



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 10, 2014****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, 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 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 12-17(5):
ANTI-POVERTY ROUNDTABLE
AND NEXT STEPS**

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to this Assembly's goal of helping our residents become healthy, educated people free from poverty. A strong territory needs a strong society, and all residents of the NWT should have the chance to enjoy the benefits of living in a prosperous, well-governed territory and to participate fully in a healthy, just society.

Last June I was pleased to table the Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework: Building on the Strengths of Northerners. This important document represents input from key stakeholders and was an important first step.

Later today I will table in the House the GNWT's initial response to the framework. Our government's Anti-Poverty Action Plan outlines the commitments we will make, starting immediately, to improve our response to poverty in the NWT. Our action plan includes investments of \$2.6 million. This new funding will support day shelter programs in Yellowknife and Inuvik, and to build new housing units in four small communities for residents who may need additional support. It will see \$1 million in new spending every year to provide nutritious food directly to children and youth through established programs.

This demonstrates our government's commitment to taking leadership in the reduction of poverty in our territory and will form a part of the territorial action plan which will include actions by all sectors and all regions of the NWT. But that is only a start.

We have always recognized that this government can't tackle this issue alone. We need to partner

with communities, Aboriginal governments, non-government organizations and business.

Mr. Speaker, on November 28 and 29, 2013, an NWT Anti-Poverty Roundtable was held in Detah to begin the work of developing a territorial action plan. Many delegates in attendance left with concrete plans for action and a commitment to start on them as soon as they returned to their community. Everyone in attendance at the roundtable agreed that it is time to move from talk to action, and that is what we are doing. The budget includes \$500,000 in new funding to support communities, Aboriginal governments and non-government organizations to get moving on community-based projects.

An Anti-Poverty Charter was presented to the delegates at the roundtable. This charter symbolizes our commitment as stakeholders to work together, at all levels, towards the development of a territorial action plan.

Twenty-four delegates signed on to the charter. Other organizations have subsequently signed on and we will continue to invite partners to join us.

Mr. Speaker, through the anti-poverty initiative funding proposed in the budget, we are also establishing an Anti-Poverty Action Plan Advisory Committee, including representatives from regions across the Northwest Territories, to lead the development of the territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan over the next year. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders.

This committee will work within their regions to raise awareness and build capacity and will provide recommendations to the Minister.

As with any major initiative, it is important to have a way of measuring progress. Funding in the budget will enable the Department of Health and Social Services to lead the development of a Performance Management Framework that will allow all partners to report consistently on our activities and track our overall progress.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that, working together, these initiatives will continue to move us closer to our goal of eliminating poverty in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 13-17(5):
SUCCESSFUL TRADE MISSION TO CHINA

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I accompanied Premier Bob McLeod and Mr. Robert Hawkins, Member for Yellowknife Centre, along with delegates from our territory's business community on a trade mission to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. The business representatives from the Northwest Territories were Mr. Robin Goad, president of Fortune Minerals; Ms. Verda Law, Yellowknife Tours; Mr. Deepak Kumar, Deepak International; Mr. Fernando Alvarez, president of Jacques Cartier Clothier; and Mr. Mark Downey, CEO of Fur Harvesters Auction Ltd.

Our visit was an important part of the GNWT's work to develop closer ties with China and the immense market potential it holds, particularly for our territory's fur, tourism and diamond sectors.

Building relationships with Chinese business and tourism leaders, expanding markets for our products and encouraging investment all strengthen and diversify our economy, a priority of the 17th Legislative Assembly.

This trip provided us an opportunity to follow up with contacts we made during the Council of the Federation trade mission in 2012, where we had productive meetings with the Chinese Vice-Premier, Minister of Finance and leaders in the business community regarding trade and investment opportunities.

The 40th Annual Beijing Fur and Leather Show was a main focus of our mission. China is the world's leading manufacturer of fur garments, and their demand for NWT wild fur is high and continues to rise every year. Currently, 80 percent of all NWT wild fur ends up in China; a significant number. Our genuine Mackenzie Valley fur is recognized as a premium product that Chinese designers want to work with, and perhaps more importantly, it is a product that the growing Chinese middle class loves to wear.

Our meetings in Hong Kong helped us to understand this city's relationship with mainland China. Hong Kong is the gateway to China and an international financial hub. Our fur and tourism sectors have enormous growth potential in this market.

Mr. Speaker, our promotion of the NWT as an exciting location for Chinese tourists was also well received. I am happy to confirm to Members that representatives of the Chinese travel industry are especially interested in aurora tourism. We have seen an increase in Chinese travelers this year,

and by following up with the connections we made, we hope to consistently grow this number.

In addition to promoting NWT Tourism's new Aurora Capital of the World brand, our meetings and presentations offered numerous opportunities to showcase the wonders and natural beauty of our territory's regions.

Chinese visitors are interested in authentic cultural experiences, and we took this opportunity to highlight our emerging Aboriginal tourism sector.

During the delegation's time in Shanghai and Hong Kong, we focused our efforts on tourism and diamonds. I toured the Shanghai Diamond Exchange and promoted the NWT's diamond sector from both a mining and secondary manufacturing perspective.

Mr. Speaker, China offers the potential to be more than just a source of consumers for our economy. The Chinese manufacturing sector has grown considerably in the past decade, and there is great interest in our territory's wealth of raw resources and the potential for future trade.

The Premier and I met with investors familiar with the Canadian investment environment, who were excited to learn of opportunities in the Northwest Territories. We highlighted our rich mining history and the need for capital investment in new mines, infrastructure development and our untapped oil and gas sector.

The collective purpose of our government's trade mission in January was to strengthen trade ties with China and build and establish relationships with Chinese government, businesses and organizations.

With over 25 meetings in three major centres, I can assure Members of this Assembly that we surpassed this goal.

Mr. Speaker, we must act on the momentum from this trip and build on the opportunities that will grow and diversify our economy. I look forward to highlighting for Members of this Assembly the real and tangible outcomes of our work in China as they come to fruition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Colleagues, before we go on today, I would like to welcome back into the House former Member for Nunakput, Mr. Ernie Bernhardt.

---Applause

The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 14-17(5):
CANADA'S BEST DIVERSITY EMPLOYERS 2014

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I am very pleased to announce that for the second year in a row the Government of the Northwest Territories has been

chosen as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers. This award is presented by Canada's Top Employers at Mediacorp Canada Inc., which manages the competition in partnership with the Globe and Mail and recognizes employers across Canada with exceptional workplace diversity and inclusiveness practices.

Mr. Speaker, diversity is a core value of the NWT public service. It enables us to create a workplace that represents the population we serve, that is open to contributions from all, and where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential. As a central goal of the NWT Public Service Strategic Plan, 20/20: A Brilliant North, the GNWT has undertaken many initiatives to develop and encourage a diverse, inclusive workforce.

We have recognized the importance of establishing a culture of understanding and cooperation among our employees through training and communications. I am particularly pleased with the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training program which was launched last June. Available to all employees as well as the public, this training enhances employee understanding of Aboriginal culture and reaffirms the fundamental importance the GNWT places on including Aboriginal values in program design and delivery.

As well last year, we continued our very successful disabilities awareness campaign that highlighted knowledge and acceptance of physical, social and invisible disabilities in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, diversity and inclusion characterize all of our recruitment and human resource management practices. We work closely with the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee and the GNWT's Advisory Committee on Employability – known as GACE – which advise our human resource practitioners on ways to improve the recruitment, retention and advancement of Aboriginal employees and persons with disabilities. The Department of Human Resources has committed positions to assist employees and supervisors with inclusion and workplace accommodation, such as the diversity officer and duty to accommodate advisor positions.

We have also implemented a number of initiatives targeted directly at increasing the representation of Aboriginal persons at all levels of the public service. The Aboriginal Management Development Program is intended to enhance and facilitate workforce planning for senior management and management positions by developing qualified Aboriginal persons to fill management roles. Formerly called the Associate Director/Superintendent Program, it has recently been expanded to support up to eight participants at one time and been broadened beyond its original focus on senior management positions to now include manager-level positions.

Mr. Speaker, I am also anticipating the results of the Aboriginal Inclusion Survey concluded in December. This survey, conducted in partnership with the Aboriginal Human Resource Council, will assist us by identifying strengths, weaknesses and trends in the way we engage as an employer with Aboriginal people in the NWT. The department is expecting a detailed report of the results in March, and I look forward to sharing the results when they are ready.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of employers from across Canada, both large and small, are considered each year to be recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers. That the GNWT has been chosen for a second time reflects our position as an industry leader and role model for the advancement of diversity in the workplace and the value we have given to a public service that encourages participation by all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRIBUTE TO WINTER OLYMPIAN MICHAEL GILDAY

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Gilday Day, as declared by the mayor of Yellowknife, and I am pleased to see Members wearing red to honour Michael.

Today at 4:00 a.m., I joined a gathering of Northerners who overnighted at the Yellowknife Fieldhouse to cheer on Michael Gilday in his Olympic debut. Every athlete at these Olympic Games is a champion and Michael is no exception. His years of dedication, hard work and perseverance is reflected in his ability to compete with the best in the world.

Michael's individual achievements are impressive and we are proud of them. While speed skating may appear to be a competition between individuals, Michael's success shows that speed skating is, in fact, a team sport.

At 140 skaters, the Yellowknife Speed Skating Club is the largest in Canada. For 35 years athletes have figured prominently in the Arctic Winter Games, Western Canada Games, Canadian and world championships. Clearly, there are some very special, dedicated people supporting our speed skaters. From parents to coaches, volunteers, communities and sponsors, right down to the Zamboni operators, all are part of this Olympic achievement.

Locally, I would like to mention Shane Clark, head coach; and Karin Clark, president of the Yellowknife Speed Skating Club; Pam Dunbar, Michael's

mother, president of the NWT Speed Skating Association and David Gilday, his dad, a long-time coach and a huge force in the NWT speed skating world.

Benefits ripple through our society. A Michael Gilday T-shirt signed by the Canadian Men's Speed Skating Team auctioned Saturday night raised \$2,900 for the Yellowknife Community Foundation. The community all-nighter at the Fieldhouse was festooned with red T-shirts designed by Sarah Erasmus of Erasmus Apparel. The sale of over 300 "I'm on Michael's Team" T-shirts enabled the donation of \$3,000 in profits to Kid Sport NWT. I'm proud to say that all these officials and Sarah are Weledeh constituents.

We are proud of Michael Gilday and fellow Olympian Northerners Brendan Green and Jesse Cockney competing in Sochi this week. Please join me in celebrating their accomplishments and honouring the NWT-wide families and volunteers who help our athletes on their path to success. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES
IN THE SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement is on the ongoing requests of the people, especially the family members of the elders. They have been asking for a palliative care service in Deline.

There are 54 elders 60 years and over in Deline. People have asked since last year when the letter was written to the previous Minister, Tom Beaulieu, when he visited the community. Upon his visit there, people wrote a letter and asked if there could be a possibility of putting two palliative care beds in the existing community wellness building.

People have noticed that since 1994, when the facility was shut down for reasons only the government has known, there were people trained there, and people want to see their elders be brought back to their community, especially in their last dying days. The community has seen a lot of their elders pass away outside in the other facilities, which makes it very hard for family members to come to Yellowknife or Inuvik to get the last words from the elders. When elders are called, some family members can't make it because of the high cost of an airline ticket, when they don't see their elders before they pass away. Elders in our culture always want to provide words of wisdom. It's a special time to give messages to the young people, especially to their family members.

So, they have been asking for a long, long time for palliative care beds in Deline, and I want to ask the

Minister, what plans, what stage and where are we at with the budget that we have in front of us – we have another capital planning budget ahead of us – if there's a possibility of granting the wish of the elders in Deline. For the leadership and for the people, I think they're excited and they want to see this continue and not just fall off the books in regards to their request. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES TO DEHCHO
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Minister of Health and Social Services travelled to Fort Simpson and we hosted a public meeting on the future of the Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority. I'm also pleased to see that the public administrator, Mr. Jim Antoine, of the Dehcho Health and Social Services, is making efforts to go to the communities to explain where the health board is going.

As they heard, I'm sure, community and residents are still very concerned about potential changes to the structure of the Dehcho Health and Social Services. The Minister and the Department of Health and Social Services are contemplating administrative changes since the health board was not appointed in March of last year. Communities and regions want more autonomy, not less. With the new potential streamlining of our boards, I remain cautiously optimistic, as I do not want my constituency to lose jobs.

I do support sharing of health professionals and leveraging of bulk purchases by all health authorities. I'm also pleased that they heard it is important that we need to restore community involvement in policy and delivery of health in our small, remote communities through some type of regional council.

Residents are also very concerned about medical travel and the apparent wastage. They're pleased to see that there's a plan to review it. When you do, I suggest you allow as much public input as you can. Our residents are the ones that are most impacted by medical travel and will have the best suggestions. For instance, in small communities medical escorts are often the same person and unemployed and have the time to travel, but they do not receive any stipend at all and find themselves in Yellowknife or Edmonton with little or no money for long periods of time.

Getting back the future of the Dehcho Health and Social Services, the Department of Health and Social Services cannot take all the responsibility away from my communities.

Later today I will be asking the Minister of Health questions on this initiative. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MLA INFORMATION REQUESTS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about what is perhaps the most important part of our job: serving our constituents. We all do it differently and that's no surprise. Our ridings are each unique and different from each other. One tool that I use to do the job is social media. I use it to share information, news items, media releases, upcoming events, funding opportunities, youth exchanges and so on.

Recently, I wanted to share information about an upcoming public meeting, information previously published by the Cabinet press secretary in a news release several months ago. I wanted to verify the information before my office published it, so we contacted the government person listed on the media release to do that.

