



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

4th Session

Day 6

17th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Pages 1817 – 1858

The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Jackie Jacobson

(Nunakput)

Hon. Glen Abernethy

(Great Slave)

Minister of Justice

Minister of Human Resources

Minister of Public Works and Services

Minister responsible for the

Public Utilities Board

Hon. Tom Beaulieu

(Tu Nedhe)

Minister of Health and Social Services

Minister responsible for

Persons with Disabilities

Minister responsible for Seniors

Ms. Wendy Bisaro

(Frame Lake)

Mr. Frederick Blake

(Mackenzie Delta)

Mr. Robert Bouchard

(Hay River North)

Mr. Bob Bromley

(Weledeh)

Mr. Daryl Dolynny

(Range Lake)

Mrs. Jane Groenewegen

(Hay River South)

Mr. Robert Hawkins

(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Jackson Lafferty

(Monfwi)

Deputy Premier

Minister of Education, Culture and

Employment

Minister responsible for the Workers'

Safety and Compensation

Commission

Hon. Bob McLeod

(Yellowknife South)

Premier

Minister of Executive

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and

Intergovernmental Relations

Minister responsible for the

Status of Women

Hon. Robert C. McLeod

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

Minister of Municipal and

Community Affairs

Minister responsible for the

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)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Tim Mercer

Deputy Clerk

Mr. Doug Schauerte

**Principal Clerk
of Committees**

Ms. Jennifer Knowlan

**Principal Clerk,
Operations**

Ms. Gail Bennett

Law Clerks

Ms. Sheila MacPherson

Ms. Malinda Kellett

Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

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

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	1817
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	1817
8-17(4) – Economic Opportunities Strategy Engagement Process (Ramsay)	1817
9-17(4) – Minister Absent from the House (B. McLeod).....	1818
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	1818
Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway (Blake)	1818
Medical Agreement with BC Health (Menicoche).....	1818
Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway (Groenewegen).....	1818
Elders in Motion Program (Yakeleya)	1819
Tribute to Dr. Clyde Hertzman (Bromley).....	1819
NWT Parks and Recreation Association Elders Award Recipients (Moses)	1820
GNWT Customer Service (Bisaro).....	1820
Retrofit to Stanton Territorial Hospital (Dolynny).....	1821
Financial Administration Manual (Hawkins)	1822
Greyhound Bus Service (Bouchard)	1822
Highway Emergency Services (Nadli).....	1822
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	1823
ORAL QUESTIONS	1823
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	1833
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	1833
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	1833
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	1857
ORDERS OF THE DAY	1857

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 13, 2013****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 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 8-17(4):
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY
ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, the 17th Legislative Assembly identified the need for an Economic Development Strategy to strengthen and diversify the Northwest Territories economy.

Our strategy will respond to changing circumstances in the North and address business opportunities in all regions of our territory.

Mr. Speaker, the Economic Opportunities Strategy is part of a much bigger picture. It complements other initiatives the GNWT is undertaking such as a comprehensive Mineral Development Strategy, and other linked initiatives such as the Land Use and Sustainability Framework and a Northwest Territories Anti-Poverty Strategy.

While the NWT is filled with economic opportunity and potential, we are sometimes challenged to find ways to convert it into jobs and development that prevents poverty and encourages people in all of our communities to participate in the economy.

This strategy is of pan-territorial importance and cannot be developed by government alone. While Industry, Tourism and Investment is coordinating the government's participation, the project itself is being overseen by a governance committee that includes representatives of the NWT Chamber of Commerce, the Northern Aboriginal Business Association, the NWT Association of Communities and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

Last December, in consultation with this governance committee, I appointed an advisory panel to engage NWT residents, the private sector,

governments and other key stakeholders in a series of discussions on the economy. This panel is travelling to communities to identify the economic opportunities that exist in our territory's regions and communities along with the strengths, weaknesses and threats that exist in each area. All of this work will be very helpful as our governance committee drafts the Economic Opportunities Strategy.

This strategy will have benefits for every region of our territory. It will contain tangible, attainable recommendations for investments and decisions that will advance and sustain the NWT economy for the future.

Over 100 invitations and opportunities are being provided to NWT residents and organizations to engage with the NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy Advisory Panel. The panel has already met with stakeholders and residents in Hay River, Fort Smith, Fort Resolution and Inuvik. They will also travel this month to Fort Simpson, Norman Wells and Behchoko.

A public forum will be held tonight at six o'clock in the Explorer Hotel here in Yellowknife. These public meetings are opportunities for individuals and organizations to contribute experience and insights on the very important subject of our territory's economic future.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this period of listening and public engagement is only a part of the overall process. We have done a review of major NWT economic studies together with best practices in other regions. Our strategy will include the recommendations and applied experience and insights of our highly qualified advisory panel. We also value the advice of industry and economic expertise from our territory and elsewhere.

Collectively, through this extensive and multi-partnered process, we are putting in place the elements of an economic strategy that will enable the NWT to keep pace with the incredible opportunities and growth potential that it possesses. We will ensure that our North is positioned to manage this investment and growth to advance jobs for people, opportunities for businesses, self-reliance for communities and economic sustainability for our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 9-17(4):
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Glen Abernethy will be absent from the House for a portion of today's proceedings to attend to a personal matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INUVIK TO TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Construction of the road between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk is an important first step in completing the Mackenzie Valley Highway. If we do it right, this project will provide many jobs and business opportunities.

Living in the Delta, I see all kinds of business going to the Yukon because the Dempster Highway is our supplier. I see millions of dollars going down the road every year, Mr. Speaker. We need that business and economic opportunity in our territory. The Beaufort-Delta region badly needs a boost to its economy and people need jobs so they can support their families. The unemployment level in most of our communities is terrible, at 35 percent.

As you know, creating jobs is one way we can build safe and sustainable communities, one of this government's main priorities. By building the road to Tuk, we will create lots of jobs. The question is who's going to do them. Will our people in the Beaufort-Delta be ready for those jobs?

I'm worried that we are behind on providing education and training to prepare the Delta workforce to get well-paying highway jobs that should be available for many years to come. For example, there should be Class 1 driving courses in every community every few months.

Appropriate courses should be delivered through the community learning centres, but some are not very active and in some communities they don't even exist. Current high school students should be ready and able to handle the future jobs. The community schools are under-resourced and graduation rates could be a lot better.

Support for students who have completed high school in Inuvik is another big problem. If this territory is going to prosper, and if our people are going to prosper, we have to improve our education and training.

I'll be asking the Education, Culture and Employment Minister about that later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MEDICAL AGREEMENT WITH BC HEALTH

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to say, for the record, that we do have a great health care system. It is very difficult to deliver quality health care from Fort Liard all the way to Sachs Harbour, but on the whole, people working in the health system are to be commended.

Saying that, there is always room for improvement, and I would like to suggest some changes that would both help out the people of Fort Liard and probably lower the cost of health care and medical travel in my region.

It is one of the goals of our health system to deliver as much care as close to home as possible and I very much agree with this. For people in Fort Liard, that means getting some of their health services in Fort Nelson, British Columbia. Right now residents of Fort Liard often use their own resources and just drive south for certain services. It is only 210 from Liard to Fort Nelson, and I might add that the road is better, too, compared to the 284 kilometres on Highway No. 7 to Fort Simpson. It is not uncommon for Liard patients to be flown to Yellowknife, which is 780 kilometres away. If it is not absolutely necessary, this is both inconvenient to patients and expensive to our health system.

For example, a constituent can say his knee hurts, he is sent to Yellowknife and sees a doctor who confirms that his knee hurts, and then sent home to await a more rigorous appointment. This, as I say, can be done closer to home in Fort Nelson.

I would like to see an agreement between the Health and Social Services and the BC Health ministry that allows seamless care that is invoiced to our health system. As it is now, it is not fair to those people in Fort Liard who are covering the costs of their own trips to Fort Nelson.

I see the current budget includes expanding the use of electronic medical records. This should make it easier to manage the arrangement I propose. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INUVIK TO TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I must preface my statement with all due respect to the folks of the Beaufort-Delta. We, as keepers of the public purse, have a job here to

keep the public interest, and the accountability and transparency for the expenditure of government funds. We have an obligation to question that.

I'd like to also talk about the Inuvik-Tuk highway. I am not categorically dismissing it as a good idea, but there are certainly some very big questions that need to be asked before I can personally endorse a project of this magnitude.

The cost-benefit analysis of a piece of infrastructure of this expense at this time in this area needs to be very critically looked at, and I do hear the plight of the Inuvik area, the Inuvik region, in terms of the economic downturn, the conditions there. I do not think that a \$300 million road project to create economy is the answer to that situation, not in and of itself.

I hear the federal government say that they want to be able to say that they have highway infrastructure coast to coast to coast. That's a very lofty goal, an admirable goal, but our government is necessarily being called upon to participate in this project at least with 25 percent of the capital cost and who knows how much on the ongoing operations and maintenance of that highway.

We have Highway No. 7. We hear our colleague from Nahendeh stand up session after session and talk about the lack of maintenance and upkeep on a highway in his region. We heard many times from folks that represent the Mackenzie Delta about the conditions of the Dempster Highway and how this government does not have enough resources to maintain and upkeep that highway, and now we want to build another piece of highway infrastructure. We need to do so by first very seriously counting the costs of what the use will be and what the ongoing costs of that are.

I look at the latest major highway project this government overtook, which was from the Rae turnoff to Yellowknife, and no offense to the Department of Transportation, but they were building a highway in the Canadian Shield where they had unlimited access to rock they could crush to put a proper bed in that road, and that road is beyond disgusting. I think they started rebuilding the road the day after they built it. That was a \$200 million project in this part of the country where they didn't have to deal with permafrost and all the challenges that they will have to deal with up in the Beaufort-Delta area.

So we have to ask ourselves some very hard questions, regardless of the fact that it is on sale at 75 percent off. It will still be a piece of infrastructure that we will be responsible for and we have to look at this very critically. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELDERS IN MOTION PROGRAM

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I sat down with some very committed and encouraging people in the Northwest Territories. They were working on initiatives to help our elders in our small communities. The program is called Elders in Motion. These people talked about how they are working with the elders in our communities, and some of the barriers, some of the advice and some of the things that they are doing in our communities. I just happened to be there when they were doing their presentation – and they're at the Baker Centre this afternoon finishing off today's work there – and they were talking about the elders who are needing help in our small communities and communities right across the Northwest Territories.

The people in my region were talking about having some support, some of the small stuff we can do in our communities to help our elders get out, get active and do some of the things they used to do a long time ago.

For example, one of the things that the participants talked about is having ramps at the elders' homes so they can easily come out of the houses and get out and exercise, pick berries and do the things they have loved to do all their life. They also talked about putting small steps into the school because some of the steps are pretty steep in the schools in the settlements. There's maybe about 20 steps for them to get up into some of the classrooms or walk in some of the other areas that they want to go. They also talked about the roaming of dogs in the small communities. They are really afraid that there are too many loose dogs in the communities and it stops them from getting out and being active.

These community people are working hard. The elders are guiding and advising them. I think that there is a time and place that these small things, that sometimes we overlook as legislators, we need to look at some of these things that can support our elders get out, get them in motion and give them a good life before they pass on to the next world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRIBUTE TO DR. CLYDE HERTZMAN

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to mark the sudden passing of Dr. Clyde Hertzman. Clyde Hertzman became well known to NWT health professionals and educators through his role as an advisor to this government in the development of the first Early Childhood Framework. He has since been a continuing resource and inspiration to our territorial early childhood community. Dr. Hertzman was with us

only last month at the Early Childhood Development Round Table in Yellowknife. I know many Members were there and Ministers, where, with his usual high energy and discerning understanding of his audience, he effectively conveyed his learned research, an essential point to consider in the design and evaluation of early childhood programs.

Dr. Hertzman was director of the Human Early Learning Partnership, Canada Research chair in Population Health and Human Development and professor in the School of Population and Public Health at UBC. He was a Senior Fellow of the Experienced-based Brain and Biological Development Programme and the Successful Societies Programs of the prestigious Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. He was named Canada's Health Researcher of the Year in 2010. He held an honorary appointment at the Institute for Child Health University College of London, England, and last month earned the Order of Canada.

As one of the great champions of early childhood development and population health in Canada, Dr. Hertzman was considered a guru in the international field. He produced an extraordinary body of research spanning and linking the health and social sciences. This trailblazing work deepened our understanding of childhood development and provided compelling evidence-based arguments for progressive policies. Struggling for publicly funded universal childcare, striving for program assessment and young child evaluation tools and pushing for the elimination of child poverty, Dr. Hertzman was an impassioned champion of the need to bring equal opportunity to all people.

We were fortunate to enjoy his support, wisdom and inspiration in the continuing effort to improve the well-being of our children, families, society, community and economy. The early childhood community and the people of this territory feel his loss, and continue to be inspired by his example and contributions. Our most sincere condolences to his wife and children.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT PARKS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION ELDERS AWARD RECIPIENTS

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my colleague's comments, Mr. Yakeleya. Last night I had the opportunity and the pleasure of attending the NWT Rec and Park Association awards for our elders in the Northwest Territories, the active ones. At this time I'd really like to take the opportunity to recognize two elders

who won the awards: Ms. Violet Beaulieu from Fort Resolution and Mr. Gabriel Kochon.

Violet is 80 years old and Gabriel is 84. Last night, when I got to meet them, they were full of energy and in great health.

The NWT Rec and Parks Association takes a different approach in promoting its healthy living programs. It promotes the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of well-being, taking a holistic approach in taking care of our elders. They know what to do with our elders and our people in the Northwest Territories. They make a focus on traditional and cultural lifestyles while introducing new and innovative exercise programs that continue to allow our elders to live a happy, fulfilled and, more importantly, an independent lifestyle.

In the budget address the other day, there was mention of chronic disease management and investing in more long-term care facilities and staff. When we ask for programs in chronic disease management to take care of our ever-growing senior population, we don't want more facilities, we don't want staff to take care of our elders, we want funding to go into these successful programs, effective programs that continue to keep our elders alive and well in our communities passing down our traditions, passing down our language, and for that I respect what the NWT Rec and Parks Association is doing. We've got to take a different approach in prevention, promotion, and we've got to recognize elders that are being active in the communities, and are being role models and continue the traditional culture and language of our peoples which is declining.

We've got to support these organizations who've never had an increase in funding, no forced growth, and support them so that they can get out to the communities and do stronger support for our people in the Northwest Territories and our residents.

At this time I'd like Members to join me in congratulating our two award winners, our elders, as well as congratulate the hard work that the NWT Rec and Parks Association does for the 33 communities across the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT CUSTOMER SERVICE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to return to the subject of government customer service that I discussed last week. I have brought up the issue of poor customer service at least once a year during my time as a Member. It's an area where no one government person or department is really in charge of the issue, so each department

and office operates on its own which, in turn, leads to inconsistencies in service for NWT residents.

The GNWT as a whole has no culture of customer service, no standards, no policies, no monitoring. So here's an idea, as my colleague Mrs. Groenewegen likes to say: Why doesn't the government centralize the responsibility for customer service in a department like, say, the Executive? We wouldn't have to reinvent the wheel. We can look to our provincial counterparts for models that work. Ontario has spent a lot of time on this.

I gave an example of poor service last week, that of motor vehicle clients being unable to call and being able to talk to a real person and what I consider to be poor voicemail messages on their phones. There needs to be guidelines for all GNWT employees around returning phone calls and e-mails, how to answer, timelines and so on. There needs to be guidelines for employees dealing with clients face to face and through social media, how to greet people, how to listen, how quickly your response should be given to an inquiry. This applies whether they are internal clients, other GNWT employees or external clients, anyone outside the government.

All of these things are integral to good customer service. Private businesses who provide good customer service invest the time and money to properly train their staff. We need to do the same for our public service, Mr. Speaker. To do that well, we have to centralize the responsibility for developing a culture of customer service in our employees. We need to train GNWT public servants to understand excellent customer service and have the skills to feel comfortable and competent when dealing with clients.

We need policies, guidelines and standards that apply to all employees, and a small staff within the Department of Executive could provide the necessary leadership and develop the necessary standards and policies.

I need to make it clear, I do not advocate for more employees. We have more than enough. As I said the other day, a serious analysis of our current staffing will find us several employees who could transfer into a new position for customer service. If the will is there, Mr. Speaker, it can be done without spending any more money. The question is how important is customer service to this government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RETROFIT TO STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we are seeing a budget go wistfully by and, yet again, our potential territorial hospital has been bypassed. Let me say those words again, Mr. Speaker, territorial hospital.

We continually hear by this government that we have competing priorities, that roads are more important than territorial health and that an office building is more important than territorial health. Yet this government continues down a path of priorities where economics and practical sense collide.

A recent visit by the majority of Regular Members to our territorial hospital showed, clearly, a dire need for new facilities. This facility was designed for only 10,000 patient visits a year. We are now doing over 20,000.

The Minister of Finance, during our general comments on main estimates, admitted that this hospital is in need for a midlife retrofit. He is on record as saying it's going to require \$200 million to \$300 million, yet we see no signs or signals in this budget to begin the planning for this.

The Finance Minister's comments of "we're on the road of taking care of that" leaves the average NWT residents wondering if they, too, can go down to their local bank and ask to withdraw some of this "taking care of that" money.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, we're taking care of that. What does that really mean? Unless this Assembly and the people of the Northwest Territories see it on the books as a priority within the budget line, there is no taking care of that and that is for sure.

