Territories, and I think the youth today are benefitting from that. A lot of money was put into youth.

As far as the youth centres go, it used to be $250,000. In 2007-2008 we had 18 applicants. Again, thanks to the efforts of the Members of the 16th Assembly, that money was increased to $500,000. As of last year we had 35 applicants for the $500,000.

**MR. MOSES:** In the communities, especially the remote communities that have a hard time getting supplies or have to pay high utility costs, $500,000 over 35 projects doesn’t go too far.

Can the Minister specifically let me know, out of those 35 organizations that receive funding, how much did each organization get? Thank you.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Each friendship centre received $14,285 to go towards assisting with their youth centres.

**MR. MOSES:** Fourteen thousand dollars in Yellowknife might get you a lot of supplies and materials for youth to attend after school programs, but up in communities like Sachs Harbour, Inuvik and Fort McPherson, those dollars don’t travel very far. I was in a meeting in Inuvik with Ingamo Hall. They talked about lack of programs and funding, and competing for funding dollars.

I want to ask the Minister, is he willing to review the amount of funding going towards the youth centres and youth-serving organizations, to look at possibly another increase so that these communities can benefit and get a little bit more funding to run the programs and keep the kids into healthy, educated programs?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We’re always looking at reviewing the programs we offer and the amount of funding they’re getting. We’re quite pleased that we’ve had so many applicants for the money that we have out there. It’s an ongoing review and we would have a look at it every year. Obviously, if there’s any talk of an increase, it would have to go through committee and it would have to go through the whole budget process.

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

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have 35 organizations that are competing for community dollars to run programs. We only have 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. How is the Minister and his department working with these organizations to get them to work together so that dollars can be spent more effectively and efficiently, so that they’re not competing for dollars and that they’re working together to develop programs for the youth of the Northwest Territories?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We always want to be sure that our youth centres are offering programs that the youth can take advantage of. We have a couple of communities where they may have two youth centres. We’d like to see them all work together. I think at the end of the day, though, the ultimate goal is to provide some programming for youth, and with the territory being so spread out, a lot of these smaller communities can collaborate on offering programs for youth. They all have their own stand-alone youth centres. But again, it’s always one that we would like to monitor and see how we can best improve our service to them and their service to the youth.

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

## QUESTION 223-17(3): ACCESS TO VACANT PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of housing has always come up every time I’ve gone into the Sahtu communities. There are many challenges and there have been many discussions over the past nine years I’ve been a Member of the Legislative Assembly, about getting people into houses. Specifically, just last week I had a meeting with the leadership of Deline and they talked about the challenge of getting people into those houses in their community.

I want to ask the Minister, is he or his department or the Cabinet looking at ways that they could get people into these units, either own them or to get them into public units? Because we seem to be running up a brick wall on how to get people into houses, especially this time of year with winter coming. Is the Minister doing a housing review?

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just had the shelter policy review that was completed. We had gone into all the communities and looked into the housing situation in the communities. Our goal is to try and get people into public housing or home ownership. I think we’ve made a lot of inroads into making it easier for people to access some of these programs. We still need a lot of people out there to step up to the plate and accept their responsibility. That way we can form a partnership instead of just having the Housing Corporation responsible for everything.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** The Minister indicated that the discussions have happened in our communities. However, I have a four-page note from the community of Deline that says that they need more done, because if that was the case of helping people get into these units, it’s not happening. People are coming up with challenges of their own personal responsibility. They are coming up with challenges of the conditions of these units. A large percentage of people are not working in some of our communities that do not have all-access roads into our communities and the economy is not there.

The community of Deline is asking the Minister, we need to look at this and look at these special circumstances how to get people into these units. I’m asking the Minister again, would he again look at certain circumstances such as Deline where he can have the department look at their policies that would allow people into these units and get them the responsibility?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** The case in Deline is there are some vacant units there. They’ve had some issues trying to do the work on these units. We have a modernization and improvement program that’s available every year. We’ve run into a bit of a roadblock there. We’re working closely with the community to try and rectify that, that way these units can be available for allocation.

However, one of the advantages of having public housing through the NWT Housing Corporation is the fact that if people aren’t working, then their rents reflect that. If people do happen to get a job, with the new rent scale review, I think that would reflect that too.

All the conditions are there and things have improved quite a bit. We still need to work with tenants. There are a lot of tenants that are refused for arrears, but we’re always working hard to try and improve that and improve the condition of our public housing units, which are in pretty good shape.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** The 2009 survey shows that the percentages are pretty high in the Sahtu region in regard to suitability and adequacy. I would ask the Minister if he would come to Deline or to Good Hope or even Tulita and look at the conditions of some of our units in our communities and at the amount that we’re being charged for these units. We have nine units in Deline that are 42 years old, and we have 32 percent of our housing in Deline that are 30 years old. I want to ask the Minister, again, in terms of him looking at some ways that are unique that could put people into these units and give them responsibility.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** I have to commend the communities in the Sahtu. Their collection rate has gone way up. They’re actually probably one of the best regions in the Territories. I think their collection rate is up to 122 percent now. That indicates that there are a lot of people that are stepping up to the plate, starting to deal with arrears so that they’re able to get back into the public housing portfolio.

Again, we always want to make sure that our tenants are well looked after. The Member talked about the age of the units. We usually have about a 50-year lifespan for the units, with a retrofit after about 25 years to give us another 25 years out of it. The units are in fairly good shape. We have a good condition rating system right now that is being improved, and the community decides how they’re going to allocate their maintenance money based on the condition ratings of the units.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue with Deline is that they’re asking if the Minister would look at the arrears issue, because the people who have arrears have a very slight chance of getting into a unit unless their arrears are cleared up. Sometimes we want them to do it right away; however, that’s not the case. They want to see if the Minister would look at a minimum amount of arrears, say, less than $500 would put them on the eligibility list to get into a unit. Right now it stands that you have to have zero arrears if you move from one community or the next in order to get into public housing. Will the Minister be able to look at that?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the clients of the public housing portfolio across the Northwest Territories are stepping up to the plate. We are quite pleased with that. We try and work with these, and one of the home ownership programs we allow them to carry up to $5,000 in arrears. They can still qualify for the program. We are trying to open doors to make tenants and clients out there eligible for some of our programs.

Again, it is unfortunate there are so many out there with arrears. Part of the reason that we are in arrears is we didn’t go after a lot of these people quick enough. We accept some of that responsibility. Again, we are quite encouraged with most of the communities across the Northwest Territories.

I would love to stand up here and name some of the communities that are our best and name some of the communities that are in arrears. We have communities with 6 percent collection rate and they expect our local housing authorities to provide maintenance on those units when we are only collecting 6 percent, $14,000 out of $250,000 that is assessed. It is a partnership, again, and that is what we are trying to promote.

I think it is a goal of the 17th Legislative Assembly to make people more responsible, and people are actually starting to step up to the plate. We are quite pleased with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Colleagues, before we move on for oral questions, I would like to welcome back into the House chair of our Human Rights Commission, former MLA and Minister from Frame Lake, Mr. Charles Dent.

---Applause

I would like to welcome Mr. Yacub Adam, deputy chair of the Human Rights Commission. Thank you.

---Applause

The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

## QUESTION 224-17(3): FOREST FIRE AVIATION FLEET REVIEW

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources for his post-mortem on 2012 wildfire end of season and more so for playing an active role in containing, as he indicated, 279 fires and taking action on over 89 fires. I know he is not the one out in the field putting out the fires personally. We have to commend the hard work of the wildfire crews, the air crews and the emergency fire services teams.

Within the document today, there is mention of the fleet of our CL-215’s. This is a well-known fact that these planes were given to us for almost the same amount of change I have in my left pocket, for very little from the federal government. These aircraft were really entering the end of lifecycle or their end of use cycle for the Northwest Territories. We have seen little to no plan in the recent capital budget for the replacement of this very expensive piece of equipment or any capital needs assessment to the House.

Can the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources please indicate what the plan is of the government to replace this fleet? Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dolynny will come to learn that in the field of politics, there are many types of fires that require putting out, some on the ground in the bush and some on the ground in this Legislature. We have done extensive work on the 215’s. During the last Assembly, we had consultants hard at work and we have further reviews going on, planning for the day when the contract is complete, that currently exists which goes to 2018, and recognizing the fact that the 215’s as they now exist are piston airplanes and the increasing shortage of aviation gas come to pass so that we are going to have to make some changes.

There is extensive work done which I would be happy to share with committee if they would like to have their memories refreshed with the documents, because it is going to be a debate and discussion we need to have. Thank you.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister indicated, I found it humorous. Yes, there are many fires we put out. Again, I do commend the work that he is doing under his stewardship and guidance in this area.

As indicated, these planes are coming near the lifecycle in 2018, as the Minister indicated, in the not so distant future but a number of years from now. The question remains, will aviation fuel be there for that end of lifecycle? Is there a plan of action the department has to replace or at least assist in the so-called lack of aviation fuel in the near future? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my Minister’s statement, we are doing a review over winter. It clearly came to a harsh reality here this summer when we were up fighting fires outside of Inuvik and there was no aviation gas and our fleet was grounded until we got some other planes from the South. We are going to work over winter on the aviation gas piece.

We are, as well, hard at work with some options in terms of what we do to replace the 215’s. Can we afford to spend $120 million of the capital money to retrofit and turbinize old planes to make them flight worthy so we can, in fact, get fuel? Right now the planes are so old we can’t even export them for use in other jurisdictions. They refuse to accept them.

It is a challenge. It is a huge amount of money. We have to look at lease versus purchase. There are other planes out there and new technology that we are looking at as well. By next spring we are going to be ready with a plan to get us through the next few years with the aviation gas issue as we come to grips with the longer term infrastructure decision on what we do to replace the 215’s. Thank you.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I appreciate the Minister’s response on that. What we heard today is a plan. We have heard, in so many words, that there are pieces of the puzzle that are seamlessly and possibly in different corners which we need to sew into one type of document.

Would the Minister commit to creating a strategy for wildfire suppression? Would this be more inclined to be brought to the House this spring? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of work on the review of our wildfire practices, our values at risk, all the pieces and protocols and procedures tied into actually fighting fires. The issue of the 215’s is going to be a separate discussion. I would be more than willing and happy to come with the officials from ENR to fully brief the committee on where we are with all the work, and then talk about the next steps so that there is an agreement and understanding on what steps we do have to take to do with this very important but expensive issue. Thank you.

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

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have an emergent industry on the scene here in the Northwest Territories. That industry is biomass. We continuously talk about it in the House. We are seeing great progress. A lot of companies are investing time and money into this new industry. Of course, they need the resources such as wood to do so.

Will the Minister commit to make sure, if the strategy is to come forward in terms of protecting our forests, would the biomass industry be invited to participate in such an event? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, we are hard at work with the proponent for a biomass facility in the Northwest Territories. Part of the process that has to be gone through is the reaching of agreements on forest management agreements with the communities. We have to make sure we have the timber inventories done for sustainability. Fire is one risk. The other issue, of course, is the risk of endangered species that we know are coming or are already here, like the spruce budworm over the years gone by and more recently the pine beetle. Once again, I would be more than happy to come before committee if they wish and we can brief them on all aspects of the fire program.

As well, I would suggest that committee, if they would be really educational for those who haven’t been to the Fire Centre in Fort Smith, to actually see what is there and how it is run. It is almost like Cape Canaveral with the technology and how we manage, and try to marshal the forces, and track lightning strikes and do all the other things we need to do to manage the forests in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 225-17(3): SOCIAL SERVICES FOR 16- TO 18-YEAR-OLD YOUTH

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I would like to ask the Minister some questions about the recommendations that were in a report.