A media release is a public document, so we anticipated an easy answer, but it was not to be. Yes, my office got confirmation of the information, but we were also advised, reminded perhaps, that all requests from an MLA's office have to be funneled through the Minister's office so they can track the requests.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. A request from an MLA's office for information already in the public domain has to take the long, protracted, torturous and winding path through the Minister's office to the department and back again, tying up many people's time and energy, creating an unnecessary delay in determining the answer to a simple yes or no question. Hardly the best use of our government resources.

What surprised me the most about this situation was that my office had to ask the Minister for information already in the public domain, but any member of the public, like my neighbour for instance, could contact the department directly and receive an immediate answer.

There's something wrong with this picture. I can understand a Minister's desire to protect his departmental staff from demanding MLAs and their CAs. I can understand that sensitive and involved inquiries must be funneled through the Minister's office, but information already in the public domain? Surely that could be provided direct from the department to the MLA. The response from ECE frustrated me considerably. I don't believe this mindset, this policy exists in all departments, but it certainly is alive and well at ECE.

The Minister must rethink his communication and information sharing policy with MLA offices. It has

to be easy for us as elected public servants to serve our constituents, a job we are presumably sworn to do. How can we do that job well, Mr. Speaker, when we are stonewalled on the simplest of inquiries? Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN THE BEAUFORT-DELTA

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I was able to attend the AGM for the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority in Inuvik where a lot of really surprising stats caught my attention in terms of how services are brought forth within that authority, and the hard work that the staff are trying to do moving forward in terms of having to do the best they can with the resources that they receive and the funding that they receive through this government.

Some interesting stats that I'd like to share with committee, the Members here today and Cabinet were in terms of mental health and counselling services and psychiatric services, something that I've been a champion for within this government since the beginning of this Legislature.

With the counselling service in the Beaufort-Delta there were 699 new referrals in this last fiscal year. Of that, 3,186 hours were spent providing direct counselling. That equals about 424 days, regular job days, and that's not even including any type of administrative work, paperwork or any other type of follow-up. Of those that were referred to counselling, there were also 43 percent no-shows. Even if there was a fraction of those no-shows that showed up, it would have put a more extensive workload on the counsellors that are already providing very long services already.

However, there are some good things that were discussed and that was the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority provided some 237 community education events in terms of prevention and promotion, something that this government has discussed and brought forth over the last couple of years, and that equates to about 403 hours spent providing education to people across the Northwest Territories; well, particularly in the Beaufort-Delta region.

This only reflects a portion of the communities in the Northwest Territories. If we were to get these kinds of stats throughout all health authorities across the NWT, I'm sure it's going to show us that we do need to provide more funding, more services, more resources throughout the Northwest Territories.

I will ask questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services later, on how we are attacking this problem and how we are able to find solutions.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WORKER EXPOSURE TO ARSENIC AT
GIANT MINE REMEDIATION SITE

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A little less than two weeks ago, the NWT and all Regular Members woke up to news reports that more than 30 employees were critically exposed to arsenic at the Giant Mine remediation site. At this point, we have no idea how these employees were exposed, how long they were exposed, when this government and WSCC were notified of this incident and, more importantly, what is being done.

Why do Members of the House and the people of the Northwest Territories have to be notified via surprise media reports of such disasters? Why do we have to hear quotes from the president of WSCC saying, "There's a disconnect somewhere where these people are getting exposure and they're not supposed to." What are these disconnects? We know this is a federal cleanup initiative. This is a given. But the contractor is local and these employees are covered under health and safety jurisdiction, and like any other business in the NWT, there are rules to follow, especially with dealing with high-risk work.

What is further perplexing is that this government may have been aware of this serious arsenic exposure issue for many months, so again, it seems I ask this question every session: Why, in a consensus government, are Members not informed of such problems? Why do we get the feeling of a perceived cover-up? Even as of today, we have yet to hear anything concrete coming from this government or the federal government on what is to become of these high tested arsenic employees, the contractor or the future cleanup initiatives of Giant Mine.

The bigger question is: How many more health and safety issues are out there with this remediation cleanup work? When is it more important to hide from the truth behind the Giant Mine curtain than to come clean with issues affecting the health and safety of our employees?

On the mind of many, and it must be said here today, when do cleanup profits take a front seat to human safety? It is clear, I have many more questions here today than answers in my Members statement. Therefore, I will be asking the Minister responsible for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the Northwest Territories to help demystify this arsenic caper later today.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MEDICAL ESCORT POLICY

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak on medical patients, more so on the issue that the majority of these patients require medical care that cannot be provided by the local health centres. My focus is on our patients who travel from their home communities to larger centres, such as Inuvik, Yellowknife and, in most cases, Edmonton, and are in need of medical escorts. I'd like to ask the Minister to take this issue on a more serious note and listen to the pleas that are coming from patients who are requesting medical escorts and are yet denied.

When my constituents call me, write me letters telling me that they're sick, when they are weak and have no strength to travel, when they can't speak for themselves and when they don't understand, I need to speak for them and let this Assembly know that we cannot continue operating the way we do. Changes need to be made in order for our people to be more comfortable.

Another thing on that same note, medical escorts are a huge support for patients that are going to see the doctor when they are told they have life-threatening illnesses such as cancer. It's alarming and shocking, and the patients have their escorts to rely on. The escorts are there to make the patient comfortable, to ease their fear of travelling to large centres and to be a support when diagnoses are given.

I would like to know if the Minister can assist medical patients who are requesting escorts, to seriously consider their request. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WILD MUSHROOM HARVEST

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The people of the Deh Cho very highly value the natural abundance of the land and water surrounding our communities.

Wild mushroom harvest in the area is a tremendous potential for my region. Wild mushrooms are highly sought after for their variety and flavour. Morels themselves cost as much as \$120 apiece, and a Member of the previous Assembly reported pine mushrooms fetching as much as \$300 per pound in some markets. Like berries, they add a distinct northern character to a meat dish.

The first organized harvest of wild morels in the Northwest Territories took place almost 15 years

ago, but since then we haven't done very much to capitalize on this opportunity. A number of times, entrepreneurs have had huge profits from northern mushrooms, while just a few lucky Northerners pocketed only a small fraction of the benefits.

Fortunately, mushrooms are a renewable resource. Last year wild fires devastated Deh Cho forests and we can expect a new crop of mushrooms this year. Many of these areas are easily accessible by highway, and the people of Fort Providence are ready to harvest mushrooms the way they already pick berries.

For many years the lack of provisions in the forest management legislation has prevented commercial mushroom harvest. As the Northwest Territories takes control of our land and resources, we have a prime opportunity to update the Northwest Territories Forest Management Act and make it possible for our residents to harvest and sell wild mushrooms as well as berries, herbal teas and other bounty of the northern wild.

For far too long we have watched our local produce snatched up by mushroom-savvy Southerners, and I am afraid that this coming year that will only happen again.

Local communities should be the first to profit from the harvest of our renewable resources. It would be unacceptable for southern entrepreneurs to come in and try to trap our furs, mine our diamonds or drill for oil without the involvement of local Aboriginal people.

I urge this government to move forward on a sound agricultural policy and changes to the Northwest Territories Forest Management Act, to ensure that we can make the most of harvesting the northern wild. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the public becomes increasingly aware, the ideas and concerns of Regular Members seem to matter little with this government. I ask anyone to show me one recommendation from Members and the committees in this budget.

However, the interested public here watching us do our work certainly get to realize that we learn things all the time, such as these job vacancy rates.

I have to give credit to MLA Blake and certainly MLA Groenewegen the other day, who certainly got it right. When it comes to those 800 vacancies, the public wants to know, where are they? This government seems to be tucking them away in hiding and saving them for what reason I have yet to know.

The public wants to know. They are asking questions. Where are these jobs? How long have they been empty? How much are they costing this government, and even more importantly, where is the money going?

The public deserves these types of answers. We didn't get them the other day to either Mr. Blake's or certainly Mrs. Groenewegen's questions. We need these on the record.

The government says that they are actively recruiting these 571 jobs. I ask where. The public asks where. The public feels insulted by this particular problem.

Mr. Speaker, you yourself know, as a small community MLA, and all small community MLAs know, that the community employment rates are at dismal levels. If we had the ability to help these community rates with these types of jobs, these 571 jobs that mysteriously showed up that no one has ever seen before, they would help regional rates, and regional rates would help northern rates, and northern rates... Everybody working would help everybody. It would be good for the whole North. But where are they being tucked away? I personally don't know where these hidden jobs are.

Recently, we heard about the job fair in Ottawa, and I'm certainly not against sending a job fair out, looking for special employment type of people that you just can't get off the street. It makes sense sometimes, because those skills and qualifications may not be easily found. But I'll tell you, the average Northerner is starting to wonder: does this government not care about them? Do they need to go to job fairs in Ottawa and shut them out of what should be northern opportunities? I know many families have passionately invested their lives into the North, and they're feeling shut out by the circumstance.

Let me finish by this: Over the last 10 years, the unemployment rate has done nothing but increase in the Northwest Territories. I will tell you, by going to the NWT Bureau of Stats website it will show you that over the last two years of the McLeod government, it has sharply increased.

We need to get Northerners employed; we need to get Northerners working; and I'd say we need to do it now. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT FISHING INDUSTRY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, as I was able to enjoy some dry fish from the Beaufort-Delta area, I came up with a Member's statement here.

I know that in the Northwest Territories we value these northern fish. Whether we fry it, bake it, barbeque it, smoke it, or even enjoy it dried, it's an important asset to the Northwest Territories.

In the Hay River area, in the Great Slave area, we catch it, a lot of it. One million pounds last year, the Minister was able to announce last November. One million.

Our fishers are working hard out there in this industry. They have increased the production over the last couple of years and made it over that million pounds.

The recent successes in the industry don't indicate the fact that we have to support them more. We have to increase the amount of the fishers out there and the supports that they have.

As we sit here and debate resource revenue sharing of these non-renewable resources, we should be focussing on this opportunity that we have in renewable resources like our fisheries. If we support and train these Northerners to stay here, this will have a direct impact on our economy, and we won't have to be dealing with what the price of some commodity on the world market is. These are direct jobs directly affecting Northerners.

Later today I will have questions for the Minister of ITI about some of the money that they've talked about in the budget, supporting the industry, where that money is going to be and how we're going to put these people to work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognitions of Visitors in the Gallery

Colleagues, I wish to welcome some very special visitors in the gallery here today. We have 10 young men and women, who are participating in the Ontario Legislature Internship Program, visiting us all this week. I understand they're looking forward to seeing consensus government at work, and I assure them that you've come to the right place.

I'd like to recognize – once your name is called, please stand up – Emily Barrette, Jessica Behnke, Mitchell Davidson, Aaron Denhartog, Vanessa Dupuis, Amanda Garofalo, Taylor Lew, Lauren Miller, Melinda Munding and Douglas Wong.

On behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly, I welcome you here to the Northwest Territories. Welcome to our Chamber.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 63-17(5): ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES IN THE SAHTU REGION

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services, and it goes to my Member's statement on palliative care for the people in the community of Deline. It has been a big issue for some time, and actually since 1993 they've had units that were there for extended care shut down in 1994. They've made some changes to it. However, my letter of 2005-2006, just an update from last year from the previous Minister of Health and Social Services that went into Deline. People in the community of Deline are asking that the existing community wellness building have two beds dedicated for elders who are on the last days of life in this world, if they could look at that building being renovated so that we can have two palliative care beds in the community of Deline.

Can the Minister give me a brief update as to where he is now with that request?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is actually currently completing a Territorial Palliative Care Framework and Action Plan, which is going to guide us on the delivery of community-based palliative care services throughout the Northwest Territories, and this plan and action plan are expected to be completed by the end of March 2014. Once that's done we'll be in a better position to have a discussion about what we can do with existing infrastructure and new infrastructure.

I do know that with all new infrastructure that we're building with respect to long-term care facilities, we are including one palliative care bed and one respite bed. So that's all new facilities we're building. I'll be in a better position to talk about what we'll do in the communities otherwise once this action plan is done, and I would be happy to have discussions with the Member and committee once that is done. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Can the Minister commit to meeting the people of Deline and the people of the Sahtu, once the report has been completed, that there will be some specific discussions for the community of Deline on their request to have palliative care services? Is that something that we could look at working on, on a going forward basis, because the capital infrastructure budget will be coming up shortly after that.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: At the invite of the community or the Member, I'm happy to visit his

constituency and talk about any issues that the residents may have. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I know once we get Ministers into our communities, there are issues even without the Minister's role or responsibility. There are all kinds of issues. So, specifically, I want to have the Minister put some emphasis on the request for palliative beds in the community of Deline, and certainly as I'm standing here today, I will be inviting the Minister into Deline. When we have time we can go into that community. So I want to ask the Minister to talk about specifically the palliative care request that the people in Deline have.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'd like to thank the Member for the invitation. We will certainly come to the community and we will come prepared. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 64-17(5):

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES TO DEHCHO
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my Member's statement about the Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority and where we are and where we're going.

I was pleased that the Minister of Health and Social Services was in Fort Simpson and had the ability to explain to residents, I think it was like a bird's eye view plan of the health authority. So I'd just like to ask the Minister and get it on record here in the House, once again, on behalf of my constituents, the Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority does not have an existing board.