If the Minister of Finance does not think we need to spend any more of our budget on health care, fine. He has every right to believe in a legacy of a fiscal restraint policy of don't get sick. Let me remind everyone listening today, with our imminent landscape about to go into full throttle, our new \$800 million shiny platinum Visa card is ready to be inserted into the chip reader and Premier McLeod has the PIN number.

So, back to the territorial hospital. While our health care providers are clearly working out of closets or having to trip over pallets of medical supplies in the hallway or having to eat their lunch outside because they just lost their coffee room for a new service, our government will be keying in the PIN number to withdraw funds that have nothing to do to ensuring the future of our health care. But not all is lost, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure the voters will be taking care of that in the next election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use today's opportunity to talk about the Financial Administration Manual. I'm going to frame it around the administration and the conduct built around that.

The public is concerned, certainly as I am, about the accountability of this manual and the transparency that's brought with it. So I'm not going to speak to any specific example whether we've had problems in the past or even in the recent situation.

I'd like to focus my concerns around the administration and our guiding book, our bible, as such when it comes to finances and economics of the NWT. What happens if there is an error or breach, Mr. Speaker? The public is unclear and wonders how the balance is worked out. Is it swept under the carpet or how is it weighed and measured in a transparent way?

Clearly, independence, or I should say unclear independence, seems to be one of the questions that is railing out there. People wonder, do the staff guide their reviews under the scrutiny of their bosses when they are, in some cases, reviewing these situations. What is the transparency of these guidelines that provide a reasonable atonement? It's not necessary about getting a pound of flesh, but we all have to know what measurements and guidelines we are being held accountable to.

The choice, as the public sees it, if there is a problem in some way, really comes down to a few options. Do nothing and that becomes a real option, or correct the error of the breach, and do nothing and pretend the error never happened.

So the government is left with the choice of two lesser evils. Do we do nothing or do we pretend nothing happened? I will ask questions to the Finance Minister later today and get some clarity on how we weigh and measure the Financial Administration Manual in an open and transparent way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GREYHOUND BUS SERVICE

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak about a national icon that's been removed from the Northwest Territories.

On October 24, 2011, the Greyhound service was removed from Hay River. Greyhound provides a service throughout the nation. On that date we lost that service in the Northwest Territories. That service continues to serve the Yukon and I've been

informed that potentially the Yukon is supporting that process to continue because it is important. The community of Hay River and the South Slave, since it's been removed, have suffered some difficulties without it.

This is a service that's used by a lot of people with low income and businesses that use it for tourism. There's a national pass system out there where tourists travelling into the country or around the country can buy a pass that will get them anywhere in Canada, except the Northwest Territories.

This service was also used by businesses that were using it to transport some of their employees in and out of the Territories on holidays and send their employees down to Edmonton on holidays or trips. That service is no longer available in the Northwest Territories.

I will have questions for the Minister of ITI and what steps we should have been working on to see if we can resume this service in the Northwest Territories; this vital, national part of the Northwest Territories. We are promoting tourism in the Northwest Territories, but this key element has been removed from Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HIGHWAY EMERGENCY SERVICES

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked questions to the Minister in terms of the ambulance service. I would like to talk about highway emergency services today.

Many residents of the Northwest Territories and visitors to our territory probably assume if they were to have an accident on one of our highways, there are ambulances and trained emergency service providers who would come to their rescue. They would be surprised to learn how thinly our emergency services are stretched. The issue is one of gaps and policies, legislation and coordination. We do not have a clear framework for emergency services outside of communities that tells who's responsible for what and who is authorized to do what.

It is also one of funding for equipment and training. Most communities do not even have a local ambulance, let alone the capacity to respond to an accident 50 or 100 kilometres away.

One resource we do have, thankfully, is a lot of very committed volunteers and professionals, who are more than willing to be there to provide these essential services. It must be very frustrating for them to not have the policy and funding support they need to do that effectively.

I'm concerned that we are all living in a bubble, just hoping that we don't have a major accident or a fire on some remote stretch of highway. The odds are that one day that bubble is going to burst.

Clearly, it is the interest of public safety that well-trained first responders are available for highway emergency. Northwest Territories residents and visitors should feel confident that services are going to be there in the unfortunate event that they need them. Increased resource development activity and promotion of NWT tourism means more traffic and the greater likelihood of accidents and fires along the highway. We need to make ground ambulance and services in communities based on the highway our priority. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognitions of visitors in the gallery. Mr. McLeod.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Mr. Willard Hagen, a constituent of Inuvik Twin Lakes; and Mr. Richard Edjericon. I'd also like to recognize Mayor Andrew Cassidy and deputy mayor Brad Mapes of Hay River who I had an opportunity to meet with this morning. Welcome to the House, gentlemen.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mrs. Groenewegen

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the mayor, Andrew Cassidy, and deputy mayor, Brad Mapes, in the visitors gallery today. I thank the Ministers who took the time out of their schedule today to meet with the MLAs and our town representatives. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Rick Edjericon, a resident of Weledeh and chair of the besieged Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. I don't know if he's still there – I can't see behind me, Mr. Speaker – but Willard Hagen, the chair of the about-to-be redesigned Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize the mayor of Hay River, Andrew Cassidy, and deputy mayor of Hay River, Brad Mapes. I appreciate the Ministers also meeting with us today. I think it's vital that we get a visit in the capital here and see what we can do to help out Hay River. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. I'd like to welcome Willard Hagen here, as well, and Rick

into the House. Thank you for coming today to take in today's proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Ms. Bisaro.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 57-17(4):

YELLOWKNIFE PUBLIC HOUSING INVENTORY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. The Minister is aware of a very difficult housing situation here in Yellowknife. A number of leased units that the Housing Corporation has leased from a landlord are being removed from the public housing inventory here in Yellowknife. Apart from the disruption to the lives of the tenants, which is a major disruption as anybody can imagine, the action also causes headaches in the ranks in the GNWT, in particular the Housing Corp.

I'd like to know from the Minister how many units at the Inukshuk Co-op are being lost to the Yellowknife public housing inventory, and who took the action to remove these units from the Yellowknife public housing inventory, and how many units are being lost. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct; we were leasing 17 units from Inukshuk. They had a board of directors meeting and they had decided that they weren't going to renew their lease with the NWT Housing Corporation, so that affected 17 units and all those residents in there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: This is a fairly significant reduction in the capacity of public housing in Yellowknife. I think it's at least 5 percent. I'd like to know whether or not the NWT Housing Corporation will be looking at replacing these lost units with other ones. Is this a permanent reduction or will we be able to keep the same complement of housing that we have now in public housing in Yellowknife? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Yellowknife Housing Authority is currently over-allocated as far as the number of units that they do have. A lot of it affects the money that we get from CMHC. The money is declining; therefore, the number of units that we're able to maintain is starting to be affected.

We've asked all the communities to look at ways of reducing their stock, because a lot of them are over-allocated on the number of units that they have.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little concerned to hear the Minister say that Yellowknife is over-allocated. He also referenced other communities. I guess I need to know from the Minister what that term means.

We have a great need for public housing here in Yellowknife. There's a need for public housing in every community, I think, but I think Yellowknife, as the capital, although it's a different situation here, we do need more public housing.

I'd like to ask the Minister if he could please explain to me what the term "over-allocated" means. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, each community is allocated a number of units that they keep in their stock. As we're bringing new units into stock, a lot of the communities haven't been reducing their allocation of units by that amount. So if a community got five new units, we would expect them to take five out of stock, because these are public housing replacement units. With the declining CMHC funding, it's getting unsustainable to be trying to do maintenance on a lot of these units.

I recognize the Member's point about the need for public housing. We do see that across the Northwest Territories. However, in some situations we try to deal with the number of units that each LHO has, and if there is an opportunity to possibly hang on to some of these units, then we have to explore that option also.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I think I heard the Minister say that they're going to look at things, but I guess my last question to him would be: Recognizing that there's a need for more public housing in Yellowknife, what plans does the Housing Corporation have to try and increase the number of units in the public housing inventory here in the city? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of units here in the capital and we are looking, in all the communities, at the number of units that we have there. This is kind of an ongoing issue to see where we can make some changes. Some communities may need to add on to the number that they have; some are a little over-allocated, as I said before. But it's an ongoing issue and I could commit to the Member, and all Members opposite, that we will continue to have a look at this and make sure that we get to a point where all the housing needs are close to being met or are met, and also having this number of units is not unsustainable with the money that we get from CMHC. Because the difference is going to have to be made up somewhere, and in most cases it

would come, I think, before the Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 58-17(4):
HIGHWAY EMERGENCY SERVICES

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked a question in the House in terms of the long-term plans for ambulances, and I appreciated the response. My question is directed to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

As you know, at this point we have increased industrial activity in the Sahtu, where we're seeing large amounts of transporting of goods up to the Sahtu area; plus, at the same time, we have the bridge operable now on a 24-hour basis. So we are seeing increased activity of traffic on the highways.

My question is to the Minister of MACA. What emergency services are available now to assist when there's a serious accident or fire along the highway outside the community boundaries? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a government, we don't have services going out on to the highways. In many cases the accidents or incidents that happen are taken care of by the community nearest the incident. It's just the way thinking is in the Northwest Territories. We're all good neighbours and if something happens, somebody is going to respond and take care of that incident first and then worry about compensation later. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: I would like to thank the Minister for that. As you know, travelling on the highway, you don't have it full of neighbours along this. Usually you are alone travelling at your own risk. Could the Minister provide an update on the work MACA is doing in cooperation with Health and Social Services and Transportation on ground ambulance and highway fire emergency services and also in developing a policy legislative framework? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct; we are doing some work with our colleagues over at Health and Social Services and Transportation, trying to come up with overarching work to cover all of the Northwest Territories.

As far as MACA goes, we do provide \$200,000 to communities that want to apply for some of these services. It's \$200,000 divided amongst the number of communities that apply. So we do have that, but understand that that doesn't really cover a lot of the issues facing drivers on the highway. We are working with Health and Social Services. We are

looking at some numbers. It is going to be quite costly to implement a whole system right across the Northwest Territories. Those are options that we are putting together right now and I am sure, when the opportunity arises, we will have discussions with committee and also we will be hearing from the Northwest Territories Association of Communities on this issue too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to thank the Minister for the response. This matter goes back to the 16th Assembly and this matter continues to be at least an agenda item for a to-do list for the government.

Would the Minister agree that our highway communities need locally stationed ground ambulance and highway fire emergency vehicles and equipment and access to training for first responders? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we wanted to do with some of the money that wasn't taken up by the communities is use it as a training component to train members in the communities. Volunteer firemen would be a good choice and anyone in the community that wants to be qualified as first responders. I think that's the initial step that we have to take, because they can have a shiny piece of new equipment there, but if they're not qualified as a first responder, it is a huge liability. I think a lot of communities recognize that. They were very open to the training component of it and we're looking forward to possibly rolling that out through the School of Community Government within MACA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to understand just what level of coordination and leadership this department is undertaking. Can the Minister advise when he and his colleagues will be able to bring forward a proposal for expanded ground ambulance services for consideration by standing committees in this House? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I knew I should be prepared for that: When? We are continuing to do the work. For me to tell you an exact date, I don't think I'd be telling you the truth. I will commit to the Members that I will get the information and I will communicate it to the Members. Again, I know I should always be prepared for the fourth question: When? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 59-17(4):

TRAINING PLAN FOR BEAUFORT-DELTA

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I strongly believe in order for this government to be successful, we need to plan. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, what is the training plan for the Beaufort-Delta communities to prepare them for the Inuvik-Tuk Highway Project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Part of the ongoing discussions that we have had are in partnership with Inuvialuit and also with the Gwich'in to provide the training requirements. My department is working closely with the Beaufort-Delta on what kind of training is required. Not only that, but we provided training in the past on Source Road 177 in Tuk, combining with our Education and working with the college, Hamlet of Tuk, Tuk Community Corporation and contractors, just going through labour markets to build a database for local residents to plan and deliver training that maximizes the local employment. Those are just some of the examples we have undertaken.

We are looking forward to this new initiative that is coming at us. The project was just approved last week by the Environmental Impact Review Board. We are still waiting for federal approval at that level. But now we are talking about partnership, partnership, partnership. We invited Aboriginal leadership to NWT Days. It was a very productive and successful meeting. We are building on the relationship that we have. Definitely I will be working closely with the Member and members from the Beaufort-Delta to make this training requirement also a success in that region. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, in order for us to be prepared, will the Minister ensure that Class 1 driving courses be delivered regularly in every Beaufort-Delta community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, if that is the wish of the communities, by all means, we have done that in the past where training has taken place in the Beaufort-Delta, whether it be safety training, substance abuse workshop, Class 1 driver exam, driver training. There is also heavy equipment Class 1 and Class 3 training that has been undertaken. We need to be prepared and also preparing those individuals from the communities so they can enter the workforce. Once the road has been constructed, we want the manpower to be ready. So that is an area that we are exploring.

My officials will be meeting with ITI and DOT, my department, Aurora College and regional representatives to deal with planning stages on Valentine's Day. Definitely, we are looking forward to those planning stages. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, how many jobs are expected on the Inuvik-Tuk Highway and what is the target for hiring from the Beaufort-Delta communities and also this territory? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the jobs, training opportunities will be identified through a working group that we are going to establish. When I talk about the meeting tomorrow, that is a preliminary stage of planning. Out of that, we are hoping to get some more concrete figures, concrete numbers from ITI, from DOT, from my department and from regional representatives, because they have their own needs as well. So we need to respect that. We need to take those into consideration, compile all the information that I will be sharing that with the Members once we have that information. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 60-17(4):
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES
FOR INUVIK

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later on today we're going to be meeting with Environment and Natural Resources. I have some questions in the budget address with the \$100,000 that he mentioned that's an LNG, liquid natural gas, solution for Inuvik. I've been getting a lot of e-mails and questions in regard to what this money is going to be allocated towards and how it's going to affect our gas situation in Inuvik. If the Minister can take a moment, would he be able to elaborate on what this money is for, how it's going to be spent and how it's going to be used for what he mentioned in the budget address? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the government has worked with the community of Inuvik and other stakeholders through a response to the declining and depleted natural gas sources around Inuvik, one of the alternatives that came up as a viable option was liquid natural gas. NTPC has been engaged in a lot of work, talking to suppliers, doing the numbers, looking at transportation costs, looking at the cost per gigajoule landed in Inuvik versus other substances like the propane air mixture that's currently provided, for example, or diesel, which is the most expensive. So there's been work in that

regard and we anticipate, hopefully in the next few weeks, to be able to report that hopefully we've reached a successful agreement with suppliers.

At this point that work is still underway and I'm not in a position to speak too much to the detail, but it looks to us, from the information that I've seen, that this is a potentially viable alternative. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. I'm glad to hear that the Minister is working on this. In terms of his mention of synthetic gas, it is an issue because the way we ship it up in Inuvik is from Dawson, and as we all know, the Dempster Highway does close down sometimes. Our storage for the synthetic gas is only a five-day storage and we don't want to get into a situation during these cold winter months where we'll find ourselves in dire straits here.

He did mention about four weeks to come back with the report and the study. Can he give me an exact timeline, whether it be after we finish this House sitting, so I can let the residents of Inuvik know that at the end of this session we should have something that might be implemented, something that we can look at and move further? Can he give me a specific timeline, if possible? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. The Power Corporation is working hard to conclude some of the arrangements. So I'm hopeful that in the life of this sitting that we'd be able to stand up and make a public announcement. What we are looking for, or the long-term target, of course, that we're looking for, is to be – if all things fall in place as we're planning – by this coming fall, in October, November, in Inuvik we'd be able to have an alternative source should we be able to confirm and sign all the necessary contracts to, in fact, embark on putting in liquid natural gas as an alternate source. So within the life of this sitting, I would hope to be able to stand up in this House and share that information with the folks.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. We're talking about this advancement in the LNG possible solution. Last year the Minister and the department had allocated another \$100,000 to other energy initiatives such as biomass, pellet stoves, wood stoves. Can the Minister confirm whether that dollar figure is still available for the community residents of Inuvik so that they can find another way to heat their homes and not rely on fuel? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. The money that's in there for rebates and grants is there, and we've added dollars and we've raised the cap, especially for businesses. So businesses that have expenses that are fairly significant, I think the cap has been raised to \$50,000 from \$15,000 and to better support folks. So that money is there not only for Inuvik, of course – but if they make use of that, that's more power to them – but other Northerners as well. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you. I appreciate the work that we're doing for all residents and businesses that are on the natural gas situation. But the ones that are on diesel or on fuel, are there any initiatives in the plan going forward that would reduce the costs for those people on diesel fuel, as well, so that their cost of living goes down when other businesses on natural gas go down, as well, so that we're targeting the whole community? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. The intent with the Power Corporation, we're focusing on generation of electricity. We're a major customer in the community. We've been on diesel for a while now, ever since we got the word that the gas was being depleted, so that we would free up as much gas for the community as possible.

