



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**5<sup>th</sup> Session**

**Day 9**

**17<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

## **HANSARD**

**Tuesday, February 11, 2014**

Pages 3557 – 3584

**The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

**Hon. Jackie Jacobson**

(Nunakput)

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*Minister responsible for*

*Persons with Disabilities*

*Minister responsible for Seniors*

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(Tu Nedhe)

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(Inuvik Boot Lake)

**Mr. Michael Nadli**

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**Hon. David Ramsay**

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**Mr. Norman Yakeleya**

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, February 11, 2014****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:29 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.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 15-17(5):  
RESPONSE TO MINISTER'S FORUM ON  
ADDICTIONS AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS**

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly identified the need to enhance addictions treatment programs as a key priority. Our government is committed to making sure that NWT residents have the tools and support they need to overcome their addictions challenges.

Addictions are linked to poverty and to educational achievement. Addictions can affect parents' ability to care for their children and meet their needs. Their impact goes well beyond the individual. Families, communities and even our economy can be affected.

Mr. Speaker, we asked 12 respected community leaders to come together, to travel to communities and to learn from our people's experience of what solutions are most effective in this battle against addictions. I want to thank Mr. Paul Andrew, the chair of the forum, and all the members for their efforts. After the Minister's Forum completed its work last year, 67 recommendations were put forward in the final report on how to move ahead with a plan of action to help people heal and recover from addictions. Later today I will table the GNWT's response to the Minister's Forum.

Many of these recommendations perfectly align with what is already laid out in our Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, A Shared Path Towards Wellness.

The report also identified a need for new services and approaches. Initiatives that focus on spiritual and cultural healing are being incorporated into our approach to mental health and addiction service delivery. We are also focusing on the need for

streamlined intake and fast turn-around in accessing treatment services. Mr. Speaker, the NWT is a diverse region made up of many different cultures with their own traditional beliefs and practices. We need as many options as possible to allow people to decide what works for them. People need to determine their own pathways to wellness, and it is the government's responsibility to help them follow that path. We are addressing the recommendations of the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness with \$2.6 million in new funding in the 2014-15 budget. This is in addition to the existing budget of \$6 million for the delivery of the Community Counselling Program across the NWT.

As a result, we will continue to provide an array of southern residential treatment options which can offer specialized treatment facilities, gender-specific options, cultural components and increased length of treatment. We will ensure that NWT residents who attend these treatment programs are offered follow-up support and after-care through their Community Counselling Program once they return home.

Through the Standing Committee on Social Programs, we will continue to keep the Members of the Legislative Assembly informed about developments in this area. I greatly appreciate Mr. Moses, Mr. Dolynny and Mrs. Groenewegen taking the time to visit Poundmaker's Lodge with me recently. We saw firsthand the high quality of care our residents are receiving at one of our four southern residential treatment facilities, and we heard directly from NWT residents attending this program how important this treatment option was to them.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we have not lost sight of the need to develop NWT-specific options as part of our approach to addressing addictions. In collaboration with Katlodeeche First Nation, we are exploring options for the use of the Nats'ejee K'eh building to ensure existing infrastructure is put to good use.

On-the-land programs will be an important part of our continuum of care. The \$2.6 million in proposed new funding includes \$900,000 to establish community-based on-the-land healing programs. This fiscal year we are partnering with Aboriginal governments and regional authorities to pilot a

variety of approaches to combining traditional and clinical approaches to healing. I am also committed to obtaining the best possible withdrawal management services for our residents, and work is underway to identify models that are best for the NWT.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I can assure Members that the Department of Health and Social Services is working to put in place a range of addiction treatment services that meet the needs of all residents of the Northwest Territories. We will open the doors for people to choose their own pathways to wellness and addiction-free lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 16-17(5):  
SERVICE INNOVATION STRATEGY

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, many of our residents want to access more government services "on line," rather than standing "in line."

We are looking at ways to improve service delivery. In 2013 we approved the Service Innovation Strategy, a government-wide strategy to improve the delivery of programs and services by leveraging technology and by taking a more coordinated approach to service delivery.

I share this Assembly's goal of efficient and effective government. It is time to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is time to focus on on-line services to complement the services we provide in person and by phone. We have to make it easier for residents and businesses to find the services they need.

The office of the chief information officer is working with all departments to provide a consistent approach. Already, the departments of Justice and Transportation have introduced new on-line services that securely manage on-line payments and client information.

We are committed to continuing to create and deliver services in a citizen-focused manner. We have already heard from the business community, and this year we will ask the public about their priorities for on-line services. We want to hear how satisfied they are with the services they receive from government.

We will also continue to foster a culture of service excellence within the Government of the Northwest Territories.

For instance, in December we delivered a pilot training program for front-line service professionals and plan to follow up on this training in 2014 with additional training for both front-line service professionals and management responsible for service delivery. Seven departments sent 30 very

engaged GNWT employees from across the NWT. Feedback has been very positive and consensus from participants was that their customer service skills have improved as a result of taking this training. This year we hope to offer regional training as well as more training in Yellowknife.

A service excellence training program is also in development. It builds on the introductory course and lays out a path to certification as a certified service professional or certified service manager. Based on the levels of interest shown in the course in December, we have already received feedback that more people would like to attend.

Our new service directory website launched in December, with information on over 375 government services, in one easy-to-search location.

It connects people, information and services, reducing red tape and making it easier to access information and services more quickly.

This government has had great success providing in-person service through department service centres, government service officers in rural and remote communities, and through offices like Services TNO here in Yellowknife. With the service directory, residents don't need to know which department, division or location offers a service, they can simply go on-line to find the information they need.

You can also expect to begin seeing improvements to the GNWT's website in the coming year. We are improving the design and making information and services more easily accessible.

Mr. Speaker, important initiatives like those outlined in our Service Innovation Strategy will improve the way we deliver programs and services and serve the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 17-17(5):  
ON-LINE DRIVER AND  
MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICES

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation is now providing residents with the option to access driver and motor vehicle services from the comfort of their homes, workplaces or from anywhere else with an Internet connection. On-line driver and motor vehicle services are part of the government's Service Innovation Strategy. Effective and efficient government is achieved by reducing red tape and connecting NWT residents and businesses with the information and services they need.

It has taken over five years of dedicated work to modernize the Motor Vehicle Information System. Now we have been shifting our focus outward to expand on-line services to our clients.

Our first move was to offer electronic notifications. We're streamlining processes and delivering more efficient government at the click of a button.

How many of us have forgotten to renew our registration or driver's licence, only to be reminded by a ticket? NWT drivers, commercial carriers and organizations may now create accounts to manage their driver and motor vehicle information through the Department of Transportation website. It's as easy as going under the "Drivers/Vehicles" tab at the top of the page and clicking on the link that reads "On-line Services." Once registered, Northerners can subscribe to receive e-mail reminders to renew a driver's licence, general identification card, vehicle registration, driver's medical, appointments, and commercial vehicle inspection notifications.

Vehicle owners can now also renew their vehicle registration anytime, from anywhere that has Internet access, as early as three months before the registration expires. This is an important step that will particularly benefit those in small communities without issuing sites or who are outside the territory at renewal time. On-line services also reduce wait times and improve service quality at driver and motor vehicle issuing offices.

At our busiest issuing site here in Yellowknife, we have recently implemented a number of initiatives including queuing systems, posting wait times on-line and implementing measurable service standards to improve the client experiences. We expect that up to half of registration renewals will be processed on-line. That means clients who do need to come to the office will have shorter wait times. In small communities government service officers have been trained and are available to provide assistance.

The department will soon expand on-line services to include scheduling appointments such as driver tests and obtaining your driver record on-line. In the long-term, we hope to offer on-line driver's licence renewals, address changes and commercial vehicle permits.

Streamlining the driver and motor vehicle services also includes eliminating validation stickers on NWT licence plates. When renewing vehicle registrations, clients will receive blank masking stickers to cover previously issued date stickers. Over the next year, like other jurisdictions, we will be phasing out the use of validation stickers. This will streamline the process for on-line registrations.

With technology and client-centred thinking, there are endless possibilities for innovative service

delivery. I look forward to keeping you updated on our ongoing efforts to improve service delivery and reduce red tape. In the meantime I encourage residents to go to the Department of Transportation's website and click "On-line services" under "Drivers/Vehicles" to begin taking advantage of this convenience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 18-17(5):  
HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, last week I delivered the 2014-15 budget on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories. That budget was based on a fiscal strategy of living within our means while still identifying funds to better support the people of the Northwest Territories and make strategic investments in our economy. Part of our plan included investing in the future of the territory by allocating 5 percent of resource revenues coming through devolution to the Heritage Fund.