What is the plan for the Dehcho Health and Social Service Authority as we move forward? Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to ensuring that we have mechanisms that allow the voice of the people to be heard with respect to health and social services authorities. The Member is right; we do have a public administrator providing us the direction from the Dehcho at this point in time. We are exploring options for changing our structure so that we can provide better health, better care and better results for our residents throughout the Northwest Territories. In that model, I believe and I'm committed to ensuring that the people for the regions and the communities continue to have a voice in the delivery of their health and social services.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Part of the Dehcho Health and Social Services authority is spread over basically two constituencies, Nahendeh and Deh Cho. There was some talk about utilizing the Hay River hospital as opposed to everybody coming to Yellowknife. Can the Minister comment on that?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: What we are trying to accomplish is a more integrated system of health and social services delivery in the Northwest Territories so that a resident in a community can receive seamless care through the whole system from their community of origin to any facility that can provide them the services they need. With a more integrated system, we can maximize our benefits of having patients go to other locations as opposed to just focusing, say, on Yellowknife. We'll be able to flow patients to Inuvik, Hay River or wherever we can provide the best service in the best time for the best results, so it could conceivably include individuals, depending on conditions, utilizing the services that will be available in Hay River.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I'd like to thank the Minister for that answer. As well as the old board and the authority, we had one member from each community sitting on a governance council. Just how would that kind of community input be involved in this new structure that the Minister is thinking about?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Those discussions still need to be had and ironed out, for the most part. We do know we want to, and must, maintain regional and community input, but every region and every authority that exists today is different and has a different catchment area, and the individuals that need to be represented may be different, so it's not going to be one model fits all. We're going to have to talk to the people from the Deh Cho with respect to that particular area, as we'll need to talk to the people from the Tlicho, the Sahtu, the Beaufort-Delta as well as Yellowknife. We need to have those discussions, and we will be having those discussions as we move forward. We are currently out seeking input and some guidance and having discussions with communities throughout the Northwest Territories as well as committee.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask the Minister to continue to keep my constituents and our residents informed as we move along. I know that sometimes we get ahead of ourselves when we get an idea. I think that's important, and of course, I'd like to ask the Minister to return to Nahendeh for a fuller tour later on this spring as we move along with this bird's eye view of health authorities in the Northwest Territories.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I believe it's important to get to the communities to meet with the residents. As the Minister of Health and Social Services, I'm absolutely committed to do that. I'll take that as an invitation, and I'll have my staff work with the Member's staff and we'll work out a date.

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

QUESTION 65-17(5):
MEDICAL TRAVEL ESCORT POLICY

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to follow up to my Member's statement, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, what process does the department follow for medical escorts for the elderly?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The Minister of Health, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a policy in place. I do acknowledge that the policy is quite old, and we have heard significant feedback from residents from across the Northwest Territories that it does need to be reviewed. We have committed to doing that review. I did meet with Members in January to talk about the review, the timeline for the review. We will have a policy, a redrafted policy shortly, and from there we will have an opportunity to discuss and go out for consultation on the individual components which do include escorts. We will have an opportunity to amend that portion of the Medical Travel Policy, and we will be seeking input from Members and from the public as we do so.

MR. BLAKE: I'd also like to ask the Minister, why are medical escorts denied when approved by the doctor?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There is a policy in place and recommendations do have to come for an escort and sometimes they don't meet the policy as it stands, which is another indication that there seems to be a glitch in the matrix, if you will, and we need to work on this policy and we need to fix this policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: I also mentioned in my statement a need for support more along the lines of counselling when dealing with life-threatening illnesses.

I would like to ask the Minister, will the Minister develop these support programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a variety of conditions that our residents may be facing with respect to health. I know that we are doing a significant number of things around cancer and have cancer support groups and other groups and mechanisms that are available to individuals that are suffering from particular conditions. If the Member has some other conditions or some

specific conditions that he would like to talk about, I would certainly be open to that discussion and encourage him to come down the hall and we can have that conversation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask the Minister, are those supports available to the people in the small communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I know that we do have individuals in each of the regions who are providing services out to the smaller communities and there are opportunities through telehealth where some of those groups can connect.

As far as the communities the Member represents, I would be happy to provide the Member with a little bit of breakdown of some of these supports we are providing with respect to these cancer support groups. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 66-17(5):
MLA INFORMATION REQUESTS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and I would like to follow up on my Member's statement and see if I can get some clarity as to the department's policies.

I would like to first ask the Minister, what is the policy of Education, Culture and Employment, the department and/or the Minister around communicating public information to MLAs, either the MLA themselves or their staff? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. There is a mutual agreement with the MLAs on guiding principles and process convention that we want to have a coordinated approach with our departments, not only my departments but other departments. Once it is funnelled through my department, we are fully aware of what is out there. But an independent agency or organization or MLA's office go directly to the department and we need to keep track of those activities, those transactions. Those are just mere transactions that we need to be fully aware of. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Minister, I think. I really am struggling to understand why public information must be routed through the Minister's office. Were I a general citizen and not an elected official, I could phone the name on the

press release and ask for the confirmation of the information directly.

So, I need to ask the Minister why he feels that information that is publically available must be requested through his office and why my office cannot go directly to his department and ask for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, again, with a coordinated effort and approach, we need to keep track of all the transactions that are happening within my department. I need to be on top of any request that comes in through an MLA so we are on top of answering their questions. We give immediate answer back, within five days. If it is a day-based operation, then we can definitely give it in a day. It is just a reporting mechanism, keeping track of all the transactions that are flowing through our department within the GNWT government-wide. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: I guess I need to say to the Minister that if I had asked for this information through his office, it probably wouldn't have arrived in time for me to communicate that information to my constituents in advance of that meeting, so I have a real difficulty with everything having to go through his office.

I would like to ask the Minister, if he needs to track every request that comes from a Minister's office, why cannot requests for public information asked of one of his staff of the department, why can that staff person, or a communications person, why can they not track that information or that request? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That is happening at the same time as well. As you know, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is the second biggest department along with Health and Social Services. We go through so many transactions throughout the day and we just want to be mindful of the requests that come in, so we can be prepared for the session and prepared for any briefings that may come up. So, we're on top of the activities that are happening or transactions that may come across our table.

At the end of the day, we just want to keep track of all the transactions that are going through. We may have missed out on some areas, but we try to be on top of it every step of the way. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's desire to be on top of things, but if he really thinks that I'm going to be asking him questions about public information about a meeting that's upcoming, I have a hard time understanding that.

I would like to know if there is any hope that the Minister might change this policy. I'm talking about public information, something that's already in the public domain. It's been released through a press release or a media advisory.

Is there any hope that he will change his policy and allow his staff to talk to my staff to confirm public information? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: There is always hope.

---Laughter

Honestly, I can work with the Member and have that brought to my department to discuss further. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 67-17(5):
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
IN THE BEAUFORT-DELTA

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to follow up on some of the alarming stats that were presented to us by the health authority in the Beaufort-Delta region on the amount of hours spent on counselling, the amount of no-shows, the referrals, especially the amount of new referrals. There were 699 new referrals to counselling services.

One thing that I have brought up in this House, and I'll do it again today, is our psychiatric services in terms of assessments. Some of these clients might be going through counselling over and over again without getting the proper assessments they need because we only have so much psychiatric services in the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to ask the Minister, what is he doing to improve our psychiatric services so we can do the proper assessments for people in the Northwest Territories moving forward in this upcoming fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The honourable Minister of Health, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Psychiatric services in the Northwest Territories have been enhanced through a partnership between Stanton Territorial Health Authority as well as Dalhousie Global Psychiatry and Yellowknife Health and Social Services. As the Member knows, there are two resident psychiatrists in the Northwest Territories, and mental health services, as I've just said, have been expanded to include the Dalhousie Global Psychiatry department of Dalhousie University. Both the on-site psychiatrist and those helping us through Dalhousie provide both direct and distance treatment consultation and assessment. This can be done

over telehealth. So, we are enhancing our services that are available to our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: I'm glad the Minister brought up the Dalhousie program and gave us a little detail into how that's working so far.

In terms of doing the assessments and if there are any residents of the NWT or clients that are going through this program that need some treatment for their psychiatric services, how many beds do we have in the Northwest Territories that would be able to house some of these individuals who might need around-the-clock services? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I can't recall the number of beds in the Northwest Territories, off the top of my head, but I will certainly get that information back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: I know that one of our issues and our challenges that we have in the Northwest Territories is resources and infrastructure to house some of these individuals. We are going through the same thing. We also have the long-term care issues. We have an increase in our seniors population, and with that might come dementia and other areas that might require more services.

Does the government have some type of program with out-of-province jurisdictions that provide services to the GNWT? If so, how many NWT residents are accessing those southern placements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: In the Northwest Territories there are a number of long-term care facilities throughout the Territories in different communities and regions. The Housing Corp has done some pretty impressive work in getting some infrastructure on the ground to provide types of support. There is a dementia centre here in Yellowknife. So, we do provide a significant number of services to individuals needing it.

I'm not sure I fully understand the Member's question. Is he asking how many seniors are utilizing long-term care facilities outside the Northwest Territories? I'm not too sure what he's asking, but I'd be happy to sit down with the Member, get the specifics and get back to him with the information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should have been a little bit more clear. I was looking at psychiatric services, out-of-territory services that are provided by other government or other NGOs.

What does the Minister have planned, looking at some of the stats that we have in the Beaufort-Delta? What is his plan, working with the health

authority, to address these high, direct counselling services as well as these new referrals that are putting a strain on our current counselling services that we have in the Beaufort-Delta region right now? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I already indicated, the Dalhousie psychiatric partnership has really helped us create some stability within the psychiatric locum pool and has allowed for the expansion of psychiatric services throughout the use of telehealth. On top of that, we do have 65 community counseling positions, including community wellness workers, mental health and addictions counsellors, clinical supervisors, managers, as well as some funded NGO positions to provide community counselling services in the communities. They do things like assessments and crisis intervention, referrals for treatment counselling, follow-up and after-care. So, there are a significant number of positions out there doing this type of work, and with the addition of the advanced psychiatric, we should be able to take down some of that workload and get better care, better health and a better future for our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

QUESTION 68-17(5):
WORKER EXPOSURE TO ARSENIC AT
GIANT MINE REMEDIATION SITE

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today as a follow-up to my Member's statement on my questions surrounding the disconnect to the recent media reports that more than 30 cleanup workers at Giant Mine site were critically exposed to toxic arsenic trioxide. We have received little to no updates on this disaster, and it is important that we hear today from the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission as to what we are doing in the wake of this health and safety issue.

Can the Minister inform the House as to when his office was made aware when these critically arsenic-exposed cleanup workers at Giant Mine site were showing positive test results in their weekly medical monitoring program? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. WSCC was first informed about the exposure on August 10, 2013, and they sent me a briefing note on August 14, 2013. Those are the days that have been identified. Mahsi.

MR. DOLYUNNY: If the Minister and Cabinet were informed August 14, 2013, why were Regular

Members and the public at large not informed of such critical health and safety findings? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Part of the mandate of the WSCC is to first deal with the workers and the employers. In this instance, the general public were not at risk of exposure but were confined from the contaminated zone on the Giant property. The general public does not have access to the mine site or the contaminated zone. Worker/employer information is confidential and cannot be disclosed, so that's part of the reason why it was kept confidential to the parties. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: Maybe the Minister can elaborate on what activities the cleanup workers were doing to put them at such a high risk of exposure. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The workers were in the midst of cleaning out the asbestos and arsenic from the roaster complex at Giant and they were wearing the protective equipment required at that point. In some cases equipment fails, and in all the cases WSCC and company are still trying to find out how the workers were exposed. During that time frame, the WSCC were giving directions to the company on how to eliminate the exposure and WSCC also immediately closed the project down until the company determined what caused the spike. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister for that, but can the Minister inform the House as to what exactly is being done now for these exposed NWT workers to this highly toxic arsenic, and when can the House expect a full risk assessment of this arsenic exposure for public review? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: WSCC is dealing with the workers that were exposed, to ensure that they have all the information that's required to deal with the exposure.

The low-level arsenic exposure is not a substance to cause any instant illness. It can manifest over long periods of time. That's the information that we received. WSCC is also ensuring that it is not manifesting to a latent disease of the workers. Those are some of the areas that we are currently monitoring. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 69-17(5):
COMMERCIAL HARVEST OF
WILD MUSHROOMS

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. My constituency, of course, is

situated very close to the southern NWT with easy highway access. Basically the Deh Cho, in the heart of the region, there was tremendous forest fire activity last year that basically rendered a lot of the forests highly impacted by an unfortunate natural occurrence. Yet at the same time, it's February at this point and summer is dawning. This matter has been raised in the House before.

My question to the Minister is: What changes to legislation need to be made in order for the commercial harvest of wild mushrooms to be viable in the NWT? Mahsi.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a major piece of legislation that has to be redone. That's the Forest Management Act. It's a major legislative undertaking. Some preliminary work will get done in the life of this government, but it will be carried through to conclusion in the life of the 18th Assembly. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: This matter, as I've pointed out, has been brought to the House before and there are some entrepreneurs at the local community that are poised to take advantage of this opportunity, especially at the local community level where there are very few employment and business opportunities.

What is the Minister prepared to do to help out the communities to basically prepare for the commercial harvest of wild mushrooms? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: ITI has put on, and will continue to put on, workshops to assist communities and interested individuals on the ins and outs of the morel mushroom harvest, both in terms of the actual harvesting and then looking to the secondary piece, which of course is marketing the product. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: There seems to be a call of action for this government to put in place some provisions to ensure that the commercial harvest activities of mushrooms are, first of all, regulated. At the same time, there's a level of control to ensure that this very precious natural resource is protected, so it seems that the Minister needs to do something.

Is the Minister prepared to step towards an interim provision to protect mushrooms? Would the Minister consider establishing immediately an arrangement with First Nations on their traditional lands to put in place a traditional knowledge study of morels? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: If there's a specific request, ITI and the government, of course, would work with the Aboriginal governments on land that is identified or a part of a settlement area.

On public lands we have the provisions put in place that we are able now to do under the current legislation and we will continue to do that. We, as well, offer these workshops to folks at large.

As the Member indicated, the year after fire season, there tends to be a bumper crop of morel mushrooms, and there's an industry that tracks these fires across Canada, and the harvesters will appear to pick as soon as the harvest season commences. So, we're prepared to work with the Aboriginal governments and community governments. Thank you.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's encouraging that the Minister is going to take some action after many times that this has been brought to the House.