The 16th Assembly Standing Committee on Social Programs conducted a very comprehensive review of the Child and Family Services Act. One of the major recommendations from that review was a gap that the committee and the consultations had identified, a gap in services for children and young adults aged 16 to 18 years, particularly that once a child turns 16, as an example, they are no longer eligible to be kept in foster care. It was a very large gap, and committee spoke with the Minister at the time and those recommendations were discussed at the time. But it’s been over two years since that report was tabled.

I’d like to know from the Minister what the Department of Health and Social Services is doing at this point to try and deal with the lack of services for 16 to 18 year olds. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were 76 recommendations made by the standing committee and the department is making a movement on all of the recommendations. But specific to closing the gap from 16 to 18, I know there has been work done on it, but I don’t have the most recent work that they’ve done with me here today. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister. I look forward to, I hope, getting that information from the Minister.

I know that as a result of the recommendation to try and provide services for 16 to 18 year olds, I know that there is legislation that is required.

I’d like to know from the Minister whether or not amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, specific to providing services for 16 to 18 year olds, whether or not that is on the department’s agenda. Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Amendments to the legislation as a result of all of the recommendations that were made that impact our legislation is on our agenda. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister for that confirmation. I’m glad to hear it. Since there have been no changes to date, at least none that I think are out there in the public, there may be work behind the scenes, but there’s nothing to date that I’m aware of and that I think will affect the kids from 16 to 18.

I’d like to know from the Minister whether or not social workers, who are on the front lines who are dealing within this specific age group on a day-to-day basis, have the flexibility to make arrangements for these children to provide them with the best possible care, to provide the services that they need so they can stay within a family environment as much as possible. So, is the flexibility given to our staff on the front lines to provide an environment for 16 to 18 year olds that is in the best interests of them, not necessarily what the legislation says? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. On a voluntary basis between the social worker, child protection worker and the child that’s between the age of 16 and 18, arrangements can be made for Health and Social Services to continue to support that person that’s between 16 and 18. Also, we’re currently consulting with the Department of Justice in that legislation for that change so that we’re able to extend the service beyond the age of 16 years old. I think that we’re looking at something possibly up to the age of 23, actually. Thank you.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I’m really glad to hear that some work is happening. I’d like to know, the Minister mentioned that social services is assisting these particular children and I guess I’m thinking I would hardly want my 16-year-old daughter or son to be put into an apartment by social services. So I’m hoping that they can still stay with their foster family, if that’s where they’ve been. So I’d like to know from the Minister if that’s a possibility between 16 and 18 if they can remain with a foster family, or is it only that they get put into an apartment and are left on their own? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. It appears as though that is what is needed. We know that the foster parents and the children themselves would rather remain in a home environment rather than just getting financial support to remain on their own. So I think that direction, I think that is the direction that Health and Social Services will be going in, and that is to try to link the child with their foster parents as long as possible. Thank you.

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

## QUESTION 226-17(3): GROWING FORWARD II PROGRAM

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to follow up on your earlier comments to welcome Mr. Yacub Adam also to the House. He’s a resident of Weledeh and I welcome Yacub. Great pleasure.

My questions today are to the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. The Territorial Farmers Association is eager to participate in the development of Growing Forward II programming, as I mentioned. There’s no better source of the hands-on input we need to craft the best programming before we commit to it for five years. The association has been invited to provide written comments, but as I said in my statement, they’re eager to do much more than that.

So will the Minister commit that once a draft set of programs has been developed, he will take this draft back to the association for their further comments and insights to ensure it’s highly relevant? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was certainly an honour and a pleasure to be in Whitehorse recently to sign the Growing Forward II agreement with the federal government and Minister Gerry Ritz. It is going to bring $6 million more to the Northwest Territories so that we can develop our agricultural sector here in our territory.

I thank the Member for his statement earlier today. Certainly dealing with the Territorial Farmers Association and other stakeholders around the Northwest Territories is going to be fundamental for this as we move it forward. Our aim is to develop those programs, take them out to stakeholders for consultation sometime in November, and on Friday I am going to be in Hay River and I will be meeting with the Territorial Farmers Association again. I’ve met with them in the past and I certainly look forward to all of their critical input to this as it all moves forward, and I think it’s great news for the agricultural sector and great news for our territory. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks to the Minister for those comments. Indeed, a good news story here and I appreciate his commitment.

There has also been some concern with eligibility to all programs under the previous Growing Forward agreement. All communities, really, basically need to benefit equitably. I’d appreciate the Minister’s assurance that under the Growing Forward II Program all communities in the NWT will be eligible for assistance under the Small Scale Food Program. So may I be assured that this is the case? Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you. Seven years ago we had I believe it was five communities in the Northwest Territories that had some type of agricultural activity happening in the community. This past year, through Growing Forward and the money that was provided to us from the federal government and the work of ITI, we’ve got agricultural activity in 29 communities in the Northwest Territories. So our goal is to get that type of activity in all 33 communities if we can, and certainly I wouldn’t see eligibility on the Small Scale Food Program and community gardens being a barrier to any community in the Northwest Territories that wants to get involved in this as we move it forward. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks again to the Minister for those comments. In my questions to the Minister last spring regarding the need to make more agricultural land available, the Minister committed to work with the Minister of MACA, Municipal and Community Affairs, and contacted the Territorial Farmers Association to discuss their priorities to releasing more arable lands for farming. I’m pleased to hear that the Minister is meeting with the TFA next Friday.

What progress has been made on these commitments and what are the Minister’s plans to address the need for providing this industry with access to more land? It really is a modest amount of land, I think, that’s needed. Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** It all continues to move forward and I think access to land obviously is a big component to this. It is a very important aspect to the Territorial Farmers Association and their list of priorities as this moves forward. We’ve had discussions with MACA and we’ll continue to pursue that, and I do look forward to meeting with the Territorial Farmers Association again this Friday to get an update from them on their activities. I think as long as we’re all working together, I do believe that we can help municipalities identify land that is or has a use for agriculture, and get the appropriate steps taken so that we can get more agricultural activity happening in communities around the Northwest Territories.

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

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again for those comments. Maybe we’ll look forward to a little briefing on what’s happening on that front. Good things are obviously happening for this industry, but it also needs to be supported with an appropriate big-picture context.

Zooming back a little, many jurisdictions are developing a food security system or strategy and the call has been made for a similar approach for the NWT for agriculture. Will the Minister commit to taking the extra step now to develop a food security strategy to ensure safe, reliable and local food for the health and economic and other broad benefits such an approach would ensure for the people of the NWT?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Removing barriers to get locally produced products to market and food security are certainly big issues. As this moves forward, the funding comes, the programs come, I can see us working toward what the Member is concerned with on food security and perhaps a strategy in that regard. That may be something that falls out of these initiatives. It’s certainly something we’re interested in and I thank the Member again for raising those concerns in the House today.

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

## QUESTION 227-17(3): NAHANNI BUTTE ACCESS ROAD

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to follow up on my Member’s statement on the concern about rebuilding the Nahanni Butte access road to the Minister of Transportation. The community was pleased to see Mr. Ramsay during our Nahendeh tour of August 7, 2012. At that time they had addressed the immediate concern of repairing the access road. It wasn’t able to be done this fall. Perhaps I can just begin by asking the Minister what some of the difficulties were that prevented them from repairing the road this fall.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. David Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for his statement earlier and the concern for the residents in Nahanni Butte and the condition of the access road there.

The decision was made after the road was looked at. The water covered about 17 square kilometres. Pumping it out, removing the water that way wasn’t an option. When the department looked at the various options of getting the equipment in to do the work this fall, which was what the community wanted to see happen, because of water levels and whether or not the equipment could get in, do the work, and get out, and the safety of the people working on that and the equipment, it was decided that the best approach might just be to wait until the winter when the ground is stabilized and there was no need to worry about water levels. That is what the department is intent on doing. We are going to be repairing the access road but, unfortunately, it’s not going to be able to happen until this winter when everything is frozen and in place and it is safe to repair that road. It will be done.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Typically the Nahanni Butte access road opens up just about Christmastime, and I would just like to ask the Minister what the plan is to help Nahanni Butte reconstruct that access road. It’s about planning and getting the equipment ready and getting in as soon as you can. What is the plan for the Department of Transportation to repair the access road?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** As soon as it’s safe to do so, the equipment will be brought in and the work will be done. That will be once the ground is frozen. We also need to be working closely with the community of Nahanni Butte. I have heard just recently that there is some work happening. The community is doing some work out there slashing. We need to be working with the community. There can’t be any work happening in isolation of DOT and the community. We have to be working with the community.

I want to assure the Member that I will be having discussions with the department on working more closely with the community so that we cannot have any surprises, that the work can get done, so there are firm timelines in place and the community can be assured that the road will get repaired, and they’ll know exactly when that’s going to happen and it will be working with the department on how that happens.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** I think it’s important for the department to get into Nahanni Butte as soon as we can to start those preliminary plans. Planning is about having the equipment ready to go by December, not February. I’d sure hate for the construction to happen in February and March when the road closes. It’s important to get the work done early, and I’d like to ask the Minister to work with his department and work with the community as soon as possible to get those plans underway. I know that contracting takes time too, so a lot of that administrative work has to get done in advance as well.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I will speak with department officials and get a firm timeline on the repairs to the access road for the Member. I will also talk to the department about perhaps getting into the community sooner rather than later to talk to community leaders about next steps on the repairs to the access road in Nahanni Butte.

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

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that costs may be a factor in repairing the road. I really don’t understand that. I thought I heard that in discussions with the residents. How can costs be a factor when these repairs should be eligible under the federal Disaster Fund as well? How is the department going to manage funding the repairs for the access road?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** On costs, we are working with MACA on accessing federal emergency dollars and we will continue to do that. I don’t believe dollars factor into the repairs that are required on the access road. We are working closely with MACA to ensure that we can find the money to make sure the repairs happen.

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

## QUESTION 228-17(3): CHILDHOOD HEALTH INDICATORS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member’s statement today I was referencing my concerns, of course, with the potential vending type of tax focusing on junk food. By no means was I stressing, in any manner, that I’m an advocate for junk food, but the reality is it comes down to the right type of information and doing the right stuff with it. My questions will be directed towards the Minister of Health and Social Services and certainly in light of how do we build the right type of information to make the right type of decisions.

Is the Minister aware of any type of publications produced by his department that are used to garner information on the health of children in the context of obesity, nutritional health, diabetes and, of course, the list goes on. Is that compendium document used by any other department to make fact-based decisions and investments in our programming?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There’s a considerable amount of research throughout the country on the fact that our children are getting considerably larger every year and that obesity is an issue. We also have research that indicates that healthy foods are very positive for development of healthy babies, even mental health. There is research. I don’t know if there are actual reports that we’re using across the department to make decisions, but there is research for the Department of Health to work with.

**MR. HAWKINS:** In my Member’s statement I talked about some type of reporting mechanism and I’d like to coin it as the NWT State of Health for Children. Does the Minister see any value in spending some time over some periodic time, be it two years, three years, four years, of doing some type of annual style snapshot on the health of children in the Northwest Territories to understand exactly what we’re looking at, and how we can work to help solve and make sure our children are healthy and ready for tomorrow?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Yes, we do, I do, and so does the department believe that there would be a great benefit to developing some base studies using the research that we have, and using that to try to curb what is happening now with the children becoming more obese and less active.

**MR. HAWKINS:** I appreciate the understanding from the Minister as he’s just reflected on this particular problem. I raise this in the context of meaningful research that will have a positive influence on how we invest in our programming. It’s not just Health, it’s whether it’s MACA or Youth or Education for learning or physical activity, et cetera.