While public reaction to the budget has generally been positive, Members have clearly indicated that they disagree with the proposed allocation for the Heritage Fund. We have heard these concerns and, in the spirit of consensus government, will be taking Members' wishes on this matter into account by allocating 25 percent of resource revenues to the Heritage Fund beginning in 2015-16 when revenues begin to flow to the government.

---Applause

We should be clear, Mr. Speaker, that this will have an impact on future budgets for our government.

Our Fiscal Responsibility Policy limits the amount we can borrow to fund capital projects, Mr. Speaker. Beginning in 2015-16, when the first resource revenues begin to flow to our government, we will have to revisit our fiscal strategy.

We will need to find offsetting reduction from the O and M base and protect the infrastructure budget.

We share a vision of a strong, prosperous and environmentally sustainable territory, Mr. Speaker. The programs and services we deliver as a government and the capital projects we undertake have a direct impact on that vision. An important part of our job in this Legislature is to decide how we will work towards that vision and how we will pay for it. Come next year, this government and this Assembly will have some decisions to make about the initiatives it wants to undertake in its final year and how to pay for them. I look forward to working with Members to take on that challenge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRADITIONAL FOODS FOR ELDERS

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently had occasion to run into a leader from the Fort Smith Metis Council and he was telling me about a very interesting program. I subsequently did some research and I wanted to share what I found out with Members of this House. It may be something that's already been shared with this House, but it's not something that I was aware of, so I would like to do a Member's statement about that today.

About a year ago, the Fort Smith Metis Council was approached by the Department of Health and Social Services to develop a pilot project for elders that would incorporate traditional foods. In the fall of 2013, the Metis Council received a \$55,000 grant. The idea behind the pilot was simple: provide elders with a free year-round supply of fish and wild meat. The project is called TAASTE, which stands for Time-honoured Aboriginal Actions Sustaining Traditional Eating, short form TAASTE.

The bulk of the funding was earmarked for the purchase of new freezers to be stocked with foods donated by local hunters and fishermen. The freezers have been purchased and installed in the Metis Council's secretariat building.

The success of this pilot hinges on a time-honoured Aboriginal tradition: to give a portion of the hunting harvest to the elders of the community. According to local observers, the program is a godsend because it gives elders access to the type of foods that they were raised on but have, regrettably, gotten used to going without.

Another facet of the project is sending youth out into the bush to learn basic hunting and survival skills, how to set up a tent, how to shoot, clean and cook small game and how to make bannock on a stick. Getting kids out on the land stimulates their curiosity and their appreciation of local foods.

A final component of the project will see greenhouses built in the Northern Lights Special Care Home, giving elders a chance to cultivate some of their own food.

The principles behind the project are sound and surprisingly easy to put into practice. What's not to like about enhancing community solidarity? What's not to like about elders having access to healthy, fresh and unprocessed food? What's not to like about elders lessening their dependence on imported food and redirecting the savings toward other necessities?

Traditional foods are good for them. They are also a source of comfort and pride. I would like to see this pilot project become a blueprint for other NWT communities, so my hat is off and kudos to the Fort Smith Metis Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When times are tight, you pay down your exposed debt, retool your expenses and seek ways to increase your revenues. When times are good, you invest and plan for growth with infrastructure and service enhancement. These should be the principles of a sound business plan or, in our case, a fiscally prudent government balance sheet. Sadly, this is not the case. Instead, we see our financial picture as one based on a Fiscal Responsibility Policy that doesn't pass the smell test, yet this policy is touted and praised at every conceivable opportunity by our Minister of Finance.

Again, if one repeats the policy statement enough times, it must have some bearing of being truthful. At least this is what this Cabinet is instructed to do and does so faithfully.

However, there are some of us on this side of the House whose job it is to evaluate grand statements of claim and take the time to look at the numbers being brought forth into the public realm. One only has to look at statements made in the budget address, such as "We have a record of sound fiscal management as shown by our Aa1 credit rating from Moody's Investors Service and debt servicing costs below 1 percent of revenues."

I think I addressed the Moody's part last week, so I wanted to hone in on the debt servicing issue today. Clearly, we have heard many times in the past week from the Minister of Finance of our servicing cost below 1 percent of revenues. Now, this sounds very impressive, yet has anyone asked for the government to prove this?

If I told you this number could be more like 1 percent under our debt servicing ability, we can sleep better at night knowing this, or should we? Thank you.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the Minister of Finance's announcement today, I can throw away this speech, I guess, a complaint about the Heritage Fund not being funded 25 percent. I commend the Cabinet and the Premier



for making this bold decision for the future generations of the Northwest Territories.

Twenty-five percent is a substantial amount. It's an amount that actually provides an amount of money of these non-renewable resources that we're taking from this territory, giving it to the future generations for capital infrastructure, for paying down debt, exactly what we told the people of the Northwest Territories we were going to do. This is a fiscal restraint. This is something that's responsible government. This is something that we, on this side, are willing to look at the O and M operations.

We're seeing a declining population and we need to keep some of this stuff in check. In a year where we've signed on to devolution, we should be fiscally strong, but because of some of the lesser values in taxable incomes, because of forced growth costs we're definitely in a tighter position than we actually expected after devolution, but these are some of the tough choices that we have to make now and some of the tough choices we need to make for the future generations. Thank you.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would have to put my statement aside, but picking up some points from the statement that I'd planned today, first and foremost I have to commend the Minister for taking a bold step, and Cabinet, in terms of increasing the Heritage Fund from 5 to 25 percent, a fairly significant investment for the NWT.

Nonetheless, the Heritage Fund is a vital component of how we use the revenues from our non-renewable resources. As we approach the implementation of the Devolution Agreement, the role of the Heritage Fund is among the important decisions that the NWT has to make. Establishing such a fund is a complex and controversial process, but it is essential to how we move forward as a territory.

The NWT has a wealth of minerals, oils and gas, and these resources are costly to develop. While it is impossible to predict when they are developed, once they are gone they will not benefit anyone. A well-managed Heritage Fund will ensure that money accrues for future needs when we develop non-renewable resources today.

There are models of successful funds in place today that promise jurisdictions will benefit from non-renewable resource development even after major operations are long gone.

There are enormous pressures to spend the resource revenues now on major infrastructure investments, such as roads, airports, hospitals and schools and on fiscally responsible debt repayment,

but our constituents, the people of the NWT, have made it clear they want a meaningful portion of this money saved for the future.

Today I applaud the move of the Finance Minister to really listen to the people of the NWT and put aside 25 percent of the resource revenues towards the Heritage Fund for future investments. Mahsi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use today's Member's statement to once again return to the issue of position vacancies within the Northwest Territories government. One day later, in my view and in certainly the view of many others, is one day no further ahead. If this problem was an onion, we keep peeling it back and the one thing that is certain is that it just keeps getting stinkier.

The reality here is the fact that we just don't know where these 800 jobs are and how they're being filled, or in this case how we know they're not being filled. Questions still need to be answered. Even after our briefing this morning, we're still just as much in awe as to how this could be happening without anyone fully knowing exactly where these are. Questions like the other day the Finance Minister said there was an actual 571 jobs out there that are being actively pursued, but we know that there are at least 800, maybe even more. So what happens to those jobs? Do we continue to fund those jobs?

If you go to the website on the GNWT jobs area, it says they're looking for about 100 people. So what happened to the 471 people that they say they are looking for jobs, are they posted with invisible ink on this website? I don't know. Nobody knows where these ghost jobs are. Are there 100? Are there 200? By the way, that would add up to 10 to 20 million dollars. We just don't know. We need to know where these jobs are located and what they're doing sitting empty.

The Minister of Human Resources may describe them as, well, geez, in some cases we have students and casuals in them. Well, let's face it. How do you actively pursue a job posting when you have a casual sitting in there that constantly gets renewed? I guess the question is: Are you really actively looking to fill these jobs? They may also say, well, geez, we use that money to hire summer students, so you hold a job open for a year and only fill it for three months. What do you do with the nine months' money that's left over? By that theory, you should be hiring four summer students, not one. Where is the part that starts to make sense?

There are so many questions and we'll continue to pursue them later today in question period, but we still need to know where are all these missing jobs, these ghost jobs. How many are there? How are we funding them, and by golly, why do we bother still keeping them on the books if no one is interested in filling them? Because, quite frankly, as I said yesterday, if we have jobs on the books that we're funding, then nothing is more clear than it is simply a slush fund. We'll be pursuing this later today in question period.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
ACTION CANADA FELLOWS REPORT  
ON THE NWT HERITAGE FUND

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike my colleagues, I will not be putting aside my statement today, and I want to talk about the Heritage Fund. I want to speak to the report that I tabled yesterday from the Action Canada Fellows, titled "A Question of Future Prosperity, Developing a Heritage Fund in the Northwest Territories." That report had six recommendations and I'd like to comment briefly on each one of them.