As we proceed on the liquid natural gas initiative, clearly there's going to be opportunities for the community-at-large to take advantage of this as well. We have to look and balance the costs that are going to be there with liquid natural gas versus the projected costs for the synthetic gas, which is slightly less than diesel, but it's still about \$35 a gigajoule versus, I believe, \$39. So it's still very, very expensive when you think that natural gas is on the market down south for about \$4 a gigajoule. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 61-17(4):
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my questions the other day in my Member's statement on early childhood development with the Minister of ECE. I'm wondering, are the new family resource centres that are going into place this year meant to be a flash in the pan program, or do they actually recognize, I think, the intent and the need for a long-term comprehensive approach here? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. When we first initiated these family resource centres, we wanted to do a pilot project. Maybe for a short period of time at this point for Tulita and Ndilo, but part of the process is we want to listen to the general public, the stakeholders when we're engaging the general public about the Early Childhood Development Framework. What's going to come out of that? Would this still be their first priority and others, other initiatives that we've highlighted.

We want to see this as a long-term strategy, but we want to wait and see what the framework actually tells us, and based on that, we want to move forward in this format. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for those comments. I remain concerned about the \$125,000 that had been allocated for the Family Resource Centre in Ndilo, apparently very recently because it's year end. Ten of the 12 months have passed when those dollars were finally allocated. I'm concerned about the effectiveness of those dollars that are being spent for the last few weeks. So I'd like to know from the Minister, what is being done to ensure that those dollars are spent effectively, particularly given this situation this year. Mahsi.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. We are fully aware of the time constraint on the funding allocation. The funding will be direct deposited this week. My department met with the organization last week to start planning. The Ndilo staff do have a plan and they assured us that they want to complete the project by the end of the fiscal year. The acting chief also emphasized to us that Ndilo will implement the initiative in the time remaining. So those are the confirmations that we've received from the community of Ndilo, but we'll continue to assist them, work with them and provide support to the community, because we want this to be a successful project along with the Tulita and other projects along the way. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. I appreciate his supportive approach here. I have to say I am disappointed. When the House approves expenditures, it's with the intent that the Minister get out there and get the program on the ground so that we take benefit that year. So I'd like to ask, what were the issues causing this amazing delay in getting the Family Resource Centre dollars out the door into Ndilo, apparently just happening this week, other than their obvious reluctance to commit to a flash in the pan program when a long-term one was needed. What were the other issues and how were they addressed? Mahsi.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. When the first announcement came out, my department met with the representative of Ndilo with respect to the Child and Family Resource Centre in September and also following in October and November. We've attempted to meet with First Nations CEO, and in mid-November my department heard from the CEO to discuss the required documentation. So the draft proposal has been submitted thereafter November 15th and there's been some discussions and dialogue between my department and Ndilo.

We've done what we can as a department to expedite the process but, unfortunately, through the process the CEO left the community. But we continue to have the dialogue with their representative because we want to see this be a

successful project. Again, I have to reiterate that we're here to support them and we're going to be allocating the funding now. The plan is in place to implement it. We'll continue to provide that service and I will keep the Member up to speed on the process itself. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Short, final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I also did speak to the CEO and he expressed extreme frustration with the department. I am sure there are frustrations on both sides. I would ask the Minister to direct his staff to get down to it and just getting to it. Will the Minister commit to getting those dollars out the door early in the next fiscal year for early childhood development? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We are going to be releasing the funding this week and the plan to implement their planning. Again, we are working closely with the Ndilo community. We want to have this be a successful project, as well, and other future projects. We are doing what we can to maximize our support and provide services to the communities. Releasing the funds expeditiously will be our top priority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 62-17(4):
ELDERS IN MOTION PROGRAM

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about the Elders in Motion. In the Northwest Territories there are 4,342 elders who are 60 years and over. In the Sahtu there are 256 elders. We are all going to get old, Mr. Speaker. Some of us are going to be called to be an elder. I think in this House here, there are some seniors already here. I think there are four of them.

I went over to the Baker Centre and I saw some really dedicated people working on issues and helping the Elders in Motion. I want to ask the Minister responsible for Seniors, in working with his colleagues, is there some type of coordination where some of these elders who need support in ramps to their house so they can leave the house when they want to. I am asking this because that's one of the concerns they brought up.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister responsible for Seniors, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health and Social Services and also in my responsibilities for seniors, we are working on a plan for a continuum of care for seniors. One of the main objectives of that work is going to keep seniors in their home communities, in their own homes, as long as possible. That may

require some technical work on the units such as ramps and other barrier-free provisions within the unit. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I also asked the Minister responsible, I know there's a wide range of issues we want to look at with seniors and also with the school and part of the continuum care. Is the Minister going to ask Education, Culture and Employment how it can make it more friendly for our seniors to come into the schools and participate with the students? One of the suggestions the group talked about is steps in the school so they could participate easier and they would like to come into the school. Would the Minister look at that also?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I would have no problem discussing that with the Minister of Education. We have recognized that the schools that have easy access seem to be a centre for elders to attend and visit with the students and teachers within those schools. Schools that have barriers such as steep steps are not as senior friendly. So we can have that discussion between the two departments or between my responsibilities as the Minister responsible for Seniors and the Education Minister. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I want to say thank you to the Minister of MACA because of the sports and recreation and the good job they are doing with the Elders in Motion program and working with the Department of Health and Social Services. These seniors don't want to idle any more, Mr. Speaker. They want to go full throttle and they are asking the Minister to help them on some of these issues. One thing that really bothers them a lot, having to do with the municipality, has to do with loose dogs. I just don't know how the Minister can help, the Minister of MACA, to have dogs tied up. That's an issue that I want to ask the Minister about and if he would work with his colleague to see if they can get these loose dogs tied up in the communities.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. You are changing the topic, but I guess, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Again, Mr. Speaker, I have no problem to discuss the issue of dogs, stray dogs in the communities that could potentially be a danger for seniors with some mobility issues with the Minister of MACA. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya. I guess I will give it to you, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Member's statement, I went to the Baker Centre and I heard the Sahtu people talk about the Elders in Motion program in our region and a number of issues our elders have to face. I want to ask the Minister, would he be committed to come back, within a period of time, and make some

improvements to some of their recommendations. Some of them I talked about in this House. Will the Minister come back this fall so we can have some discussions about some of the things we talked about to make it easier for the elders to keep in motion?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: As I indicated, within the continuum of care for seniors, I will give the Member a progress report on how we are moving along with that initiative. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 63-17(4):

INUVIK TO TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow up to my Member's statement today, I have some questions for the Minister of Transportation. In this tentative agreement we have with the federal government for the construction of a highway from Inuvik to Tuk, I would like to ask the Minister, in his discussions with the federal government, has the topic of the ongoing cost of the operations and maintenance of that highway ever been raised. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Minister of Transportation, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ongoing maintenance and operation of that highway would be the responsibility of the Government of the Northwest Territories like other highways in the territory. So the answer would be no.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I would like to ask the Minister if he could give us an approximate cost of what it cost to maintain the 2,200 kilometres we currently have of all-weather road in the Northwest Territories, a ballpark figure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I don't have that figure and I'd be guessing, but I can perhaps read the Member's mind. The projections on the maintenance costs of the Inuvik-Tuk highway would be approximately \$2 million a year. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I was hoping that the Minister would give me an amount so I could figure it out per kilometre. If it was a high amount, I was going to tell him that's exactly why we can't afford to spend more. If it was a low amount, I was going to tell him that's why we can't afford anything else because we can't even keep with the roads we've got. I was ready for it.

Mr. Speaker, when we built the Deh Cho Bridge, it was self-financing. Does the Minister see any aspect of self-financing from the use of the Inuvik-Tuk highway? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I think now is the time for the government to invest in an infrastructure project like the Inuvik-Tuk highway. Now is the right time. We have to think long term. One of the criticisms, when you talk to companies that want to do business here in the Northwest Territories, is the lack of infrastructure. Putting a road between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk is going to do a tremendous amount to the future economic prosperity of that region. It's going to grow an economy outside of Yellowknife in a region of our territory that needs that type of activity. It will lead to resource development both onshore and offshore. It will connect those two communities. It will lead to further tourism opportunities in the region. There is a number of great, compelling reasons why the government needs to act now to build the Inuvik-Tuk highway. We need to make those type of decisions now, that are going to be benefitting this territory for generations to come. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Final, short supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you for that lovely speech. I'm all for growing the economy outside of Yellowknife, as everybody knows. But I'd like to ask the Minister, how did the traffic projections for this projected road, this planned road, compare with other regions and other all-weather roads throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, for that level of detail, I can get that and commit to get that to the Member. Certainly, this road will be the first one to get to the Arctic Coast in Canada. It's going to connect the country from coast to coast to coast, and our belief is we are going to see a lot of interested parties that want to drive this road to get to the Arctic Coast. Currently, you have to fly in there or take the ice road in the winter. It's a great opportunity for the region, a great opportunity for our territory and a great opportunity for this country. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 64-17(4):
MEDICAL AGREEMENT WITH
BC HEALTH MINISTRY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in my Member's statement, I spoke about our Health department working with the BC Health ministry and their northern health authority about having Fort Liard residents utilize their services.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, do we have a current arrangement with BC Health or any of its authorities currently? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do not have arrangements currently with BC Health.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: As I indicated in my Member's statement, I think by having an agreement with the BC Health ministry will certainly impact and even lower our health costs in terms of medical travel as well.

Can the Minister investigate what process will it take to having a working agreement with the BC Health ministry as we did in the old Capital Health System with Alberta? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am prepared to have the Department of Health and Social Services have discussions between the leadership in Fort Liard, Deh Cho Health and Social Services, to discuss the feasibility of using the health system out of Fort Nelson, British Columbia. We will use our agreements with Alberta as a guide to hold those discussions. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Already our Fort Liard residents are utilizing the Fort Nelson health system on their own costs. Will the Minister also investigate the possibility of reimbursing patients in Fort Liard going to Fort Nelson, at least for routine care? They're using the dentist, they're getting health check-ups. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, normally we don't have a system where we pay retroactively on medical travel and so on within our own system. Right within our system we don't have that possibility. But I will look at having a system where if it's medical travel, just like we do medical travel into Alberta, there would be medical travel from Fort Liard. As opposed to going to Simpson, they're going down to Fort Nelson and it would be just like the regular medical travel system. I will look at that. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister is on the right track. Once we get an agreement, I think the travel between Fort Liard and Fort Nelson will certainly take care of itself.

Just once more, will the Minister contact the BC Health ministry and begin these discussions, as well as involve the community of Fort Liard and its residents? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I will commit to having our department, Health and Social Services, the executive office, start those discussions and we will make contact with BC Health in Nelson and also

discuss that with the leadership in Fort Liard. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 65-17(4):
GREYHOUND BUS SERVICE

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Member's statement, the loss to Hay River and the South Slave of the Greyhound service has been detrimental to the spectacular North. My question today will be for the Minister of ITI.

Has the department looked at re-establishing this service into the North?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was unfortunate that Greyhound made the corporate decision to not include the Northwest Territories in its routes in 2011. They have done likewise across this country with taking away a number of rural routes into other northern areas of other provinces. Some provinces have provided subsidies. I know in Manitoba they've provided a \$3.9 million subsidy to Greyhound to operate rural routes in Manitoba.

In the Yukon, with Alaska there and the Alaska Highway running through the Yukon, Greyhound continues to operate in the Yukon and services a market in Alaska of close to a million people.

We just don't have the scale of that type of market here in the Northwest Territories, and Greyhound made some business decisions and decided to cut the route into the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: Mr. Speaker, my next question is: Has the Minister and his department looked at what it would take to get Greyhound back into the Northwest Territories?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, we haven't explored the prospect of subsidies to accompany Greyhound to operate. We certainly understand there's a negative impact on tourism numbers in the South Slave because of the discontinuation of Greyhound service.

I would say that there's a business opportunity here for somebody in the South Slave to pick up the slack and have some type of service, scheduled service, whether it's to Grande Prairie or Peace River or wherever the case may be in northern Alberta, to connect to the Greyhound line. That's an opportunity for somebody to pick up that slack.

If there is an entrepreneur in the South Slave that wants to take a look at that, we have programs and services with the Government of the Northwest

Territories that could help somebody get established and get that type of service started in the South Slave. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: I understand the importance of the business concept and maybe somebody potentially doing that, but the importance is Greyhound's national link. I'm just wondering if the Minister has been able to confirm – he indicated Manitoba – whether Yukon Territory subsidizes any Greyhound services.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, we contacted the Yukon departments of Highways, Public Works, Economic Development, Tourism and Culture. All of those departments in the Government of Yukon indicated that they do not in any way provide a subsidy to Greyhound to operate in the Yukon. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if I can get a commitment from the department to actually investigate the costs of the subsidy and the potential of doing the subsidy to get this vital national link back into the Northwest Territories.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, if the Member would like us to contact Greyhound directly and begin some discussions on what it would cost to get that service, I guess that is something we can certainly find out and bring back to this House and see if there is support for something like that to happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

QUESTION 66-17(4):
PLANNING FOR
TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL RETROFIT

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with my theme of no new territorial hospital this year, we seem to be following the legacy of a fiscally restrained Finance Minister, Minister Miltenberger, whose new health policy right now is don't get sick, at least not this year.

We are hoping that the Minister of Finance can maybe clearly articulate, with all of these very expensive financial competing infrastructures that we will have in the near future from Inuvik-Tuk. We talked about a fibre optic line, a large scale. We have only about \$180 million Visa to play with here and very limited revenue resources coming in here. How does the Minister expect to stretch this Visa, knowing full well, as he said, that this is going to be a 200 to 300 million dollar piece of infrastructure? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have laid out the fiscal framework going forward to Members. The Stanton Hospital is

going to be done over time. We recognize there is planning work to be done. There's money being budgeted, increasing amounts, over the coming years that will allow us to manage this project.

As we go forward, other projects will fall off and be completed. So we have looked at all the numbers, we looked at all these factors, and we are of the opinion – and we've laid it out before this House and before committee – that we can manage these projects with careful investments, some very strategic debt, and do the things we are doing to manage our expenses, and we can spend \$1.6 million on programs and next year we can add another \$50 million in addition to the Tuk-Inuvik Highway to our capital plan. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Speaker, again, I know the Minister has been courteous enough to come to committee and talk about some of this fiscal strategy. We would hope that the Member or the Minister would be able to do so with the public so they can also see what the strategy is all about.

I am still very confused. We are starting with an odometer riding on our budget or Visa baseline of \$621 million. We have only \$800 million to spend. We talked about all of these competing priorities. How is it, again specifically, are we going to move forward these large-scale infrastructures in the very near future?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, we approved the capital plan last fall, in November I believe it was, where we laid out the fiscal arrangements, the capital plan that we can afford on a go-forward basis. That detail was laid out before Members, before this House. We are going to be involved in another capital plan going forward.

Not being able to use props and hold up charts and show them the fiscal strategy, I can tell the Member, and as the Member well knows, we have some very, very competent people in Finance who laid out the plan. We've had input in it. We have put in the key critical infrastructure investments we need to make. We've laid out a four-year plan for the budget we are on that's going to allow us to do these things and still control our debt, keep \$100 million cushion between us and the borrowing limit so that we have room to respond to emergencies.

I can tell that in this House, if the Member wants something further to provide comfort to the public, I guess we can have that discussion other than the main estimates, the capital plan and all the attached information. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Speaker, I will take the Minister up on his offer to share this information, but I also equally ask him to share this information with the public. They have clearly indicated that they want to know, they want to see the graphs, the charts and everything else, and I think we owe it to them.

We talked about the fact that the hospital is needed. The Minister has indicated in general means that this is going to be a large retrofit, yet we did not see anything, no signs or signals in this budget for this imminent piece of infrastructure, this territorial health piece of our structure and our future. When can we start seeing these types of signals being sent to the House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, let me offer this to the Member and to the public as well. When we did the budget dialogues, people asked us, when you come back next year, give us more comprehensive information. We tried to give them a summary, but they wanted to have the detail. So what I'll commit to in this House is that when we do our budget dialogues, we will lay out the fiscal strategy in detail, plain English, but enough detail so that folks will be able to see on the capital side, on the O and M side how we budgeted ourselves for the next four years, two years, when we go out to the communities. We can do that. I will give that commitment to the Member that when we do the budget dialogues for 2013, we will do that.

In regard to the Stanton, the Stanton is going to be appearing more significantly starting in the next capital go round and all the years hence with money being added in significant quantities as the project starts to evolve and be defined. Thank you.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Again, I do appreciate the Minister for coming up with that information and continuing the dialogue that he's promised. But a very simple question: Will we see a shovel in the dirt with a new territorial hospital within the life of the 17th Assembly? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 67-17(4):
NWT SENIORS' CHARTERS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no surprise to Members that I'm a big supporter and champion of seniors' issues and certainly their rights. In the 16th Assembly, I brought up the issue of an NWT Seniors' Charter. In my belief, it would complement the work here that we do in the Assembly. It would serve as a mission statement as to how the government sets out its commitment, well-being and support for quality living with seniors.

My question for the Minister responsible for Seniors is: What does he use for his guiding principle and mandate to build and work within a relationship with

NWT seniors to ensure we're meeting their needs? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Seniors, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry; I was distracted and didn't hear the question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Hawkins, could you re-ask the question for the Minister, please?

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I include my preamble as before? It's so exciting.