Would the Minister be willing to take a look at a strategy that develops a regular type of reporting on the NWT state of health of children in the Northwest Territories, and that would give us a document that we could always use as a sort of format and plan as we work to invest into the long-term health of our children?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Some of that work does happen in Healthy Choices at a national level, but I think the department would have no issue whatsoever to discussing this, whether it be the Social Programs committee or the Priorities and Planning committee.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

## QUESTION 229-17(3): COST OF SHIPPING AND POSTAL RATES

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I talked about the cost of shipping from either up here in the Northwest Territories to down south and vice versa. My question is to the Premier of the Northwest Territories. What influence can Northerners have on postal rates to small communities?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ve raised the issue of cost of living with the Prime Minister, and he’s indicated that he would prefer that we take a pan-territorial approach. In doing so, we would also have to engender support from I believe it’s six other provinces that benefit from the Northern Residents Tax Deduction.

With regard to specific postal rates, that’s set by the federal Crown agency and we would have to try to engender some support and make representation to the Government of Canada.

**MR. NADLI:** Right now we’re kind of going into the Christmas festive season, and a lot of people up here in the Northwest Territories rely on postal services and mail to get their goods up here. Is the Premier willing to look into the matter of changing X0E postal codes for communities on the Northwest Territories highway system?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We can express our concern to the Government of Canada. I think it would be more beneficial to get more jurisdictions into the picture. Something like this is not something that you can change overnight. I think postal rates are changed on an annual basis, as far as I know. It would need to take a strategic approach.

**MR. NADLI:** I’d like to thank the Premier for mentioning those discussions on postal rates are kind of at a pan-territorial level. For that matter, has the Premier discussed the matter of shipping costs to remote communities with federal Ministers?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** I have discussed it with a number of federal Ministers and they have both indicated that it’s something that we need to approach on a much larger basis. For one individual jurisdiction it would be difficult for them to change their approach. I think the postal rates are set, pretty well, on a national basis.

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

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In advance of the festive season that’s coming up with Christmas, could the Premier maybe set the stage and perhaps a present for everyone, by: Is the Premier willing to advocate for shipping services and rates that are equal to the rest of Canada on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We would be pleased to do that. We’re always looking for every opportunity or every possibility to help reduce the cost of living in the Northwest Territories.

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

## QUESTION 230-17(3): SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDED TO 16- TO 18-YEAR-OLD YOUTH

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to follow up with the Minister of Health and Social Services and ask a few more questions with regard to the Child and Family Services Act review and possible changes there. The Minister gave me some answers, but the last answer he gave me, he said that basically there was nothing we could do at this time, and he talked about voluntary agreements between a child and social services.

I’d like to ask the Minister if we can do that in a social service milieu, so to speak, why can we not do that for children who are with a foster family or a foster parent. Why can we not make that voluntary arrangement for the family to keep the child until they are at least 18? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, in order to do some of the things that we are not doing within the child and family services due to the legislation, we’d have to change the legislation in order to make some of those changes.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister. I appreciate that legislative change is required, but I would still think that we could probably make a policy decision to give some flexibility to social workers and to foster families, and allow the child to stay within the foster family and still provide them with some financial support. Does the legislation prohibit us from doing that?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** I don’t have the information with me here that specifically indicates that perhaps it would not allow us to have the child that’s aging out remain in the foster care home, but there is something currently that is preventing that from happening, because children are aging out and then they’re actually not allowed to remain in the foster home with the support of Health and Social Services. I think that some children remain at the home at the good graces of the foster parent, and we are working on that. I have been trying to talk to the NWT Foster Family Coalition. We had planned a meeting, but that meeting has yet to take place. I believe that the legislation is there, but I’m not sure if we can develop a policy that would contravene the legislation at this time.

**MS. BISARO:** It sounds to me as though it’s only a matter of will that’s keeping things from happening, but I’d like to know from the Minister whether or not the department would consider doing a fast-tracking of one amendment to the Child and Family Services Act to cover this particular area.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** I could start to move to fast-tracking the amendment, but I do know that there is some cost to moving that age for two years. As an example, I had indicated earlier that we’re working on something which is like that the human rights consider a youth to be somebody that is a youth until they turn 23 years old. We’re looking at that definition as well. We’re looking at that definition, so if we make legislation that allows the individual child to remain in the foster care beyond the age of 16, at which point does the department stop paying for the foster parent to house this individual. If we’re just talking about the gap which is between 16 and 18 that would resolve some issue, there is some cost to it, but a lot of the issues do occur beyond that as well.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One last question to the Minister. He mentioned earlier that legislation is on their list of priorities on their radar. When can we expect to see these legislative changes come forward?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** This is one of the things that I’ve been pushing the department on, but because there are so many priorities in the Department of Health and Social Services, it hasn’t received the attention that it needs to receive in order to advance it forward. I will talk to the deputy minister and attempt to advance this forward as quickly as possible.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

## QUESTION 231-17(3): INCREASING DEMAND FOR HOME CARE SERVICES

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m just going to follow up to my Member’s statement earlier in regard to home care. I want to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services what he is doing to address the demand on home care workers such as Inuvik. We have two home care workers, a home care nurse, and the demand on them to do their work on a day-in and day-out basis is overwhelming.

What is the Minister doing to address such concerns such as Inuvik, but more importantly, what is this Minister doing to address the concerns of the home care demands that are going to be put on Hay River when those 10 beds are not going to be in the new hospital come that time?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Moses. The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indicated in the House yesterday that we’re going to get the long-term care beds that have been removed from the plan from the new health centre in Hay River into the capital plan as quickly as possible. Hopefully, we will be discussing that through the capital planning process in the next process, but I cannot make a commitment before it’s approved by the Legislative Assembly in this House.

**MR. MOSES:** My question was referring to home care workers and what the Minister is doing in terms of home care support, home care services in the community of Hay River. One, there’s a great load of demand and in Inuvik, as well, on the positions that we have, even taking it further into the communities that are going to be affected such as Fort Resolution, Hay River Reserve and the communities that house out of Hay River in the long-term care. What’s his plan of action for the home care services and support in the communities?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** We recognize that home care, all types of care that is going out to the seniors has to be enhanced. We recognize that. We’re developing what we’re calling a continuum of care for seniors, which is going to look at everything that’s available as far as infrastructure goes, and what is needed as far as programming goes, and that’s programming like home care, home care coordinators, home care workers, home care support workers and so on, and also trying to provide some other types of positions into the home care system in order to provide a better service to seniors. We are looking at that and we recognize that there is a bit of a gap in the system. Thank you.

**MR. MOSES:** Mr. Speaker, I think I heard there that the Minister mentioned that he is working on a continuum of care. Is that a report or an action plan? Where is he getting his information from? Is he getting it from the home care workers? Front-line workers? Nurses? Doctors? Who is involved in this continuum of care plan? What kind of input is he getting in that plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services, working with the various health authorities across the Territories, are going to be developing the plan. We have a pretty good idea, from speaking to the people themselves, on what the needs are. We know exactly what we have on the ground. We know what the demands are just by taking a look at the aging population. We know that there are 50 percent or 100 percent more people in between the age of 15 and 65 than there are people over 65. We know this is a huge issue, a looming issue in the department. We are trying to respond to that and try to make some proactive decisions in this whole area of continuing care for elders. We certainly don’t want to get caught unawares. Thank you.

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

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just going to go back to this one question again and ask the Minister, what are his immediate plans to address the demand on our home care staff in the communities? What is he willing to do immediately to get those addressed so that it will take the workload off of our workers that are already being overwhelmed in some of our communities, especially the ones without nurses or the ones without the proper infrastructure? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, right now we have a request for proposal that was released this fall, the fall of 2012, that is going to look at that. We are going to look at the current needs and future needs of the clients by community. By March of next year, prior to the next fiscal year, we will have that report. Although we know that this is an issue – we know that it is going to be a huge issue – we don’t exactly know how big. We need to know that by the condition of the people as well. In March 2013, we will have a very good idea of what we are looking at. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5 on the Order Paper, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

---Unanimous consent granted

# Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to recognize a constituent of Frame Lake, chair of the Human Rights Commission at the moment, previous Minister in this House, previous representative, my predecessor, I guess. I would like to welcome Mr. Charles Dent.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 7 on the orders of the day, oral questions. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

# Oral Questions (Reversion)

## QUESTION 232-17(3): PERFORMANCE BONUSES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Bouchard.

---Laughter

Yesterday I was talking in the context of employee bonuses as well as salaries being publicized. It is one of the particular issues that are being raised in the context of being fair and transparent.

Why do we pay performance bonuses to employees? When you do the math on $1.2 million divided by just over 200 employees receiving those bonuses, we are talking about $6,000 on average. That is an average, of course. It is not like that; some get higher and some get lower. With the after-tax impact of those bonuses, it is pretty small. Why isn’t the GNWT moving forward through the remainder of this latest Collective Agreement process to eliminate bonuses? If they are necessary, then why don’t we just roll them into their actual contract? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unionized employees in the GNWT are not entitled to bonuses. It is not part of their Collective Agreement. The individual categories of employment that are eligible for bonuses are excluded employees, senior management employees and executive management employees. For both the executive managers and senior managers, they, unlike union excluded employees, don’t have a grid system as far as their pay is concerned.

For UNW excluded, every year up to eight years, an individual can move up a grid one step at a time. For senior and executive managers, that doesn’t exist.

There is an entire range. For an individual to move within that grid to be consistent with UNW and excluded, we utilize the performance bonus system which will allow them to move within the grid. It is also, as I have indicated before, an opportunity to recognize individuals for exceeding and going beyond their normal job requirements.

Just as another note, I would like to point out, as well, that in the excluded category and senior management category, individuals, employees are not entitled to overtime. They do not earn any overtime similar to what individuals in the excluded category and union category can earn. These individuals – and all of us know many individuals who work in this area – know they are putting in excessive hours well beyond the 37.5. In fact, many of our employees in these categories are putting in 60, 70 and more hours a week. If we were to actually compensate these individuals for overtime as opposed to the performance bonus system that we have in place which recognizes steps but also all the above and beyond services that they are providing, it would far exceed more than double, probably, than what we are paying them bonuses at this point in time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, the reason I picked the context of the latest public service agreement is that way we can work our way through on a transparent manner. That way, we didn’t just say, today they are here and tomorrow they are gone. That is why I linked them to that particular time frame. I know unionized and our employees don’t receive them. The reason I raise this is because, as well, citizens bring this issue forward.

Why do we continue to give bonuses to people who are already paid to do that job? It is kind of like giving the Deh Cho Bridge contract $10 million for contracting when we already have it in place. It is a similar wash. Why do we do that? The fact is the average public would much rather see the bonuses rolled into a fair, transparent contract. That is the issue. Why are we not setting up their contracts fairly and not rely upon these bonuses? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, just for the record, I don’t see the comparison to the bridge and the comparison to how we are compensating our employees as being even remotely comparable.

As far as what we pay our employees and how we pay them, especially at the senior management and the executive grid, I would say that it is fair.

As I have indicated, within the current system now, individuals in the senior management and executive category do not get annual steps similar to all UNW and all excluded employees. All union employees and all excluded employees, every year until they hit the eight-year cap, will get a step in their pay. Senior management and executive don’t get this.

The bonus system gives us the tool we need to provide those individuals with a step within the system when in fact they have performed their duties and exceeded in the performance of those duties. It gives us an opportunity to provide steps similar to all other employees, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** The general public thinks, and I believe they are correct, when they see that performance bonuses do not have the transparency or scrutiny like other situations, many people define it as spinning the dial as to where it comes out.

What type of transparent process will the Minister put in place so the public can see what is happening? Bonuses are needed. As I said, roll it into their salary in a transparent manner. Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, I think the process is quite transparent. We post it on-line how individuals are eligible for these particular bonuses and these steps within their pay grids, what individuals have to do in order to be assessed to receive these steps and/or bonuses. At the end of the day, we can’t take away the fact the way positions are compensated in the Northwest Territories.