Will the Minister ensure that there is at least a dialogue that is established with those First Nation communities that are interested in at least doing a baseline study of the traditional study and the purpose and the value of wild mushrooms, especially those communities that are situated close to the NWT border and along the highway? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The government, of course, stands ready to work with the affected communities in the affected areas where there have been fires in the previous year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 70-17(5):
NWT FISHING INDUSTRY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my Member's statement about the fishery in the Great Slave Lake, and my colleague from the Deh Cho reminded me that they also boil that fish and it's delicious that way as well. I have a question to the Minister of ITI about the current activities that they are doing with the fishery.

What are those monies that the Minister and the budget addressed the other day, what are the monies going towards to increase the production of the fishery in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The money that we have announced in this year's budget, it's about \$1.7 million, will go toward upgrading the fleet on Great Slave Lake, a new marketing effort to get more product in the domestic market here in the Northwest Territories which we

predict is somewhere around 500,000 to 750,000 pounds in addition to the 930,000 pounds that were taken from the lake last year.

Also, the key piece to this is the construction of an export grade new fish plant in Hay River. We're going to try to leverage the dollars that we do have that you see in this year's budget with monies from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, as well as CanNor. Those discussions are ongoing and we hope to see that come to fruition really soon. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: My next question for the Minister is about that marketing that he discussed. I know he's talking about domestic marketing. I'm also concerned about marketing this product outside of the Northwest Territories.

Along with that marketing and pricing, what is the department doing to bring up the prices for the fishers to basically create an income and get paid for their good product?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Part of the funding that was announced in this year's budget would include a marketing subsidy of 44 cents per kilogram for fishermen. It is believed that the domestic market would be much more lucrative for fishermen to sell their product in the local domestic market, Hay River, Yellowknife, Fort Smith, for example. Again, we have announced some money to help fishermen market their product here in the domestic market, which will put more money in fishermen's pockets here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BOUCHARD: I know the department went throughout the Northwest Territories on their new Economic Opportunities Strategy and the fishery was one of the things that came forward from there.

What monies are they putting into this Economic Opportunities Strategy to help the fishers in this industry?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: We did hear loud and clear, both in the North Slave region and in the South Slave region, the need to reinvigorate the commercial fishing industry on Great Slave Lake. That's why, I believe, the cornerstone of the work of the EOS here initially is going to be to revitalize that fishery. We've got \$1.7 million. We want to build a new fish plant in Hay River; we want to upgrade the fleet; we want to attract new fishermen to the industry; we want to keep the existing fishermen that we have; and we're going to put our best effort into doing just that.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is about the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and our work with them to do this marketing.

How much involvement has the Minister had with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation? Have we looked at that opportunity? Have we looked if that is a need? Do we really need them still? I know that's been debated in the fishery quite a bit, but what is the department doing with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I have met with the officials from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation last year. Our officials continue to dialogue with Freshwater. It is our hope that they will be a vital piece of the puzzle in the construction of a new export grade fish plant in Hay River. We want to work with them and we also want to work with CanNor to ensure that this happens.

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

QUESTION 71-17(5):
POLICY ON NORTHERN ART
IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister for Public Works. Around this time last year, I had a great debate with the Minister of Public Works. We debated whether displaying more NWT art in public buildings was a good idea or a great idea, and I believe a great idea won the day.

Could the new Minister of Public Works update us on the current status of the northern art in government buildings policy?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Minister of Public Works, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. After the commitment was made to do this work, a working group consisting of four departments, ECE, ITI, Transportation and Public Works, was put together to work with the NWT Arts Council on making this display of art in GNWT buildings possible.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. We put a lot of effort into this. Did we actually come up with a policy? When developing policies, obviously it's a good idea to consult with the public, so as well as consulting internally, can the Minister report back on the latest meetings with NWT artists and what they thought of his latest proposals?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The first thing that had occurred was the two content management TV display systems were created and put out. Essentially, a TV screen, one at the Yellowknife Airport and one in the Public Works office in Inuvik, and they display art. They have had discussion with the NWT Arts Council. This group of departments had discussions with the Arts Council and are working on what will be displayed, for what type of period they'll be displayed, how many different things would be displayed and so on.

In as far as the policy goes, ECE will be developing a policy, working with Public Works and ITI, and this policy will guide how GNWT buildings are used to display NWT art, so there is some movement there.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks again to the Minister. Last year we also had some discussion about possibly doing displays on a rotational basis, and I'm wondering if that discussion has been had yet or whether that's also being left to those other two departments. Anything the Minister could report?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The Department of Public Works will advise the group of areas where spaces would be available for art display. Like I indicated, there will be a policy developed, and I think that's going to guide us on whether or not we are displaying art, in which buildings and what pieces of art that we will be displaying. As I indicated, at this point it appears as though the group, the NWT Arts Council, that we're working with were happy with the display appearing on the television and the TV display system, but because the policy is not finalized, it would be difficult to indicate at this point what art we can use on a rotational basis in the Public Works buildings.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the Minister. I note that the GNWT office building downtown here is very close to completion. I'm wondering: how are things proceeding in terms of a plan for displaying northern art in that building and, if I can squeeze it in, if the Minister has any comments on how we're going to be sure and communicate this new policy, whenever it's developed, to all our artists.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: As far as the new building goes, I don't know what will be available, but one of the things that we have determined as the group of departments working together that it was very important for us to do our communications to the NWT Arts Council. They seem to have their membership communicating with the memberships right across the territory throughout the arts community, so any communications that this government has in order to determine what would be displayed and which buildings will be communicated to the NWT Arts Council.

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

QUESTION 72-17(5):
GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly a great pleasure to have the opportunity to follow up on my Member's statement. I want to find out, first and foremost, what is the government doing to promote these 800 vacancies, as

highlighted by the government, and certainly reaffirmed by the Minister of Finance that 571 jobs are being actively recruited by this government.

I will ask the Minister of Human Resources, what is he doing to ensure that Northerners have an opportunity at these jobs first and foremost, because when you look on the website it only shows about 100, 120 jobs. Where are we hiding them?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is our mode of communicating with individuals. A careers website is what we're using to advertise for the people that are looking for jobs in the NWT. The departments, various departments are constantly trying to advertise the jobs on the career website. If there are 100-and-something jobs on there, I can check with the department to just determine why there are not more jobs on the career website at this time.

MR. HAWKINS: I've been contacted by public members who have gone to the job website and are not seeing them there. Of course, it's a huge concern of theirs that they feel that the government is slapping them in the face when the first whistle stop is Ottawa. What's next? Vancouver, maybe Edmonton, before Inuvik or Hay River or even Yellowknife?

My question now to the Minister of Human Resources is: What is he going to do to demonstrate that he's in charge of this file and showing that he's actively looking for people in the Northwest Territories for these jobs? Because right now, as everybody knows, these small communities have an over 30 percent unemployment rate, and right now they see no hope, and demonstrations like this prove that the government has abandoned them.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The Department of Human Resources does work with all departments in trying to fill the vacant positions in the small communities. We are well aware of the employment rate in the small communities, that they are very low.

If we could fill all the jobs in the small communities, we would do that, and we constantly work with the departments to determine which jobs can be filled, which jobs we're having difficulty filling and so on. In the small communities, I recognize, as a Member from a small community, we need to have jobs in the small communities, and we are doing everything possible to fill those jobs.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the Bureau of Stats website is an amazing source of information. It says there are about 2,000 people unemployed who are looking for work in the Northwest Territories. That

800 set of jobs would do significant damage to that 2,000 level of unemployed, Mr. Speaker.

The last point I will make, in the Handley government it was 5.65 percent unemployment; in the Roland government it was 6.625 percent unemployment; and now in the McLeod government we are now into 8.15 percent unemployment in the Northwest Territories.

What is this Minister going to do to put a dent into this huge level of unemployment? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, I know that we need some infrastructure in the communities where the employment rates are low. Some of those positions can't be filled unless individuals are brought into the community to fill those jobs, because some of those positions need some qualifications that are not easily attained in some of the smaller communities. The jobs that can be filled in the smaller communities with individuals that have the qualifications in those communities will be filled, but when we have to bring people in...

As I indicated in my response earlier, of the 570 active positions that we are trying to actively recruit across the government, I believe that the number, I don't have it right here in front of me, but I believe the number was that 325, or something like that, required a university degree. In order to get somebody to fill those positions that has a university degree, we have to have individuals within the Northwest Territories with university degrees looking for work – we have a very small percentage of those people – or we have to go south to try to get those individuals to fill the positions. At this time, unless we are changing the job completely, then that is a completely different discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the government doing placement opportunities, giving Northerners a chance. I hear from the public and they are concerned that these job opportunities are being held away from them. In other words, that they're not seeing these opportunities and benefits. Of course, at the same time as the last point is, they start to ask themselves, why bother to live and invest here with their families in the future if this government shows little interest in them.

I want to know what this Minister is going to do to show that these jobs matter, and that Northerners matter, and we are going to try to hire for some of these 800 jobs that are open. I actually think it is more than 800, but we will get that cleared up here in the next day or two.

What is this Minister going to do to demonstrate that Northerners matter and we care about their families and we care about their investment in the Northwest Territories? Whether they are in a big

community or a small community, it matters. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, it does matter; I agree. This is a reason why we are trying to put infrastructure into the small communities.

In some of the larger centres, we do have very good employment rates. An example is the employment rate in the city of Yellowknife is over 80 percent; across the country it is 69 percent. The issue is not really because we don't have infrastructure here, we don't have infrastructure in the small communities. The low employment numbers in the small communities are due to education and housing and other office space and other infrastructure that's needed to attract people into these small communities.

We are trying to put those things in place so that it could become a place where individuals could work. Without those things it is very difficult to recruit positions. We are trying to recruit what we can with the people in the communities, but if we have to bring someone in, we have to be able to provide them housing and a place to work. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 73-17(5):
GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up on what the Minister of Human Resources continues to keep talking about. He keeps talking about infrastructure.

I fail to understand why infrastructure is such an issue with Northerners being hired, but it's okay to go to Ottawa to hire people even though we may not have infrastructure here. Maybe the Minister of Human Resources can explain what infrastructure means and, in that regard, why it matters when it comes to employing Northerners but infrastructure isn't an issue when you go to Ottawa to hire those folks there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The career fair in Ottawa was one method that we were using to try to attract individuals to the North. They come to the North; they would be subjected to the same type of infrastructure and housing deficiencies as anyone else here.

We are also trying to advertise in the North. We have open houses. We've had one in Simpson. We're going to continue to have open houses the next couple of months in all of our centres where we have career centres. We are going to have these open houses to try to bring people from these

communities to the open house and talk about their potential career with the public service.

We are not ignoring individuals in the Northwest Territories. We're open for business and we do accept people's applications. People who apply, we accept their applications. We had a lot of applications, and I indicated earlier that we had 1,704 staffing actions last year. Not all of them are hires, but many of those are part of our recruitment process. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, we still fail to seem to get the answer to why these 800 jobs are, what I would say, a relative secret. Why would we be hiding these employment opportunities to Northerners? When you go to the website and you don't see them there but it is okay to take the show on the road to Ottawa, and maybe make one northern stop, what's the government's benefit of keeping them a secret? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, they are not a secret, so it would be difficult to answer a question that leads with why is it a secret. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Can the Minister say for certain that every one of these, whether it is 500, 800 or 1,000 jobs that are open today, that we know they are actively campaigning, because I am sure they are not flying around the country wasting people's time.

Can the Minister guarantee that every one of these jobs is posted on our careers website, encouraging people to apply far and wide? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: No, I cannot guarantee that all of those 571 jobs will be on the career website and advertised soon; however, I will guarantee that we will be doing a full presentation to committee on exactly what the issues are with the vacancy rates and our complications with filling all of these positions and why these positions are vacant, where they are vacant and where we are having difficulties recruiting. I will assure the Member that tomorrow morning we will be putting a full presentation together and talking about all of the vacancy rates. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the final question begs the question about, you know, where is the money. Some of these jobs were probably vacant a short period, some are probably vacant long periods, but when you add up to 571 jobs, as stated by the Finance Minister, that's a lot of money sitting doing nothing.

So the question is: How much money are we talking about and where is it going if it's not employing people? That answer certainly deserves a little light and the public deserves to know. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, even though the position is vacant, the job still has to be done. Often the positions are filled with a casual, and also when we have some vacancy rates, we create some money for summer students so we are able to hire summer students. It is very important to us as a government, when these kids are out at university or college, when they come back to the Northwest Territories that we try to employ them so they have a better chance of success when they go back to school. Last year we employed 308 summer students. If we had every position filled to the max all the time and there was absolutely no vacancy rate, that would be one program that we would have to cut, the Summer Student Employment Program. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What can the Minister do to show us where that money is going? This Legislature votes for that particular money to be allocated for a very specific purpose. I don't know the FMB rules that tightly to be able to say if you take that money and spend it somewhere else, you've breached that. I can't say that today, but I am certainly going to look into it. How do we account for that money? If it's not going to these jobs, the public sees it, rightly, as a slush fund to do whatever they want. So how do we know the money is going exactly to what it was designed for and passed in this Legislature for? Will the Minister explain that and guarantee it and also demonstrate it in writing to this Legislature? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The money to hire employees for the GNWT is there and we use that money for that purpose only. We don't spend it on other things. Tomorrow morning we will be able to demonstrate in committee the full program of vacancies, hires, and we can do comparisons with the main estimates. We are prepared to do all that. We had promised committee we would do that work and we are doing that tomorrow morning. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 74-17(5):

ELDERS LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I want to talk about the elders in our small communities who have to go through a long-term care facility either in Inuvik or Yellowknife. Once they get assessed in that community, they are better suited in the long-term care facility, providing they have beds. Is it the responsibility of the elders to find themselves in those facilities?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, we want to work with our residents to keep them as close to home as possible, recognizing that we do have some infrastructure challenges. The Housing Corp has been doing a significant amount of work with respect to facilities in the communities to provide some opportunities for elders as they age and have to move out of their own units. We are looking at putting in a long-term care facility in Norman Wells, which would be the first of its kind in that region. So we are doing a number of things, but from time to time we do have residents who do have to come out of their home communities, either come to a regional centre or, if their personal condition happens to be more severe, they might have to come to a place like Yellowknife. With respect to how that is funded, I will have to get that detailed information from the department. I would be happy to share that information with the Member at a later date. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YAKELEYA: I am certainly happy that Cabinet has agreed to put a long-term care facility in the Sahtu for the people of the Northwest Territories. My understanding, from talking to some of the elders, is once they are assessed and with the lack of infrastructure in their communities, they have to somehow make their way to Yellowknife or Inuvik and they have to pay for their airfare.