The first one is to establish clear fund objectives and allocate more than 5 percent of annual resource royalties to the Heritage Fund. We've heard from the Finance Minister earlier today that the government is willing to put 25 percent into the Heritage Fund, and that's wonderful, but I don't believe it's in the current budget year, and that's what, I believe, we're asking for.

Legislation is also required to state exactly how much money we're putting into the Heritage Fund, and I didn't hear the Minister state that legislation changes would be upcoming.

The second recommendation is to set up a statutory framework for deposit and withdrawal rules. Again, this needs to be in legislation. We need to know how much money we are depositing on a regular basis, how much money we are withdrawing on a regular basis. Some of that is covered in our current act, but not in as much detail as it should be.

The third recommendation: Appoint a supervisory council to manage the Heritage Fund. This one is a big one. Currently, the fund is under the management of the Financial Management Board, and in my mind that's like having the fox guard the henhouse. We need to have an independent and arm's-length supervisory council which will have independent oversight of the Heritage Fund. Sure, we can have government representatives on that council, but we need to have the public involved and it needs to be reporting directly to the Minister

of Finance or the Premier. It should not be reporting to the Financial Management Board.

Number four, develop a robust investment mandate. This one is maybe a little bit more difficult, but we need to know how our funds are being invested. There should be an independent investment manager, and I'm not saying that that's missing, but it's not stated, and we need to also have that stated in legislation.

Number five, establish strong fund governance including transparency mechanism, and we don't have that. It goes back to the third recommendation about the FMB managing the fund itself. There needs to be regular reports, and it has to be reported to the Assembly, and it also has to be reported to the public.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MS. BISARO:** Currently, I don't believe we have anything which states that there will be any kind of an annual reporting mechanism, and that also needs to be in legislation.

The last one is to continue citizen engagement to ensure the public support and the long-term viability and success of the Heritage Fund. It's very important that the public understands and supports what we're trying to do with the Heritage Fund, that we're trying to save for the future, that we're trying to ensure that we have revenues in the future when our resource revenues are gone. The fund belongs to the residents of the NWT, and with them involved that will ensure that the objectives that have been set in place will actually be maintained.

I will have some questions for the Minister of Finance later on.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few sittings that we have had here since we started the Assembly, there have been a lot of questions regarding some of the human resources practices that this government exercises and we have talked about the career fair and going into the communities. We talk about trying to recruit our northern people into positions within the government. We heard about how many vacancies we have within the GNWT, within the departments.

We are going through the budget process right now where this government, actually the departments determine positions required for them to do the programs and services that they provide the people of the Northwest Territories. These fully funded positions are budgeted for and funded through the

business planning and main estimates process. That is where we are right now. As I said, we have heard a lot of issues on these funded positions that, as committee, we go through page by page, department by department, we look at these positions and we approve them.

Now, not all of these positions are people getting these positions; we have all these vacancies. Where do these dollars go? In discussions with the government, it opened up another, as Mr. Hawkins put it, you peel one layer away of an onion and there is another layer.

It brings me to something that I have to look on in the Financial Administration Act and dealing with how dollars are moved around within our departments. It brought concern to me because, looking at the actions, there is a significant amount of cash and budget that has been approved for within this government that can move from these job positions that we are talking about, that we approve and fund through the budget process.

I will have questions today to see who has the authority to move the funds that we put for these positions within the government, why they are being moved around, and I will get some more clarity on those with questions later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to the Minister's statement on the Heritage Fund contributions. I would like to begin by thanking my colleague Ms. Bisaro for stating many of the shortcomings of where we are at right now with regards to developing the Heritage Fund.

With regard to the Minister's statement, I think pulling the wool over our eyes would be the most appropriate thing that comes to mind here. The net fiscal benefit resulting from our collection of resource royalties as a result of devolution is booked, although dollars are slow to flow.

The Minister has repeatedly claimed to have included 5 percent of the net fiscal benefit in our 2014-15 budget, but a quick scan reveals on page 5-14 of the Department of Finance budget, that in fact is all he allocated is \$250,000, the same as last year and far short of the \$2 million to \$3 million that 5 percent would be.

The resource royalty collection that the Minister has booked for 2014-15, this fiscal year under discussion, is \$120 million. Page 12-9 of the Industry, Tourism and Investment budget shows this clearly, of which we expect \$60 million will go to the federal government as per the agreement, leaving \$60 million for the GNWT booked during again fiscal year 2014-15.

The Minister is allocating 25 percent of the net fiscal benefit to Aboriginal governments during the 2014-15 budget. That is entirely appropriate because we are booking the revenues. This amount is \$15 million, as clearly laid out on page 5-18 of the Department of Finance budget under discussion. Yet the Minister here is grandly offering, in his statement earlier today, to meet Members' request for 25 percent into the Heritage Fund for this 2014-15 budget year under discussion by providing 25 percent in the 2015-16 year, a year that is not under discussion here. This is obtuse and is further evidence of a lack of forthright dealings to address this issue.

Further, this is absolute bafflegab, apparently meant to confuse and misdirect us into accepting this grand offer, which addresses his needs, not that of Regular Members.

In 2014-15 we are booking \$120 million in royalties. We are booking 25 percent of the GNWT's net fiscal benefit, \$15 million to be paid to our Aboriginal partners.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. BROMLEY:** In 2014-15 we are booking \$120 million in royalties. We are booking 25 percent of our net fiscal benefits. That is \$15 million to be paid in our 2014-15 budget to our Aboriginal government partners. Regular Members want 25 percent of GNWT's net fiscal benefit to also be booked for '14-15.

This House has been clear, the public has been clear about this 25 percent for many, many months, probably over a year. The Minister needs to start paying heed to the will of the House and not provide bafflegab where this is going to be met in some future years. Mahsi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HERITAGE FUND OPERATIONS AND OVERSIGHT

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement is on the mechanics of the Heritage Fund. It's fine and dandy if you have a Heritage Fund, and colleagues have talked about the amount of money going in and how it's going to be administrated. I wanted to look at the mechanics. Should the Heritage Fund come to a full-blown discussion with the people in the Northwest Territories, what is the purpose with the Heritage Fund and how it's to be set up within the government structure, independent, arm's length from the government and have people who would administrate it and look after it for us, and having

that framework set up – do we do it now or do we do it later on in five years or 10 years?

I wanted to also know that within this Assembly if the government is willing to entertain that concept of removing the Heritage Fund administrative process and start looking at an independent process as other Heritage Funds have been set up elsewhere within Canada, and look at how this independent body could work if we were to move it out of the government's hands and put it into an independent body.

The Heritage Fund is a very good concept. I remember having this discussion in a past Assembly, when Members on the other side who were once on this side brought up this idea of having a Heritage Fund for our people in the North, especially for our younger kids who are going to inherit this money. So, I would like to have some discussion on a territorial level, specifically on the whole concept of the Heritage Fund and the implementation of the Heritage Fund. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of days we heard in this House about many empty jobs in government. This is, of course, concerning to all Members on this side. However, my take on this is that I think we should be filling them.

Of course, we're asking the Minister to assess them and see where those empty positions are, how many are funded, not funded. There are many mechanics and different definitions about this whole job review and ghost jobs, et cetera. My concern is my people, and in my constituency qualified people are being screened out. P1 Aboriginals and local people are not getting the jobs.

Part of the Minister's fiscal plan is to increase the population, I think he said by 2,000. I also submit that this plan should also include filling our empty positions so that they have people in them paying taxes that will benefit our Government of the Northwest Territories.

Members are anxious to reduce positions because the day that we see that these jobs are not needed...but I remain cautious about that. Jobs are important to my constituency of Nahendeh. We depend on them. They generate revenue for our economy. So, I like the slow, cautious approach, but we must get answers about what those jobs are and why it looks like they're so empty. We think that the government is using empty positions to use those approved jobs for other expenditures, which should not happen, but let's work on the plan, let's

get them filled and let's get people back working in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

#### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to recognize today the Honourable Paul Okalik. He holds the distinction of being the first Premier of Nunavut and is currently the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Culture and Heritage and the Minister of Energy with the Nunavut government. Joining the Honourable Paul Okalik is Karen Kabloona. Karen is an EA for Minister Okalik. Also my executive assistant, Mr. Ryan Strain, is with us today. I'd also like to recognize a former Member, Ernie Bernhardt. Also with us today is our Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Mr. David Jones; and I see our Privacy and Information Commissioner Elaine Keenan Bengts as well. Thank you.