In 1989 a pay equity complaint was filed against the Government of the Northwest Territories because some jobs were deemed as not being compensated fairly or accurately. We lost that pay equity complaint, and as a result, we had to put a job evaluation system that assessed jobs based on knowledge or skills, problem solving and working conditions. That applies all the way up through the system, all the way up to senior management. So, all jobs are assessed-based on the work required, not the individuals doing it.

For senior managers it’s the same. For deputy heads a review of the salary was done in the early ‘90s and it was compared to other jurisdictions across the country. Since that time we haven’t changed the senior management grid, other than the normal performance increases that have been negotiated by the union.

Our compensation package is fair and reasonable. It’s transparent, it’s been posted. All salary ranges are posted in the Northwest Territories, and when it comes to the bonuses, all of that information is public, it’s all there. If you want to know how an individual is eligible and gets those bonuses, please look at the website. It’s there, it’s transparent and it’s available for everybody to look at. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How many people who qualify for bonuses actually get bonuses? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I don’t have the specifics memorized, but I believe that was in the written response that was provided to the Member earlier this sitting. I’ll confirm those numbers again tomorrow. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Item 8, written questions. Mr. Dolynny.

# Written Questions

## WRITTEN QUESTION 14-17(3): WORKERS’ SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION ASSESSMENTS AND PENALTIES

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Human Resources. The Minister is asked to provide the following information:

1. The amounts, reasons and details for any penalties assessed against the GNWT and its boards and agencies by the Workers’ Compensation and Safety Commission for each of the three most recent years for which information is available; and
2. The actual results from the GNWT management practices questionnaire and the return to work questionnaire from the WSCC Safe Advantage Program for each of the three most recent years for which this information is available.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committee on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Lafferty.

# Tabling of Documents

## TABLED DOCUMENT 77-17(3): GNWT STRATEGIC PLAN ON FRENCH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIONS AND SERVICES

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled Government of the Northwest Territories Strategic Plan on French Language Communications Services, October 2012. Mahsi.

## TABLED DOCUMENT 78-17(3): NWT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Pursuant to Section 21 of the Human Rights Act, I wish to table the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report, 2011-2012.

Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Abernethy.

# Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

## BILL 12: AN ACT TO AMEND THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 26, 2012, I will move that Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Human Rights Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Abernethy.

## BILL 13: AN ACT TO REPEAL THE CREDIT UNION ACT

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 26, 2012, I will move that Bill 13, An Act to Repeal the Credit Union Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. 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 64-17(3), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates 2013-2014; Bill 2, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012; and Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Securities Act, with Mr. Dolynny in the chair.

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

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Good afternoon, colleagues. I’d like to call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 64-17(3), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates 2013-2014.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, committee. We’ll commence after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Welcome back, committee. I would like to ask the Minister if he has witnesses he would like to bring into the Chamber. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** I would ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to bring the witnesses into the House, please.

Mr. Ramsay, would you like to introduce your witness to the House, please?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’ve got today Mr. Russell Neudorf. He’s the deputy minister of DOT.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Welcome back, Mr. Neudorf, to the House. Committee, we are on page 9-10. Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question here with regard to the item rehab of Highway No. 3. This is on the budget. I suspect that we’re not going to be able to rehabilitate that whole section of highway in one year. I’d like to know, from the Minister or his officials, whether this is a one-year project or if it’s an ongoing and multi-year project.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is the end of the BCP funding. For a more detailed look at the future of the rehabilitation of Highway No. 3, I’ll ask Russell to provide that.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The money here is, as the Minister mentioned, the last year of our Building Canada Plan funding. We do hope that in future capital plans we will be able to identify additional funding. The highway is experiencing some effects of melting of some of the permafrost that’s underneath it. We are seeing quite a few heaves, and we have to stay diligent to rehabilitate that surface. This funding will be used to rehabilitate those sections that are in the most need. In the springtime our engineers will go out and do an assessment and decide where those areas are and then issue contracts to have that work undertaken. Going forward in subsequent years, additional funding will be required and we would hope that some additional GNWT funding or a potential renewal of the Building Canada Plan funding from the federal government will provide that opportunity.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister and the DM for the info. If we have money in budget just for this one year, and I’m presuming this is about 100 kilometres, how many kilometres is the money that’s in the budget for this one year going to get us? How many kilometres are we going to be able to rehabilitate? I guess my second question, in light of that, is how many years does the Minister expect that it’s going to take to fully rehabilitate these 100 kilometres?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The plan would look at 20 kilometres. As far as the future rehabilitation, that will be ongoing. We foresee a need to look at rehabilitation of that highway for the foreseeable future. We have some test areas where we’re looking at different types of innovative ways to manage the ice lenses and the permafrost, the degradation of the permafrost so that we don’t encounter the heaves and rolling that the public and Members see on that highway today. We have some hope for the future, but it is going to take some investment and, as the deputy minister alluded to, we’re hopeful for a new infrastructure arrangement and plan coming forward from the federal government that will hopefully give us the necessary capital dollars to put some effort into the rehabilitation of Highway No. 3 and other highways around the territory.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks for the explanation. It’s a little disturbing that it sounds as though, from the Minister’s language, that this is going to be a forever project. I appreciate that the department is experimenting with different possible solutions and so on, and I sure hope that we find one, but if we’re going to be spending a significant amount of money every year kind of in perpetuity, I guess that would be my question. Is that what we’re going to have to do or does the Minister see that there is some end in sight to having to continually rehabilitate this section of Highway No. 3?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I appreciate the Member’s concern. Certainly, we’re looking forward to the results from the test sections and the work that is being done that the department is undergoing. Hopefully we can find a way forward that will see us not have to spend as much money on rehabilitation. Like I said, for the foreseeable future, until we come up with a game plan, until we realize the results from those tests, we’re going to have to plan to rehabilitate sections of that highway. Perhaps, for a more detailed response, we could go to Mr. Neudorf.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are challenges when you construct a highway through an area of discontinuous permafrost, and I think we’ve seen a bit of an exacerbation of the problems this summer because of the warm weather that we’ve had. Our crews are out there now trying to finalize the work program that we undertake every fall where we try to get as caught up as we can to fix the heaves and dips that we’re seeing in the road. Along with the capital, that’s what we use to rehabilitate the surface. We have done much engineering on the work. We’ve got some detailed engineering assessments of what’s happening so there’s a good understanding of the process that’s going on. Unfortunately, it will continue to take money to address those problems. We, along with other jurisdictions, are doing various test sections, so we hope to learn from each other to figure out some best practices for how we can address the specific problems that are occurring on the section.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** I guess just one comment. I can’t help but think about the proposed Inuvik-Tuk highway and maintenance on that highway when I talk about Highway No. 3 and the difficulties we have with Highway No. 3. I can only imagine that the maintenance and difficulties that will be encountered on an Inuvik-Tuk highway will be far worse. That’s just a comment.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway certainly would be built on an area that’s much different terrain than Highway No. 3 is. It would be much more like the Dempster. You wouldn’t see the discontinuous permafrost there. It would be more permanent permafrost in that region where the highway would be constructed. I mentioned earlier, maintenance costs will be estimated to be what they are on the Dempster, and that is roughly one half to two million dollars a year. It’s a different type of highway. And it’s gravel. It will be gravel as well.

**MS. BISARO:** That’s fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’m done.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you. Moving on to questioning I have Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I’d just like to say that it looks like the department has done well in trying to allocate resources here that we do have for our highways. I just wanted to ask them detailed questions, particularly on Highway No. 1 from Providence junction towards Fort Simpson, for now. Of course, my biggest concern is Highway No. 7, but I’ll try and use my time expeditiously or ask a second set of questions with regard to Highway No. 7.

I think with Highway No. 1 from Providence junction towards Fort Simpson is about keeping on top of our infrastructure that’s there and some of the chipseal work that we’ve done. Of course, I have been assured, like you see, more chipseal work done from the Providence junction towards Fort Simpson. It really improves the safety of our highway when we have the chipsealing. I know that some work has begun, so maybe if I could just get a little bit more detail on the strategy from the Minister on the chipsealing efforts between Fort Providence and Fort Simpson.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. For a response to that we’ll go to Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have been reconstructing the section of Highway No. 1 from the Fort Providence junction to Checkpoint for a number of years. Funding is coming from the Build Canada Plan. We were able to extend the chipseal from Fort Providence towards Simpson for about 20 kilometres or so. We had wanted to do a little bit more, but based on the performance of a short stretch of chipseal that we had there, we decided it wasn’t the best investment because it looked like we were just going to lose the chipseal.

Whenever you construct a road and before you put chispeal on, the road has to have the strength in it in order to maintain the chipseal surface. That was the challenge we were seeing. We did do some repairs and upgraded that stretch of road.

In the meantime, this past summer we’ve been working on a 10-kilometre stretch right near Checkpoint. The plan is that next summer we will go in and chipseal that. We also hope to, depending on tender prices, get another six- to eight-kilometre stretch of road carrying on toward Fort Providence from the last stretch. Reconstruct that and then actually chipseal that entire stretch of road by the end of next summer. It should be 16 to 18 kilometres of additional chipseal on that road by the end of next summer.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** That kind of answers my questions in terms of future work and expansion of chipseal down Highway No. 1.

I’ll just turn my attention to Fort Liard. There was actually quite a bit of repairs and I think they were using fibre cloth during my last trip to Fort Liard this year. Maybe I can get an explanation of the work that was done this year and the plans set for next year for Fort Liard and Highway No. 7.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly enjoyed the visit to the Member’s riding and the time we spent driving Highway No. 7. What I’ll do, so we get the most detailed information on what is going to happen with Highway No. 7, what happened this past summer and what is proposed, I’ll go to Deputy Minister Neudorf.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Minister Ramsay. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We had $1.3 million of capital in the current fiscal year. With that we were able to do some ditching work on a problematic stretch from Kilometre 97 to 104. We were also able to do some surface repairs in the same stretch of road and put up some additional granular material so that it’s there for next summer when it’s required.

There is $1 million in the capital plan here for Highway No. 7. We will use it to keep the highway open. We will monitor conditions in the spring. We will take similar types of actions that we did this past year, which is to restrict traffic so that heavy vehicles were off of the highway at the times in the spring period when the road is most vulnerable to the heavy truck traffic. That did help us this year, by being aggressive with our weight restrictions. Of course, it doesn’t help the users of the road and those that want to use it for hauling heavy loads, but it is required in order to maintain the integrity of it.

Our current plan is that we will concentrate in about Kilometre 104 to 111 area. But as I mentioned, we’ll wait and see what the actual performance is next spring and into summer and then redirect so that the most urgent areas are addressed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Every time I go to Fort Liard, the residents always say, as soon as you get to the… Well, only because they travel to Fort Nelson as it’s closer for shopping, they always say go over the border and you’ll see asphalt and not chipseal, how come you’re not doing anything on our end.

In our last discussion talking with the Minister, I think DOT was looking at some chipseal from the NWT border towards Fort Liard.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** We have tried in the past, and it is something, going forward, we will have to try to find some money to get that done. Maybe I’ll go to Mr. Neudorf for some further detail on that.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:**  Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we have tried chipsealing the stretch of road from Fort Liard to the BC border in the past. Again, the structural integrity of the road wasn’t there, so we ended up losing the chipsealed surface. Since that time we have reconstructed the first 20 kilometres, so it’s in reasonable condition. We had hoped to get all the way up to Fort Liard, and then once that entire stretch was reconstructed, then go and resurface or chipseal that stretch of road. Unfortunately, with limited capital funding, with the distress and the needs in the other sections of the highway, we took the capital funding that was available and redirected it to those other stretches that were in more urgent need of reconstruction.