I want to ask the Minister, if that's the case, is his department looking at where the elders don't have to pay for their airfare once they get assessed and they have to come to a long-term care facility for their future needs?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Where it's medically necessary for an individual to come from one community and reside in another community on a permanent basis where the services are, we do provide financial supports and assistance to help those individuals get here, but it's got to be medically necessary. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Would the Minister be committing to look at past files where people who have left their communities in the Sahtu who have to come to a long-term care facility because of their medical needs where these elders have paid for their own tickets from Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, Deline or Tulita and that these files will be looked at and proper compensation will go back to these elders?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Where it's deemed medically necessary by physicians or other health professionals, we would certainly be willing to have that conversation. I would encourage the Member to come to my office and maybe we can discuss the individual cases, because I'm not actually aware of

the individual cases at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have certainly known elders who have left the Sahtu and have come to me and said we have to pay for their tickets, because they don't have any money from their \$550 a month pension cheque. We have to pay money to get to the centre. The Minister is also welcome to walk into my office to have this discussion.

I want to ask the Minister if he's willing to look at this file again and properly compensate the elders who have made their own travel arrangements, paid their own tickets to come to Inuvik or Yellowknife.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am happy to work with the Member. I am happy to walk down the hall to his office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The time for oral question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Mr. Lafferty.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 6-17(5): REALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Ms. Bisaro on February 7, 2014, regarding reallocation of funds for junior kindergarten. Ms. Bisaro requested a breakdown, by department, showing where the reallocated \$1.8 million in funding to implement junior kindergarten in 2014-15 in our smallest NWT communities will be found.

Mr. Speaker, the \$1.8 million to implement the optional, play-based Junior Kindergarten Program for four-year-olds in 29 small communities across the Northwest Territories in 2014-15 will be sourced from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ms. Bisaro also asked from which line of the department's budget the reallocated funds will be sourced and the amount for each budget line. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will be re-profiling existing education authority contributions. These are the operations and maintenance contributions for the operation of school programs, which are projected to total \$152 million in 2014-15. The re-profiled funding will come from adjusting the K to 12 pupil-teacher ratio, or PTR. It is important to note that although the PTR will be adjusted to accommodate the implementation of junior kindergarten, PTR funding

will still remain above the minimum legislated PTR level. In the NWT, a large part of the calculation of the amount of funding provided to education authorities is determined by looking at the number of students and how many teachers and support staff are needed for those students. The legislated pupil-teacher ratio is 16 to one, whereas current funding levels to education authorities are actually much higher, at about 13 to one, which is almost \$11 million annually above the legislated requirement.

The total projected cost of implementing junior kindergarten, based on the school year of July 1 to June 30, will be as follows:

- In the 2014-15 school year, the cost of implementing junior kindergarten in 29 communities is projected to be \$2.8 million annually;
- In the 2015-16 school year, the cost of adding regional centres – Inuvik, Fort Smith and Hay River – is projected to be \$1.7 million annually; and
- In the 2016-17 school year, the cost of adding Yellowknife schools is projected to be \$2.5 million annually.

The total cost to offer junior kindergarten in all of our communities, a goal that will be accomplished in September 2016, is projected to be \$7 million annually. This cost will be absorbed by education authorities over the three-year implementation time frame and on an ongoing basis. We anticipate that there will be minor infrastructure investments required in some of our schools to make sure they are equipped for four-year-olds, but this cost will not be borne by the education authorities.

Ms. Bisaro also asked for the amount of reallocated funding that will be sourced from each individual education authority. Mr. Speaker, five education authorities will end up receiving a slight increase in funding as a result of junior kindergarten, while five will experience a slight decrease. Of the five education authorities experiencing a slight decrease, the greatest decrease, over three years, is just a 1.2 percent reduction in their total funding.

Specifically, over the next three years and annually thereafter, we are projecting that the Beaufort-Delta Education Authority will experience a net decrease of 0.4 percent, or \$122,000 to their funding; the South Slave Divisional education Council will experience a net decrease of 0.9 percent, or \$207,000; the Tlicho Community Services Agency will experience a net decrease of 0.1 percent, or \$19,000; the Yellowknife Catholic Schools will experience a net decrease of 1.2 percent, or \$214,000; and the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 will experience a net decrease of 0.3 percent, or \$62,000.

Over the next three years and ongoing, we are also projecting that the Commission scolaire francophone will experience a net increase of 2.5 percent, or \$104,000; the Dehcho Divisional Education Council will experience a net increase of 0.1 percent, or \$7,000; the Detah District Education Authority will experience a net increase of 0.8 percent, or \$14,000; the Ndilo District Education Authority will experience a net increase of 4.2 percent, or \$91,000; and the Sahtu Divisional education Council will experience a net increase of 3.1 percent, or \$408,000.

Mr. Speaker, our education authorities are run by professional administrators who I am confident will be able to manage a reduction of 1.2 percent, or less, over three years, especially considering that our education authorities are sitting on projected accumulated cash surpluses that total \$8 million this school year. Mr. Speaker, given the fiscal realities we face, we are confident this is the best approach to funding this important and exciting new program for our children.

Let's not lose sight of the big picture. We are talking about a minor financial impact in exchange for introducing free, optional, play-based, full-day junior kindergarten for four-year-olds across the NWT. Mr. Speaker, this government has heard what parents have said, and we are responding. The research clearly demonstrates that a quality daycare program for four-year-olds will not only improve school success but success in life as well. This, Mr. Speaker, is what junior kindergarten is all about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address, day 3 of 7. 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. Abernethy.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 26-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES ANTI-POVERTY ACTION PLAN,
BUILDING ON THE STRENGTH OF
NORTHERNERS, 2014-15 TO 2015-16

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "Government of the Northwest Territories Anti-Poverty Action Plan, Building on the Strengths of Northerners, 2014-15 to 2015-16. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Ms. Bisaro.

TABLED DOCUMENT 27-17(5):
A QUESTION OF FUTURE PROSPERITY –
DEVELOPING A HERITAGE FUND IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the report of the Action Canada Fellows, entitled "A Question of Future Prosperity: Developing a Heritage Fund in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Bromley.

TABLED DOCUMENT 28-17(6):
NEWS/NORTH EDITORIAL – FEBRUARY 10,
2014: DEVOLUTION DISHONoured

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table page 8 of today's News/North, entitled "Devolution Dishonoured, Premier Sold out Aboriginal Partners to Get Devolution Deal." Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 16, notices of motion, Mr. Hawkins.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 8-17(5):
ALLOCATION OF RESOURCE REVENUES
TO NWT HERITAGE FUND

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, February 12, 2014, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends the government allocate 25 percent of new resource revenues annually to the NWT Heritage Fund, commencing in the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. 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 of bills and other matters, with Mr. Dolynny in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Good afternoon, committee. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have three items here before committee: Bill 6, Tabled Document 4-17(5) and Tabled Document 22-17(5). What is the wish of committee? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We would like to consider Tabled Document 22-17(5), opening comments or general comments on the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Agreed. We'll commence after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider TD 22-17(5) Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2014-2015. The Minister does not have witnesses to bring into the House, so we will commence with general comments. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of questions that don't need to be answered today. Many of them are rhetorical, but in looking at the budget address, I found it raised a number of questions in my mind. I don't need answers that are detailed, but I do want to raise a number of concerns that I have.

Right off the top, the budget address stated that Members had helped with the budget. Yes, we certainly had input into the budget. We certainly had any number of meetings where we provided our comments, but like other Members, I don't really feel that this budget reflects the handprint of Regular Members.

I mentioned the other day, and I have to mention it again, I am particularly disturbed about the percentage of our resource revenues that is going to go to the Heritage Fund. The budget is based on 5 percent, and as I mentioned the other day, there certainly is evidence that 25 percent is a much more realistic number. It's what I would say the majority of residents want, and it certainly is something that I think the Finance Minister heard during his consultations, but it seems to me that it was ignored.

I'm trying to understand the logistics of the way the cash is going to flow from our resource revenues. From what I understand of the budget, we're intending to spend our resource revenues in this budget year of '14-15, but we're not going to actually receive the dollars until '15-16. I think it's some 16 months after the beginning of this fiscal year is when we're going to actually get those resource revenues, so the only thing I can figure is that we are going to borrow in order to spend the resource revenues that are identified in the budget but that we don't have the cash for yet. So I guess that is a question that I could appreciate an answer from the Minister on.

I mentioned the other day, as well, that there's no new revenue source in the budget, and that really concerns me. I've mentioned this every year for, I think, the five or six years that I've been here. We certainly have an inflationary increase on taxes and

fees, and that's a good thing. We've established a policy whereby liquor and tobacco, for instance, the taxes on those go up every year, and our fees, the fees that we charge, those are increased based on inflation every year. But we need, as Mr. Dolynny said I think it was last week, a new revenue source, and I have yet to hear from the government that they're willing to identify and to look into a new revenue source, and so I would hope that the Minister, in light of the loss of tax revenue that we're experiencing this year, I would hope that the Minister is going to commit to actually do something about finding a new revenue source and establishing a new revenue source, because we definitely need to increase our revenues.

I'm surprised, and I mentioned the drop in our corporate income taxes, and I think the Minister has said it's somewhere around 30 or 40 million dollars, and I am quite surprised that that's mentioned in the budget address, but at the same time, the Minister said that we still expect to spend \$100 million on our capital. I'm having a little trouble reconciling that we have this huge drop in revenue but we are still able to spend more on our capital than we did in this current budget year.

The other thing is that the budget address states that our revenues are up 2.8 percent, and it says that our tax reduction, so the loss of our \$30 million in taxes, is offset by an increase in our federal grant, so I'm having difficulty reconciling. We're losing \$30 million. We're gaining \$30 million on our grant. The net result is that our revenues are going up 2.8 percent, and yet it sounds as though we're in a deep hole.

One of the things that again I have to ask rhetorically, is if, as was suggested by the Minister, I think, in answer to questions, is if we are so strapped, if we have to exercise fiscal restraint, what are we doing spending money on new initiatives? Why are we not funding those new initiatives from within? Why are we not using internal reallocation? I think it's been said by Members quite often before, new initiatives don't have to have new money, and when we don't have new money, which is what we're hearing, then we shouldn't be using new money for our new initiatives or we shouldn't have new initiatives at all. I'm not so sure I would agree with that though.

The Minister has mentioned in the last few days that we can expect a \$30 million supplementary appropriation coming up in the near future. It will impact this particular budget year, and I think he said that it is cost-driven expenditures. I understand that, but every year that I've been here, we have overspent our budget, and I wonder, in the 2014-15 O and M budget how have we planned and how will we plan for the over-expenditure of budget which we know is coming. It's something which I don't think we do well. We basically set our budget, we

set a contingency for that budget, which I believe is in this budget as well, and then we overspend that contingency, I think, regularly just like clockwork.

We've heard, certainly in the last year and I believe it carries forward into this new year as well, that we need to do short-term borrowing in order for us to operate fiscally from day to day, from month to month, and that cash flow is a problem. So I don't quite know how this new budget, how the 2014-15 budget is going to address our cash flow problem and our short-term borrowing problem.

I have some concerns about the Mineral Development Strategy. There is about \$2 million that's going into the Mineral Development Strategy actions to address that, and I am concerned that much of this \$2 million is going to go to industry, who I feel are generally well financed anyway. Maybe some junior exploration companies are not, but I really feel that we could be putting a lot of that money, a lot of that \$2 million into other areas where we have great demands. It makes me wonder whether or not there was a cost-benefit analysis that was done to prove the value of putting money into the Mineral Development Strategy.

Did we look at what we're going to gain by spending this money on industry? Did we look at whether or not our social programs would be a better cost benefit than putting money into the Mineral Development Strategy?

I find that this government, almost to a fault, pushes economic development without considering the effect that that economic development is going to have on our programs and services. That is a concern that exists for me.

We have a number of major projects, I guess, which have been mentioned a number of times. The Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link, we have the hydro expansion dream, we have Stanton Hospital renovations, we have the Mackenzie Valley Highway and they are all great projects, but I wondered, as I considered the budget address, why we are struggling to do them ourselves. There was talk of P3s a little while ago. That seems to have disappeared. Private partnerships, Aboriginal governments, other government partnerships, where are they?

I am especially concerned about the hydro project. From what I understand, we are spending money in this next budget year to prove whether or not there is a business case. My recollection is that we have spent many millions of dollars to date trying to prove a business case for another project. Do we really need to spend another many millions of dollars to try and prove a business case for this project that, in my mind, is really quite circumspect in terms of whether or not it's going to make us money.

There has been a lot of talk about the increase to the borrowing limit. Some people are for it, some people are against it. I can see a value in increasing our borrowing limit to the level that the Finance Minister would like to see it, but it really depends on how it's used, in my mind. If we have a borrowing limit of \$1.8 million, it would allow us to do some of the major projects that we can't do right now because we are so close to our borrowing limit.