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

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize some of the people in the gallery. First and foremost is Ms. Joyce Rabesca of Behchoko. She's also an entrepreneur in the community of Behchoko. I'd like to welcome her. Also, the honourable Mr. Paul Okalik. He's also responsible for Culture, Labour and Immigration and Official Languages. Welcome. Mahsi.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I talked about the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness and the 12 individuals who helped us with that. Today I'd like to recognize Paul Andrew, who is the chair of the forum, and thank him for all of his hard work and that of his colleagues. Thank you so much.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize, as well, Ernie Bernhardt, a senior boy, my roommate way back in the mid-'60s back in Grandin College. I was a junior boy and they put me in with him so I could learn a thing or two and I learned all sorts of things that I don't really want to talk about, but about dating girls and all that kind of stuff from Ernie. Also, his son O.J. and his daughter Donna. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think both Minister Ramsay and Lafferty already introduced him, but I wanted to once again reaffirm a welcome to Minister Okalik. I've come to know him over the last number of years and certainly have a great respect for him. One thing that hadn't been mentioned was he's also, I believe, the first lawyer in Nunavut, if not close to the top, but he's had such a distinguished career as a politician and we're certainly glad by all means to see him return to the House in the Nunavut Assembly and I look forward to the good things he'll continue to do. It's a great honour to have you here, sir. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also am proud to recognize some Weledeh constituents. We've heard about Mr. Ernie Bernhardt and I see his family, too, so welcome to them. Paul Andrew, of course, and any members of the forum that might be with him from Weledeh. I can't really see people back there. I'd also like to recognize David Jones, our Conflict of Interest Commissioner, who I haven't met yet but am looking forward to meeting, and Paul Okalik as well. It's great to have a representative from Nunavut here, old friends. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Colleagues, I should have gone in front of Mr. Ramsay. I'd like to draw your attention to our presence today in the gallery of Mr. David Jones, our Conflict Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. He's accompanied by his daughter Sarah Jones. Please join me in welcoming them to the House today.

Also in the gallery is the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ms. Elaine Keenan Bengts. Welcome to the House.

As well, the former Member of Nunakput, Mr. Ernie Bernhardt and his son O.J. and my executive assistant, Donna Bernhardt. Welcome to the House. I, too, would like to welcome Mr. Paul Okalik to the House. I remember fishing with you in Huskey Lake when we had the western Premiers up in Tuktoyaktuk a few years back. We had a good time. So, welcome to the House.

I'd like to welcome all visitors here in the public gallery today. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

## Oral Questions

QUESTION 75-17(5):

### TRADITIONAL FOODS FOR ELDERS

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my Member's statement today, I have a few questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I'd like to ask the Minister if there are plans by the department to evaluate the pilot project in Fort Smith that I referred to. Maybe the evaluation has already been done. Maybe there are other communities that are already piloting a similar project. I'd like to know what the status is of the evaluation and the encouragement, I guess, of other communities to follow this example.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member indicated, this is currently in the pilot status, and as with pilots, we will evaluate and determine whether or not we will be able to deliver this in the future in other communities, regions, locations throughout the Northwest Territories. I will get a follow-up on the status of the evaluation for the Member.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** I'd like to ask the Minister, would they be at a stage at this point of perhaps calling for expressions of interest from other communities who may like more information on this or who may be wanting to participate in a similar program as this to support elders in their communities? It encompasses a lot of really healthy activity. Would it be premature for other communities to contact the department to express interest?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** It might be a little early to go out and to actually do an expression, but we're absolutely willing to share any information that we have on the program with other communities that might be interested in doing the same type of thing. But until we do an actual evaluation and conclude that evaluation, we won't necessarily be in a position to make any commitments to support that program in any of the other communities, but we will share information.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** My research would indicate that this program started in Fort Smith about a year ago, and I was wondering if the Minister could provide any kind of a time frame on when such an evaluation may be undertaken and completed.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I'm not sure of the exact date or the exact status of the evaluation, whether we had started or whether we're just waiting for the program to conclude its full year, but I will get that detail for the Member and committee.

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

QUESTION 76-17(5):  
HERITAGE FUND OPERATIONS  
AND OVERSIGHT

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I talked about the mechanics of the Heritage Fund. I want to ask the Minister of Finance, within the life of this government, will the government consider an option to look at considering having an independent body type of framework to manage the Heritage Fund?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The establishment of a Heritage Fund has been a long process going back to the last Assembly, and we started with the legislative proposal to get the legislation passed. We got the legislation passed in anticipation of the day when devolution would come. In the meantime, we started putting in a very modest amount of money, a quarter-million dollars a year, seed money, as it were. We've always contemplated, and it has always been anticipated that as the fund devolves as we hit devolution, and as the money starts being put into the Heritage Fund, and as it grows in critical mass it will need to evolve in terms of how it's managed.

All the issues raised by Members in terms of the lending criteria, what's the governance model, initially, in the start-up phase it has been looked after within government by the FMB, which has allowed us to get up and running, and we're still in very early stages, but that discussion has already been acknowledged that we're prepared to take part in that. Whether we are going to be in a position to set up a major governance oversight structure in the life of this government to look after a relatively small amount of money has yet to be determined, but we are definitely going to be moving that way once it is set up and fully operational. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Within the life of this government, would the Minister look at a discussion paper where he could bring forward to the Assembly to say where we could start having discussion on the Heritage Fund and the government framework for the fund? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, we would be glad to pull together a document that lays out issues to be addressed in the coming months and years as it pertains to the Heritage Fund as it moves ahead. Thank you.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister say that it will be within a year, within a few months shy of us calling our next election? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Yes, we will endeavor to have a document on the books within the timelines outlined by the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 77-17(5):  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND  
REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up with the Minister of Human Resources on our Affirmative Action Plan. Over the years it always seems to be the case of one step forward and two steps back. The statistics have held level at about 33 percent for the last 10 years. I know that the Minister has got some new strategies there.

I would like to ask him, just exactly what is he doing to improve the affirmative action and our representative workforce in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The first thing that we are doing is that we are looking at community-by-community statistics and determining whether or not in a particular community that the numbers of affirmative action positions are low and then we are trying to fill the positions that are vacant in those communities with Aboriginal employees by various strategies that we are undertaking. One example would be the Regional Recruitment Strategy. Thank you.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, also I think some of the barriers are that some of our jobs are entry level positions, but the qualifications listed beside them are impossible for just entry level positions. They are asking, I don't know, like five years of experience, some college or university, but these are entry level positions and they don't have to be that qualified.

I would like to know if the Minister is reviewing some of those jobs and entry level positions as well. Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, in the Deh Cho, which includes another riding in the Assembly, there are 34 positions that we are trying to actively recruit for. Seventeen of those positions need a university degree and 10 of those positions are college or trades. Very few of the 34 positions are entry level positions, so I hear what the Member is saying.

One of the things that we are looking at with the regional recruitment is to see if individuals who have a high school education with some training for over a year can fill one of the positions that has a greater education requirement, combining experience and the fact that the individual would have high school. Thank you.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad they are going to do some work towards that. Just on another note, too, my constituents and also people throughout the Northwest Territories are frustrated that they're P1 applicants and are screened out. They actually qualify. They showed me their qualifications. "Mr. Menicoché, why am I being screened out when I've got the qualifications?"

What will the Minister do about those scenarios that I've raised in the House before? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** These situations have come up a few times. We do look at these on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes the position requires something that's not exactly in line with the applicant's experience and qualifications and they end up being screened out. Sometimes they are close enough that we can use equivalencies and their experience to screen them in. So, many of these things are on a case-by-case basis, but we are working with the departments as these jobs come up, and as individuals responsible for making sure the policies are followed, human resource people are working with them to make sure that the policies are followed with the intent of increasing affirmative action hires in the GNWT. Thank you.

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

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess part of our job as government is to give our constituents the confidence that we are taking care of their needs, confidence that our policies are working. We are not giving the people the confidence that it's working. I have constituents who have applied and applied and get screened out. How does this P1 affirmative action work to get our people hired? In my constituency, I have a majority Aboriginal population, but I don't think the stats represent that.

How are we going to become a representative workforce? If there are two applicants who have the same qualifications, can the Minister explain how P1 works? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** The job evaluation process is used to determine what qualifications are needed to do this particular job, so if this particular job is out, has certain qualifications that are required, those are the qualifications that must be met. So if there is a priority 1 candidate that meets the qualifications, then those are the individuals interviewed. Once we have a number of priority 1 candidates or even one priority 1 candidate eligible,

regardless of whether or not priorities 2 and 3 have higher qualifications, we do interview the priority 1 candidate and attempt to try to increase the affirmative action numbers. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 78-17(5):  
HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions, probably not surprisingly, are for the Minister of Finance today on his statement earlier today in the House. I'm wondering how the Minister can book \$120 million in resource revenues in 2014-2015, \$15 million for Aboriginal governments as 25 percent of our net fiscal benefit and refuse to commit 25 percent to the Heritage Fund to a more distant fiscal year? Mahsi.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In both the case of the Aboriginal governments and the Heritage Fund, the money is not expected to flow into our coffers until late in 2015, at which time we will honour the commitment to put in 25 percent into the Heritage Fund. Thank you.