Going forward, we do hope to identify some additional capital funding, and with that it will allow us to get back to that original plan, which is to reconstruct the stretch between Fort Liard and the BC border, and then ultimately put a chipsealed surface on it. The timing with when we get to that will depend on the amount of funding that we’re able to secure.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Just in terms of chipsealing that 20 kilometres that presently had been reconstructed, I think it might be an opportunity to save some costs because the Hamlet of Liard is going to do that, take some main street chipsealing or they’re looking to save some money there as well. I don’t know if the department is willing to enter into discussions with the Hamlet of Fort Liard to see how they could save money and do two projects while the equipment is there and mobilized and moving around. I think it might be an opportunity worth discussing.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** If the community is making that effort, it is something the department could consider. We’re always looking for opportunities to work with communities around the Northwest Territories, so we’d look forward to those discussions.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Moving on for questioning I have Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The transportation in the Sahtu, as the Minister talked about yesterday, is something that all avenues are going to be looked at because of the potential for the resource development. I want to ask the Minister, in his capital acquisition and infrastructure plans here, is there going to be some upgrades to the winter road? We’re going to see more and more semis and huge trucks coming up. Sometimes these operators that come from the South are not very familiar with our road system and they think they’re still driving where there’s paved highway. The road system is somewhat changed when they come onto the winter roads in the Northwest Territories.

I want to ask the Minister about the safety and what plans are there for infrastructure, in terms of having our drivers in the Sahtu that use the roads, also, to do some shopping down south for groceries, that these roads in our region will be safe, because sometimes we have these truck drivers that are not quite familiar with our system.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Member for his questions. I know he drives the winter road there quite often, so I will give a bit of an update. In the current fiscal year we do have money to look at Bob’s Canyon, Strawberry Creek, Prohibition and Four Mile. Those will be addressed in this current capital year. There is no new funding in this capital plan, but we put a tremendous amount of effort into building up the crossings on the winter road route through the Sahtu. We also have, and I mentioned this yesterday as well, we have looked at partnerships with industry that would see us enhance the maintenance of the winter roads in the region. That’s something that we have struck a deal with industry to do. I believe it’s $1.2 million. We’re looking forward to continuing that relationship with industry.

Our efforts will make the winter road safer with these projects getting completed this year. We’re obviously looking to the day where there’s an all-weather road down the Mackenzie Valley and we’re not having to talk about winter roads anymore, but we’re not quite there yet so we do have to continue to work on those crossings.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** The winter roads are a lifeline for some of our people in our communities up in the Sahtu. There are other winter roads in the Northwest Territories that probably have the same types of issues with safety.

The climate change has been an issue now that it’s been in the back of our minds when we use the winter roads. I want to ask the Minister if there are any types of climate change initiative studies on our winter roads, either by the federal government or ourselves, to get involved in looking at the sensitivity of our environment and the issue of climate change that has an effect on our winter roads in the Sahtu, and there are probably other regions that have similar types of issues.

I do hope that there will be a time where the federal government will start putting in roads into the Sahtu. Like I said yesterday, once the oil companies go forward on a development or production phase, if the Norman Wells oilfields take off, we’re going to need all the help we can get. Right now, we don’t have that because other areas are taking up dollars that they need to fix their roads. We need to look how we can be supported in the Sahtu.

You know what, Mr. Chair? You look at the economics in the Northwest Territories, the Sahtu contributes a lot to the Northwest Territories. We have over $600 million going to be spent in the Sahtu on oil and gas exploration. Those are just exploration activities. We need to ramp up transportation dollars to meet that in the region. There’s not too much in the Northwest Territories other than around Yellowknife where they have diamond mines that are going full bore and are being supported by the activity that is happening on the roads. The Sahtu is making a huge contribution to the economics in the Northwest Territories. We need to step up to meet that challenge. We are paying our dues. We are spending close to 200 to 300 million dollars this year. Not to have capital infrastructure in the other places where they are putting money in here, I’m not too sure if you want to do an analysis and see what kind of return we’re getting back on those dollars.

For us, we need to see some commitment from the government to see where there’s going to be some dollars. We have people travelling out with families on the winter roads. Some have had close calls with these truck drivers that are coming up from the South who are hauling huge equipment to the Sahtu for the oil companies and there are lives at stake on our roads. I want to see where the Minister and his department will start giving us due attention to our roads in the Sahtu.

Like I said, if you look at the numbers across the board, the Sahtu is putting a lot of dollars into the Northwest Territories, and maybe more. There’s going to be a day when we’re going to need some help even with the Bear River Bridge, climate change on the Mackenzie River.

Mr. Chair, I’m getting a bit concerned that we’re not putting as much of an emphasis on it as I think we should be. Mr. Ramsay, the Minister, is working hard for us, but for my people who use the winter road when it’s open, we have concerns. Just because we don’t have an all-weather road doesn’t mean we don’t have concerns. We are bringing in the oil companies. We have opened up our lands so they can do some work there and bring dollars into the Northwest Territories.

I think once the oil companies decide that it’s a good field that needs to go into production, you are going to see some major changes. I’d like to see something on the Bear River Bridge. Right now, it’s $7 million. We need to look at some type of action so we see a bridge.

Our issues need to be up there. Not very often you hear a region bringing that type of money to the economics of the Northwest Territories. You need to pay attention to us. It gets frustrating. I don’t see other regions with those types of economics. We pour a lot of money into those regions. The Sahtu has suffered long enough in terms of winter road infrastructure.

So, for me, I’d like to see the government start paying attention and see where these types of roads can be upgraded. I have family travelling on that winter road. If I see close calls, I’m concerned. A life is not worth it. You are saying we have to cut here and there. For me that’s not acceptable. We are seeing a lot of people working in our region for the oil companies. Like I said, we have to pay attention to the money that’s coming into the Sahtu.

I guess a little frustration of my side when I look at the infrastructure. So I’d like to thank the Minister for visiting us and paying attention to some of our needs through this infrastructure and I’d like to hear what he has to say.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I really do appreciate the Member’s concern. I’ve been there a number of times and talked to a number of people in the communities in the Sahtu and it is a pressing issue.

Here in the Northwest Territories, we have over 1,200 kilometres of winter road. It’s a lifeline for a number of communities around the Northwest Territories. It’s important, first and foremost, that they’re safe.

Over the past 10 years, the Department of Transportation, into the winter roads in the Sahtu, has put in permanent bridges. About $60 million was spent on those permanent bridges.

I mentioned earlier, we are addressing Bob’s Cannon, Strawberry Creek, Prohibition Creek and Four Mile. In very short order here, those will be done. That will lend itself to further safety on the winter road. Again, it really does set the stage for the Mackenzie Valley Highway and getting a permanent all-weather road down the Mackenzie Valley. We’re anxious to continue to pursue that. In the meantime, we have to do what we can with the existing winter road system in the region and in the territory.

As I mentioned earlier, partnering with industry is a good thing to be doing, working with communities. That’s what we intend to do. We intend to work with whoever will work with us. We only have so many capital dollars to go around. In this year’s capital plan, we’ve done our best to try to address the things we need to address, but I do appreciate and hear the concerns that the Member has. I believe wholeheartedly, as things progress there, and as the resources are proven up, and if it does get to production and commercialization, both the federal government and our government are going to need to react to that and find the capital dollars to invest in the Sahtu. I can see that happening in the next three to five years, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Next on the list I have Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:**  Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome, Minister Ramsay and Mr. Neudorf, back to the House.

I will continue some of the dialogue that was started on Highway No. 3 which was part of our project listing here in the capital budget. As mentioned by the deputy minister, we do hear that in the Building Canada Plan those funds are depleted and we can only imagine trying to make the tough decisions that have to be made by highways and the department itself.

We were also told today that only 20 kilometres of Highway No. 3 will probably be rehabilitated or reconstructed in this upcoming budget, which probably leaves about 80 kilometres of road which, for the most part, if anyone has had the pleasure or displeasure of driving that road, knows full well the concerns anyone travelling to the capital city or leaving the capital city has. We only have to ask one of our own Members here from Behchoko, and I commend the heroics of one Minister Lafferty who did save a life on this road.

So there’s a lot of rationale for safety for this road. Where I’m going with this, Madam Chair, is the fact that safety has always been the priority anytime I discuss roads and strategy behind it.

Some of the road postings for speed limits are not proportionate for the quality and safety of the road that is currently being enforced. I will leave my first question as that. Has the safety component and have the speed limits been adjusted to accommodate the safety profile for the 100-kilometre stretch leading into the capital city?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are continuing to look at that. We are going to get the work done on the road that we can do this fall, and re-evaluate where we’re at and make the decision on the speed limit at that time.

I had the opportunity to drive from Yellowknife to Fort Providence and back. The section of road between Behchoko and Yellowknife, if you’re under the speed limit or right near the speed limit, there are a couple of spots that do have some dips in it, but it certainly wasn’t unsafe and I wouldn’t categorize that highway as unsafe.

Safety is a priority of the department. That’s why we’re looking at the speed limit and we will come up with a solution here in the very near future. Thank you.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you. This is probably where the Minister here and the Member here slightly differ on opinion of safety. If one is driving a large four by four pick-up truck or a vehicle with the posted speed limit as it is currently for that 100-kilometre stretch of road, I might concur with that statement. Anyone driving a truck with a trailer, holiday trailer, motorhome, even large-scale trailers that are bringing in goods and services into the town of Yellowknife, I think if you poll those people and you asked them is 70 kilometres safe, is 80 kilometres safe, I think you’d probably have a different response from those people with those different categories of vehicles.

So again, would the Minister commit to looking at, for those reasons and those reasons only, sooner than later in terms of re-profiling the proper safety speed limits for that stretch of highway until such time as we do get that done? Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:**  Yes, we always encourage people to drive to the condition of the road. I said it in my previous response and I’ll say it again, that we are going to take a good, long, hard look at the speed limit. After we get the work that we have to do this fall, once we get that completed, we will do that and we will communicate that if we’re going to make a move, or even if we’re not, we’ll communicate that back to the Members and to the public.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you. I do appreciate the Minister’s response to that need. We mentioned or we talked earlier about what’s referred to as continuous permafrost, which was pertaining to this stretch of highway, and that testing is being done. Testing has been rigorously done in this area and continues to be done over the next couple of years.

The question I have is permafrost degradation is nothing new. This is something that is probably very common practice in many other parts of North America, Europe and Asia. I find it odd that we’ve got to spend all this time studying highway degradation and, really, I believe there’s plenty of data at our fingertips here. So are we reinventing something that’s not currently out there in terms of scientific data on this road or are we leaders in this area? Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you. I would say both, but for a more detailed answer I’ll go to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We certainly are learning from others as we constructed the road initially and then in reconstructing it. We’re a member of a network of expertise in permafrost. We also have participated in a study undertaken by the Transportation Association of Canada on best practices related to permafrost. So we are and we have hired experts to help us in assessing the current conditions on that highway and what’s contributing to the surface condition of the road.

Every situation is a little unique. Yes, there are overarching principles related to permafrost, but every situation is unique, and so we need to take the knowledge out there related to permafrost and engineering and apply it to our situation. That’s why we’re undertaking these or have recently constructed the four test sections that we have.

But I’d note, as well, Yukon government has also undertaken some test sections and we are looking at their results and trying to see if there’s anything that can be applied to our situation here. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do appreciate Mr. Neudorf’s response. It’s nice to see that we’re contributing to the scientific community on the subject.

Following up on what was stated already from the Member for Sahtu, big oil is telling us, in great numbers, what their intention is here in the Northwest Territories. Yet it seems that as a government, as a department our contribution to the success of that region doesn’t seem to equate; it’s not an equal balance. With trying to look at every opportunity of economic stimulus here in the Northwest Territories, road infrastructure is a critical link to prosperity, and literally it’s our pathway to prosperity.

The Minister has been heard on numerous occasions speaking to gatherings on the subject of a highway strategy, which would outline the basic premise of dealing with exactly what we’re talking about today. How do you prioritize budget? How do you prioritize the impact of a limited budget and also forecast for the future when federal money such as the Building Canada Plan came into effect?