What is the Minister responsible for Seniors using as his guiding mandate that builds and bridges the relationship between his responsibilities as Minister responsible for Seniors and certainly the relationship and their needs by seniors in the NWT? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, as the Members know, the responsibility for the Minister under seniors comes with actually no budgets. However, we do draw from interdepartmental pool where Health and Social Services provides some funding, some coordinator, some support to the seniors and the Seniors' Society, and then the funding comes from the various departments to the NWT Seniors' Society as an example. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, in a coordinating fashion, how do we know we're meeting the needs of seniors? How do we measure this? How do we understand this and what type of relationship fashion is set up to ensure that the messages, their needs, are being communicated to the government? Is it the responsibility of this Minister? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. We have a seniors coordinator within the Department of Health and Social Services reporting through the system at Health and Social Services. That coordinator works closely with the NWT Seniors' Society. The Seniors' Society supports the various seniors' organizations in the communities across the Territories. That is how we coordinate our activities or any support that we may have from the government through the one individual that works through the Department of Health and she will get some administrative support within the Department of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. Would the Minister responsible for Seniors agree that if we had a seniors' charter, it be useful, in his view, to ensure that we're meeting the needs of seniors, and if he does believe that being the case, what would he be prepared to do to work on a seniors' charter for the NWT? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. I can discuss that with the regular committees, committees of MLAs, to see if a charter would be something that would enhance support for seniors. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. A seniors' charter would be a mission statement of this government on its principles and support for its seniors. Does the Minister believe in that type of concept and ideals? Would he lead this initiative? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. We have set up a structure where we have, within the Cabinet, a subcommittee of Cabinet that is a social envelope committee, which is led by the Minister of Justice. Within that committee we have the various Ministers working on that committee. We also work with the Regular Members in developing some work through the small communities, the real remote communities, to be able to have the work that's needed to be able to assist seniors in the various communities across the small communities where they may not have the same type of support systems that are available such as the NGOs in some of the larger communities. So, yes, I will continue to work within that group and involve the seniors groups as much as possible. Thank you.

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

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 7-17(4):
DISTRIBUTION OF GNWT JOBS

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Human Resources.

Please provide a geo-traffic breakdown by town, constituency and region, of GNWT jobs-to-population ratio at December 31, 2012.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address, day five of seven. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Mr. Yakeleya.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 15-17(4):
SAHTU EXPLORATION READINESS SESSION –
FINAL REPORT

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table the Sahtu Exploration Readiness Session Report.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Hawkins.

TABLED DOCUMENT 16-17(4):
ARTICLE ON PRESSURES
AFFECTING SLAVE RIVER

TABLED DOCUMENT 17-17(4):
ARTICLE ON METAL LEVELS
IN NWT RIVERS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table two documents. They are both from the Northern Journal. Ironically, both of them are from the same page and the same date, but I will table them separately. The date is Tuesday, January 29, 2013. The first article is a clipping on Pressures Affecting Slave River. The second one is the NWT River Metals Far Below Guidelines Study Finds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole and other matters: Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014, and Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendment Act.

By the authority given to me as Speaker, by Motion 1-17(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the hour of adjournment to consider business before the House, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. What's the wish of the committee? Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee wishes to continue with Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014, with Environment and Natural Resources.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. We will proceed after a brief recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'll call the committee back to order. We are continuing on with our review of the main estimates and the department we have up next is Department of Environment and Natural Resources. I'd like to ask Minister Miltenberger if he'd like to provide opening comments to his department.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, I would, Madam Chair.

I am pleased to speak to the 2013-2014 main estimates for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The plan proposes total operational expenses of \$71.5 million for the upcoming year. This represents an 8.9 percent, or \$5.8 million, increase from last year's budget.

The bulk of this increase is attributed to forced growth adjustments of \$5.3 million to cover increased costs for forest fire operations and suppression, preparing for increased oil and gas exploration and development in the Sahtu and completing negotiations on a transboundary water agreement with Alberta and \$1.6 million in energy initiatives. This increase was offset by a \$1 million reduction due to funding sunsets and other adjustments.

As Members are aware, the mandate of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is to promote and support the sustainable use and development of our natural resources and to protect, conserve and enhance the environment for the social and economic benefit of all residents.

The department also supports and promotes the priorities of the 17th Legislative Assembly as outlined in *Believing in People and Building on the Strength of Northerners*.

A range of activities are proposed to uphold this mandate and this Assembly's priorities. I would like to highlight a few key investments planned for the next fiscal year.

We are investing an additional \$2.5 million to the fire suppression base funding to allow the department to adequately plan and respond to forest fire activity without the recurring risk of exceeding its appropriated amount. An increase to the suppression budget was requested by the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure.

The fire suppression budget has remained static for the past five years and has proven to be insufficient to meet demands in four out of five of those years. The department is also receiving additional funds to cover cost increases for 11 contract forest fire management crews, to provide training for firefighters and to cover increases in the volume and price of aviation fuel for aircraft including helicopters and CL-215 and L-188 Electra aircraft.

As Members requested, we have identified an additional \$1.6 million for our energy initiatives. This will result in increased funding for alternative energy technology, commercial energy conservation and efficiency, and energy efficiency incentive programs. Other key activities include ongoing delivery of the Greenhouse Gas Strategy, funding of regional energy advisors in Inuvik, Norman Wells, Behchoko and Fort Simpson, a community scale wind demonstration project in an Arctic Coast community, and installation of remote

smart grids to help improve the efficiency, reliability and sustainability of the production and distribution of electricity.

The department will also continue implementing the NWT Biomass and Solar Energy strategies.

Increased oil and gas activity in the Sahtu region may result in significant environmental impacts. A coordinated approach to collecting baseline information will allow us to monitor these impacts and ensure we have the appropriate information to make informed decisions related to development in the Sahtu. Additional resources have been allocated for a new environmental protection officer position in the Sahtu region and for gathering environmental baseline data.

We continue to make good progress in our negotiations on a bilateral transboundary water resources management agreement with Alberta. Additional funding has been identified to continue this important work which includes Section 35 consultation with Aboriginal governments and regional workshops on the development of Northwest Territories positions for the bilateral agreement negotiations.

The department continues its work on a range of activities which address the priorities of building a strong and sustainable future for our territory, and strengthening and diversifying our economy.

Key activities for the 2013-2014 fiscal year include protecting territorial waters, mitigating and adapting to climate change impacts, improving environmental stewardship and working collaboratively with Aboriginal governments, communities, industry and the public, to conserve our environment and ensure the wise and sustainable use of our resources.

This will be accomplished through the introduction of a new Wildlife Act during this session, the expansion of community-based water monitoring programs, the implementation of a number of wildlife management strategies and action plans including those for barren-ground caribou, boreal caribou and wood bison, the development of sustainable forest economies in our communities, the coordination of the government's participation in the environmental assessment process, and the development and implementation of an electronic waste program.

ENR staff also continue to work with the devolution office to review, assess and analyze waste management sites identified for transfer to our government and plan for an orderly transfer of organizational records from the federal government.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the department's 2013-2014 main estimates. I look forward to discussing them in more detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I'd like to ask the Minister if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses to the table.

For the record, Mr. Miltenberger, would you introduce your witnesses, please.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Madam Chair, I have with me Ernie Campbell, deputy minister of Environment and Natural Resources, and Ms. Nancy Magrum, director of shared services for ENR and ITI. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We'll now move on to general comments. Just by way of process here, folks, I believe the wish of the committee is Members will make general comments, not including questions that they expect the Minister to answer. We will save the questions for the detail and we will ask the Minister to hold his response to the general comments until the end until everyone has provided general comments. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. General comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Minister for his opening comments. I'd like to start, as he essentially did here, with the energy programs. I'm very disappointed, obviously, in the decrease. We established \$1.7 million last year. What this government wants, and I think it's spoken clearly on, is increasing spending in energy initiatives. I suppose I have to make it clear that I'm not talking about subsidies on fossil fuel, which is where we seem to be putting literally hundreds of millions of dollars. When I add it all up, it's that sort of number. It's pretty startling. So I'm very disappointed on that front and, again, I know we will get into some details on that.

I want to note the challenge, recognize the challenge, for preparing for funding for fires. It's totally unpredictable. We do know, though, that with climate change, the fire characteristics are changing and the costs are changing. Here, we didn't have so much as big or numerous fires as very expensive fires. That's the sort of characteristic that is predicted to become more and more problematic. As our land dries out, we're already sort of a remnant of glaciation, and our land is drying out in geological time. But now with

climate change, that is being accelerated and will be expressed most prominently in the area of forest fires. So I recognize that's a real challenge. I know that there has been a lot of thinking that has taken into consideration climate change in the forestry strategy. So it will be interesting hearing how that is impacting our programs.

I am wondering if there's a budget for implementing solar energy. I haven't seen it. It must be there somewhere, but we have a new Solar Strategy. I think it's a good one, a very progressive one and will be challenging to implement, but it will certainly take a dedicated budget.

I'd be very interested in the Minister's thoughts in terms of protecting territorial waters, improving environmental stewardship and this sort of thing, given the present climate that we've got and the decimation of our environmental protection regime. I know the hope is we're going to complete devolution and get resources to do that. I guess it's not too early to start thinking about how. What is our strategy in putting together a recovery program and planning for the budget that it will, very obviously, take.

The recent conversation, I think we need to start recognizing that MVRMA, for example, if and when we take it over, it's well known that it's been underfunded from the start. I know the Minister is aware of that and many reviews have pointed to that. I would say, people in the Northwest Territories want that addressed. So what are we doing right now to get ready for that eventuality?

I have some concerns about the expansion of community-based water monitoring programs; not the community-based aspect of that, obviously. But we have aggressively expanded our water dollars. We've created a land and water department, I believe, division. I believe the last time I asked, something like 85 percent was being spent on the water, and here we are increasing it again and these are federal responsibilities. They're not being carried out by the federal government, so I'm very happy to see us participating in this.

But I do, at the same time, hear the Minister talking about austerity and living within our means and so on. I am frequently faced with the impression that it's within the Minister's means rather than our means. So I would appreciate some detail there on what's going on with that.

With barren ground caribou, we're still way behind on that front. Well before I got into politics I was working in the area of environment and wildlife, and I saw a request for proposals – it crossed my desk – to design a Bathurst Caribou Management Plan. I don't know how many years ago that was, but that was a long time ago and we still don't have one. So we're really behind the eight ball on that. We've got to get going on that. There are obvious problems. So I'm looking for the Minister to show where there

are obviously and clearly surpluses, that we will be providing all users with access to caribou now. I think it was very irresponsible that...(inaudible)...so I'd like some expression of how that's going to be done in the near future.

Participation in the environmental assessment process, again that's going to be challenging since there's not a lot of processes left to be participating in. So we need to be considering that in our long-term planning.

We've talked about electronic waste programs implementation and so on. I'm looking forward to that, and I wouldn't mind some details on that, or we can leave that to the detail. I'll leave that to the Minister's discretion.

That's it for general comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Next I have Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the big focus for me, as most Members will probably know, is the situation we're going through in Inuvik in the energy initiatives with finding a gas solution. Earlier today I had questions for the Minister of ENR here, talking about the \$100,000 that he mentioned in his budget address to advance the LNG solution. Currently with our gas shortage, our community relying on synthetic gas, the synthetic gas storage in the community, which only lasts five days, and all the other concerns such as transportation on the highway. At times when the highway does shut down for possibly a week or so, and we don't have the proper storage right now for that propane or mixture gas and it would affect a lot of residents and businesses. So I'm glad to see that there's work being done in that area. I would like to get a little more information as we move forward, and keep apprised of the developments with what's being in the discussions here.

Obviously, if we do find some energy initiatives that would lower the cost for residents in Inuvik, it would also offset possibly other costs in other departments: income support, possibly getting more human resources, jobs, things like that. So there's a rippling effect into finding this solution for the gas shortage in Inuvik.

Also, continuing to look at biomass initiatives in the community and other communities, as well, in the Beaufort-Delta region. Something that has come by our desk is some of the work that the Arctic Energy Alliance has done specific to diesel communities, and some possible solutions since 15 percent of our residents in Inuvik also rely on diesel fuel, and also the government switching over. Finding solutions that would cut down the costs for residents, but also for the government in the long run, and looking at some of those studies that have

been done and possibly putting those into the works.

I'm going to keep my general comments short today, just to get into detail. Also, in terms of what happened last summer with the fire suppression and the big fires that happened in Inuvik, I'm glad to see that there are investments into the fire suppress. There's \$2.5 million that I think will prepare our suppression crews and our fire departments within ENR to adjust the issue and be ready.

The other big one here is the Wildlife Act. There's a lot of hard work that's been going into this. My discussions around the table with the working group members, with the beneficiaries, with Aboriginal groups that they see that the work that's being done there, the consultations back and forth is something that they want to see become reality and get this bill passed.

Other than that, my main focus in ENR is finding some good energy initiatives not only for Inuvik but for the high-cost communities that rely on diesel and the coastal communities of the Beaufort-Delta region, and as we move forward, looking at some other solutions. Also the key activities that the Minister mentioned here, such as protecting territorial waters, mitigating and adapting to the climate change impacts, improving environmental stewardship, and collaborative work with the Aboriginal Governments. The work that's being done in that area, I look forward to seeing, and listening to discussions, and hearing the updates and where we move from there.

Just a few general comments, Madam Chair. I look forward to this department continuing to work and looking to find solutions for Inuvik, as well as the community of Norman Wells that is kind of in the same solution that we're in at the same time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Moses. General comments. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have a couple of opening remarks and I think most of my questions will be in the detail. One of the first comments I have would be towards all the biomass initiatives that are currently in the budget. I'm pleased to see that.

I will have some questions later on about the forestry resource inventories and how much money we're spending to do a baseline in the South Slave if we have a strong potential of a company setting up...(inaudible)...operation in the area. I'm just wondering if we're continuing to reinvest in that to make sure that we know what the inventories in the South Slave are to feed that type of operation.

One of the other areas that I wanted to discuss today was that the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure had

reviewed the hydraulic fracturing. Some of the things involved with that, and I think are involved with this department, are some baseline study work in the Sahtu area where there's lots of oil and gas going on right now, and what the department is committing for some sort of baseline study to see what the current landscape is before all the development. If any kind of major oil and gas play happens in that area, we need to have some baseline studying, especially in the area of hydraulic fracturing, where I know some people are concerned.

Along the lines of hydraulic fracturing, I would like to know what the department is doing in conjunction with the NEB, National Energy Board, and how we as a committee have made some recommendations that there should be some regulations put in place before some hydraulic fracturing is happening. I'm just wondering. I would like to get some information on where the department is going with that and what kind of dollars they are committed to maybe giving to the concerns in the Sahtu towards hydraulic fracturing.

My last point is some of the dollars that the department is going to be spending. We've been informed that the department will be implementing the Wildlife Act later this year. I was just wondering what kind of dollars they are committing to this process, the second go around. Is it as heavy as the years before or are we kind of expecting the water to be a little calmer and have we worked out some of the solutions? Those are my opening comments and I'll have more questions in the detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. General comments. Next I have Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just reserved some of my questions for later on in the detail. For the most part, I am kind of encouraged by the movement to engage communities in terms of trying to at least advance the whole biomass initiative. I think it is a very good initiative that complements the realities of community life, especially small communities where jobs are very few and industry is not very actively present in the communities to provide businesses plus job opportunities. I think right now I understand it that there are discussions ongoing with several communities. Perhaps some of them are more advanced than other communities. I think it's a very significant undertaking and I am very interested in terms of the progress and the success of the initiative. I'd like to ensure that the communities that I represent are fairly involved with that.

Other matters I feel strongly about are in terms of how we are trying to advance the transboundary water agreement with other jurisdictions in terms of the effect on the fish population or the aquatic

species or aquatic life. As you know, we live along the Mackenzie. We are fairly dependent on the river for travel, but also at the same time, a diet of fish is very prominent in terms of trying to supplement people's diet in small communities.

In terms of wildlife, I have stated my points in terms of concerns about the woodland caribou populations: whether we have been closely monitoring them, the status of the population in terms of their rank of whether there are a species at risk. I am also interested in terms of the moose population. Of course, living again from Fort Providence, we try to supplement our diet with food from the land, and the moose is fairly prominent in Dene culture. We need to ensure that we have mitigative measures in place to ensure that we properly manage and ensure the success of the moose population.

I am, of course, curious in terms of the bison recovery plan for Fort Providence. As you know, last summer was a fairly traumatic event for the bison population, and I would like to know, in terms of the bison recovery plan, in terms of some of the steps that have been taken to try to put some measures in place to ensure that the bison population does recover. I'd like to, maybe later on, ask some questions.

Of course, energy initiatives, I think, in some respects with small communities there is optimism that things are complementing at least the communities plus the environment around them that we value is workable. It is hoped for at least the immediate future for business opportunities, at the same time for at least trying to be advanced, a collaborative effort that I have seen thus far with governments and communities. I would like to know in terms of just how it is that the Land Use Framework is helping out in terms of trying to at least get a semblance of various initiatives in terms of whether it be conservation, whether it be environmental management, regulatory regime, and all the land claims that are happening, helping whether this framework is supposed to at least put things in a logical sense so that at least strategic decisions on the environment are made. Those are just a few of my comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. General comments. Next I have Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the Minister and his delegation here. It is always a pleasure to have you back.

I have to commend the Minister here. A lot of change, I think, within the last year, and a lot of good doing. We are hearing a Wildlife Act is going to be going back on the road here. I think the general population is looking forward to commenting on that and, I think, hopefully finally putting to bed something that has been in the works

for many years. I applaud the stewardship behind that.

I don't want to reinvent the wheel here with respect to what has been said. I just want to earmark a couple of areas that I noticed in the opening comments of the Minister and another couple that aren't on here that aren't somewhat reflected in the budget.