**MR. BROMLEY:** I didn't hear an answer there, but I'm not surprised at that either, I guess. The Minister has repeatedly claimed that 5 percent of the Heritage Fund was part of this budget, yet less than 1 percent – it's a very small fraction of 1 percent – is actually budgeted. What gives? Mahsi.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The key issue with the Heritage Fund has been the political debates over the amount that goes into the Heritage Fund. We came forward with 5 percent. We've had the debate. Clearly, the money is not going to flow into our coffers where we'll actually have the cash until 2015, but the critical decision as a government was what we are going to put in, as a Legislature, what we are going to agree to earmark to go into that Heritage Fund. If we would have waited until next year, then the 5 percent in the budget would have gone into the fund. So there was a need to have that political debate, even though the money isn't going to flow until some months hence. This was the first opportunity to clarify that and we've done that.

**MR. BROMLEY:** The point is that the Minister has booked the revenue. He's booked the allocation to the Aboriginal governments and he has not booked the dollars to the Heritage Fund. We want that done this fiscal year. We know that the dollars flow later, and by delaying it another year, guess what. It delays the dollars into the Heritage Fund another year. Not acceptable.

I assume the \$120 million booked in the budget as resource revenue royalties is an estimate. Why don't you, again, at least book the estimated 5 percent as per your repeated claims that 5 percent was being booked this fiscal year.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The intention was to have that number reflected in the 2015-16 budget when we had the number. We've committed to the 25 percent and we will honour that and we will put it in as soon as we get the money. That will be reflected clearly and accurately in 2015-16. Thank you.

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

**MR. BROMLEY:** The Minister has budgeted us into an untenable situation where he claims we have to spend almost all of our children's inheritance in 2014-15.

How will the Minister adjust our budget to ensure 25 percent of the net fiscal benefit in 2014-15 can be booked into the Heritage Fund as per the will of our public and this House? Mahsi.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Our plan is clear. I have laid it out. We've agreed to the adjustment of 25 percent. That money will not be available to us as a government until late 2015. We will book that money. We will agree to the 25 percent on an ongoing basis. We will book that and have it reflected in the 2015-16 budget. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 79-17(5):  
HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be for the Heritage Fund as well. The Minister's statement indicates the Heritage Fund begins in 2015-16 when the revenue begins to flow into the government. I guess Mr. Bromley's questioning about when that money will flow... Are we skipping a year of the Heritage Fund? Are we skipping the first year of the Heritage Fund?

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, we're not. We're acknowledging that the Devolution Agreement kicks in April 1<sup>st</sup>. The resource royalties will start to accrue but the royalties will not be paid out and will not come into our coffers until the end of 2015. Once the appropriate business cycles are concluded and reporting cycles and financial cycles are concluded where royalties are ascertained, at that point we will honour the commitment and put in 25 percent in 2015-16 on a go-forward basis. Thank you.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** I guess one of the confusions, then, is that we're booking the revenue, we're booking the expenses for the Aboriginal groups for the 2014-15 budget.

Can the Minister explain those if we're not expecting them until the 2015-16 budget?

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The \$120 million is booked for accounting purposes. The \$15 million is a sign of good faith, but you'll notice in my budget address I indicated in there that that money will not flow until late 2015.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Mr. Speaker, are we sure those monies are flowing and if they don't show up are we committed to the fact that we're going to have to borrow that money to pay the Aboriginal groups?

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** As it has been pointed out, some of these figures are estimates. They're based on the royalties posted on an average basis. So depending on how good a year it is and the coming year will depend on what we're going to get, but we fully anticipate we are going to get royalties in the neighbourhood of \$120 million, barring some unforeseen bad news, and if there's good news, then it will be more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 80-17(5):  
GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue with questions towards the Minister of Human Resources, and again it's about the GNWT vacancies. So let's start with what we know. We know that there are 571 jobs that the GNWT is actively pursuing, and we all know that there are possibly 100 or 200 other jobs that they're not pursuing. We can only assume that when you consider and extrapolate the numbers the Finance Minister has used that could be anywhere from \$10 million to \$20 million.

So let's start with this: How many jobs out there are not being actively filled and sometimes are defined as dormant or inactive jobs? How much money is being allocated and where do we find these resource jobs referred to as dormant or inactive? Thank you.

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

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The dormant and inactive positions that are not scheduled to be filled in the GNWT as of October 31, 2013, was 161 positions.

**MR. HAWKINS:** I want to thank the Minister for laying out a clear number in front of us. So let's work with 161 jobs that are not being pursued, of course. So we've ignored for just a moment the 571



jobs that are being pursued. Knowing that we have 161 jobs and we use the typical math of about \$100,000 per person, that could now put us into the range of about \$16 million are out there somewhere just sitting.

Would the Minister agree that some positions are not being filled by departments and that money is being used for other things that the department has on their wish list other than being directed for human resources as further directed by the Legislature itself? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** At this time many of the dormant and inactive positions are not funded. They're unfunded positions or just PYs that appear in the PeopleSoft as dormant and inactive positions. We are undertaking an analysis with all of the departments to determine if any of these positions are funded and with the ones of the inactive, dormant positions that have funding attached to it, what is happening specifically with that funding and for what other personnel use is that money used for.

**MR. HAWKINS:** The Minister said many. Many could be one or two, three or four, maybe even 100. We don't know, because in my first question, of course, I asked exactly and the question was how much money is being allocated to these jobs. So right now all I can do is use my traditional math provided by the NWT Department of Education, I want to thank them for those 12 good years, not discovery math, which we're not sitting here guessing.

My next question for the Minister is, if there was a snapshot using the ever famous program called PeopleSoft, as of October 31, 2013, what would that snapshot say of how many vacant positions are there within the Northwest Territories government? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** The positions are vacant for various reasons. Two of the position categories that are vacant are the dormant and the inactive and also the to-be-staffed positions, which we use the number of 571 for that specific date as a snapshot. Counting that plus all the other vacant positions in October, no, I'm sorry. I do have a number that is from December 31, 2013, and that is 1,150 positions. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a reason I keep saying traditional and discovery math and I'll leave that up for the Cabinet to figure out. So we work with the number provided by the Minister, which is 1,150, we minus the 571 they call it actively pursuing jobs, we also minus the 161 jobs that the Minister says, well, they're vacant or dormant, we don't know what's happening with them, that still leaves us 418 jobs on the table. We

have 20 percent of our government unstaffed and certainly funded.

So where are those human resource dollars going? Who is spending them and who is providing the direction on how that money is being spent? If it's not through the Legislature itself, it must be the bureaucracy deciding where human resources are being spent, overriding the will of the Legislature. Can the Minister answer that? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** The departments manage their own human resources. They do it using the vacant positions. Sometimes they maintain a home position for an employee that may be under an assignment. So that home position would be considered vacant. They may need other priorities that need to be met by not just by the Assembly but also the department priorities and they use the position by filling some casual positions to meet the mandate. They support other positions that are required, other priorities that are required and also sometimes if the department had some vacant positions, they may keep the positions vacant if they felt that if they're filling the positions immediately could create a cost overrun in the budget. Thank you.

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

#### QUESTION 81-17(5):

##### RCMP OVERNIGHT VISITS TO TSIIGEHTCHIC

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been just over three months since we've had a commitment to have RCMP overnighting in Tsiigehtchic. So I'd like to ask the Minister, how many times have the RCMP overnighted in the community of Tsiigehtchic since our last session? Thank you.

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

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The detachment commander in Fort McPherson has met with the band council and the SAO in Tsiigehtchic twice in December. We continue to work out arrangements for RCMP officers to overnight in the community of Tsiigehtchic and our hope is that they would be there eight days a month. We continue to work out the logistics on exactly how that's going to happen. We've identified accommodations, I believe. So the details are just being worked out today.

**MR. BLAKE:** I'd just like to ask the Minister, when can the community expect to have the RCMP overnighting in that community? Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** If the details can be worked out, it should happen. Hopefully by March we can have RCMP officers overnighting in the community of Tsiigehtchic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BLAKE:** Many of the community residents in the community of Tsiigehtchic would like to see more of a presence from the RCMP, so I'd like to ask the Minister, will he ensure more of a presence in the community of Tsiigehtchic? Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** In addition to looking at having RCMP officers overnight in the community of Tsiigehtchic, we're also looking at the establishment of a contact location in the community of Tsiigehtchic so that community members are aware when the RCMP are on patrol in the community and they have a place where they can meet and bring any concerns that they might have to the RCMP that are on patrol in the community of Tsiigehtchic. We do look forward to the success of that. We've identified policing priorities for last year. We're looking right now to establish the policing priorities for the community of Tsiigehtchic for the upcoming year.