Can the Minister maybe allude to when we can see a preliminary draft of such a strategy? How is this strategy going to have input by Regular Members, by public, by community, by special interest groups and by the industry themselves? So again, I’ll highlight in terms of when can we expect to see this strategy? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Member for his question and his concern. I’ve mentioned this before. We’ve got a couple of big things underway with the Government of the Northwest Territories in trying to grow the economy here and realize the opportunities that exist. The first is the Economic Opportunities Strategy that we are currently in the process of getting into and also the Mineral Development Strategy and I believe we need to conclude those two strategies and feed them into a comprehensive transportation strategy here in the Northwest Territories. That is going to see us maximize the opportunities that are out there in terms of mineral potential and also other economic opportunities here in the Northwest Territories. To do one before the other, I’m not sure that would be such a good thing. I think we should do the two strategies and tie them all together.

We also are looking at prioritizing expenditures as we go forward and that’s a key part of seeing where priorities are, and any opportunity that I’ve had in the past, I’ve talked to industry about the prospect of partnering on all-weather roads in the Sahtu. That dialogue will continue. I believe – and it’s still early days in the play in the Canol – once the resource is proven up and Husky will be flow testing the two wells that they drill, if there is production, if there is commercialization of the oil, and a big by-product of that oil is gas, I believe that will be a huge game changer for the NWT, for the economy here, for the region and you’ll see things pick up, especially in the area of transportation infrastructure. I believe we will have some willing partners with industry and the federal government to enable us to finally realize the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Next on my list I have Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to ask the Minister, in the infrastructure Mr. Dolynny talked about a little bit in regard to the climate change and the federal government. Is the Minister working with the federal government in regard to some study on the impact of climate change on all our roads in the Northwest Territories? I say that because, again, about the roads into the Sahtu, as the Minister’s words, the play is up to this potential that we’re going to see more and more. Even with Husky. Husky is putting close to over $30 million in building a road to their lease site. That is some serious dollars going into a 35-kilometre road. That tells you a lot. If Husky is willing to put $35 million into a road out of nowhere, actually, that tells me that these oil companies mean business and that right from the border up they’re going to be busy. They want to be busy. They might even bring some stuff to Hay River and barge it there or truck it through the road system. Once they pass Wrigley, they get into the winter road system. Climate change is going to have an impact on our weather and opportunities for employment.

I want to ask the Minister, in the upcoming plans for infrastructure, is his department working with the federal government on any type of initiative that will study our road system with regard to climate change?

I bring this up because I talked with the leadership of the Charter Community of Deline and they are very concerned about the frost on Great Bear Lake. They are saying that last year on Great Bear Lake the water temperature rose by one degree. That is unheard of. Even today, look outside. It should be really cold and snowing and the ice should be freezing over pretty well in our area. They’re very concerned with the frost on Great Bear Lake and they want to look at an alternative route around the lake to hook up with the winter road section.

I know this is probably the second or third time that I’ve talked to the Minister about this; however, the leadership was very concerned last week that we need to start having some plans on this and having some infrastructure dollars that go towards the winter road from Deline to the winter road that meets up outside of Tulita. I want to ask the Minister again if there has been any type of discussion with the federal government on climate change on our road system in the North here.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member has a few questions. I’ll just start with the climate change subject. I just recently was at the TAC Conference, Transportation Association of Canada, and I met with the other Transportation and Highway Safety Ministers from across the country as well as the federal Minister, and when I had the opportunity, the first thing I mentioned was the fact that the Northwest Territories is ground zero for climate change. We’re having a huge impact not only on our roads but on our winter roads, our runways, things like that. I put it out there that the federal government needs to work with especially the… It’s more pronounced in the three territories but now you’re seeing more pronounced impact of climate change in the northern parts of some of the provinces. For example, last winter in Manitoba they weren’t able to put in winter roads. Some communities had their winter resupply completely cut off because of the climate changing so much. I think as it becomes a bigger issue in the northern part of some of the provinces, maybe we’ll get more support for federal funding to look at the impact of climate change.

We’ve received some money in the past through the Building Canada Plan to look at that. Certainly, I agree with the Member that we need to ensure that we’re doing whatever we can to look at climate change, to get the funding that’s necessary to examine the impact so that we can build our transportation system in that regard, knowing full well what the impact is.

One of the other things I wanted to respond to was the Member had talked about the warming of Great Bear Lake and that’s a direct result of climate change as well, and the fact that the community is having trouble with the winter road there. Last year we did supply some increased funding to the base to allow that work to get done and we will do that again this year with an increased effort to see the winter road put in. We are working with the community of Deline, and like last year, there will be some additional funding to get that winter road in.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** The community of Deline certainly appreciates the opportunity to continue to work on that stretch of their highway. There’s nothing more than driving the highway in our regions and communities and seeing local contractors, local workers on our highway, working and improving the highway system. Stopping and talking to the operators, there’s pride in their face and voice when they talk about the work that they have for that winter or that week or that couple of months. Then them working on the roads and it goes twice as far when they see their family members driving. They know that their father or uncle or grandfather is driving on the road, so they take extra precaution and care on those winter roads. I want to thank you for continuing this type of leadership on our winter roads. The Sahtu certainly appreciates it.

I’m very concerned when we start seeing the number of trucks coming up from the South to supply the oil exploration projects in the Sahtu. I’m more concerned that once the Huskys of this world say, yes, we have a good product, we have to get it out, be it gas or oil that we’re hoping to have oil and we need to get on it right away because in the big oil and gas industry, time is money and they want to make money, but they want to see that the territorial government will be there to help them out. They are building a 35-kilomtre road because they want to have at least nine months of product and work. They don’t like this three months. It’s costing them too much. So that’s what I’m hoping the Minister would prepare a strategy in the Sahtu, even through a special economic discussion paper, to get the attention of the federal government.

I want to ask the Minister if he has considered putting together a northern highway or transportation strategy for the northern communities, communities that do not have the luxury of getting in your vehicle and driving to another community to do shopping or go to work. There are a lot of communities that do not have that type of luxury right now. We’re hoping that the federal government will step up to the plate. Is there a strategy such as Colville Lake or Deline or Fort Good Hope can see some infrastructure?

You have some communities in the Northwest Territories that have roads. Nahanni Butte has a road. Jean Marie River has a road. We have real small communities that have roads into their town, which is really good. We’d like the same opportunity in the Sahtu or any other communities that don’t have it.

We always rely on the airplanes or the marine. We want to see some strategy. We want to see some action from this government that says we can put a road in here, let’s do it. Look at that paved road in other areas are fixed up. We need to look at the small communities and say, yes, we can put a road into Colville Lake or to Fort Good Hope or Norman Wells or Tulita. We have roads. We’ve done it before. That’s what I’m looking for.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** The Member is talking about the Transportation Strategy that I was speaking of earlier. I do believe that we do need to get there. I also talked about the Economic Opportunities Strategy that’s very important to getting us to where we need to go, as well as the Mineral Development Strategy. I think those three things are key to the economic success that this territory could have, and I certainly look forward to working with the Member and other Members of this House.

The opportunities in the Sahtu, I’ve said it before, are immense. It’s got to be sustainable and the benefits have to be given to residents of the Northwest Territories first and foremost. The Mackenzie Valley Highway is a big piece of this. It’s a big piece of the Transportation Strategy. It will go down the very middle of our territory and connect us from north to south. It also will be the fibre optic link and that transportation corridor could be a possibility, as well as the Mackenzie Gas Project.

We have lots of opportunity in front of us and I do think that working together, we can get where we need to go. For us, the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway is the first step in the construction of that Mackenzie Valley Highway. We’re very anxious to move on that, to get that started, get it complete, and I do believe there’s going to be a number of opportunities and the Mackenzie Valley Highway is a big, big part of that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Next on my list I have Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My first question has to do with the upgrades to the sand and salt storage facilities. I understand that salt was declared a toxic substance for use on highways in 2002-2003, somewhere thereabout, so we need to store it responsibly. It seems like we’ve been very slow to move on that so I’m happy to see that we’re finally moving, but I’m also distressed that we are, in fact, continuing to use this toxic substance. There’s something that seems a bit odd to me that we would freely apply a toxic substance when we know the impacts that it is having on our environment. I’m wondering if the Minister can tell me if we’re moving away from the use of salt, and what are we doing to come up with a non-toxic replacement for the application towards whatever the issues are that meant to resolve.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Member’s concern. The department does have a salt management plan that meets all of Environment Canada’s requirements. We don’t believe that there’s another way we can go instead of salt that would be economic. From a safety perspective, it’s where we need to be. I appreciate what the Member is saying, but we do use salt and will continue to use salt. Perhaps the deputy minister can provide some further detail to that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to add that our use of salt has been increasing over the last decade or so. As we are seeing the climate warm, we are having more days with freeze-thaw, more days when salt is effective, so our consumption and use of salt has come up, all in keeping with our salt management plan, as the Minister noted. Part of that is being diligent on how salt is stored, as the Member had pointed out. So we have a number of sand/salt storage sheds that have been upgraded in the last five years or so, and we want to continue with that to upgrade those facilities to ensure that we are storing our salt properly.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks for those comments. What is the problem with sand or the equivalent non-toxic? Is it that it disappears or something? What are the benefits of salt versus sand? Is it strictly economic?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m going to go to the deputy minister for a detailed response to that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We actually use quite a bit of sand in our maintaining friction on highways. When temperatures are between zero and minus 15 or minus 20, it’s most effective to use sand and salt in combination. The salt will help to actually take the ice off of the surface and allows the salt that is applied to stick to the surface a little longer. Once you get below minus 20 or minus 25, then salt becomes ineffective and then we use sand. The challenge there is getting the sand to stick to the surface of the road. We’ll put sand on in the morning, and if it’s cold enough and with enough traffic, then all the salt will be blown off the road by the vehicles that use it, so we’ll have to come back and keep applying sand. That’s just the reality of life and doing highway operations in the North. But it is effective to use both a combination of sand and salt in our O and M practices.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks again for those comments. Yet another cost to climate change, and I hope the department is adding that as obviously an environmental cost and not just a financial cost.

I suppose my most major comment is that it’s clear that our highway systems are deteriorating, partly as the cost of climate change and new problems raise their ugly heads. Unfortunately, we are choosing to take on new, very expensive, and even more daunting environmentally, projects, and let our existing infrastructure deteriorate. That’s my major concern. I know the Minister is aware of that.

I just want to throw in one example here and that’s the Detah road. There are many examples: Highway No. 7 and so on. But the Detah road, here we have a project that’s been abandoned in midstream. It’s a very modest project. The residents have been calling for work on this. It wasn’t even really a road. A Caterpillar just threw a bunch of gravel on top of the trees there for a long time. The residents there have been extremely disappointed and, really, aghast that there have not been funds dedicated to that project and that, in fact, it’s being abandoned in midstream like this.

I know the Minister, again, is well aware of this. The work that’s been done there has been done incidentally on the backs of other projects that haven’t been done or whatever, and it’s an incidental approach. I think we have a much greater responsibility to the residents of Detah, as we do to all communities. What is the Minister going to do to correct that situation? I don’t see it in this plan. That’s unacceptable to me, again, when we are throwing tens of millions of dollars this fiscal year, and so on, at new projects.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I thank the Member for his comments and his concerns. On the existing transportation system specific to highways here in the Northwest Territories, I beg to differ with some of what the Member is saying. I think we’ve done a lot to improve the highway system here in the Northwest Territories. We’re going to be opening the Deh Cho Bridge, a $202 million project, near Fort Providence in the coming weeks. As I mentioned to Member Yakeleya, we’ve spent $60 million over the past 10 years on putting permanent bridges in the Mackenzie Valley in anticipation of the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

We are doing the best we can to balance the approach to looking at new highways and maintaining the ones we have currently. I know the Member is concerned about the Detah road, and I don’t want anybody to think we’ve abandoned that project, but if you look around the territory, I mean, we don’t have the capital dollars. We have to do things incrementally. All you have to do is look at Highway No. 7, look at Highway No. 5, look at any of the highways, really, in the Northwest Territories and you can see that incremental approach. If you look at our capital plan, we just don’t have the funding to put it all in at one time.