First and foremost, in no particular order of importance, is the CL-215s. There are aging fire suppression fleet. The Minister is very much aware that I have asked many questions in the House before regarding the age of our fleet, the viability of our fleet, and the future outlook in terms of what we are going to do when these planes become no longer of value, more or less along the lines of questioning the end of life. We have yet to see a plan of action. There is significant infrastructure investment. I think the people of the Northwest Territories, including Members of this House, would like to see the long-term strategy behind that.

I have to give credit where credit is due again. I think our Minister has made incredible progress, not only territorially but nationally – I think we can use the word internationally – in terms of his ideology behind transboundary water agreements and the stewardship behind that. Even in certain books now has the Minister's name been mentioned in it. I applaud the Minister for his bigger vision, and sometimes, again, we don't give credit where credit is due and I think that is very critical.

However, with that accolade of accomplishment, I do put some regressive caution that these negotiations have cost taxpayers a substantial amount of money over the years. It would be nice to see an end in sight. Where is that end? Yet, we don't really see this in the budget; we see a continuance here. I think that the people of the Northwest Territories, although pleased with the direction and stewardship, I think need to see some closure moving forward.

Other areas where I didn't see much mention in the budget is the gathering of baseline information, whether we are dealing with species at risk or looking at all of the effects of our wildlife and the monitoring, especially migration and adaptive behaviour. I'm hoping and encouraging the department to make the investments in creating good baselines in our future.

Not necessarily last on my list is how we deal with our energy use. As we heard from committee, and as you heard from some of the Members, reducing our use of fossil fuels needs to be more than just a slogan. It needs to be more than just a flavour of the day. We are hoping that the department leads in this capacity to provide meaningful and thought-provoking means to get people off fossil fuels. We have to look at those viable options. We have to make sure we put those necessary dollars so that,

whatever we are putting in, the return on our investment is extremely tangible and not, I guess, fictional.

The last thing I want to talk about is our environmental watching or stewardship or watchdog behaviour. We have a lot of ongoing projects in terms of waste management. We have a lot of change on the horizon with the transfer of powers through the devolution portfolio. I think a lot of people, as it was very plain and obvious through the public hearings with the recent Giant Mine Remediation Team, that people are concerned. The people around Yellowknife are gravely concerned, but the people of the Northwest Territories should be equally concerned. Water moves upstream or goes downstream, I should say, from the Yellowknife basin all the way down the Mackenzie all the way to the ocean. This is a big issue. I am hoping that the ongoing dialogue with the people in working with the remediation teams is one in which we're going to see, again, more of a closure, more of a long-term thinking than the current cryogenic, I guess, solutions that have been proposed before us.

So last is, we've got a lot of activity in the Sahtu with the central Mackenzie oil and gas. We want to make sure that we are stewards, we want to make sure that during this transfer of devolution, we know ENR is going to be busy more than they probably ever have in the next couple of years. We need to make sure that we provide those levels of comfort for all residents in that area because, again, we do not want to have another Giant Mine issue.

So those are my opening comments, but there will be a couple of specifics. But again, some of these were covered in the opening address. Some of them may be new. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Any further general comments? Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of ENR is going to be challenged with some significant changes in the Northwest Territories if some of the proven resources in the Sahtu come to fruition. As indicated in his opening statement, they're preparing for the increased oil and gas exploration development in the Sahtu, and one of our greatest resources that sustains us today is the water. The Minister indicated they are completing a transboundary negotiation water agreement with Alberta and, of course, Alberta is also ramping up and they're looking at using water for hydroelectric energy, and the Alberta tar sands is also involved in their operations with the water. It all flows up to the Slave River and to the Great Slave Lake and down the Mackenzie River. We have the Norman Wells oilfields that have been in operation for some time. I wanted to ask the Minister about a hearing to the Sahtu land claim in

regard to keeping the quality of water as a priority in our government and that there's not to be any alteration of the quality of water in our area of our settled land claims. There could be other areas or land claims that have that type of specific agreement that was negotiated.

So I'm going to ask the Minister about those areas where there is a high interest in the oil and gas, especially with the new technology in the North of fracking, and ensuring our people that our water is of the utmost, and the integrity of our water is kept in place. That we're going to do everything within the means of this legislation so that the oil companies are kept on notice when they begin, and if they begin a fracking operation, that we're going to be okay. In 50 years we're still going to be okay, or even 75 years.

So I'm very interested in that type of work and that the government will be looking at to provide some comfort to the people of the significant environmental impacts that are going to happen with development, which could certainly change the Northwest Territories economic powerhouse in the North and how things will be looked at in the Northwest Territories in regard to the new interests of the oil and gas developments in the Sahtu region.

I'm very happy to see the Wildlife Act being put back on our tables, to have some discussion and look at how this Wildlife Act can be discussed where we would see a new Wildlife Act by the end of this session. We certainly came close to it in the 16th Assembly and I was heartbroken at not having it passed at that time. This Wildlife Act is coming into play and it is very important to the people in the communities, people in the North and, specifically, people in the regions where they have Aboriginal and treaty rights. This Wildlife Act hasn't been changed since I think I was in Grade 11 or 12 when they had the Wildlife Act, so there are lots of changes that have taken place since that time. I'm not that old, but I think that's a significant amount of appreciation to the Minister for his patience and people who have made contributions all over the North to this Wildlife Act.

It's very sensitive because how do we work together on it. People use the animals to feed themselves and look after themselves. So we had to be very patient and sometimes I'm not. Sometimes I just want to get these things done and we have to learn to work together and live together and educate each other. I think there's enough will here, I hope there's enough will that this Wildlife Act will come to the floor and we'll vote on it so the department can get to work and modernize our Wildlife Act. I want to thank the Minister and staff for the due diligence that it had to do to get this piece of legislation through the discussions. It will

certainly be coming to our table for further discussion so we can see this being implemented.

The last point I want to make is with the energy initiatives. Certainly we saw a worst-case scenario happen in Norman Wells this past winter and I thank the governments for responding in a very professional and speedy way in the turn of events that happened. The situation of having their gas shut off and resources had to be put in place to ensure people and all safety mechanisms were going to be taken care of, such as evacuating if they had to and looking at other issues that the government was facing, especially with MACA and the Town of Norman Wells. I bring that up because the importance of an energy initiative in the Sahtu, especially for the town of Norman Wells, they had people go through some of that experience of the last 24 hours when they were going through that. So I look forward to some initiatives that could be out of this world, can be maybe thought of as thinking outside the box that we had some good discussions on. How can we reduce the carbon emissions?

Looking at ways that we can help our communities reduce the cost of living, and I think we're going to have some discussion in that area. We talked about one far-out idea as to put woodstoves in people's houses. That would do so much good. That's such a unique concept that we could really help our people on many fronts. I hope the government is open to that type of suggestion. Our people in the Sahtu live off the land and I think a lot of people in the North like to go out and have that opportunity to take their children – it's educational, the fresh air, get active – and if they had an opportunity to have a woodstove that would cut down on their diesel or their natural gas or whatever, they would use it. It would help a lot. So I look forward to those types of energy initiatives that ENR can look at in the future and have some discussion on that.

Those are all my comments for the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Any further general comments? Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a great pleasure to provide a few opening comments to the Minister. I guess I would start off with this, although it's been mentioned. I will be brief.

The department I think needs, from a forward thinking point of view, to develop a fracking strategy from the Environment and Natural Resources perspective. I know that as a Member on the Economic Development and Infrastructure committee, the environment issues are constantly brought up. We have to find ways to steward ourselves that balance the needs of infrastructure and development in the context of appreciation and respect for the environment. I would hope that this

would be on the agenda of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Quite often we hear from our constituents about caribou and how important they are, the caribou survey and where it needs to be further developed by this department. I would hope the department would have something to say.

Madam Chair, you yourself, as well as I, have talked for a number of years from time to time about the tire shredder and how the department has some good initiatives on waste reduction. I think a tire shredder, we are certainly due for one in our infrastructure. We could send it up and down the Mackenzie into our communities. It doesn't necessarily need to make the whole trip in one year, but it could make its way up and down the valley every couple of years. I bet we could even send it over to Nunavut and make a bit of money that way. It would help redirect some of the waste that could be sorted out.

I have said over the years, and I'm going to use this occasion to remind the Minister, we need a good strategy for e-waste in the Northwest Territories and I would certainly like some feedback on that. As well, I've often brought up the issue on batteries, whether they are car batteries or just general household batteries. It's something that gets parked in the community dump, whether it's Yellowknife, Hay River, Tsiigehtchic or wherever it is. What happens to these things? I don't think we have a philosophy as to how we plan to deal with this. On a small program, we could talk about how we want to do something. I think here is a real initiative we can talk about and do something with.

The Minister has made more than a polemic argument as to why we should continue biomass. It's very important. I am absolutely a supporter of biomass. I think it makes a lot of sense. Without sounding like a critic, it seems to be one of the things we do fantastic. It's not to say we don't do other things well, but it's one of the things we do very, very well. It helps our energy. It's a good type of stewardship.

But by the same token, I have concerns about solar energy. Without it being significantly subsidized, it just doesn't make sense. Our solar energy does not deliver the same type of bang for the buck that we could get from biomass. That said, although I do appreciate the initiatives that have been done, if they had not been heavily subsidized, they would not be economic. So it's funny when you say you super-subsidize something to make it economic, it kind of makes you wonder where the money is coming from and what it's actually doing.

I will say the notation here in his opening remarks about baseline study in the Sahtu area, I think with the addition of an environmental protection officer, we need that type of work done. We can certainly see the tsunami of work that's coming our way in

that region and I have no doubt that everyone in the Sahtu, from an economic point of view, are on the edge of their seats, saying we cannot wait to get to work. I'm sure they need the work. This will help further develop the region, but by the same token, as I said earlier, in the context of fracking, in that message that is, we also have to ensure we are good quality stewards of our resources. At that point, I should also give credit to Minister Ramsay who brought the Economic Development committee to Calgary. His department was very helpful in our study tour. I would say he may be tough in some perspectives, but Minister Ramsay does deserve credit for leading that initiative. Without that type of information, we wouldn't help appreciate the stewardship we need to take in consideration going forward.

Madam Chair, today I tabled a couple of articles from the Northern Journal. By coincidence they were on the same page, and certainly they were talking about northern water and the quality of it. The present quality is good. Having said that, a relentless and robust program here to develop, monitor and manage our water is very important because once it's bad, in my view, as a non-expert, it's almost impossible to fix. It is the lifeblood of everything we need, so it's got to be primary in our concerns. By the same token, I should remind everyone in this House and not just the public, Minister Miltenberger has led that crusade for many years. He needs to be patted on the back for his accomplishments.

I happened to go down to the Alberta Legislature when he presented them with a motion in this House and talked about how important this relationship is. Getting along in the messaging, programming and developing policy with Alberta to ensure NWT waters are clean and safe for generations to come is critically important.

I didn't necessarily want to spend too much time on the opening comments, but I did want to provide a little bit of feedback from my perspective. I'd say, overall, I am quite pleased with the department in the way they respond to my concerns as an individual MLA. I can't speak for all MLAs in that regard, but I get a sense that the department does do good work. At times we may disagree with them, but they certainly do a yeoman's job on perspectives that need to be raised and sometimes, at the end of the day, they're different. I respect that.

Madam Chair, that's all my comments at this particular time. I look forward to the detail as we proceed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. General comments. Next I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a few brief comments to make. First I will start with

biomass. I would like to thank the department, on behalf of Fort McPherson, for working with the community for the last year to start a new initiative in the community.

Also, hopefully we can build on that partnership over the next few years. As you know, the Gwich'in Settlement Area is the only area in the Northwest Territories that actually has a forest management plan. I'm really looking forward over the next few years to create that partnership and move forward.

The Arctic Energy Alliance, a lot of homeowners last year were very happy with the initiatives that were taken installing woodstoves. I know there is a huge interest of homeowners that would like to see that continue.

Under traditional knowledge, you have some funding set aside for communities to carry out some specific wildlife and forestry research. I am really happy with that and I hope we can carry that on over the next few years.

For now, those are the only comments I have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you very much, Mr. Blake. General comments. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I guess a lot of area has been covered already by my colleagues. I guess one specific thing that impacts my constituents and the Dehcho First Nation is the recent approach to the Protected Areas Strategy. ... (inaudible) ... even stopping the process right now, so that raises some concerns. As well, Grand Chief Herb Norwegian was asking about Edehzhie, the Protected Areas Strategy and getting that process continued. I think that was one of the ones that have to be considered, Madam Chair.

Those are my particular comments right now, Madam Chair, with regard to the Protected Areas Strategy being slowed down or even stopped. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Any further general comments? No further general comments. I will ask the Minister if he would like to summarize a response to the Member's general comments.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank my colleagues for their thoughtful comments and feedback. I would like to start by just trying to bring a number of pieces together here. There were questions and concerns raised about what's happening to the environmental landscape around us with the changes at the federal level and what that means to us. What are we doing to fill in? How are we going to manage our affairs in spite of that?

At the same time, we are working on devolution to take over land, water and resource development.

Then there is the concern raised about transboundary waters, water in general and why we are spending money or that amount of money when we don't have legal responsibility, which is a bit of a contradiction to the early concern. I would just like to say this: We are very close to devolution, looking at taking over land, water and resource development.

The 15th Assembly, when it comes to water, made a decision and passed a unanimous motion in this House, saying that water was a fundamental human right. That motion was the basis for the 16th and 17th Assemblies to go forward and build the Water Strategy, look at internal implementation of that climate in the territory and, at the same time, move towards negotiating the transboundary water agreements which were required to be done back in 1997, when we signed on to the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Master Agreement, and was never followed up on.

So what are we doing now to protect our interests and why are we spending so much money on water are two linked questions. We made a decision in the 15th Assembly, going on six, seven years ago now, that has led to a significant investment in the development of the Water Strategy. It has led to our ability to develop a transboundary negotiating team that is at the table with Alberta. It has allowed us to build an exemplary community-based water monitoring system in the Northwest Territories that folks have told us they wanted to see so that they could have assurances that the water they were drinking was safe, and as the Member for Sahtu asked about the substantially unaltered language in the land claims.

So why did we do this if we had no legal responsibility? It has been clear for the last seven years that we are moving towards devolution, and we were operating on the political and moral authority of this Assembly and of the North to prepare itself and take over its responsibilities. And water, we were told by everybody in the Northwest Territories, was a fundamental issue that they wanted us to take care of.

The investment in water, we should be clear, is not going to stop. Once we negotiate agreements, there's going to be a requirement to do ongoing monitoring. We're going to have to be vigilant. We're going to have to commit and invest the same way Mr. Bromley asked us how we're going to offset the cuts and the changes and the downsizing the federal government is going through. Well, we are making investments that we think, as an Assembly and as a territory, are critical to the well-being of the Northwest Territories.

When we concluded transboundary negotiations with Alberta, we have to go then to BC and

Saskatchewan. Thirdly, we have to go back to the Yukon and renegotiate that one, because that one was done in 1997, and if you look at that agreement compared to the awareness of water now, and the complexities that people now recognize, it is a feel good bureaucratic agreement that has no substance. We have to redo that so we can, in fact, talk about the Peel Watershed as well.

We have to be prepared to continue to invest in those critical issues. I'm not here to defend the federal government whatsoever. We recognize that they're making decisions that they think are in their best interests. As the Premier indicated, they didn't consult with us, they didn't ask us. We have to be prepared to live with that reality and protect our own interests. It's those type of investments that are going to allow us to protect those interests.

As we approach devolution, I would suggest to you that if we hadn't invested six or seven years of work in getting ready on water, people would be justifiably concerned if we were not ready, that our thinking wasn't clear. If we hadn't done all the work we've done on the Wildlife Act and all the other related issues with the species at risk, I would suggest to you, people would be saying, my goodness, our thinking is not really clear here and are we ready. I'm here to tell you that we've made those investments and we are ready.

We are going to continue to invest in those areas. There is money in the budget for solar. I'm just going to pick through some of the concerns. Within that context, I'd like to address some of these specific issues.

There was a concern raised about the Land Use and Sustainability Framework. What does that do and how will that help us? The Land Use and Sustainability Framework is a framing document that outlines our thinking as it pertains to land use in the Northwest Territories and what do we mean by sustainability. It captures the principles that are in the existing sustainability framework and it's going to lay out, on a go-forward basis, what our thoughts are about land use planning, so that we can go now to the table and finalize the agreements with the Dehcho, for example. That framing document, that Land Use and Sustainability Framework captures and has within it some other subsidiary strategies: the Water Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy, the Mineral Resource Strategy and the Energy Strategy. All those are critical linked strategies guided by the principles of the Land Use and Sustainability Framework.

We need, as a government, to have our thinking clear. That is why we're investing time and effort in all these different areas. It's going to help us make the right decisions with the Dehcho. There are bilateral arrangements that have been set up with the Dehcho. The Protected Areas Strategy is not in

jeopardy. What we are doing is consolidating the work on the five candidate areas, on Edehzhie we are going to come to the table, or we are at the table with the Dehcho and we will reach an agreement. That is clear. We want to reach an agreement, as well, on the broader Land Use Plan. That commitment by the government is clear. So that work is underway.

As it pertains to the environmental assessment process and involvement and how we're going to do that, we're going to commit resources as we have them and as it is required. In the Sahtu, if it proves up, we know there will be greater impacts and we will collectively, as a Legislature and as a government, have to put our heads together to see how we manage those.