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

QUESTION 82-17(5):  
GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to follow up with questions to the Minister of Human Resources here. It's been brought up many times with the vacancies that we have within our government system. I talked to people back home and some of the concerns they bring up is they constantly see a job posting but it never gets a hiring.

I'd like to ask the Minister, for all the GNWT jobs that we have in the Northwest Territories, who writes the job descriptions? Because we've also heard with the college students that a lot of these job descriptions ask for two, three, four, five years' experience. That already takes them out of the equation and doesn't help them out when we're trying to get our own northern workforce in.

I'd like to ask the Minister, who writes these job descriptions that go out into the public?

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

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The job descriptions are written by the department that will be employing that specific person once the person is hired.

**MR. MOSES:** Going off some of my colleagues' questions here, because we have all these job descriptions out there and we also have job postings that aren't being met. You look on the website and there's, I don't know how many there are, but I know they're not all being filled. We talk about the main estimates and the budget process where we approve these funded jobs for the government and the departments but they're not being filled.

I'd like to ask the Minister, and he already alluded to this earlier, but what happens to these dollars that we approve for these job positions? What happens to the dollars within the departments that we go to the positions and they're not being filled?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** As I indicated earlier, there are various uses for the money that goes in with the positions. The departments still have the mandate to perform the tasks that are assigned to them as a department, so sometimes when they're unable to fill a job and after a job description is completed, and the job is advertised over the period and they are, for some reason or another, unable to fill a job, then some of that money would go to a term position perhaps. It could be going to a casual and also has been used for relief workers. Sometimes when you don't have all of the positions filled then there's a requirement to pay overtime, so sometimes there is overtime paid, and sometimes the departments also go through a process, I guess, well, all departments go through a process or passive restraint and sometimes the management of the human resources is part of the passive restraint.

**MR. MOSES:** The Minister mentioned that for different reasons jobs are vacant and the money is used for other areas.

With some of the challenges that we have within our departments possibly filling the position, would the Minister agree or would the Minister allude to our positions within some of our departments deliberately left vacant so dollars could be used for other areas. Can the Minister please confirm or allude to that question?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Yes, I can confirm that that does occur to meet other priorities, to support other positions that are required and also to take pressure off budget to avoid over-expenditures.

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

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He did confirm that some positions are deliberately left vacant to offset some of the O and M operations stuff, so why don't we see those operations in the budget process right from the start and not put these positions out that we agree to? It's ridiculous how we approve this budget here.

My last question is: Based on the job descriptions that departments write, how does the Minister or what is his goal or his strategy to get our educated students that have no job experience into the job system and into public service knowing that the job descriptions ask for two years' experience plus?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** With the students that are trying to gain experience, the Government of the Northwest Territories uses a couple of methods to give the students experience. One is the Summer Student Program. We try to track some of the

students that are going to school down south and we try to employ them during the summer giving them some experience each year. Also, at the end of that, when some of the students are finished school and want to get into a job to gain some experience, we use the Internship Program to bring students into the GNWT.

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

QUESTION 83-17(5):  
FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement today. When you do a search result on our GNWT website under Fiscal Responsibility Policy, you're whisked away to a two-page pamphlet with the good looking Mr. Floyd Roland's picture on it. Now, I like simplicity in design as it makes the complex more palatable to work with; however, with our current debt wall and with this guiding policy consistently being used to prop up our financial future, I must ask, where is the meat on this bone? My questions today are for the Minister of Finance.

It appears that the fate of our financial future lies in a two-page document which appears to be a bit dated. Can the Minister indicate to the House here what recognized authority or professional body approved the parameters of the Fiscal Responsibility Policy?

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very experienced and capable staff in the Department of Finance, vetted through the appropriate processes and signed off by FMB.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I guess we're hearing from the Minister that this was an internal policy, possibly vetted with some people with criterion in financial management, but we're not quite certain.

So, I guess, when was the last time this policy was thoroughly reviewed to address the growing debt load that we're about to incur and with such negative revenue growth?

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The issue of the debt to revenue number, for example, 5 percent, a maximum 5 percent can go to interest payments out of revenue. It's not 1 percent; it's 5 percent, so the Member's statement earlier in the day was wrong, just for a point of clarification. But that number, we looked across the fiscal landscape across the country and it's something that is manageable, and at the 5 percent of revenue, yes, we could manage the additional cost should we get a borrowing limit of a billion dollar bump-up and should we decide to invest that money, and yes, that money would be targeted to economic

infrastructure and we'd have to look at the full financial impact.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** It's clear that this policy has not been reviewed because the Minister failed to answer the question. In my Member's statement today I had indicated 1 percent, and that is what is being quoted right from the Minister's own words here.

Communication of government policies is a vital step in transparency, and if I pulled the information off this pamphlet, it says for a full text of the new Fiscal Responsibility Policy, go to [www.gov.nt.ca/fmbs/documents/famweb](http://www.gov.nt.ca/fmbs/documents/famweb). Well, when you go to this website it says, "Page cannot be found." Can the Minister explain this? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, the number is 5 percent not 1 percent, so the Member is incorrect. I will personally ensure that a copy of that policy is on the Member's desk before the end of the day. Thank you.

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

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping that maybe we can have this policy for everyone to see.

Accountability is the cornerstone of transparency, and according to what this little pamphlet says on the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, government accountability for this policy is to be presented annually by the Minister of Finance in a report on the debt management results and performance criteria when the public accounts are presented.

Can the Minister indicate why we did not receive this report for the public accounts ending March 31, 2013? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, we are constantly held to that account, and to my understanding, it is embedded in part of that documented process. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 84-17(5):  
HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask some questions to the Minister of Finance. I want to follow up on my statement and also follow up from my colleagues' questions earlier.

I would like to say that I appreciate the government's willingness to do the right thing and put 25 percent of our new resource revenues into the Heritage Fund, but I am unable to reconcile the Minister's words with the numbers that are in our

budget. As I stated in my statement, the request was to put that money in '14-15, not in '15-16.

Mr. Bromley has asked this already, but I don't believe I heard an answer, so I have to ask it again. The Minister states that we're going to put 25 percent of resource revenues into the budget because that's when the money is coming in, in '15-16, but the revenues are from the '14-15 year. Yes, we get them in our hand in 2015 or 2016, but the money is coming in and it should be allocated to '14-15 and it shows that in the budget, the \$120 million.

I would like to know from the Minister why we record the revenues in '14-15 and yet we don't record the expense in '14-15. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. None of that money is going to be available to flow until late 2015, so as I have indicated, we are going to honour our commitment to 25 percent and put it into the '15-16 budget. Yes, the deal starts on April 1<sup>st</sup>, but we're going to wait until we get the money so we're not going to be borrowing money at a high interest rate to put it into a fund where we're not even sure what the number is. The money will go in in '15-16 as we have indicated. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** It gets more confusing every time the Minister answers a question, I think.

The Minister says that the money will not flow until '15, late '15 or early '16. I understand that, but if that's the case, then the money is not flowing in until that same time, yet we are recording money flowing in in '14-15, so why are we not recording the money flowing out in '14-15? I'm not talking about the actual cash transaction; I am talking about the records on the books. We're not going to get the cash until '15-16, so why are we recording it in '14-15? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, we are booking a whole number of dollar figures. We are booking all the money we're getting for our A-base transfer, for all the positions, all the programs. We are booking the notional amount of \$120 million as projected revenue, and once we get the money, then we'll talk about the expenditures which we have committed to, one of them being the Heritage Fund, the 25 percent. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** Mr. Speaker, it just does not compute for me. We are comparing apples and oranges and I cannot understand how it's okay for us to record the revenues... It's an accounting entry, I think the Minister said. So we are recording an accounting entry and it's okay for revenues but we won't do an accounting entry for expenses. So on the one hand we're taking advantage and on the other hand the government is also taking

advantage and saying we're not going to do it in '14-15, we'll do it in '15-16.

I'd like to ask the Minister if he can tell me, since 5 percent is presumably what the budget was presumably based on, where does that show up in the '14-15 budget? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** It doesn't.

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

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That confirms what I had believed, that yes, it's not in there.

The Minister, in his budget address, talked about 5 percent. Today was the first day that I heard that he was talking about 5 percent in '15-16. In all our discussions previous to this, I have never been advised that this 5 percent was not intended for the '14-15 budget.

I don't have a question here, but I am quite dismayed that we've been led down a garden path and the only amount that's going into the Heritage Fund for this '14-15 year is \$250,000. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Mr. Speaker, nobody has been led down the garden path. What we've had here in this House over the last few days is a very fundamental debate about what amount of money is going to be put into the Heritage Fund on a go-forward basis that will eventually be put into legislation. There was a critical first step and that's what we've had.