I think we have been fiscally prudent as a government and I think that we do manage our debt quite responsibly, so if we had the room in our borrowing limit and a major project did come along, it would give us the opportunity to be able to do it. But I'm not advocating that because we get a \$1.8 million borrowing limit that we need to immediately borrow up to that limit. That's not at all what I would want to see.

Mr. Chairman, I see that my time is fast evaporating. If I have an opportunity to come back again, I would ask you to put me back on the list. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We'll definitely do that. Because there was a lot of information in that opening comment, I will allow the Minister the opportunity to respond to individual Members during general comments. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The fundamental question that keeps coming up, even though it's in our consensus system, is the concern by some Members that somehow they don't feel that this budget process is inclusive enough, that the budget doesn't have clear and visible handprints of the Regular Members, when I would suggest to you that things like all day kindergarten was an initiative pushed by the Members, or on-the-land programs. If you want, I have a list on my desk upstairs of the things in this budget alone, let alone every other budget that we have reviewed, where we have tried to work collaboratively with the Regular Members, yet the complaint, budget after budget, is that somehow the perception is that it ends up being done in isolation.

As I said in the House the other day, this is a process where the government proposes a budget to the Legislative Assembly. The government proposes, the Legislature disposes. We have walked through this process now for decades, and when the budget is approved at the end of the day, it tends to be approved almost unanimously.

If there were significant changes, for example, if Members said we don't support any new initiatives, we want all those funds taken out of the budget, we would be listening very, very closely. If the concern is that those types of things are there, even though we just got a letter that said you wanted all the previous initiatives that were agreed to funded, and you want all the new initiatives in this year over and

above what was in the budget funded, if there was a reconsideration of that position, that would be very helpful as we look at the management issue of sustainability.

With the budget we have before the House, if it's approved as is, it would leave us with \$142 million of borrowing room.

The press didn't quite get the story right when they said that there is a \$200 million surplus. What they didn't mention was that we passed a capital budget in October worth considerably more than that, and we're obligated to find savings within the O and M budget to help offset that cost, which is what the \$200 million is for. We did that and we are still borrowing money for capital and we are going to be in the borrowing mode here for the next four or five years.

Yes, the resource revenues don't flow to 2016. We have set ourselves up to manage our way to that date and we will continue to do that.

The issue of no new revenues versus building our economic base, the issue of taxation versus building our economic base, increasing our population, putting in that critical infrastructure that's going to promote economic development is a path to the same end. If there is debate over taxation to industry, resource tax, land rent tax, mineral tax, we can have those, but we know we have at least one mine, or two mines that are within the end of their life, and if we add to the cost to Northerners, if we increase income tax, if we increase other costs in one of the most high cost territories, jurisdictions in the country, it seems to be counter-intuitive that somehow that is going to encourage people to move here, it is going to encourage business to do business, it is going to encourage people to stay, it is going to encourage students to come back. The much more productive and constructive way, in our mind, is to expand our economic base.

When we're in the House with Mr. Kalgutkar and Deputy Minister Aumond, I would be happy to walk through the whole list of percentages that the Member, in her mind, didn't seem to add up. The supps that we bring in are demand driven, and the one that's going to be coming into this House, you will see has fairly significant demands on the health side, which we know it's coming, we never know how much it's going to be and it depends on the uptake. It's in keeping with some of the concerns that were raised in this House during question period about mental health, for example, and what are we going to do about it and there's a huge demand, and sometimes it reaches a point where there is an intervention by the government or Health and Social Services.

We are going to continue to use short-term borrowing to keep us moving. But the reality is, and it feeds into the debate over the Heritage Fund and

how much money should be going in there, we are basically spending almost every cent that we take in, plus we are still borrowing. We are managing and working very hard to manage that issue because it can easily tip the wrong way. We are very concerned about that, hence the 5 percent in the Heritage Fund versus the 25 percent which in a perfect world I think everybody would like to see. But given all the concerns and the numbers that the Members raised about how come we are doing this and why are we spending this money and why, if we don't have new money, are we spending it is a good question.

The issue of funding from within is one that's easy to say and hard to do. We have to keep in mind that when we touch inclusive schooling and what we are proposing to fund with the junior kindergarten, that's being done through some reallocation. It's a very, very modest amount and that alone causes significant angst.

The issue of the Mineral Development Strategy and what's better and why are we putting it into business development and not into social programs, the reality is we are spending \$1.2 billion on social programs, roughly, out of our budget, \$1.1 billion or \$1.2 billion. What we need is to be able to have a strong economic base to support and pay for those social programs, so you need to invest some money at the front end to promote and support and sustain and balance environmentally sensitive resource development and other economic development like the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link. We always have to keep in mind, as legislators, the whole 360 degree, full circle of demands on the table. We can't just focus on one at the exclusion of the other. At the end of the day, we have to keep in mind how do we pay for everything. It's a very significant question and it's an important one. Growing our economic base is where the issue comes back to.

The hydro and why we are doing a business case when we already did one, we did a business case for hydro development that was going to go straight from the Taltson straight to the East Arm to the mines with the mine as the only customer. That did not work out. The diamond mines were not prepared to sign on for power, take or pay, for the whole life of the project when the lifespan of the mines was in question. There was not clear support for the route of the transmission line. What is being proposed now is up the west side down an established right-of-way, but still requires a review. We want to bring a major transmission line with an intertie from the South to connect the North and South Slave. We want to work with the industry to see if we can put a spur or have them come and get power once we get that transmission line up to Behchoko.

We also know we will be able to hook up communities along the way. We will be able to provide back-up and more efficiencies in the system than we now have and relieve some of the pressure on Jackfish, which is fully subscribed to. So it requires both a business case and a technical case. We know technically it can be done, we just have to get it costed out. Once we have the numbers, we need to include the business case that's going to show that this, in fact, is a revenue generator.

When we talk about revenue generation, it's more than just what are we going to charge for power. If we can provide reasonable, affordable energy to resource development initiatives like the mines, which the existing mines already add over \$2 billion to our yearly gross domestic product, and if we can work with the mine and extend mine life to about \$250 million per mine per year, then if you do the math, one year of mine life extension could conceivably pay for the cost of that particular hydro expansion by providing that kind of basic infrastructure.

If you think of the negative and we just do nothing and we let the mine close and let nature take its course, one of the biggest costs, 30 percent, is energy, then just in direct employment in those mines is over 1,500 Northerners, not to mention probably at least another 1,000 or so in related industries. So we have an interest here about how we pay for social programs that consume the majority of our budget and we have to balance both of those needs and I think this budget tries to do that.

Why are we paying? We are taking on the responsibility of devolution. We have a vision, we have a plan, we have a responsibility, but we will also look at what other available programs are there, for example, federal P3. We were not successful at looking at the fibre optic line, something as big as transmission lines may meet the test, we're not sure but we will, of course, look. As we look at generation expansion, we are going to be looking for equity partners. We have the door open on the fibre optic line, and as of yet, we have no takers for Aboriginal equity. But the door is open and we are prepared to look at all sorts of partnership arrangements to minimize the direct cost and burden on the taxpayer. Clearly, if we don't drive this initiative as an Assembly, as a government, if we don't provide the vision and the plan, nothing will happen and if we come up with a plan that has a \$700 million or \$1 billion price tag for two major projects, for example, and if we go to Ottawa and expect them to somehow write us a cheque, it will be a frosty, frosty, frosty Friday before that would happen, I would suggest, because the federal government is not in that business anymore. Their job is to enable folks to do their job, which is what we are asking them to do.

Give us the tools, untie our hands, enable us to use our authorities and our good proven governance skills here to manage our way to some development that is going to support our economic base and allow us to continue to fund at the level we all expect of our social programs. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's been a few months since we've been here now, and learning this budget process is interesting because there are certain things in the budget I like and certain things that I don't like. Ms. Bisaro did point to a lot of those issues, those concerns, so instead of talking about it all, I'm going to focus on just one area that I have a concern with.

I have a concern with the amount of money we are putting into the Heritage Fund. The Minister has put together a budget of 5 percent, which I don't understand where that number comes from. That's the minimum that we've heard from anybody. The Minister has gone out to the public, heard from a whole bunch of different people and some people said for the first four or five years, let's put 100 percent in so we can actually accomplish something for the future generations, for them to have capital money to do these projects.

I understand we have a lot of capital needs. Our side has indicated in the past, in June and in the fall, we want at least 25 percent to go to the Heritage Fund. The Minister has gone to the public and said we're going to put money into the Heritage Fund and we're going to put money to pay down debt. So the general public believes we are sitting here and we are looking at decreasing the debt, saving money. They are all for that. They see that as responsible government and I see that, as well, but in the same breath when we're talking about borrowing another billion dollars, we're not doing what we just told the public we were going out to do. We are basically only putting 5 percent away and the rest is being used to service debt maybe, but not reduce debt.

The Heritage Fund at 5 percent is not a very big number. I think it's a couple million bucks. I don't think it's appropriate that we're only putting that minimal amount away.

I think we need to put money away for the future. Most of these resource revenue sharing dollars are coming from non-renewable resources. These non-renewable resources aren't going to be here forever, so in the future generations they aren't going to have the opportunities we have to generate that revenue. So we need to be putting some of that money away now, so people of the Northwest Territories, who are the owners of this thing, have the ability to reap the rewards from them in future generations, in five, 10, 25, 35, 55

years from now. This is something that is fiscally responsible to do now, put 25 percent away.

I don't understand why we have to sit here and have a debate over this, whether it's 5 or 25 percent when this is new money coming from the federal government. This is money we've never had in the past and now we are fighting over it just like we've already spent it. I don't understand how that can be. This is new money, the projects that we're putting into it are new concepts. So how can there be a debate over we can't afford to put 25 percent away? That shouldn't even be an argument. Like I said, this is new money coming from the federal government. This is the first year we're getting it. We should be sitting here and we should be happy on both sides of this House, but yet we're fighting over the money that we just received from the federal government because that government on that side has already committed the additional 20 percent, but that's not what they heard from us and that's not what they heard from a lot of the people in the public. We want to have 25 at a minimum. Like I said, that argument, some people did say 5 percent, some people said 25 percent and some people have committed to 100 percent. So I believe 25 percent is the number that has to be the minimum of us putting away.

I know they want to argue with us and say okay, well, let's start at 5 percent now and we'll build the 25 percent. That's not what you do when you're saving money. Let's do it right away when we first get the money. Once we only put 5 percent, we're never going to get up to 25 percent. So, I mean, the numbers are too minimal at 5 percent. It doesn't work for me and the government are making us look like we're the bad guys that have to find the cuts to make the 25 percent happen. I think that's ridiculous, and the fact that this is new money, this money has never been spent before and the departments will say well, yeah, we don't get the money for a year and a half, but that side of the House is spending the money like we had it. So they're borrowing against it, as far as everybody here understands. So we're supposed to hold off until we actually get that money. That doesn't make sense from my perspective as a Member of this Legislative Assembly.

The other issues with the budget I will deal with over the next couple of weeks, but I do believe that the Heritage Fund needs a minimum 25 percent down from those resource revenue sharing dollars. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Member for his comments on the Heritage Fund. We just remind the folks that are listening that this is what we do agree on. We agree on a Heritage Fund because

we spent three years in the 16th Assembly putting a bill into place that would give us the legal authority and looking forward to the day that devolution would be upon us. We know we have to put money aside and the one figure that the Member didn't say, and there were some folks that said it, more than one, and more than one community, that we shouldn't put any aside, that we need it all today, but two Assemblies have agreed that we need to put money aside, so now we're talking about how much.

We know we're getting \$120 million a year. That's been planned for some time. Half of it goes back to the feds. The remaining 25 percent goes to the Aboriginal governments and then we will look at the remaining roughly \$45 million. At the same time, we've finalized, to the extent possible at this point, additional costs like the \$350 million Stanton renovation that has to be paid for and that's a long-term commitment. We've got to conclude the commitment on the Inuvik-Tuk highway and we have a \$3 billion infrastructure deficit that we're trying to pick away at. So when that money comes in, modest as it is, it has to do three things. We want to put money in the Heritage Fund and we want to service our debt to keep us below interest payments of 5 percent of our revenues and we want to try to add money to our infrastructure plus meet the constant demands for more program enhancements and service expansion. We hear it in this House, we hear it wherever we go, to manage all that money, put money away, give us all this money, usually in the social program area, to expand programs and services and keep the money the same, try to do some economic infrastructure or in some cases don't do that, let's just put it all in the social programs, but let's just keep growing government.

So it's a challenge and it's easier to sit here and suggest on one thing, just put in 25 percent and those other issues will sort themselves out, which we don't have the luxury of looking at.

Let me restate, we've started a process here. We've got a budget on the table and now we're in the process of having a discussion and it's come down to the Heritage Fund, which is a very specific topic, which points out to me once again that we agree to a significant vast majority of the budget that's before this House. So now we have to sort out the Heritage Fund and the issue of other requests for additional funding over and above what's in the budget in addition to the Heritage Fund.

We're interested in resolving this and this is the forum where we're going to do it, and we're committed to having that discussion to get us to that point. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was reading the budget and the highlights over the weekend. I made a comment in one of my meetings that it's not a bad budget, and then I woke up.

---Laughter

Mr. Chair, I want to say that when I looked at the budget and looked at it from the perspective of the communities and from the Sahtu region, it's the first time I've ever seen in budget history that the budget is going to be shared with the Aboriginal governments. In all my time with the Legislative Assembly I have never seen that. There's a significant amount of money going to the Aboriginal governments. For me that's history making. That's something I have never seen. The Aboriginal governments will be receiving their 25 percent of the net fiscal benefits and they'll be sharing a budget with us. I have never seen that before, that amount of money and commitment. That's history making in any type of government in Canada with that kind of money going to our partners in the Aboriginal governments. I thought that was good news to see that.