The budget for implementing solar comes through the Ministerial Energy Coordinating Committee. The Power Corporation is moving ahead with a commitment, for example, and we're focusing on Colville. A small community where we're going to look at solar, batteries and diesel, and how much penetration can we make with solar. We're going to do one other community on top of that.

As it pertains to some of the other energy issues, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake raised the concern about the gas situation. As a government, we've been looking seriously at liquid natural gas as an alternative. It has a small carbon footprint, a cheaper alternative, a better alternative than diesel. We're looking not only at its application in Inuvik, but we believe there's going to be a significant opportunity and application in other thermal communities like Liard and Simpson and Wrigley; all the ones that are accessible as we work our way north on the road system. We expect to be able to stand up in this House in the next couple weeks or so, as I mentioned to the Member today, to hopefully make some specific announcements about where that LNG work is taking us next.

We are also going to be standing up as we talk about energy in the other communities. We've talked about solar, there's a commitment to biomass. With all due respect to Member Hawkins, solar does make sense. It's been proven around the world. If you do it right, and I would suggest to you, if you looked at all the fixed costs tied to diesel, at the end of the day they are going to be very, very close and growing in favour of solar. The good thing about solar is the energy itself is free, and the technology is getting cheaper every day. Our ability to blend it with, like they do in Colville Lake, batteries and diesel, will allow us to increase our reliance on alternative energy, still have a backup, smooth out the relationship between solar and diesel, getting us to the smart group technology that would be applicable in every community in the Northwest Territories.

Madam Chair, our commitment to biomass is significant as a government. We have one of the best biomass strategies in the country, I believe, and we're implementing it. Is there enough inventory to sustain the work? Yes, there is. We have to manage it properly. We have to work with the Aboriginal governments and the communities. We're investing money in inventory work, forest management agreements in the South and North Slave, so that we can proceed with biomass. A pellet plant is being proposed. Our plan as a Legislature was always clear: Build the market and then you can build an industry. We have built the market and are continuing to build the market. Now we are working hard and we have a private investor, with all his own money, looking at building an industry that we believe will have, as Mr. Nadli pointed out, significant economic benefits to the communities that are going to be involved as equity partners, return on investment, employment opportunities. All those good things are going to be there. So we are very committed to that.

The issue of fracking, there are guidelines. We anticipate we are going to have guidelines by this coming fall. We have been working with the committees, the Minister of ITI and myself, the appropriate deputies committee. Cabinet has put out instructions. There is work being done and there are guidelines. Our job is to make sure, as has been pointed out around this table, that we have this balance between protecting the environment and economic development; in this case, hydraulic fracturing. That work, committee has been briefed on and they will continue to be briefed on as we move forward. We anticipate that we will be able to come to an agreement on a way to manage this one.

Energy use, replace fossil fuels is more than just a slogan. I made a note of that; that was Mr. Dolynny. I think, from the amount of money we spend and actual work on the ground, we can demonstrate that we are leading the country in some areas in terms of replacing fossil fuels and we are continuing to do that in increasingly progressive ways.

The baseline information that we need to gather, we are focusing in the Sahtu. We have \$200,000 in the budget. We are going to leverage that, working with this environmental study and research fund that is funded by industry that is going to allow us to put hundreds more or thousands of dollars to work in the Sahtu to focus on a baseline information on groundwater, surface water and wildlife concerns raised by the people of the Sahtu through their Sahtu Land and Water Board. We have committed to working with the federal government, National Energy Board and all the appropriate groups and governments in the Sahtu to get that work done.

The Wildlife Act is a culmination of nearly a decade of work that is coming up. It will come into this

House probably in early March for us to give first and second reading to, so that committee can then decide the extent of their consultation that they think is necessary and be able to report that bill back to this House if not in the May-June session, then in the fall session. Then we can have the very great pleasure, I am hoping, of voting on third reading that will put in place, once again I think, a very progressive piece of legislation that has set the bar not only for content but how that legislation was drafted in partnership with multiple hands on the pen with the Aboriginal governments and the territorial government, same as we did with the Species at Risk Act.

If you give me one second, I want to make sure I cover as much of this as I can.

The issue about caribou, we have about \$1 million in the budget. There is another \$400,000 that they are using for biophysical work. We put that money into the base a number of years ago, when we realized very clearly that we can't just be doing surveys on an ad hoc basis, that we needed to commit, especially when we had the Bathurst crash and all the other herds in distress. So that money is in the budget and it is there for that very reason, that we can monitor that. What we are working towards over time is a system – with all credit being given to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board – that they have come to that sets predetermined triggers in terms of herd numbers and if the numbers, hit a certain level, certain actions are taken. There is no surprise. There is no debate. There is no politics. It is just based on the Aboriginal governments and all of the territorial government and all the folks on the board coming up with a good, smart, knowledge-based decision. I think that is what we have to work for across the territory.

As it pertains to the resident harvest in the North and South Slave, there is, and I have indicated this previously, we are doing the work, both as it relates to the Bluenose-East and Ahlak Beverly, to work through the appropriate processes so that we will hopefully be in a situation of reinstating resident harvest by the time the fall season rolls around in 2013, so that we can all benefit from the sacrifices we have collectively made to try to rebuild the herd numbers. That will be addressed as well.

I apologize if I missed anybody's specific concerns, but I do thank you for the comments. I look forward to the detailed discussion.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. What is the wish of the committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. I would like to turn the committee's attention to page 13-7. We will defer that after consideration of the activity summaries. We will move on to page 13-8,

Environment and Natural Resources, information item, infrastructure investment summary. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under infrastructure investment summary this would be a great opportunity to ask my question about the tire shredder. I think he missed it and I was quite devastated to hear how easily it was skipped over.

In essence, this issue has been raised repeatedly in this Assembly and certainly in committee, not only by myself but with Member Groenewegen on the same song sheet.

How does the Minister feel the NWT can meet that need by looking into that type of infrastructure investment? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do apologize to the Member. It was raised by at least two or three Members, both the tire shredder and the electronic waste.

What I will tell you is that our next priority on our recycling list is the electronic waste. That arrangement will be with Alberta. We have to sort out the particulars, but basically we are going to make arrangements to collect our electronic waste and hopefully be able to negotiate an agreement to use the fairly large facilities that they have in Alberta to have that waste recycled. That's the next priority.

There has been some work done on tire shredders. It is not because they are not all equally important, but we have a list and we have capacity issues. Paper waste and tire shredders are probably next on our list, along with the issue with drums now that the oil companies are not taking them back. We know that there are probably tens of thousands of them scattered across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HAWKINS: I am actually appreciative that the Minister mentioned drums. I think at one time I suggested putting a finder's fee on that. I'm sure I'm not the only one that has mentioned that over the years about a finder's fee on those drums, whether they are worth \$50 or \$100. When people travel out on the land, they can throw them in whatever. They can take a boat, whether it is a truck or a plane, they can throw a few in and certainly they can supplement some of the gas they need to get out there.

That said, the Minister had mentioned next on the list, as always, when do we think that this will be a priority that we'll be seeing and the investment required in a timing sense. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chair, we are concluding the front-end work on the electronic waste piece and we are going to be moving to

implementation. I would suggest in 2014-15, we probably would be making reference to that where there would be some initial preliminary work at the planning level, but the focus for the next year or year and a half is going to be to get the work done on the electronic waste off from paper into reality. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chair, I don't really have any more questions on this page, but I did want to make it clear that it is not that I am against solar energy. It is just that I think it is the least practical of them considering the infrastructure costs. That said, I do also agree with the Minister's point, which is that technology is getting cheaper all the time, but my view is, and I still maintain let's do the things we do very well and biomass is certainly a hallmark of quality work with good benefits at a great price. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. We will treat that as a comment.

Committee, I will direct your attention back to page 13-8, Environment and Natural Resources, information item, infrastructure investment summary. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you. Page 13-9, Environment and Natural Resources, information item, revenue summary. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see a drop there of a couple hundred thousand dollars in the Environment Fund net revenue. Perhaps the money has been put into the e-waste program or something. Could I get an explanation why the drop in revenue there?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That number is a projection based on a three-year average. It may potentially change, but it's just based on a three-year average. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I didn't excel in math, but two years are reported here and both years are about \$450,000. So I'm not totally clear on where the Minister is coming from here. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: That average is based on actuals. On this page, the only actuals we see are 2011-2012. So there are two other years of actuals but the actual number isn't listed. All we've listed here are the mains and revised estimates. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I'm still not sure I see the numbers there, but it looks like we've got quite a reduction in revenue from the last year that we had an actual, which was the year before the current fiscal year. We are just about at the end of this fiscal year and a revised estimate of \$450,000... I

will leave it at that so we can move on. It seems curious. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Page 13-9, Environment and Natural Resources, information item, revenue summary. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Moving on to 13-10, Environment and Natural Resources, information item, active position summary. Any questions? Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just under the Beaufort-Delta indeterminate part-time positions, over the next couple of months we're going to have a facility in Tsiigehtchic. I was going to ask the Minister if he could make that a full-time position. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. Campbell.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this time right now, we're not planning on making it a full-time position. The plan is to remain with a half-time PY.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Campbell. Page 13-10, Environment and Natural Resources, information item, active position summary. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Page 13-13, which also would encompass 13-12, Environment and Natural Resources, activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$11.492 million. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in terms of details of travel, there's an extra \$100,000 in other expenses. Can I get clarification of that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. For that we will go to Ms. Magrum.

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The increase was in a couple of areas where we had additional budget dollars in salaries due to turnover in fairly senior staff and two areas, as well, that were underfunded in travel. One of those was in field support and one of those was in the Sahtu region. So while there will be increased travel in the field support unit doing increased regional visits and increased travel within the Sahtu region, it's not expected that the full travel budget will be utilized.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: So it's in anticipation of planned extra travel in the new fiscal year, then, is it?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, plus the Sahtu travel budget

was almost nonexistent and it was always funded from taking from other pots. So the folks there didn't have a lot of ability to do the work they needed to do. So between that and anticipated increased demand because of the oil play is the answer. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: No, thank you very much. That clarifies my question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Committee, we are on page 13-13, Environment and Natural Resources, activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$11.492 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Page 13-14, Environment and Natural Resources, activity summary, corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$370,000. Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Page 13-15, Environment and Natural Resources, information item, corporate management, active positions. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Page 13-16 including 13-17, Environment and Natural Resources, activity summary, environment, operations expenditure summary, \$6.968 million. Committee agree? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I was really pleased to hear that e-waste is next on the recycling list. I am glad that's what the department is looking at next. I hope it's sooner rather than later.

I wanted to ask a question with regard to waste sites in the NWT. I know it's being dealt with through devolution negotiations, but I'd like to know from the Minister whether or not he feels comfortable, his department feels comfortable, that we are cataloguing all the waste sites we have in our territory in advance of devolution. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are confident that we have quite a comprehensive list. We have built into all our discussion the recognition that there's always a possibility that something has been missed, but we have, over the years, catalogued quite extensively across the North, the many hundreds of various waste sites. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: To the Minister, if there are sites following devolution that have not been catalogued, what's the recourse for us as a government? If it's a site that was on federal land when it was developed and it's been left behind and remediation is required, do we have any recourse with the federal government for funding or do we have to eat that ourselves? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: In that particular chapter, there is a recognition and an opportunity that should there be heretofore undiscovered waste sites, there's an opportunity for the parties to get back to the table to discuss the fate of that particular waste site. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that. It's an area that is fraught with possible large dollars having to be spent, so I'm really glad to hear that there is an opportunity for us to go back and talk to the feds again if we discover some sites.

I apologize if I missed it, but I do have a concern with fracturing and it's been talked about, not necessarily today but other times. I didn't hear the Minister talk about it in his reply so I apologize if it's been dealt with already. From the perspective of ENR and looking after the environment, what steps is this department taking to ensure that if we do get into fracturing, we are well versed in what we are taking on and we minimize the risks to our environment? Thank you

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: As a government, we are cognitively working with all the appropriate departments, including ENR and ITI, the National Energy Board, industry and the folks in the Sahtu, to work on guidelines. We've briefed committee and Minister Ramsay has taken the Members around to see sites down south. We've been working on guidelines and there is work underway. We anticipate them by this fall. We will be able to put guidelines on the table for discussion that would lay out what we think is the most appropriate way forward as it pertains to hydraulic fracturing. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that; it gives me some comfort. I have read some articles over the last year or so that reference oil companies not wanting to disclose the elements, the contents of the fluid that they're using. In terms of the guidelines that the Minister is referencing, two things: Will they be public so that people can see what it is we're considering and provide some input into it? Secondly, will the guidelines reference the contents of the fracturing fluid and minimize the cost to our environment? I gather some fluids are really toxic. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, as we come forward with the guidelines, they will be public. We are looking at best practices across the land, and full disclosure of fracking contents is one of those very critical issues so that there is

awareness and understanding. As we try to manage the balance, between the environment and resource development, we have to know those critical factors. So as the guidelines go forward, that has been identified across the land as one of the best practices that jurisdictions are putting into place, and we are wanting to learn from other jurisdictions in terms of best practices. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. I appreciate the information. I have no further questions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Moving on with questions on this page I have Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one question. Further down the line I'll probably have more. Before I lose my thought on it, I wanted to ask in terms of the Land Use Framework. I know the Minister had stated that it could be, in some respects, used as a guide for policy guidelines in terms of how the government operates, especially in terms of trying to work cooperatively with the regions that are developing land use plans. I just wanted to understand how it is that this could be helpful in terms of trying to at least...(inaudible)...regions to ensure that there is common ground in trying to be consistent with initiatives on both sides, especially from government and First Nations. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I referenced initially in my comments responding to the opening comments, this Land Use Sustainability Framework is the government's thinking, and it's a framework that captures how we want to deal with the broad issue of land use and the sustainability principles that have been a cornerstone and bedrock of this government's approach to resource development and just in general our relationship to the land, the water and the animals. Within that framework there are other subsidiary frameworks that are being worked on, strategies. Minister Ramsay referenced one today: the Economic Development Strategy. There's the Mineral Strategy, the Water Strategy, the Energy Strategy. They're all linked in here to make sure we're consistent with those fundamental principles and elements of what we see as critical when it comes to land use and that issue of sustainability.

So when we now talk to the Aboriginal governments about their land use plans, for example, the complaint out of the Dehcho has always been the territorial government's thinking isn't clear, we just sort of mill around, we follow the federal government, we never make a decision, all these types of things. It wounded us sorely to be characterized that way. We applied ourselves to

getting our thinking clear on this, and this is what that work will give us and it will allow us to, I believe, conclude the Dehcho Land Use Plan and will allow us to be more effective at the table as we deal with all the other regions when it comes to land use planning. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Nadli. Moving on with questions I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My thinking is in line with many of the comments that have been brought up. Certainly on the fracking side of things I guess I would like to note that we did learn a lot on the trip that ITI sponsored for committee. Unfortunately, despite being shepherded about by industry, none of this committee, to my knowledge, has ever visited a frack site. So we still have a tremendous amount to learn.

I would say what we do know is that there is some very, very nasty stuff that routinely is both put into the ground and much more very, very nasty stuff is brought up from the ground. The issues happen, of course, when those enter our water or the air we breathe, the food we eat and these sorts of things. Many jurisdictions are just now, after some period of time, employing the fracturing technique – in fact, the very individual who invented fracturing has experienced this – are now recognizing major health costs to their families, to their water, to their livestock, to their municipal water supply and so on. These impacts are sometimes from the water, they're also from volatile organic compounds that are emitted in gaseous forms, and they're also from the very highly toxic elements that come out in the process of flaring. These are all, obviously, very rich areas for the department to play a regulatory role, and we want to know that that is happening. In fact, I think we've learned so much, but there's still so much more to learn, both by committee and by Cabinet, I'm sure, and I know you're on the road there.

I guess I'll leave that as a comment, noting that certainly many jurisdictions have now decided to disallow fracking, and in fact that number is increasing across the globe in some jurisdictions, right down to community-sized jurisdictions. Obviously, it's a very serious thing out there. The issue of seismic events, what most of us call earthquakes, being caused by fracking, there's a report just out for northeastern BC where it's been demonstrated to cause many, many of their seismic events. Of course, that's fracturing of rock.

The practice now, a standard price, is to put water down into the ground and trust it's going to stay there. This is very, very toxic water after it's been used, and trust it's going to stay secluded down there. But then when all these earthquakes start happening, that fractures rock and allows that water to migrate away and so on, and cause problems if it

gets into the groundwater and the source of our drinking water.

Another issue on the water that I would appreciate the Minister looking into – and I know he's into water – is the fact that we are totally, in huge quantities – we're talking trillions of gallons now – taking water from the surface, from the aqua sphere, if you will, the biosphere, the water cycle, and permanently removing it from that cycle and storing it away so it will never participate in that cycle again within the lifespan of our species. This is pretty serious stuff.

It is particularly serious here for a couple of reasons. First of all, we are sort of at the leading edge of climate change. Climate change is being expressed most severely towards the poles. One of the expressions is, despite higher precipitation relative to our current, we have more evaporation. So we are drying out. That is partly a natural phenomenon as a result of the receding glaciers still, but it is unfortunately being accelerated severely. This is becoming an issue in many parts of the world: desertification related to climate change. We are very vulnerable to that.