We had listed in our budget address, in the budget, 5 percent, and if the House would have just concurred with that, 5 percent would be what would be driving us, as a government, on a go-forward basis in the Legislative Assembly. Now we have clarified that very fundamental point. That's why it was listed there, so we could make sure it was clear in writing and resolved. Now it has been resolved and it's 25 percent. Thank you.

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

#### QUESTION 85-17(5): GNWT POSITION VACANCIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to continue asking questions regarding the vacant positions with the Minister of Human Resources.

The Minister should know I'm not asking him to account for whether it's the Department of Justice or Education or Finance or those things. I'm asking him from his policy position as Minister and steward of Human Resources.

The Minister just confirmed that some positions have been deliberately left vacant and I've been told by some people in the bureaucracy, even as of

today, that some positions' money is being left vacant, and that money is being left vacant for various reasons obviously, but it's often used for other departmental purposes.

Why is this a contradiction when you can't use doctor money that you can't hire doctors for and you can't use that to hire nurse practitioners, but it's okay for department officials to turn around and not staff positions, in some cases deliberately, and use that money for other projects? Thank you.

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

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier, the management of the human resources and the budgeting of human resources is a responsibility of the departments. The departments need to use that money for various reasons, and one real obvious reason is when you do have vacant positions and you are in the process of filling the vacant positions, it is a complete process. When you have that many vacant positions, you can't possibly advertise them all at once. So, they have these vacant positions and they are forced into paying overtime because there is no overtime allocated within the framework that we provide to the departments by the position.

Overtime is one big one and then, of course, just to try to meet the priorities of the department, which are priorities of the House, they would sometimes need to hire another position that's not of the ones that are vacant but a position such as a casual to fulfil a job and so on. So, there are various reasons as to why this money is with the departments, and the departments are managing on the ground how to expend the money that's associated with the positions.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister just said something really interesting, which is the departments can't advertise all the positions all at once. That's an interesting situation, because if you go to the career website, there's barely 100 jobs there and the Minister just earlier said there is at least 1,150 jobs considered as a snapshot of vacancies. So there's a variance of at least 1,000 jobs and we know that they are actively pursuing, although we can't find it anywhere, 571 jobs.

So when I asked the question to the Minister – and I will ask it again – do we continue to fund these positions that nobody is in, his answer is maybe.

Can the Minister officially clear it up on the record that when a person transfers on a transfer assignment, we'll say from the Department of Justice over to the Department of Education that even though he's now paid by the Department of Education, the Department of Justice continues to fund that position at its home office? So in other words, that money is sitting there. Will he clear it up and tell me where that money goes? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** An individual that goes on assignment would still have the home position held for them. However, they do need to do that job that he or she was doing in the home department. So, on a transfer assignment they will backfill that position. That position stays vacant and they will backfill the position with most likely a casual or a term position until that person returns to the job. So the position is vacant. The money is used to continue to do the job that the position would do back at their home department.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Most likely, maybe, who knows, we're not sure and when would it happen.

Can the Minister say for certain that all that money left over in the home department is actually being used for human resources, or is the best guess today a maybe? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** The money remains there, the money is there to perform the tasks that are the responsibility of the individual that is now on a transfer assignment. Those are some of the priorities that are assigned to the department that would be a part of that. So that's what the money is used for. I don't know what else that money could possibly be used for other than to perform those tasks in this particular case. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister even knows departments use money for other things other than human resources. So, finally, I keep asking how much is being accounted for all these funded positions, who knows, up to 1,151 as noted by the Minister of Human Resources. How much money is being invested through our legislative process but spent in other allocations? We don't know. Maybe the Minister can enlighten us. Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** As the Member knows, inside the main estimates we have positions, compensation and benefits. There's a category there. The departments use that money for that purpose. At this point the indications that I have are that this is what that money is used for, it's not expended on other things. There may be personnel hired elsewhere to do the job, but it is used to pay individuals compensation for doing the job for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 86-17(5):  
BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS AND  
INTERACTIVITY TRANSFERS

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'll have questions for the Minister of Finance. Discussions with the Minister of Human Resources

earlier brought me on to looking at the Financial Administrative Act under Section 32.1(1), the transfer among activities. Although the act – I looked it up – states that the board, on the recommendations of the Minister responsible for an item, may transfer funds among activities set out in the estimates on which the appropriate item is based if the amount appropriated for the item as a whole is not increased.

Can I ask the Minister of Finance, up to what amount are they able to practice this transfer among activities? Can he give me an amount within the department they're able to make that decision? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Moses. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, \$250,000. Thank you.

**MR. MOSES:** So that's \$250,000 that each department is able, under the direction of the Minister responsible, to move within the department. That concerns me about accountability and transparency. So when the Ministers do this practice – I'm not sure how common it is – are there any discussions with committee or are there any discussions within Cabinet on how these dollars are moved within the department under this section of the FAA? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** The activities that the Member talks about are set out, as he's pointed out, in Section 31.1 of the Financial Administration Act. Under that act, as well, deputy ministers, under the delegation of authority of regulations, have been delegated authority by the FMB to transfer funds among activities. Departments are required to report to the Department of Finance detailed monthly reports of all budget adjustments and transfers affecting operations, expenditures and capital expenditure appropriations. This includes transfers between expenditure categories, such as compensation and benefits, materials and supplies, and grants and contributions. Thank you.

**MR. MOSES:** It's kind of related to the job positions that we're talking about, the vacant positions that are constantly brought forward in the last few meetings here.

I'd like to ask the Minister, how common is this practice within government for the Minister and the deputy minister to be making these types of decisions? Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** I'd also point out that I'm required as the Minister of Finance, under Section 31, to table each session a list of funds transferred that exceed \$250,000 before the Legislative Assembly. So this is a standard management tool for an operation the size of ours, \$1.6 billion budget, where the managers, the

Ministers, the deputies, senior managers that manage their operations, there are the checks and balances to make sure that it's accounted for within activities, between activities, but that ability is very, very common practice. It's a management tool that's absolutely critical in order to do business. Thank you.

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

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard from the Minister of Human Resources earlier about some positions that might be deliberately left vacant and that brings up the concern that a Minister can take a vacant position or two, which is equal to about \$200,000, and use those funds to do certain programs or projects within the department and that's concerning to me.

Would the Minister look at possibly looking to see if there is a way that this section can be amended to look at the responsibilities of the Ministers in not such a high amount of dollars, \$250,000, would he look at amending it to a certain amount of money, or amend it so that committee also has input into how these dollars are moved around within a department? We're going through the budget session and, obviously, there are some concerns about where these dollars are flowing. Thank you.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Clearly, this session there's an interest by Members in terms of vacancies and this HR issue. There's a report tabled each session in this Legislative Assembly for the Members where we can have that discussion. We're also in the midst of a total rewrite of the Financial Administration Act, which will fully involve committee. We're going to be looking at a total rewrite since it's a very old document, so I believe the concerns of the Member will be able to be addressed as we look at the rewrite of that legislation. Thank you.

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

#### QUESTION 87-17(5): HERITAGE FUND ALLOCATION

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to follow up with some questions on the Heritage Fund that I had earlier. We discussed the issue of the 25 percent to Aboriginal groups, we discussed 25 percent to the Heritage Fund. I'm just wondering if the Minister can give me the information on the other 50 percent that we are not allocating those funds in the 2014-15 budget because the money does not flow until '15-16.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 50 percent has not been allocated and we're still having the discussion about

how much goes into infrastructure and how much goes for debt servicing costs. Thank you.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** I guess we are trying to figure out the math over here and when things get booked as opposed to when things get spent. I just want to reassure the public. I have a question to the Minister on the fact that the Heritage money will flow the first year that we get the first amount of money from resource revenue sharing.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The time for oral question period has expired. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

---Unanimous consent granted

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize one of my constituents in the gallery, Mr. James Wilson, a well-known carver. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Blake. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address. 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 29-17(5):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO HEALING  
VOICES: THE REPORT OF THE  
MINISTER'S FORUM ON ADDICTIONS  
AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, titled "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Healing Voices: The Report of the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 30-17(5):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LAW FOUNDATION  
31<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2013

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, titled "Northwest Territories Law Foundation 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2013." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLED DOCUMENT 31-17(5):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
CONFLICT OF INTEREST COMMISSIONER  
ANNUAL REPORT 2012

TABLED DOCUMENT 32-17(5):  
ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013  
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Colleagues, pursuant to Section 99 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I hereby table the 2012 Annual Report of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for the Northwest Territories.

Pursuant to Section 68 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, I hereby table the 2012-2013 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to draw Members' attention to the presence in the gallery today of Ms. Elaine Keenan Bengts, Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. I welcome her to the House.

---Applause

Mr. Dolynny.