The other part of the wake-up call for me was that the communities now in the North will be receiving, and how long they've been at these on-the-land healing programs, it's the first time it's showing up in the budget. You have committed dollars going to specific on-the-land healing programs and it's the implementation of these programs that are going to make it so. I haven't seen that over the years that I've spoken on it. Other Members in this government and the last government spoke on the on-the-land healing programs that are going to be now in our system. I'm hoping for the implementation, and that's what the people have been asking for.

I just received the wellness plans for the Sahtu communities, and people have aspirations, they have hope in implementing these wellness plans. I've received a report from the RCMP, monthly reports on what they're doing in the Sahtu communities, and still the number one factor for our people that we're still wrestling with has to do with the amount of alcohol that's being used.

Our communities have a high percentage of residential school survivors who are still asking for help, and these survivors are certainly looking for some help from this government providing these programs for our communities.

Over the years, sometimes we are speaking and our words don't feel like they're being heard or it takes a long time in government to move the system. For myself, I'm saying yes, it's not a bad budget. It's something that I could live with, and

certainly that the investment around the hydro, in one of the statements on the transmission grid between the North Slave and the South Slave hydro system and the Canadian grid, I need to ask some questions on what it will cost to build this business plan. I heard some astronomically high numbers as to what, if we went ahead with it, would be the payback, while our communities such as Norman Wells or Inuvik are dealing with the high costs of energy there, especially with Norman Wells. This summer, 2014, the natural gas will be turned off to that town and there are families there that are stressed right out. They're asking for help with the conversion. They just don't have 10, 15, 20 thousand dollars in their pockets to pay for the conversion. I know there are plans in there to how do we help them out. I haven't heard yet. I heard from the Minister earlier as to what gaps need to be looked at, what gaps need to be filled, but we certainly, in our small communities, are looking for help from this government.

When I look through the profiles of the Sahtu communities and we look at communities where the unemployment rate is quite high in our small communities. One example in my communities is only 38 percent are working. That causes me a lot of concern. Or there is the potential of 47 graduates in the Sahtu this year, 50 next year and 59 the year after. That causes me some concern. What type of career are we setting up for them in our communities? What's the record to track these students? We have the Minister or the government saying there are 47 graduates this year. What do we have planned for them? Aurora College and the three campuses or post-secondary or work, job-related skills? Where are we going to find work for them, because there's only so much work in our small communities and people are going to hang on to their jobs. They need those jobs. I'm looking at the future for them.

I'm very happy that there's housing going into our communities and there are different avenues how to get this housing. There are a lot of people who own their homes. I'm looking at what sort of programs and services could help our people. When I look at the budget and I compare what we have now in our communities, I'm saying, well, how do we match that, that unemployment, the skill, the employment, the housing, the economics?

A lot of people depend on the land in the Sahtu. They depend quite heavily on the food. For example, in Deline 77 percent consume the traditional foods from the land, so how do we strengthen and continue to increase that number? A lot of people want to go on the land and hunt caribou and take fish from Great Bear Lake. When you're looking at government, how do we support each other?

I, like Ms. Bisaro, have other concerns. I might have to ask to get back on the list so we can go through the detail. I wanted to say that with all the funds and some of the uncertainty that we have, this budget is being presented to us to hold the government accountable for the next five weeks. Certainly, I heard earlier on the vacancy of jobs in our government. We are going to have some discussions on the Heritage Fund. When I look at the profiles of each of my Sahtu communities and I look at the budget, when there's 19 of us that have our fingers in this budget, is it enough for me, is it enough for the rest of the Members? Well, we're going to have that debate for the next five weeks. I want to say that our people are looking forward to how do we continue to address some of our critical needs in our smaller communities. I will probably ask more questions in detail. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the Member for his comments. I appreciate the comment that it's not a bad budget, and then he woke up and realized that it was true, it was not a bad budget. I appreciate those comments. We do share the sense of success that we're the only jurisdiction in the country that has worked out a renewable resource sharing agreement with Aboriginal governments where a share goes from the gross revenues of 25 percent.

The Member and I have had many discussions about how long it takes to move government and how long it takes to change things or get things added. In the Member's case, he mentioned the on-the-land healing programs, the long-term care facility that was started probably back in the 15th Assembly. In discussions we've had – I think I was Health Minister at the time – we've moved on, and if I can speak just a bit to the Sahtu, I mean, there was a significant reference to it in the budget address both in terms of concerns with the development. If the Member searches back through his memory, he'll have seen reference to the Wrigley to Norman Wells road, for example, and we are going to work with communities.

You asked what is the cost of hydro and what about the other communities down the valley that aren't on hydro, and we have a full perspective when it comes to energy initiatives. I think we are almost national leaders when it comes to biomass development. We are doing some unique things with solar. We started in Simpson. We have a very interesting pilot project that's going to be going into place in Colville Lake with combining solar, wind and batteries, as well, potentially offsetting up to 50 percent of the diesel. If we can get that worked out, then we see small communities being in a situation where we can put their costs of energy down. We

also see an opportunity to expand the LNG rollout to all those communities that are on a road system. It might not apply most immediately to the Sahtu until they get their Wrigley to Norman Wells road, but it would definitely apply to other communities like Liard, McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Wrigley and those types of communities. We are very serious about that.

There will be a full debate on the hydro, and it's all predicated on us getting our borrowing limit increased. If we are unsuccessful getting our borrowing limit increased, then life will be a whole lot simpler. We won't be talking about the road to Norman Wells or Wrigley, at least not in our political lifetime, and we won't be looking at hydro grid expansion. We'll be looking at constantly managing to try to live within an \$800 million borrowing limit with the pressures we face right today, which for a jurisdiction that is as big as ours with a budget that is as big as ours is an administrative constraint that is not reflected in the fiscal reality of our debt to GDP ratio and our credit rating and our percentage of revenues that we spend on interest payments, which is less than 1 percent when our policy caps us at 5. So with devolution, if we don't get that ability and devolution is going to be in, our development, an advancement is going to be severely constrained by our inability to make critical investments that are necessary.

When we talk about critical investments, you mentioned all the graduates coming out of Sahtu, which is a significant achievement after you have worked long and hard to reach that point. We have acknowledged that we want to do a better job of how we deal with our post-secondary graduates. We want to encourage, of course, high school graduates to carry on their education, be it in post-secondary institutions or as apprentices. The average job requirement now requires 16 years of education, so there are things that you can do out of Grade 12 as you sort yourself out, get your thinking clear about what you want to do, travel, do these other things, but at the end of the day we want to encourage Northerners and northern graduates to carry on with their education because we have, as we've heard in this House since we've started this Assembly, concerns about vacancies not only just in government but across the territory in all sectors, in small communities, in Aboriginal governments, in major mining industries – everybody is looking for skilled individuals – administrators, technicians, engineers, doctors. We've spent millions with nursing programs and social work programs, the ENRTP programs and business admin programs in addition to working out relationships with various universities so you can get your degrees.

We have a lot of infrastructure in place but we know we want to do better. I would like to congratulate the Sahtu, and of course the Member here is

justifiably proud of that accomplishment. We are looking at jobs, we are putting in millions of dollars of housing in small communities so that we can fill positions, and we are going to do a better job at recruiting, hopefully, our young graduates to come back and live and work in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start very bluntly by saying I am very concerned about the narrow thinking that persists from the Minister, despite years of very consistent input from Regular Members. I think that is really the main point, that we have the opportunity to do a better job. But, I suppose, the Minister has said very flatly that these are cooperatively developed budgets and we've had a big role to play and so on, and I'm not saying that we don't have a role at all. But I think what the Minister is hearing is that there are clear examples out there that we have consistently attempted to work with Cabinet on through the years. Probably the best example here today before us, of course, is the Heritage Fund, which my colleague Mr. Bouchard has addressed very thoroughly. These are new dollars, as he mentioned and as we know, so let's do it right from the start. The Minister says, well, that's very simple to say. No, no, it's not simple to say, but it is very clear, and in fact this House passed a motion directing this Assembly to institute a 25 percent set-aside for the Heritage Fund. Cabinet ignored it.

I won't repeat all of Mr. Bouchard's points. The Minister said again how cooperative we are and referenced junior kindergarten as called for by committee. That, in my mind, is not true. In fact, my impression is that committee is somewhat or quite equivocal about junior kindergarten. In actual fact, what we called for repeatedly, and have done for years now, is a clear focus on early years programming. That's age zero to three. Junior kindergarten starts after that period. Even, in fact, when we insisted on that in previous budgets and ensured that there was additional monies dedicated to that, for example, for family resource centres, midwifery and so on, the work was not done. I don't know what happened to the money; the money was provided.

I guess support for mining again. Has the Minister not noticed that more and more workers are coming from the South, or essentially commuting, and it is at our cost? I think some valid questions are being asked out there. How many Northerners, how many additional Northerners want to work in mines? That is a legitimate question to ask. We know that as the number of workers in mines increases, so does the southern labour force that's commuting to our mines. How beneficial, in fact, is all this training to

work in mines? I would say again, the data is pretty uncertain there. We know that people are getting trained here and leaving to work elsewhere in Canada in mines. We know that they are also leaving to commute. They are deciding to live down south. I was talking to a person today that falls into that category.

The Minister said that we have to expand our economic base; that's the only way to deal with this. That again assumes that it is a job shortage that is always the problem, and in some areas, undoubtedly, that is the case, but in my mind, I don't think in those areas that mining jobs are what is being sought. So there are some fundamental assumptions here that I will be using the various vehicles that I have to address these as we go through the budget.

On this one, expand our economic base apparently means building big, costly, low job infrastructure that is very expensive to maintain and does not have proven economic benefit analyses to support it, or data that is demonstrably economically beneficial, such as the bridge. So, again, this is a consistent comment that this Minister has heard for a couple of Assemblies that indicates that, yes, we do need to do things differently. This whole argument of doing it the same way harder is starting to sound very hollow to me and I suspect to some of my colleagues. The world has changed and there are many new realities that must be acknowledged. I'm not seeing that happen.

We have heard, during the life of this Assembly, Cabinet spend over and over and over the net fiscal benefit, so now here we are with this approach and we are confronted with a bunch of closed doors and a failure to do the basic thing of putting significant dollars aside into the Heritage Fund as if it's a surprise to the Minister.

I'm afraid we're reflecting the immaturity that many are faced with these days of instant gratification. We want everything right away. It used to be that there was some reality in the North and we developed things as we could afford it and as we knew it was needed, but we now are going full tilt. Let's get our \$3 billion worth of infrastructure out there as fast as we can, hoping it will have some return when, at the same time, acknowledging some of the fundamentals that are changing in our society.

I will have lots more comments, but I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are at work on the Heritage Fund and we will come to a successful conclusion. If I have misstated the support for junior kindergarten, I will use other examples of the input

and involvement and significant influence that MLAs have on this process overall.

We agree there are too many fly-in/fly-out workers, which is why we struck a high level committee. We set a target of trying to increase our population by 2,000 in five years, and one of the things we want to look at – there are a number of things; there are four things, actually, we want to look at – the fly-in/fly-out workers, the immigrant Nominee Program, our own vacancy rate and vacancy rates across the territory; and of course, doing a better job of encouraging our own students who graduate to come back and live in the Northwest Territories.

It is an important issue. The Member says, how beneficial is all that training when they get trained and oftentimes they leave? Well, the reality is we want our children to have as many opportunities and be as well educated as possible. Right now a significant portion of our young people leave, but they leave educated and they have choices. As a parent and a grandparent, that's what we want for our children. Our job is now to convince a significant number of them to, in fact, choose to live in the North and work in the North, and we're going to do that. Hopefully, we're going to collectively apply ourselves to that.

The issue of big infrastructure is not the answer; I agree. It's not a silver bullet, but it is an important issue when so much of our territory lacks basic infrastructure. The issue of immaturity and folks wanting everything right away and not being content to be patient, the actual fact is, in my mind, we are a patient people but we have needs. There are communities that are extremely well served with every kind of resource and infrastructure that other communities can only hope for, then there are others where we don't even have roads into the communities and we need to pay for everything. While people are patient, they've been waiting for, in many cases, decades.

It's something to say that people that want roads, people that want jobs, people that want infrastructure in communities are immature and they should wait and somehow it will trickle down to them I don't think is the way we want to do business. If it is, then we would have a lot less ambitious plans for trying to make sure the economy and the economic base grows.

It doesn't have to grow just in mining; we're talking about filling the jobs in the communities. We're putting in fibre optic lines that are going to give us a whole knowledge-based industry, hopefully. We're going to put services in the communities that will allow things to work, systems to work more efficiently and effectively for us as a government, for people as individuals and for businesses. We have to look at all areas, but we cannot be blind to the reality that \$2.5 billion a year comes out of the diamond mines.

If we want to roll back the clock to the good old days and take that out of our economy, then I would think we're talking a very, very deep type of recession. I don't think anybody wants to say that, but we have a very important role in our economy at this point, and I think we have to be working collaboratively with them in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way as possible to expand our economic base. We still are of the mind, and for me it's very clear, that increasing taxes is not what's going to get us to where we have to go.

I look forward to further discussion with the Member as we go through department by department. I'm sure in 10 or six weeks, with give and take with the Member, hopefully my narrow thinking will be somewhat broader. Thank you.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just some general comments in terms of what's before us in the main estimates and the budget, of course, of government. Just my comments in terms of the content and the process, or more so the content.

I think it's fair to say there's much less than what we wished for on behalf of our constituents and their desires to improve their communities and to ensure they have healthy families and they have opportunities for jobs and businesses. Whether those points are reflected in the budget at this time remains to be seen, but for the most part it's just the process of which we have taken this far and the sense, at least from this side of the House, that we need to ensure that we have input into this process and ensure that this system of setting the budget for this government is determined on a collaborative basis and, at the same time, with mutual respect on the whole principle of consensus dialogue.