This is the second point: our water is fossil water. We don't have renewable water. The tropics have renewable water because they get deluges there. Even the east and west coasts, they have all kinds of renewable water there. We don't have that. Ours is fossil water. We use it; it's gone. It's not getting replaced. In a region, the scale of activities and removal of water is important. That is proving to be one of the major issues that are just starting to come to the front now. I'm looking forward to seeing the department's work in that area.

Certainly the Arctic Energy Alliance is an area that I am interested in that we rely on to provide many of our services, particularly in the way of energy expenditures and so on, the energy subsidies and incentives is the word I'm looking for. I am disappointed to see that we are decreasing our Business Support Program when businesses across the Territories... This year, I believe the GNWT is spending close to \$1 million in new electricity bills because of the 7 percent increase. This is happening across the Northwest Territories. Our businesses, our residents are experiencing this. We just pull it out of our pocket. No problem, okay, we will put \$1 million into that. This is happening every year for the next three or four years of this. Our businesses have to put up with this. How are they going to make it out there? No wonder they are hollering about cost of living.

Here we had a modest \$200,000 fund. I don't believe that we had full uptake on this fund. This was, I think if they had put in \$40,000, they got a \$10,000 benefit. We have this issue in many places. People are so strapped with the cost of living in our communities, and businesses, that they

don't have those upfront dollars. Rather than removing the support to businesses, a key part of our Economic Development Strategy, let's come up with a model to use that money in a way that fits with the challenges our businesses are being faced with.

I guess I do have a few more points, but maybe I can get any response the Minister would care to offer at this moment in time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to the fracking and the comments from the Member, the Member is correct. This is a procedure that there are risks. There is no doubt. The work we are undertaking is to see how we can achieve that balance, if we intend to proceed, between the fracking and the protection of the environment. How do we do that? We know that there are chemicals. We are going to come out with the guidelines. We are going to be working with committee. We are going to have to collectively come to grips with this. By the fall, we hope to be able to do that.

In regard to our water being fossil water, absolutely. There is a chunk of the water in the Northwest Territories that is fossil water, but we also get 70 or 80 percent of the flow that comes from the Slave, which is the confluence of the Peace and the Athabasca with the headwaters of both in the Rocky Mountains. The headwaters in Athabasca are in Alberta. The headwaters of the Peace are in BC. In addition, we have the Liard, which has headwaters in the Yukon, and then we have the Hay River and the Chinchaga and all these other ones, minor subsidiary rivers. Up north we have the Peel that comes to us out of the Yukon. We have some areas where fossil water... The Member is correct, but the hydrological cycle is the winter, the freezing, the rain, the evaporation. But we have some very major rivers that are constantly flowing through our territory with water that is part of that hydrological cycle as the snow melts and the glaciers melt in the mountains.

In regard to the decreasing business support, I will ask the deputy minister to show where we moved that money to and it hasn't been cut. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Campbell.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through the Business Support Program, the \$200,000 that was identified for '12-13, for '13-14 those resources are going to be going to instead of ENR administering that through the Arctic Energy Alliance, under the Commercial Energy Conservation and Efficiency Program. So there will be \$200,000 for that. We are actually also expanding support to businesses and communities;

in particular, Norman Wells and Inuvik. We are going to make eligible funding there up to \$50,000 for those two communities for support for alternative energy.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Campbell. Mr. Bromley, your time is up. I am just going to let questions come around the first round and I will come back to you. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions are going to continue on with the Inuvik gas situation and \$100,000 that will be provided to finding an advancement of this liquid natural gas, LNG. I just want to ask the Minister if he feels that the \$100,000 that has been allocated to advancing it, if it will be sufficient enough to have an impact on the gas costs and the advance of the residential business and government side of demand on the fuel source.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chair, the intent of the \$100,000 is to allow work to be done, options to be explored. It is not money that is there to actually look at... That money is not targeted at this point for any type of implementation. When we are in a position to stand up and announce formal arrangements, should we be able to do that with liquid natural gas, then we will be making different decisions. There is going to be maybe a different process separate from the money that is here. The Power Corporation, for example, is the lead on the liquid natural gas as it pertains to the generation of electricity.

If we can come to the agreements that we believe are possible, then we are of the opinion that we will be able to put liquid natural gas into Inuvik for the provision of electricity and then, at the same time, have those continued discussions with the community for the rest of the system. That will be a separate process. This \$100,000 was just there, because when this dollar figure was put in we were still doing the work and had to come to a lot of determination as to what the next steps will be. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Mr. Chair, just a quick follow-up question to this one here. To go ahead with the work and the options, should we come up with a viable option or solution within a short time frame, something that would be effective for the residents, the businesses and government side of things, would the department be coming back to the House with possibly some supplementary appropriations? Would that be an option to see that we do have this LNG supplied to Inuvik, should the results be positive? Would he be willing to come back with a supplementary appropriation to deal with this situation in Inuvik? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chair, let me speak specifically to the Power Corporation and the issue of the electricity. Should we be able to finalize the arrangements for liquid natural gas, that will be an all-in cost per gigajoule that we are of the opinion if things hold constant with what we know so far, it will be significantly cheaper than what is currently available in Inuvik right now. That will be funded through that price per gigajoule that we would sell the product for and we'd capture any capital expenditures that would be required to ready the...mainly dealing with storage. The Power Corporation in Inuvik is gas-ready with the generators that are there. So that would be taken care of that way.

The details surrounding the arrangement with the town for the heat side would have to be further concluded. I'm not in a position to speak to that piece with any certainty yet. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. It appears we've exhausted the first round of questioning. We'll go back to Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did want to cover a couple more areas here. First of all in the area of electronics implementation, electronics recycling implementation planned for this year, it sounds like we have an agreement with Alberta. How is this going to work and what parts of the territory would that cover? Would we start with sort of the large regional centres? Where are we at with this? Was there a fee to recycle, a plan for recycling electronics, or is this an economic proposition that we'll actually make dollars from this? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have built a recycling system now that enables us to go to every community in the North. The hope is we can build on that capacity that is there. We want to prevent, as I pointed out in Fort Smith, we have a mountain of computers at the waste site at our dump, they haven't stuck into the waste site. I'm sure that situation is repeated across the North. So the intent is to work out the details of how we can bring that electronic waste to the regional centres that are now doing the recycling and work out ways from there with trucks to send them back.

We have to work out the costs with Alberta, we haven't finalized those arrangements yet, and the idea of the surcharge on electronics to help, like we have on tires at \$5 a tire cost, I believe is what we have now, that's another thing being considered. Once we've finalized the costs, the revenues and expenditures that are going to be involved in this process, as we sort it out with Alberta and look at the cost to move this out of our territory.

The other figure where we're working on to capture is one that Mr. Bromley has often brought up, and that's the full cost accounting where we have to be able to put a dollar figure on it, and if we don't do anything and we just load all this stuff into the waste sites, how fast will that shorten the life of our waste sites and what cost is there to that. So at the end of the day, I believe we'll be able to show a full cost accounting that this is an initiative that should go forward. I don't have a lot of the specific detail the Member would like at this point, but in the coming weeks we'll be able to provide that to committee. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: It will be really great to see this get off the ground. We've been looking at it for some time. I'm happy that real progress is being made here.

My last one on the recycling aspect is, I still have people coming to me and really saying, you know, why will Cabinet not put down the price that they have to pay for milk containers in relation to what they get back. We do not want to raise the price of milk and this Minister has insisted on doing that. This obviously goes against our greater government goals of helping people and so on. Milk and the equivalent soy products are known to be really, really important to the health of our people and our children growing up. Will the Minister now move to adjust the milk container deposits so that people are getting back the same amount that they pay and there's no net increase to the cost of milk for our people? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I'll commit to give it a serious relook. It's been a number of years and I know the Member has been a passionate advocate of that particular issue. So I'll take another look, now that we've had some time to look at the costs and the money that's available, and I'll report back to committee. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Much appreciated and I'm sure my passion is a reflection of what I'm hearing.

I'd like to move now to a question that's come up before and the Minister is aware of this. In terms of the Solar Strategy, NTPC has a standby charge that completely destroys the economic feasibility of solar, unless you own the facility, solar installations that are 10 kilowatts or greater. I know the Minister is aware of this, but are we going to fix that this year? Is that considered to be part of the work plan for this budget? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The Member points to a broad issue of we're the government and the only shareholder of the Power Corporation. On one hand, as a government, we set up a Solar Strategy, for example; and on the other hand, we have our utility that we own and seem to be working at cross-purposes with the successful implementation of that strategy. So, yes, we are going to fix that.

We're going to look at net billing and net metering, and we're going to look at the standby fees, and we're going to make sure that these bodies that are working on behalf of the government and the people are coordinated and not at cross-purposes. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you once again for that commitment from the Minister. I think it has been very frustrating as far away as Sachs Harbour where energy is so costly and people have taken action there and then found out after things were in place that they couldn't afford to do it, to literally hook it up. So the facility sits there.

I'd like now to turn to our general renewable energy, energy efficiency programs. It's no surprise to this Minister or this government that committee has wanted to see a major effort and expenditure in the energy area. We see huge opportunities for addressing many, again, of our highest priority government goals, and that's reducing the cost of living, developing especially our local economies and the environmental aspects that we can get with these sorts of projects. In just about every case, and I'm not aware of any failures where we've lost money and not had these sorts of benefits and the Minister is right, we have been one of the jurisdictions leading the way in many ways, but it's a no-brainer. Why shouldn't we when we're getting all these benefits from it?

At the other time, we're also very much aware of the tens of millions of dollars that we're spending this year in subsidy of fossil fuels. Again, this just doesn't make sense and we've been talking about this for a long time. So I've pushed, and I know many of my colleagues have pushed, let's get back to cranking up our expenditures in this area and enjoy those benefits. There are some areas out there that can provide very good feedback, and specifically and very quickly I'd like to mention the area of replacing hot water heaters, electric hot water heaters in thermal communities with fuel heaters. These electric hot water heaters are the single most expensive use of electricity of anything. They typically use 450 kilowatts per year. Several programs have tried to encourage homeowners to switch, but with limited success. Again, it's this frontend expenditure that I've talked about. Two main barriers seem to be the high capital cost of an oil-fired hot water heater and the technical challenges of installing one. Just the benefits of a diesel-fired hot water heater, replacing an electrical one in a thermal community would have a net reduction of 780 litres. So 1,000 hot water heaters, 2,000 tons of greenhouse gases. It would save GNWT over half a million dollars and homeowners over a million dollars.

So, Mr. Chair, on the basis of all this I would like to propose the consideration of my colleagues on this motion. May I read the motion?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Yes, Mr. Bromley. If you just want a second, we'll circulate this motion.

COMMITTEE MOTION 1-17(4):
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES –
HOT WATER HEATER
REPLACEMENT PROGRAM,
CARRIED

MR. BROMLEY: I move that this committee strongly recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories identify additional funding to implement a program to replace electric hot water heaters with fuel-fired hot water heaters in communities that depend on thermal generation of electricity. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The motion is just currently being distributed, so we'll give it a second. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Are we able to speak to the motion in Committee of the Whole? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again the opportunity here is clear. I am aware that this opportunity, with such short payback time, has been proposed by the Arctic Energy Alliance in the past, and I've drawn on some of their analysis to make my comments. I have commented on some of this already, so I won't repeat that.

I will note there have been a couple of changes since that work. First of all, the government now subsidizes more of the energy consumed than they used to and that's because we've taken the cap from an average of 700 to something well above that. We've actually dropped it in summer to 600 when energy use is low and raised it to 1,000 when energy use is high. So the net impact is we are subsidizing those dollars considerably more.

So the payback time calculated a couple of years ago was in the order of one to two years. Payback time now would be less than that and, again, Mr. Chair, I want to stress we are looking at increases to electricity costs of 7 percent every year for three years followed by another at 5 percent in the fourth year. Who knows, those could be higher by the time we get there. Hopefully not, not if we take good moves to address the costs. So the payback time, again, this is no-brainer kind of stuff. I am very perplexed why this hasn't been done before, but it's a very concrete project and I think we can make an investment here, have the money to reinvest next year, or certainly by the year after and keep going. From that point on, we will be saving millions every year compared to what we are spending now in subsidy dollars for these highly inefficient hot water heaters.

If I could just mention how they are so inefficient, electric hot water heaters in thermal communities,

the sequence in diesel fuel is used to generate electricity at about 30 percent rate of efficiency. So two-thirds of that goes up the pipe. We take that third of energy and we use it then as electricity to heat hot water. Again, efficiency is maybe 40 percent. By the time all is said and done, we've used about 10 percent of the electricity in that litre of fuel and the rest is dissipated.

We have a huge opportunity to triple that efficiency with a single move that doesn't cost us anything over a two-year period because it's got such quick payback time. I'd be happy to put numbers to this, have the Minister put numbers to this. I suspect he could have it if he wanted. If he called the Arctic Energy Alliance, he could probably have this by coffee time tomorrow. So this is not a big thing to update these numbers.

Again, I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair. There is no reason not to do this whatsoever. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thanks, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. I have Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to say that I agree with this motion and I agree with my colleague who's spoken already. I have been struggling with the energy initiatives as presented to us for the '13-14 budget. They do not make a serious inroad into reducing our energy costs. There are a number of them, but some of them, I think, are minimal enough that we can put the money into a better project and I think this is one such project.

The Arctic Energy Alliance, in their proposal, which I think Mr. Bromley mentioned, estimates that there's about 1,000 electric hot water heaters in thermal communities and they estimate it would cost us about \$3 million to replace them all. There are programs out there. There is a program out there right now that provides a rebate if people replace their electric hot water heater with an oil-fired hot water heater, but nobody takes the challenge, particularly in the small communities where there is probably no capacity, no trained technician who can put a new one in and there's an initial fairly high cost for people that they don't want to take on.

In my mind, we're talking about \$3 million which either could be new money or a combination of new money and taking some of the initiatives that we already have and re-profiling the money from those. It's money well spent, as Mr. Bromley said. The payback period is extremely short and I also have to agree with him in terms of the money that we're putting into subsidies for electricity rates. I mentioned it the other day, and I have to mention it again, it's a huge amount of money. We are going to be doing it again for another couple of years, and at the end of it, we still haven't done anything to reduce our electricity consumption. This is one way to do that. The oil-fired burners we put in are going

to last for a very long time. It's not like these are going to be one or two years and they are going to be gone. They will probably last longer than the electric water heaters, from what I am told.

So to the motion and to showing our people that we're doing something really concrete, something that's going to benefit them and, at the same time, benefit the GNWT, I think this is an excellent way to go. If we consider the total amount of money that we're talking about, \$3 million, even if it's \$5 million out of a \$1.6 billion budget, it's peanuts. The fact that we're going to recoup the money through our subsidy, going to recoup the money through reduced energy costs over the next two years and then, from then on, we're saving money big time, again I think Mr. Bromley was the one who said it's a no-brainer. I totally agree. So I encourage my colleagues to also support this motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Coming from a region with a high cost of living and some of our higher fuel costs in the diesel communities, this was brought forth to committee and we had a good discussion on it. It's all about investment, high cost of living and the costs to this government on what we are paying in this area. With the short-term gain of the dollars that we're saying, those dollars could be reinvested into another program where, if we come up with a five- or 10-year strategy in the short term, that will start lowering the cost of living for some of the communities that are bearing the brunt of these high costs of fuel.

Like I said, when it was brought to committee, it got me thinking that we could start focusing community by community and getting a lower cost of living for our residents, for our businesses and for the way people are doing business.

With that said, you've heard comments from my two other colleagues here and I am in support of this motion and, like my colleague said, I hope others are because we do see a high cost of living and there are dollars to be saved here, like we did with the early childhood development. The sooner we start investing, the sooner we are going to start seeing a return on investment in some of the decisions that we make in this House. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the motion, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to say that I'll be voting in favour of this motion. It certainly shows the seriousness of Members on this side that that old technology is just not working and we should give it serious consideration. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be voting in favour of this motion as well. I think it's an initiative that puts the rubber to the road and we're actually seeing some sort of implementation in something that has been physically shown that it's going to save us money over the long run. I think the problem with some of the money that we've been studying and doing research on, we're spending money after money and we're not really seeing anything that's accomplished out in the communities. I think this is something we can actually see, and put our teeth to and put our name to as far as being effective out there, so I will be voting in favour of the motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The motion speaks to a new initiative for something that we want to push on this side. The people from my region will certainly welcome a motion like this, and welcome more so that the government looks to reduce the high cost of living in the Sahtu.

We'd like to see an initiative like that that would cut down the cost for some of our people in our communities. The unemployment rate in Deline or Colville or Fort Good Hope is quite high, in the thirties to 42 percent, and the cost of living is quite high with the cost of fuel, especially diesel going into our communities. So I think that the Minister has the means and resources available at his disposal to say yes, we can do this with a pilot project community. I look forward to seeing something like that in the budget, where a family could see a reduction of their power bills and look at cost-saving methods where the GNWT could help out.

I look forward to a response back from this government, recognizing that we on this side are serious that some of our ideas need to be reckoned with. We have strong support on this side to put in the heaters that could go into our communities. I think this is something where, as Mr. Bouchard said, the rubber hits the road, and this is something that we want to see. I think he has the method and the means to do it and not have any more studies to delay this process here. I will be supporting the motion.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be voting in favour of this. Even though there are a small number of residents in the Mackenzie Delta who actually have electric hot water tanks, the majority of residents in my riding are already on oil-fired hot water tanks.