In the situation with the Detah road, as soon as we can identify more funding, that will be completed. I’ve mentioned this a number of times: We’re very hopeful that the federal government is going to come forward with a new infrastructure plan in 2014, which will enable us to get some more funding to address areas like the Detah road and other highways around the Northwest Territories that need that type of investment. We’re very cognizant of the situation on the Detah road, but the reality is we need to find more funding. We’ve got a number of competing interests around the territory and when we do find some more funding, certainly, the completion of that project is right there.

**MR. BROMLEY:** I appreciate the Minister’s response and perspectives. I don’t entirely, of course, agree. I think the point is that the number of projects that are being deferred is increasing and the overall state of our highway system is not being maintained as it should be. We are having to make these choices more and more, whereas we used to be able to do both. That’s what’s changed. I think we do need to do a reassessment, but I know committee is grappling with that, as well, so that discussion will be ongoing.

Highway No. 3 has been brought up a number of times already. Here’s another highway that is proving to be very challenging; so far the most challenging, I believe, in the Northwest Territories, again related to our changing climate and the loss of permafrost. We have a few test strips being done but none of those are, obviously, cheap. If one of them does work, you know, to apply it extensively will be very expensive, but it still might be a better option than the bottomless pit of just repairing, repairing, repairing. This is in a zone of discontinuous permafrost. The Minister knows that in the zone of continuous permafrost the warming is an even greater rate than we’re experiencing here in the southern part of the Northwest Territories. But that’s another subject.

I wonder, has the Minister done any work to look at what the costs will be if one of these options proves to be technically feasible to apply them in an extensive way to Highway No. 3.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I thank the Member for his question. We are doing the work. We’re trying to find solutions. I think that’s important as we move forward with trying to figure out the best way forward for Highway No. 3. To get into specifics on the test sections and whether or not the department’s priced out if one of those four is a solution, what it would cost, the whole section is not, you know, the 100 kilometres, not all of it is an issue, so it would just be certain sections. I’m not sure, so I’ll go to Mr. Neudorf to see if we’ve done any price estimates on what it would cost if and when one of these is proven successful.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** We certainly are aware of the cost that it took to construct these test sections and we’re very interested in the results. We do have a plan to monitor them. Going forward, we’re not sure exactly how each of the tests is going to perform, but if we find that one is performing, then it might be a good option. I’d also note that there are many different mechanisms for the dips that are happening out there too, so we have to be sensitive to that.

We will monitor those. We will track the costs, and track performance and do analysis as we can move forward to determine if those repairs are cost effective. We do certainly hope that some of them will be so that instead of the ongoing maintenance and filling in the dips, that we can do something more permanent and get a 20-year, 30-year lifecycle out of the repairs that we’re doing. That’s the whole purpose of doing the test sections and we are looking forward to getting the results. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Next on my list I have Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to begin by saying that I am very surprised not to see any capital infrastructure going on into the Willow River near Aklavik, and also I was hoping to see in our budget funds going to the Inuvik-Tuk highway as we begin to start planning.

As we all know, there is very little for work up in the Mackenzie Delta region. It is very important that we start providing employment to the people up in the region and also to ensure that we spread out all of the work throughout the region. It is very important that we begin capital infrastructure, as we do want to increase the economics in the Northwest Territories. It is very important that we begin by building our infrastructure. I do realize that we are waiting for another year, but it is very difficult for the regions, especially up in the Beaufort-Delta and the Mackenzie Delta that we begin as soon as possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Madam Chair, I thank the Member for his questions. First off, on the Willow River gravel access road, I have been here for a few years. I have seen how, when a community wants access to a gravel source, that is arrived at. We had a couple of Members who I worked with from Nunakput, who kept talking about Gravel Source 177 and the importance to the community to get at that gravel source. When a funding source was found through the Building Canada Plan, that road became a reality, working with the federal government and the community. I believe the community of Tuk put a million dollars into that road as well.

If you look closer to the Legislature, here in Yellowknife, the city of Yellowknife bypass road, as well, when we had access to the federal program, that is when we saw that road get constructed as well. Again, it was a partnership with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the federal government and the City of Yellowknife.

We are very hopeful – again, I have mentioned this to other Members – that come 2014, we are going to have access to another federal infrastructure program that hopefully will allow us to take a look at projects like that and others around the Northwest Territories. Right now, we don’t have the capital dollars to be looking at community access to gravel. That is the reality that we are living in today. Hopefully, during the life of this government, we are going to have access to some more capital dollars so that we can be taking a look at those types of projects.

I want to thank the Member for the support of the Tuk-Inuvik highway. We certainly look forward to getting the cost estimates complete sometime between mid-January and the start of session in February-March and making some decisions so that we can get to work. There are a couple of sections, one out of Inuvik and one out of Tuk that don’t require the permitting, that are shovel ready, that we can get to work on. The region desperately needs the work and the investment. We are anxious to, again, continue to move that forward. Again, I want to thank the Member for his support on that. Thank you.

**MR. BLAKE:** Madam Chair, the other thing that I wanted to stress the need for is I realize it is the last year that we are putting funds into the Dempster Highway. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done to the highway and possible realignment of the gorge. I believe it is Kilometre 30 or so, but there has been a lot of shifting in the road due to climate change, and possibly the safest thing to do is just realign the highway up in that section.

Comparing the different highways I have driven over the number of years, I noticed a lot of attention is being put in the highways down in the southern part of the territory due to a lot of bison and whatnot. Up in our region, there is a lot of moose, too, yet we have willows that are almost covering the highway. It is getting that bad. Sometimes you don’t know whether you see a moose or just willows. It is a safety concern. I am hopeful that the department would address that this coming summer. Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Madam Chair, I thank the Member for his concern. Although it might seem like much attention is given to highways further south, I think between Highway No. 3 and Highway No. 8, the Dempster, they have received the lion’s share of capital dollars over the past eight years. There has been a substantial investment in the Dempster.

I just want the Member to know, even though it looks like the funding is ending, it is the last year of the BCP, but the department and the government do recognize that we have to, and we need to continue to, invest in the Dempster. We are going to have to come up with a way to do that. It is not going to just fall off the radar. I want the Member and the Members to know that. Thank you.

**MR. BLAKE:** Madam Chair, just looking to the future, if everything does go well with the Inuvik-Tuk highway, the tourists that that will bring, we need to do a lot of work to the Dempster Highway. I look forward to working with the Minister to achieve that.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Madam Chair, I look forward to working with Members of the House to ensure that we can find that investment to get into the Dempster and continue to work with our partners in the Yukon Territory on the Yukon side of the Dempster to ensure that that road is what it needs to be, not only for residents but for visitors as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just had a few more questions here. I wanted to, first of all, express my appreciation, as I am sure I am joined by all Members, for the new lighting along the highway starting from the Explorer heading out of town and going by Niven Lake. Many of us do walk along that highway. It has been quite dangerous, certainly for the constituents of Niven Lake. It has distressed many of my constituents who have had very close calls driving over people, ladies walking with baby carriages and so on. To some degree, the lighting means that, as drivers, we are able to see people just before we would hit them. It is an added element of safety, but we are not there yet.

I know the Minister perhaps can recall, in the 16th Assembly we also called for a walking and light trail that is off the highway there and also a safe crossing section. Again, many of us have to dodge across the road in the dark and so on. The streetlights are certainly helpful there. At least you can wave your arms and hope to be seen there. That is much appreciated, as I have said. Now, can we take those next steps? These are not huge costs, but I think, in terms of safety, with the amount of traffic we have there, walking traffic and so on compared to anywhere in the NWT, worthy of the Minister’s attention. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Madam Chair, I thank the Member for raising the issue of the lighting there. I know it is nice to finally have that lighting in place and I share his concern over the safety. We have had some discussions with the City of Yellowknife. We will have to find some money. Again, I think it is going to take a bit of money. We will continue the discussions with the City of Yellowknife and see if we can come up with a way to work something out here for the residents that use that section of highway. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks to the Minister for that commitment. What would be the time frame we can get that done in? Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you. We don’t have a firm timeline on it. It has more to do with the funding and identifying funding to make it happen. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you. That’s the crux of the issue, of course. I’m five years into it, starting into my sixth year, and this has been an issue that whole time. Obviously, as Niven Lake develops, the traffic increases and so on. So I do appreciate and I hope we can put a time frame to it soon, and at least with the discussions and get the partnership going. I know the city has expressed interest, but somebody has got to take the lead on it. So I guess it’s our highway.

My next topic is the Inuvik-Tuk highway. I, obviously, am concerned that again it’s not listed here. We seem to be authorizing this project through rather random supps as we have done this year to some degree and intend to do to a further degree, perhaps. Apparently for ‘13-14 as well. Not sort of the normal course of business. I do realize that we are struggling to get the environmental assessment completed and whatnot, and a final decision made. We’re spending very significant dollars in light of other serious infrastructure demands, including health infrastructure, other highway infrastructure and so on. These are very serious trade-offs that we’re making.

I have mentioned some of the challenges, and I know the department is probably aware of many more challenges than I am, but climate change is the area of concern that I’ve been bringing to the table and particularly in light of Highway No. 3, but also in light of the location and the high water content in the area compared to any of our other highways, except possibly Highway No. 3 which goes through a high-density pothole region and so on.

Could I just ask what degree of warming is the highway being planned for? I know that the Minister has mentioned the gravel investigations have been to prepare for 50 years of maintenance as well as construction. Obviously, that’s relevant for climate change impacts. Also, I’m interested in what changes in precipitation have been considered in the environmental work that’s been done to date. Again, there are significant, but less confident predictions in changes there. Generally increases in precip, but the lower confidence for precipitation means that there is going to be an increase, but it may be 10 percent or it may be 1,000 percent, and of course, Nahanni Butte can tell you all about that. So I’m interested in what degree of warming and what degree of change in precipitation in that environment the department is planning on. Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you. I appreciate the Member’s questions and concerns. The department is considering climate change when it comes to the design and the eventual construction of that highway. The Member is asking for warm-up rates and also precipitation rates, and that’s something I don’t have and the deputy minister wouldn’t have that level of detail here. When we appeared before committee the other day, we had a number of reports that were submitted for the environmental assessment. Some of that information would have been contained in those reports, and we’ll compile that information and we’ll ensure that Members get that level of detail. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:**  I appreciate the Minister’s commitment there. The reason I have come to ask those sorts of questions is, in dealing with the Giant Mine remediation project, we found out that the engineers were very out of date in the rate of change, and that’s why I mess about in those kinds of details. But I could just share with the Minister that my understanding is probably out of date. We know that things are changing to a greater degree than scientists have predicted, being a conservative bunch, but we’re talking for that 50-year period in the degree of 10 to 20 degrees of warming during the winter period. I couldn’t tell you the precip myself. It’s relatively low precip to start with. So it doesn’t take much of a change to be a big change, obviously, in that sort of situation.

So I’ll leave it at that. My concern is that we are giving up a lot of other options and priorities in exchange for new projects, and I do detect a deteriorating condition of our existing highway system, and I know the Minister and deputy minister have clearly stated that that’s a first priority is maintenance of our existing system. Thanks for that opportunity.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you. Again, I appreciate the Member’s comments and his position on that. However, and I’ve mentioned this before, we do believe wholeheartedly that we can balance what we have and we have a partnership planned here with the federal government. They’re earmarking $150 million. We’re going to construct the first phase of the Mackenzie Valley Highway between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, and we can do that, and we can also maintain what we have and we believe that we can do that.