From this perspective, it's been stated very clearly that it's been a concern. I'm hoping that we learn from this exercise that on a go-forward basis we heed to these experiences and to try to improve the system that we've embarked upon and that we ensure that all voices are heard. We're here to serve the people of the North and especially our constituents, and that we'll learn from this exercise.

One thing that I've always tried to highlight is the traditional economies of the communities. As you know, the northern economy, at least from an historical sense, is based on hunting, trapping and fishing. Increasingly, as people move to the communities, the reliance on mainstream educational institutions to ensure our residents are able to achieve a great level and move on to secondary education to get their diplomas or degrees in technological fields or the sciences and ensure that they become productive members of society has been a challenge in terms of ensuring that we have citizens of the North that live in both

worlds and, at the same time, ensuring that we have a vibrant economy and a very good lifestyle for people.

There are indications that things are changing. We have an aging population, so our elders are moving on. At the same time, we have a younger growth of people who are trying to make it within the mainstream in terms of getting into education, getting training and jobs. That still remains as a challenge in terms of trying to at least put some support mechanisms in terms of supporting the trapping industry. I know there have been efforts in terms of the fishing industry as well as hunting. Recently, we had efforts in terms of the Wildlife Act and the development of their regulatory mechanisms to ensure that that's implemented within a year. At the same time, we have measures in place in terms of wildlife population and management so that wildlife populations are on a sustainable level and managed properly for future generations.

We've seen, over the course of this year at least, a very successful trapping season where people are once again enjoying the labour of going out on the land, enjoying the natural elements of winter and being successful in harvesting furs and bringing them back to their communities and families and then selling them. We've seen a very successful year. Hopefully it will continue. We need to ensure support mechanisms in terms of ensuring that there are programs out there for our trappers and harvesters and that we try to make things work for them.

Of course, it's always been a challenge of this government to try to meet the needs of the communities. In terms of infrastructure, there are always needs that our communities want, and of course, in the communities that I represent there's always been a very keen interest to ensure that communities are reliant, they're self-reliant, they're independent, they take care of their residents locally and that, so it's always been a challenge to try and meet the community needs, and of course, way back in partnership with governments and allowing, of course, that spectrum of possibilities to blossom, and the fruits of working together usually is manifested, at least in very good structures that are established and constructed locally with local labour and brought into the community and creating jobs. But that's been a challenge because there's only a limited source of funding out there that communities can tap into.

One possible area that I feel that this government needs to explore more, and it's been highlighted by colleagues, is the concept of P3s. We've seen it initially in its infancy in terms of introducing a concept of that nature to a community, and that was the Deh Cho Bridge. That was a prime example where communities, governments and industry can

partner up to build a massive structure of that nature. I'm hoping, as we go down this path, that those kinds of concepts will be able to be maintained at least locally with local residents and local leaders to ensure that a partnership of that nature could be struck and successfully leading to the construction of infrastructure that sometimes is aging and sometimes is really needed. As an example, water treatment plants.

A few other comments are ongoing initiatives in tourism. I know the Economic Development Strategy outlines in general how it is that we could successfully take advantage of tourism. I look forward to the ongoing initiatives in terms of biomass initiatives ensuring that there are initiatives from the community level right to the regional level, right to territorial level that are continued. The prospect of perhaps seeing the major initiative in my riding is something that communities look forward to, hoping to see at some point at least the discussion reach the point where we could successfully look into a manufacturing plant successfully being opened and operated and creating jobs.

On a last note, on the Heritage Fund, it's something that has been fairly, in my sense, emblazoned on the mind of this side of the House and this government, and it should be the priority of this government to see the increase from 5 percent to 25 percent. It's something that we've set for ourselves. We need to realize it. I think it's in the best interest of future generations, and at the same time, just basically listen to the basic principle of governance, which is listening to the public and what they had to say and not turning our backs on them but ensuring what we heard is founded on the idea that this democratic system works and we're going to put into motion at least the increase of 5 percent to 25 percent of raising the Heritage Fund so that at least there is a sustainable pot of funding out there that is going to be invested for future generations.

Those are just a few comments that I had. Mahsi.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Given the common theme of many of the opening comments, it seems to me the issue of process would be a fine item for August's Caucus agenda to spend at least one time going around on protocols and those types of things which are important. If we need to have that discussion, I think that would be the place collectively to do it and see where we end up. Of course, we can always learn from the processes as we work our way through them.

The issue of the traditional economy and the challenges, I appreciate the Member's comments, and we are committed in many areas to try to

support local businesses, the traditional economy, fur programs. As Minister Ramsay said on his trip to China, it's a banner year for northern fur. We, as well, are working very closely with all the Aboriginal governments and co-management boards to look at the issue of wildlife management, in particular the bison recovering from anthrax in the Mackenzie sanctuary and the pressure that the two main herds are under, the Bathurst herd and now the Bluenose-East.

There is potential for P3s, but in reality, at the end of the day, the bridge was not a P3. It was a government funded, government run, government constructed project. We took it over fully partway through the process. But in regard to federal P3, there is a process that we will look at. We are, in fact, obligated under our own policies for projects over \$50 million, to try to see what the opportunity is, so things like Stanton, for example, we'll look at what's possible under a P3. If we ever move into significant economic infrastructure, we'll look there, as well, to see what's possible.

I appreciate the Member's comments on the Heritage Fund. We do consult. We do listen. We do incorporate. In this case, there are a lot of other variables we're considering, but the process is underway, and as we work our way through this budget process I'm confident we'll once again come forward with a budget that will have the support of the Assembly, including the direction on the Heritage Fund.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Continuing on with general comments, I have Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to my colleagues for your indulgence in letting me finish off my list.

I wanted to just say that at the outset I think the Minister misunderstood what I was saying about the hydro. I know that the business case that we did before was for a different project. I think my concern is that we haven't done preliminary analysis to determine that there's a valid reason to go ahead with a detailed business case. The term throwing good money after bad kind of comes to my mind. I just wanted to get that out of the way.

My other point that I want to make on the hydro is that I'm fine with connecting up the transmission lines or the systems that we have within the North. I'm very skeptical about being able to make money by connecting to the South. That's my main concern there.

I'd like to just say, that in terms of the budget and the increase in the budget due to devolution, I welcome devolution and I want to welcome our new employees. I appreciate that we have budgeted for a contingency in the money that we're getting from the federal government to deal with devolution. I

think it's about \$9 million, and I appreciate that the government has been prudent in planning for devolution. I would hope that that \$9 million is going to be used only for devolution activities and that we're not going to think of it as a bit of a \$9 million slush fund, so when we determine that we need extra money in a particular area because we didn't plan – and plans are always fluid – that we didn't plan exactly and we need a little bit more money, that we have it there.

To the Minister's concept of increasing the population, absolutely, I agree with that concept. It is one of the things that has affected us over the three, four, five years. As our population has gone down, obviously our revenues have gone down, and it is something that we need to seriously take a look at. I'm concerned about the details, and I know the Minister has mentioned a number of things, but they're ideas at the moment. There's no detail behind them. I think, in general, that it's going to take wide-ranging, across-government changes for us to implement some of the things that have been referenced in terms of keeping people here, bringing students back, keeping people here, that sort of thing. I've heard, unfortunately, too many stories of students who have finished their schooling. One example is somebody who graduated as a doctor tried to get a job in the Territories and just couldn't, couldn't, couldn't, waited, waited, waited, and finally took a job in the South and is not coming home. They wanted to come home and wanted to go to a community outside of Yellowknife. Why couldn't we make this happen? In my mind, some of the things that we need to change many of the departments, not just Human Resources but I think all across departments we have a problem encouraging and getting our people to come back to the North.

I am concerned about the impact of the reallocation of internal funds within Education for junior kindergarten. I appreciate the Minister's answer to my written question. He said it's no more than a 1.2 percent reduction for any board. But still, you know, it's going to have an impact on boards and boards are going to be receiving this pretty much in the middle of their planning cycle, so it's not going to be easy for them to adjust. The Minister of Education has said that this was done in consultation with the boards, but that's not what I'm hearing. I'm hearing that the boards have basically been told that this is what's going to be happening, that the boards and their superintendents have not really had an opportunity to provide input into whether or not this is a good idea.

The other thing that I have to mention, and it was pointed out to me actually after the budget address by somebody at the reception, in this whole budget there is no new money for education. We consistently state that education is extremely important, we need to educate our people, we need

to get them to graduate, we need them to have skills in order to get jobs and be contributing members to our society, and yet we're not putting any money into the education budget.

Also on education, the budget address mentions a review of adult education and a review of the college. We have been hearing about this for a very long time and I think, actually, there was a review that was done a couple of years ago. I'm quite skeptical about are we really going to review adult education, or is this just hot air in the wind? I don't believe we heard any results from the review that presumably happened a couple of years ago.

A couple of other comments. I think the budget commented about the need for efficient government and I guess I challenge the Minister to tell me what efficiency we have achieved over the last year. How has this government become more efficient over the last year? We have a program review office, which we haven't heard much of in the last little while, and what has that program review office done in terms of efficiencies? Have we gained any savings? Have we made ourselves more efficient and more responsive to our residents?

The other problem that I have is that we say we want to be more efficient, we say that we are being more efficient and yet our budget increases every year. I know we have lots of initiatives, but if we really are being more efficient, I wouldn't think, for instance, that we would have cost overruns every year as we do.

To the Minister's suggestion of discussing the process at Caucus, I think that's a very valid suggestion. I know it was done once before, but as I sit here listening to Members and the Minister responding back, it seems to me that we either need better explanations either from Regular Members to Cabinet or from Cabinet to Regular Members, or we need better communication of what each side is saying. There seems to be a disconnect in what I hear versus what the Cabinet thinks they're telling me and what Cabinet hears versus what they think I'm telling them. So, we seem to have a communication problem. We seem to have an understanding problem. We seem to have a reporting problem to a certain extent. Committees report to Regular Members; Ministers report to Cabinet, and I just don't think we end up on the same page although we may have all heard the same thing. I think it would be a good idea for us to discuss process.

One of the things perhaps, although this seems a bit strange, but I'm going to say that I think we need to get the government's plans in detail sooner so that we, as Regular Members, can better understand what actions the government is proposing. I know we certainly get an awful lot of information when we discuss business plans. We discuss a lot of things, but there are often

somewhat visionary statements and I think the government assumes that we know the detail and we wait for the detail and don't get it. Then when we do get the detail it's like, well, you never told us about this and the government thinks that probably they have. So, it goes back to my concern about lack of understanding, communication and so on. It's a long way of saying that I think we need to discuss the process and try to find a better way to do this.

That's all I have, Mr. Chair. I do want to say to the Minister of Finance that this budget isn't all bad. I've asked a lot of questions, but again I think it's because there are a lot of things that I maybe don't have a good explanation for. Certainly, we can agree to disagree, but this is not a bad budget. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to take that on a positive note and not parts of it and say, well, it's a bad budget but it's not that bad, as opposed to it's not bad in the colloquial vernacular meaning eh, it's pretty good.

In regards to the hydro – in fact we indicated this before Christmas – we have work underway both for a technical review as well as a business case review of the power system plan, if the route is technically feasible, getting some solid cost estimates and then working on the business case once we have some of those numbers in.

Further work will be done on that process but, once again, just to reinforce the fact that it's all a moot point if we are unable to successfully conclude our discussions for a \$1 billion increase to our borrowing limit.

I appreciate the Member's comment that we're prudent in our planning for devolution, and the \$9 million which at one point was more than that, but has already been eaten into as a contingency fund as things have come up that hadn't been anticipated to help offset that.

There have been a number of references – the Member has a fondness for the term when she's talking about Cabinet – any money that's not allocated is a slush fund. That is not the case. It's there, most times coffered and identified for specific use. If it isn't, then we have to come back and report on it.

I appreciate the idea of the support for the initiative to increase the population and look at these key areas. Yes, there is lots of detail to come. We're building support for the idea. There's support there from industry and the chambers as well as some of the Aboriginal governments that we've talked about it with. We look to fully engage, as well, with committee. As Mrs. Groenewegen said, she had

many ideas of her own that she thought would be beneficial.

The issue of the reallocation for kindergarten, you referenced lack of consultation, and the Minister has indicated that they worked closely with the board superintendents along the way to minimize the impact and try to carry out this initiative. I'm sure there will be more detailed discussion when Education's budget comes before this House.

We struggle for efficiency as a government. Yes, we do have cost overruns and government continues to grow in size – we have well over 5,000 employees – but there is also considerable demand and pressure to grow. The governments that I have been involved in, in the nearly 40 years now that I've been in the workforce, it is much easier to grow government than it is to shrink government, unless it's a traumatic experience like 1995, where you wake up one day and you're \$150 million short and then we have to be draconian. It's an experience and there are only two of us remaining in this House who lived through that as MLAs, so we've tried to hit the middle ground.

The discussion over kindergarten in terms of the allocation and the lack of consultations sort of typifies the process we go through when, in theory and abstract, we want to look and be efficient at the internal reallocation, but it's a process that has its own very in-depth scrutiny once it's done. Then you hear from a different constituency, usually the providers or the folks that are involved – in this case Education – and there's money moved around. So it's a challenge that we continue to try to address.

With regard to the process, maybe our second-last August together it might behoove us to gather around the table in Hay River and have that discussion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Moving on with general comments, I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report from Committee of the Whole, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do I have a seconder? Mr. Ramsay.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK, CORPORATE AND INTERPARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Tuesday, February 11, 2014, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Replies to Budget Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
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
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 4-17(5), Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2013 Final Report
 - Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015
 - Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care 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 Tuesday, February 11th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.