If this motion does go forward, I'd like the department to actually work with the communities, because each community I represent has an oil

burner mechanic, and I'd recommend that you work with the communities to have them installed. I'd also like to see a breakdown of each region with the highest cost when it's done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Blake. To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to say I don't know if I can support this motion because it just makes too much sense. This wouldn't be our way of doing things. But, you know, Ms. Bisaro just made a comment to me. I mean, even if we went out and borrowed the money to do this, it would make sense.

When we were in committee one day, Mr. Yakeleya drew me a picture. I said, draw me a picture, and he drew a picture of all of our resources here in the Northwest Territories which get piped to a refinery in southern Canada, then get brought back, then get put into a big holding tank and then pumped into our diesel generators that produce power, which then we string along little lines to take into people's houses to heat the hot water. Isn't it a convoluted circle when you really think about it? Anyway, it was a great work of art and it truly depicts what a convoluted and roundabout way we take to doing this.

I mentioned also to committee that we should put water savers on the showers because the recovery rate on oil-fired hot water heaters is much greater than electric. With electric, you're always running out of hot water, but the recovery rate on the oil-fired ones is so much greater and they're so much more efficient. We're going to have to put water-saver showerheads in the same units.

Anyway, obviously I will be totally supporting the motion. Please, for the love of all that's pure and sane, let's do something that makes sense. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think I'll use the occasion to clear up the record officially. That was my picture I gave to Mr. Yakeleya. And he can't speak after me because he's already spoken.

Mr. Chairman, I'll be voting in favour of this motion. I support this initiative and I look forward to further discussions about seeing how we can make sure an idea such as this, that seems to be common sense, we can get off the ground and get proven results, which I'm not sure further studies need to be done. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: [Microphone turned off] ...the intent of the motion. We just finished about six months of work on the business plan, and that's not to say that there's no time when

a good idea doesn't make sense. But it is into the final hours as we try to manage ourselves through the times we're in.

I've also heard, across the floor, a number of MLAs speaking strongly against the subsidy they would have in place to cushion the rate shock of the increases as the Power Corp catches up to having five years or four years of no increases in their fuel costs. So if the Members opposite all said collectively that they want that subsidy pulled, and we go back to the Public Utilities Board, we could put all that money into this type of good common sense approach. It has been said repeatedly and emphatically by Members of the House, so I just want to make that offer. If there is unanimity, I'd be happy to go to Cabinet and look at putting that money, as Mr. Bromley suggests, don't subsidize this, do this other good stuff, and that would free up money that we already have.

The other thing I just want to throw out there is when I talked to Mr. Moses about liquid natural gas, if in fact the liquid natural gas proves out to be as beneficial and cost effective as we think it is compared to diesel, then in relatively short order we're going to be looking at not only Inuvik but other communities. We're going to be looking at road communities to start with: Liard, Simpson, Wrigley, McPherson. I see it just says fuel, so I think we just want to keep that in mind before we run out and convert holus bolus, because we are literally weeks away from knowing whether we're going to be able to make a significant investment, especially in the thermal communities, mainly thermal communities with liquid natural gas.

So I appreciate the feedback. We'll work with committee. It doesn't say here, but I'm assuming you want to put this into the business planning process as we go forward, which I'd be happy to do and give us a chance to factor in some of these changes that are right in our faces as it pertains to things like liquid natural gas.

This is a direction to Cabinet, so we'll be abstaining from the motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. To the motion. We're going to go to the mover for closing comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's been a good discussion. I'm not sure; I guess I would like to reply to Minister Miltenberger's comments there. I don't want to repeat everything. I think the obvious gains, the win-win-wins are clear here. This is not news to the Minister, so I know he is not surprised. We will be looking forward to how we can get this in the budget.

The Minister claims that people here are speaking against the subsidy. Clearly, that is not the case. There is a history here. The 16th Assembly, against the wishes of many of us, made some really bad

decisions and left us with the consequence of having to pay these subsidies. It's not that we shouldn't be paying the subsidies, it's we should have been pursuing alternatives to avoid having to pay these subsidies.

What some of us have been suggesting now is, last year for example, we paid about \$17 million in subsidies. This year we are down to \$9 million in addition to sort of our base subsidy levels. I won't go into those numbers. I don't want to scare people too much here. Why not put the difference between the \$17 million that we used last year, or perhaps it is this fiscal year, and the \$9 million the following year? That is a seven or eight million dollar difference. Why not put that money into energy initiatives that will actually start to address the problems that have caused these rates to soar? That is what we are on about here. We obviously haven't got any choice, so we are suggesting that we do this modest program. I appreciate the Minister's offer to work on this. I look forward to the results with a vote.

Again, I guess I can summarize by this is a no-brainer. It's a win-win-win. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Question has been called. Motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Committee, we are on page 13-17, Environment and Natural Resources, activity summary. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to talk a little bit about the Inuvik and Norman Wells situations. I know we've supported work to look at biomass solutions. I've heard the past mayor interviewed on the radio during the recent emergency in Norman Wells extolling the opportunities of biomass in Norman Wells and the Minister has told me that the long-term feasibility of biomass in Inuvik is good. Right now, I don't see anything in here that follows up on all of those opportunities. What are we doing to move to those?

We could obviously pursue the liquid natural gas routes and other natural gas routes and so on, but we know that the general price will eventually go up once the Asian prices start to be realized in North America and so on, and the cost of fracking, reaction to fracking. It seems like common sense, again, to go for the best long-term solution from the start.

What is the Minister doing to push the frontier with those two communities that are facing real challenges right now and need long-term solutions?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Arctic Energy Alliance is hard at work on concluding their report on biomass. I've had side discussions with Mr. Mapes about the opportunity, effectiveness, efficiency and economics of pellets being shipped to Inuvik. We expect that that biomass report will be concluded. In the meantime, I think because it makes such good economic sense, many people are migrating on their own accord to biomass for heat. We will look at that as well.

The liquid natural gas one, I see that as an arrangement that is going to get us through the next three to five years as we sort things out. We also have the review in Inuvik of the wind that we are still working on. It has the potential to generate three to four megawatts of power. It could probably go both to Tuk and Inuvik.

In Norman Wells, we are continuing to work with the community. Their thinking is changing and clarifying as they look at what the options are. If you take what was proposed, a \$39 million project for the size of that community on a per capita basis, you could give every man, woman and child in Norman Wells a very large payout. I'm not sure whether they see that as cost effective because the money is not going to be there from either us or the federal government in its entirety. We are continuing to work with them. At the same time, there is money in the budget for us to convert some of our own buildings, the airport and the school, just because it makes good sense and it eases the pressure on the gas situation. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chair, thank you for those comments. I appreciate the Minister's comments there. I am glad to see he is still focused in on those things. Those sound like important opportunities to me.

I just want to acknowledge that the department is playing a very important role extending geographically the opportunity to use wood pellets for our residents and businesses by being such a good customer of wood pellets. I know there is a very new supply of wood pellets in Norman Wells. The action we are taking to take advantage of that supply and also to start considering the opportunity for generation of local supply through wood chipping, something that is done in just about every community in Scandinavia, I think those are very progressive things to be moving forward with. I appreciate the Minister's ongoing commitments there and to wind in Inuvik and so on.

This may be the last question on this. Has there been a greenhouse gas emissions analysis done for the natural gas solution that is being proposed and for other alternatives? Obviously, my understanding is that we will be trucking up that

liquid natural gas. It will be continual 24/7 trucks on the road, and then there is the cost of extraction and refining and so on. Has that analysis been done? If so, can we get that provided to committee? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chair, that work is being done. The Member is correct; it's not just the liquid natural gas, but it is going to be the cost and the impact of shipping it up by diesel-fuelled trucks. When that work is concluded, we will share it with committee. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: That's all the questions I had.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Committee, we are on page 13-17, Environment and Natural Resources, activity summary, environment, operations expenditure summary, \$6.968 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, committee. Page 13-18, Environment and Natural Resources, activity item, environment, grants and contributions, contributions, \$3.199 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Chair, I am just wondering, under the Alternative Energy Program I see it looks like we spent about \$1 million last year and it's down to \$7.75 million this year as proposed, but that is up from a couple of years ago. Is there a ready explanation for the source of convolutions that are going on with that budget? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. For that we will go to Ms. Magrum.

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Alternative Energy Program has increased by several new initiatives which include alternate energy technology for \$100,000, community scale wind for \$100,000, smart grid, \$125,000 and solar PD for \$250,000.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Has there been a community or location chosen yet for the smart grid part of that, do we know?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would have to confirm this, but my assumption is, as we looked where we are doing diesel batteries and solar and putting in the other smart grid technology, it would seem to make sense to be able to monitor that and take advantage of all that. So that's one place I would suggest be considered, but I don't think we've made our final determination on where the smart grid technology will be applied other than that. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for that information. Just in closing, I've had concern with a lot of our energy dollars, like some other departments are actually left until the last minute in the fiscal year to be spent. Can we get a commitment from the Minister that we will get some of these things identified early on in the fiscal year so that we can actually be effective with the dollars and make better progress throughout the year, as opposed to saving the dollars until the end of the fiscal year and perhaps lapsing some of those dollars? I know there is a lot of work to be done, but I think if we get at it earlier on, we can be more effective with our funding. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: It would be my intention, our intention, to have these various sites in communities decided on before the end of this fiscal year so we are ready to roll as quickly as we can.

I share Mr. Bromley's concern about dragging dollars into the end of the fiscal year when you can't realistically spend them. We want to be able to get this money into use and into the communities as quickly as we can, so we are going to target to the end of this fiscal year, which gives us just a little over six weeks. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Moving on with questions I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to ask the Minister on the biomass energy initiatives for the Sahtu specifically, the Minister mentioned Norman Wells school and the airport. I want to ask the Minister if he had some discussions regarding the new health and long-term care facility that's going to be built in Norman Wells. Also, what opportunities for the people in the surrounding communities of the Sahtu to look at biomass supplies/opportunities with the Aboriginal groups, businesspeople, what discussions have happened with the people of the Sahtu regarding this new wholesale supplies of biomass with these wood pellets burners that are going to go into these government buildings?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, when there's new construction, wherever there is biomass possible, there's discussion underway with Public Works. They have done it in Fort Smith, Hay River, Yellowknife, Simpson, and we're working our way north. I understand that, yes, there has been, as it pertains to the health centre, discussions with our folks, Arctic Energy Alliance, the Public Works folks as well, to see if that's going to be a money

saver. We believe it is because we are installing it into the school and in Transportation at the airport anyway, so we've done our own numbers. So, yes.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Minister in regard to biomass business opportunities in the Sahtu for the Sahtu people. We have communities that could be involved. We have businesspeople that could be involved. Where are these pellets going to be coming from? Are they going to be made in the Sahtu? Do we have an opportunity, giving our native organizations or businesspeople an opportunity to say we want to participate? Or is it all going to come from La Crete, Alberta?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, the intent right now is to get a northern-based supplier. There is a project on the books that was funded by private money slated for Enterprise that is looking at churning out 60,000 tons of high quality pellets with the capacity to ship them across the North. As Mr. Bromley pointed out, there are local opportunities, should that be of interest or possible, to be done at the community or regional level. We did have a pilot project out at Checkpoint Charlie by Simpson. It was just one pilot. I would say it had modest success. That opportunity is there, but right now the one big opportunity for a northern-based supplier is the project slated for Enterprise and then I am assuming that there would be distribution opportunities flowing out of that as well. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, I certainly look forward to that northern supplier at Enterprise. I would like to also keep the door open for an opportunity for the Sahtu people, to have that opportunity, should an opportunity come forward, that we could produce and look at our own wood pellet industry. We look forward in the future to that type of discussion. I know what the Minister is saying, that there is a mass of pellets that could be done in the South Slave. That's in Enterprise. I certainly encourage those gentlemen to continue that work, but I want to make sure that the door does not get shut on the Sahtu in terms of the biomass initiatives.

Right now, I am very happy to hear the Minister finally saying that we are looking at the school and the airport and possibly the new wellness centre, the health centre in the Sahtu. After eight years of talking we are finally looking at an opportunity here.

I want to ask the Minister if there is an opportunity for the Sahtu such as wood chips. Can these new facilities burn wood chips? We have to know that we want to take advantage in the Sahtu about this new facility. Will the facilities that he describes in the House, would they be taking wood chips? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chair, I can't say, with any degree of definitiveness, that

that discussion has been held. I can tell you that wood chips are very labour intensive when you are operating 24/7 on essential services heat in the wintertime especially. I will raise the issue with the Minister of Public Works and Minister of Health, but I'm not sure if wood chips has been actively considered just because it is a whole different... It gets you into a whole different area of issues to deal with in terms of staffing and harvesting locally and having dry wood, especially during tough times like Christmas and New Years and those types of times when you need to rely on a certainty of supply. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, I would like to continue this dialogue with the Minister on the issue of wood chips. We come from hard, strong working families in our communities. It may be a little different today; however, the Minister raises some points. I would like to have further discussion. I also look at the opportunity. Do not dismiss the concept of a wood chips because of what the Minister says. We have always come over some difficulties and hardships in the Sahtu.

Look at the Norman Wells community that had to deal with the running out of gas and other issues in the area. I want to ask the Minister to keep an open mind. Let's have some further discussions. I think this would be really good. We need to get our people out working hard and getting away from the communities. There is high unemployment in our communities. There are a lot of young guys that can do a lot of hard work. Anyhow, that can be said in another meeting here.

I want to ask the Minister before my time runs out, in terms of the Arctic Energy Alliance, has the Minister received some discussion papers, option papers as to where we can save money in our smaller communities that primarily rely on diesel? We just had a motion here on the oil heaters. That is what we want. Has the Minister looked at the Arctic Energy Alliance so that we would look at some of the initiatives that we can pursue in our diesel fuel communities? It would help with the carbon emission and help with the cost of living. Take some of these initiatives that make sense, look into those communities such as Colville Lake or Deline or Paulatuk or Sachs Harbour, high cost of living in Trout Lake and any of the communities that I mentioned that it costs quite a bit to live there. Can we have some more discussions on some of these initiatives that would save us money in the long run?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, if my memory serves me correctly, in the last government we worked extensively in trying to do community energy plans with all of the communities working with Arctic Energy Alliance. We subsequently put in these Pathfinders.

If I just may offer one final comment... And yes, our door is open to have those further discussions.

I speak of wood chips with a caution in my voice because in Fort Smith the Metis local started out putting in a facility to heat about four of their big buildings right by Roaring Rapids and a number of other buildings. They started out with wood chips in mind and got fairly well along the design and building and, clearly, they redid their numbers and came to realize that they better switch to pellets, because when they did all the numbers on the labour costs and the certainty of supply, and getting green wood and drying it and all these types of things, it became, in their mind, cost prohibitive and they basically put a stop on the project and they're going to spend the extra dollars to convert to wood pellets. I was offering that just as an example to keep in mind.

Our door is open to have discussions with all of the communities, not only ourselves but the government and the Arctic Energy Alliance, on how do we go forward with all of the implementation on the implementation side. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Yakeleya, your time is up. If you want to come back in the queue, let me know. Moving on, I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of comments under the energy conservation. One thing I would like to see in each region is similar to what is happening in the Tlicho region. They've hired an energy coordinator to work within the communities to help the residents there to realize how much savings can be made with little things, whether it's unplugging appliances, different ways to conserve energy. I hope that can continue in every region in the Northwest Territories.

Also, under biomass, I'm glad to see that we have increased the amount of funds there. The one thing that I notice as we enter this new initiative to actually manufacture wood pellets in the near future, I hope we're not too quick to enter into any agreements for any type of monopoly. Some of my greatest concerns are other agencies. For example, as I mentioned earlier, in the Mackenzie Delta they are along the same road to this type of initiative. I wouldn't want that to be in jeopardy.

Under the Business Support Program, I was hoping this funding could continue. Last year, it was \$200,000, but this year it's not continuing. This sort of initiative, as I mentioned earlier, is manufacturing wood pellets, it would be nice if this funding would be made available for those initiatives.

Under wind energy, that's not continuing this year and it hasn't for the last two years. I am very hopeful that we can start this initiative. We can learn a lot from the diamond mines. You know, the diamond mines, or one of the mines, have put a lot

of funds towards that and I think you'll see a lot of long-term savings. Hopefully this government could continue along those lines. That's all I have right now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: A response to some of the concerns, there is a Pathfinder in Inuvik, his name is Donald Andre and he's there to provide that support in the region. I think there's another one in Simpson and another one in Tlicho and Norman Wells.

There is wind energy. There's \$100,000 in wind energy but it got put in under the Alternative Energy Program. And we've had an expression of interest from Paulatuk. We did a lot of work in Tuk initially, but they sort of put their efforts into natural gas so Paulatuk indicated an interest.

The \$200,000 in business support programs has been moved to the commercial energy conservation. So it hasn't been cut.

And we have entered into a 10-year agreement with the proponent for the Aurora Pellet Plant in Enterprise. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. I have Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I would like to thank Mr. Campbell and Ms. Magrum today for coming into the House and the Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, please remove the witnesses from the Chamber. I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014. I would like to report progress with one motion being adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. A motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The seconder will be Mr. Beaulieu.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Item 23, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF COMMITTEES (Ms. Knowlan): Orders of the day for Thursday, February 14, 2013, 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. Replies to Budget Address
13. Petitions
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
 - Motion 2, Extended Adjournment of the House to February 18, 2013
 - Motion 3, Federal Changes to Environmental Law
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014
 - Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendment Act
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 14th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