We have to continue to look at ways we can build our economy, build our territory and maintain what we’ve got, and I do believe that we can do that, we can accomplish that and that’s what we will set out to do. I’m looking forward to the challenge of trying to balance all of that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister Ramsay. Next on my list I have Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With the indulgence of the chairmanship, I’m going to be asking questions regarding the Deh Cho Bridge. It’s not part of this, but there is no category in terms of infrastructure for highway for the bridge design. So if I can, I’ll be asking questions regarding the Deh Cho Bridge, if that’s fair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** I think that’s fair enough. Go ahead, Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you very much and thank you to the committee. It looks like we’re burning the midnight oil to get this project completed for November and I applaud the hard work thus far. I’m looking forward to seeing this done on time. It is to my belief that the contractor still, to this day, has temporary lighting – and I’ll stress the word “temporary” – for aviation, marine. A number of the cabling and conduit is still not complete and I don’t believe there is an emergency phone that is operational yet.

Can the Minister give us an update as to will this bridge meet so-called safety requirements or reasonable safety requirements for the opening here, from predictions we’re hearing, a number of weeks? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Minister Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Transportation will only open the Deh Cho Bridge if it’s safe. The items the Member is mentioning are not critical to the bridge opening. I believe most of the components the Member speaks of are in a program which will be tendered next year for electrical works on the bridge. I believe it’s one, I’m not sure exactly, I’d be guessing how much exactly, and maybe I’ll go to the deputy minister for the exact number, but we are certainly looking at opening the bridge and when we do that, and hopefully it will be in the next few weeks that that bridge will be open and it will be safe to travel on. We wouldn’t open it otherwise. Thank you.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you. I guess, from the average person or the common person, you take possession of a house, you take possession of any infrastructure, you usually take possession with full electrical hookups, you get an electrical permit signed off by inspectors and you’re allowed to have possession of your house. So, like, we’re opening up the bridge here with temporary. If the Minister indicates that it will be safe, well, we’ll have to take the department’s word and we’re hoping that those provisions are put in place.

The Minister does mention the fact that there was a tender or RFP, I think I heard. I assume that this is a significant cost. My next question is, if there is still a significant cost still remaining which would be part of the 2013-2014 budget, we don’t see that in our substantiation sheets here in terms of being an item. Can the Minister indicate as to why?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I believe that would be, and I know it is, part of the overall bridge budget. That’s why it wouldn’t be contained in here. To the other aspect to this, like when you buy a new house, obviously, there are some deficiencies. There’s paint that has to be repaired or chips in the floor, whatever the case may be. There will be some deficiencies that have to be addressed. They’ll be addressed as soon as they can be addressed. That’s not to say that the bridge cannot be opened safely and we can’t get traffic moving across it. We need to begin collecting toll revenue and paying for that bridge, so we do need to open it up. It will be opened up and done in a safe manner.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** One of the components that isn’t part of this plan, that will be available in the spring, is an emergency phone. Can the Minister indicate if there are problems on the bridge, there’s no cell service there, what are people to do?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** It wouldn’t be any different if you were on any other section of highway without a phone. If you stopped at Chan Lake, there’s not an emergency phone at Chan Lake or anywhere on that highway. It wouldn’t be treated any differently. Eventually, we will have a phone on the bridge and that will be part of the contract that I talked about earlier with the electrical work that is required, and that will all be completed as soon as possible, but that won’t stop us from opening the bridge.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Again, we’re taking the discretion of the department in terms of citing safety, and I give credit to the department for assessing that. I just find it odd that we’re granting access to this bridge use with temporary systems in place.

My question again, and I’ll leave it at that because I know we want to move on with other questions, we are in a safety topic here. Can the Minister and the department assure that these components are not a critical element for the operation and opening of this bridge in a timely manner?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** That’s what the engineers advise us. We’ve got a number of advisors working on the bridge project. As I mentioned earlier, safety is our prime concern. The bridge will be open and it will be safe to the travelling public. Because it won’t have a phone on it doesn’t mean we’re not going to open it up. We want to open it up in the next few weeks so there’s no disruption in service during freeze-up, so it’s important that we continue to work toward its opening here in the next few weeks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dolynny, anything further?

**MR. DOLYNNY:** No, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate it.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. I have nobody on my list. We have Transportation, activity summary, highways, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, $23.250 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** We’ll move to the next section, pages 9-12 and 9-13, Transportation, activity summary, road licensing and safety, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, $1.050 million. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions will involve the Motor Vehicle Information System or the enhancements that are going to be applied to the system. If the Minister or deputy can give us a broad or brief overview of exactly what components are being enhanced.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Neudorf.

**MR. NEUDORF:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are completely rebuilding our Motor Vehicle Information System. All components will be rebuilt and new at the end of the project. We are taking this approach because it is quite cost effective. We had gone out and looked for options to buy an off-the-shelf system, but they were considerably more expensive than taking the approach that we are taking.

In terms of enhancements, just having the new system we will be able to clean up all the minor bugs and deficiencies that are in the current system. The major enhancement will be on-line services, which we hope at the end of the funding here, so at the end of the 2013-2014 fiscal year we will be able to be delivering services on-line. Requesting driver abstracts, scheduling appointments, vehicle registrations are all the various services we hope will be done on-line at the end of our project.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thanks, Mr. Neudorf. I think the word “on-line” is intriguing. This is something that’s been brought up in the House, even as lately as this week here.

Can we get a bit more detail as to what on-line services the department will have operational during this fiscal year?

**MR. NEUDORF:** If I understand the question correctly, it’s on-line services that are currently in place. The only service that currently you can do electronically by e-mail is to request a driver’s abstract. That’s recently been done. We are looking at providing additional information to the public in terms of wait times. So we’ve recently upgraded our queuing system that’s in the office and when you go in the office now, you, along with your ticket, get an estimated wait time so that you can decide if you want to stay there or not. We’re looking at putting that on-line in the next little while because then instead of going to the office you can actually check on the website before you go to see if you want to wait.

The lion’s share of the upgrades and on-line services, the most major one will be vehicle registrations. That will be part of this program here, and we’ll be looking at a year to a year and a half from now providing that service.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** So I understand that the on-line component will probably have very limited capacity in the short term. It sounds like we’re getting extended components of on-line use.

I guess where I’m trying to go with this is things like renewing your driver’s licence, updating your address information, checking those basics, can you print, can you order your abstract and have it printed kind of through electronic means. Can the Minister elaborate? Are those types of on-line services in the near future here for the residents of the Northwest Territories?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we are hopeful that by the end of next fiscal year we’ll be able to provide those services on-line for the residents of the NWT.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I would assume this is a module, this is kind of like a package that we’re buying here for the information system. Will we be expecting motor vehicles to come back with another ask or another sum of money to add another module to allow these so-called new on-line services to come to fruition?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** There is no plan to do that at this time.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I guess just to get clarity on something that still has a bit of Vaseline on the lens here, would the Minister commit, and the deputy as well, to come back to committee with a full list of those on-line services that are available on short order and those on-line services that will be initiated, with any timeline components so that we can have a better understanding of exactly what’s being offered and a reasonable timeline of when we should see those come into activity?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** We’ll continue to do the work that we’ve talked about with the on-line services and the upgrades. We’ll package that together and make the commitment today to perhaps get in front of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure and go over the services that are currently provided on-line and what the upgrades will be. I know the chairman is very interested in the subject matter, as well, so we’ll compile that, we’ll get a briefing with the standing committee and go from there.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Madam Chair, I want to ask the Minister how the new road licensing system that’s working in our region, we had some difficulties and the Minister, I think we actually had some discussion and you helped us out. How is that new system going to help us? Are we going to have a similar type of situation where I heard my colleagues talk about it taking them longer to get licences, and we’re going to be needing people up there with Class 3 and Class 1, people who need to go to work and they don’t have some of the technology in Colville Lake or Fort Good Hope or Tulita or even Norman Wells to help our people get their licences quicker, faster? Sometimes we have to go on the schedule of the government and it sometimes doesn’t quite work with us. I want to ask the Minister if that system has been approved in the Sahtu, especially with the resource development opportunities that are going to be coming down the tube in the next couple of months and next couple years.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Getting back to the Member’s concerns, when we first rolled out the MVIS system last year, there were a few growing pains that we heard about. Certainly, we addressed those concerns and we haven’t had any difficulties since then.

As far as getting into the communities, we go into the communities when requested, when there’s a number there that it’s warranted to visit the communities, we do. When there’s testing required, we get in there. So if the Member is aware of circumstances or situations where we didn’t, I’d be more than happy to talk to him about how we can address that.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** The previous experience I had with the department and our communities, certainly there’s got to be a critical mass to warrant. Sometimes that’s not the case and sometimes drivers have to wait three to five months before we can get enough people in that community before the department says, okay, we’ll come in and do the test or issue the licence. Even issuing the licence, sometimes we can’t wait three to four months because the work is not going to be there. Sometimes they have to make special arrangements to charter a plane on their own expense in the Sahtu to fly to Norman Wells or wherever they can get their licence.

I know the Minister and department have made special effort in the past to help us out here. They made some efforts to go the extra mile to help people get their licence so they can go to work and contribute to the community and have some money in their pockets. I know that’s special circumstances. Even so far as they have worked with the Aurora College in Colville Lake. That was a success. That’s what we want to look for in our communities. Those are the special circumstances we have in the Sahtu. Similar maybe in Yellowknife, but Yellowknife has a different type of issue there. That’s kind of the same thing we’re looking for, is how do we get these individuals who want their licence to go to work.

That’s the thing I want to ask the Minister. When he looks at Yellowknife it’s so different in the Sahtu or Beaufort-Delta where communities such as ours are going to be impacted by resource development. I appreciate the Minister making an offer, that if it’s an issue that we have in our region, that the department and Minister have our ears and we’ll see how we can work out some situations. I know sometimes cost is a factor in a decision. At times we have to weigh the cost-analysis benefits. It doesn’t quite always favour on the community’s side. Sometimes we need to make special provisions where possibly some of these people in our communities can fly to Norman Wells, for example, and obtain their licence. Hopefully that will be a subtitle or a policy that the department may cover or otherwise they will have to do it on their own. It is kind of sensitive.

I look forward to seeing the Minister work on these types of issues when we have these types of systems. Ideally, you want to have a system in the Sahtu where they can go and obtain their licence. Sometimes that is not the case. I want to thank the Minister on that point there. I look forward to any types of suggestions he may have. These are my questions on this page here.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Madam Chair, I thank the Member for his concerns. We are always looking for opportunities to find solutions by working with communities. It is something that we continue to do. We try to assist wherever possible. I know we have done that in Colville Lake. We are also doing that in Trout Lake. We certainly don’t have an unlimited number of funds. We have to be very creative. We have to work with those communities to find solutions wherever possible. Again, I appreciate the Member’s concerns. Hopefully we can work out any difficulties he may have in communities he represents. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. We are on Transportation, activity summary, road licensing and safety, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, $1.050 million. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. We will turn to page 9-2, Transportation, department summary, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, $26.250 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that we have concluded the Department of Transportation?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. I would like to thank the Minister and his witness for being here. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you escort the witnesses from the Chamber? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we report progress.

---Carried

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I will now rise and report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Can I have the report from Committee of the Whole, please, Ms. Bisaro?

# Report of Committee of the Whole

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 64-17(3), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates 2013-2014, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Do we have a seconder to the motion? Mr. Ramsay.

---Carried

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

# Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Priorities and Planning committee at 7:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Orders of the day for Thursday, October 25, 2012, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers’ Statements
3. Members’ Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Opening Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions

* Motion 16-17(3), Extended Adjournment of the House to October 29, 2012

1. First Reading of Bills
2. Second Reading of Bills
3. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

* Tabled Document 64-17(3), NWT Capital Estimates 2013-2014
* Bill 2, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012
* Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Securities Act

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 25, 2012, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:51 p.m.