TABLED DOCUMENT 33-17(5):  
NORTHERN PUBLIC AFFAIRS BLOG,  
NOVEMBER 6, 2013: "IT LOOKS LIKE THE  
DECISIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE,  
WHAT TO DO WITH NWT RESOURCE  
REVENUES," BY STEPHANIE IRLBACHER-FOX

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a document found in the Northern Public Affairs Journal authored by Dr. Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, titled "It looks like the decisions have already been made. What to Do with NWT Resource Revenues." Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Item 16, notices of motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 9-17(5):

EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE  
TO FEBRUARY 17, 2014

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 13, 2014, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that, notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 13, 2014, it shall be adjourned until Monday, February 17, 2014;

And further, at any time prior to February 17, 2014, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. 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):** 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 Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act; and Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, with conclusion of general comments. 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. Bouchard):** I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have agreed to consider Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act.

I will ask the Minister responsible to introduce the bill. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I am pleased to be here today to address Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act.

The Medical Care Act establishes that "medically necessary" services provided by a doctor are insured services.

The act also defines who is eligible for insured services and expressly excludes some residents from coverage under the act. For example, members of the Canadian Armed Forces are not eligible for payments of insured services under the Medical Care Act. This is because members receive similar benefits under relevant federal legislation.

Until recently, the Medical Care Act was consistent with the definition of insured persons under the Canada Health Act. In June 2012 the federal government amended their legislation so that RCMP members are no longer excluded from being an insured person.

The amendments being proposed to the Medical Care Act will ensure that the act is once again consistent with the Canada Health Act.

It should be noted that federal legislation is paramount and even if we did not make this change, RCMP members stationed in the Northwest Territories are eligible for coverage under the NWT Health Care Plan.

Changes to the federal act were implemented in the NWT on April 1, 2013, so members have been eligible for NWT health care coverage since then. This change to the Medical Care Act is being proposed for consistency and to avoid any confusion.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. I will turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Programs that considered the bill for opening comments. Mr. Moses.

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs conducted its public review of Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act, on January 20, 2014.

A clause-by-clause review was conducted the same day. The committee thanks the Minister and his staff for presenting this bill.

The bill amends the Medical Care Act to reflect a recent amendment to the Canada Health Act. It deems that a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who is a resident of the Northwest Territories as of April 1, 2013, was eligible for insured services in accordance with this act.



Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 6 to the Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the whole.

This concludes the committee's opening comments on Bill 6. Individual Members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Moses. Mr. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Please introduce your witnesses, Mr. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today are Debbie DeLancey, my deputy minister; as well as Natasha Brotherston, the manager of policy and legislation, Department of Health and Social Services, and Mr. Thomas Druyan, the legislative drafter.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll open the floor to general comments on Bill 6. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to welcome the Minister and team here this afternoon. As we've seen in the opening comments from the Minister, we're talking about insured services, we're talking about the adjudication of shared services or insured services and there is a very close parallel to what the Canadian Armed Forces personnel receive as well as RCMP. There's a definite link there. So my concern is, as the Minister said, there's relevant federal legislation, which deems this as a difference between DND employees and RCMP employees, but I'm a bit concerned that this could set some precedent in costs and liability for this government.

What reassurance do we have that we're not seeing a potential move by our federal counterparts to, I guess, pawn off insured services from DND on to provincial jurisdictions or territorial jurisdictions? Thank you.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The federal government has the authority to make amendments to the Canada Health Act as they see fit. They did make changes to exclude the RCMP, which have put the RCMP under our responsibility, hence the changes to the Medical Care Act. At this time I'm not aware that the federal government is making any moves to do the same thing with the military.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you. I appreciate the Minister's comments. I guess the concern I have as a Member is that this does set a fairly unique precedent that could follow because of the uniqueness and similarity between both DND insured services as well as RCMP. So I put caution to the wind that, although I do appreciate and I understand and I concur with what we've seen here in the act and the amendment of the act, I'm a bit concerned that this could be a future set-up.

I guess my other question has to do with there are always costs associated with such an implementation or a change for insured services in terms of providing those services and funding the services for these Members.

Do we have any preliminary numbers of what this means to taxpayers in terms of future costs for us? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** With the changes, there were around 256 positions employed by the RCMP that were affected and, on average, that works out for us and the coverage we have to provide and pay for now to about \$228,000 a year.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** With that number and, again, with perceived forced growth, what's the number that the department is using as a go-forward number in terms of costs for future budgets? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** No new funds were coming from the federal government to cover this difference. We were hoping to get some additional dollars, but recognizing the fiscal restraint and fiscal policy that we are utilizing, we will fund these from within.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I guess I'll clarify my question. I was looking for a future outlook here in terms of future budgets, but if the Minister wants to comment on this current budget, that's fine as well. It appears that we're funding within. These new dollars aren't being represented in the upcoming main estimates, which it sounds like that answer has already been done, but I'm looking for the future budgets.

What is the department prepared to provide in terms of forced growth in this area in terms of potential future costs? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** It would obviously depend on the degree that the RCMP expands or increases their services in the Northwest Territories if they choose to do so. We provide these services to all residents of the Northwest Territories and as the population of the Northwest Territories changes we'll have to amend our budgets accordingly to address increases and/or decreases in the population.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I guess my final question has to do with the planned monitoring that potentially could have some changes.

Are there any foreseeable changes for the insurers out there that are providing these services, both in government and private industry? Is there going to be a seamless transition for all providers that deal with adjudication billings with this plan? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Businesses, organizations would maintain their third party insurance provider as they currently do. It should not affect them.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad to see this act come forward. I'm wondering: where do the families fit in? Were the families covered by GNWT before, and if not, are they also part of the 256? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Families were covered by RCMP before and they're covered by us now.

**MR. BROMLEY:** I understood the Minister to say that families were not covered by us before, but they are now. So I'm assuming that 256 doesn't include the families there.

I'm wondering, since this is retroactive actually, we'll be needing to come into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April of last year, what planning has been done in the way they have been handled to date, then, as actual residents, or are we talking reimbursements? I can just imagine there's a bit of an administrative nightmare potentially. What have we done to ensure that that is dealt with efficiently? Partly I'm thinking of the families here to make sure that those that are having health issues are not encountering unnecessary difficulties in being reimbursed. Mahsi.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I just need to correct a statement I made that was incorrect. The RCMP officers were covered by the RCMP insurance for their health care. The families were covered by the NWT health care. So the families haven't changed, the members have, but most of this was an accounting exercise, if you will.

If an RCMP officer before this change and after this change goes to the doctor or a nurse practitioner or allied health professional, receives services, that hasn't changed. Nothing has changed as far as the services they get and how they receive those services.

With respect to what they're covered for, there have been some differences because the RCMP may have covered things in a slightly different way, but all members were informed of the change and provided with the details they needed to know with respect to what their coverage is under the NWT Health Care Act.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks for that information. So my understanding with other jurisdictions,

Nunavummiut, for example, they receive the same services that we invoice Nunavut for those services. Have we been invoicing? In other words, for the past year have we been just taking care of these costs or have they been paid by the federal government and we will now have to reimburse the federal government? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you. Since April 1, 2013, we have been providing those services and paying for those services. Prior to that we were providing those services and invoices were sent to the RCMP to recoup our costs. That no longer happens.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just for clarification, to the Minister, this act, I guess I thought that the medical services provided to the RCMP was straight across the board to all members across Canada, because of the jurisdiction and they are a national police force. Why are we changing ours to bring them into our Medical Care Act? Shouldn't they automatically be covered under some federal legislation for their medical services?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Prior to April 1, 2013, those services were provided by the Northwest Territories for RCMP in the Northwest Territories as those services were provided to RCMP members in all the jurisdictions by the jurisdiction providing those services. The difference was prior to April 1, 2013, they were covered under the Canada Health Act, and the RCMP was billed back for those services in all jurisdictions, including the Northwest Territories. Effective April 1, 2013, the federal government has taken the RCMP out of the Canada Health Act and made it a responsibility of the jurisdictions where the members reside.

The Canada Health Act, as I indicated previously, is paramount, so it overrides or takes precedence over our NWT Health Care Act, but we want to make our NWT Health Care Act consistent with the Canada Health Act, which is one of the reasons we're before you today amending this act. But bottom line, these changes are the result of the federal government changes to RCMP coverage.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** I guess you could spin this however you want to spin it, but the fact of the matter is that we're taking on additional responsibilities and along with that it becomes an economic cost to us.

Are we going to somehow recoup or receive additional dollars because of these additional responsibilities now that come along with this act here?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** The changes to the Canada Health Act affect all the provinces and territories in exactly the same way. The magnitude might be different because of the size of the police force and the RCMP in each of the jurisdictions. The Ministers of Justice across the territories raised these concerns at one of their FTPs and it was pretty clear that the federal government was going to be moving ahead with this regardless, and those costs are now, as Mr. Dolynny indicated, downloaded on to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Given that statement by the Minister, when the federal government downloads these responsibilities, does it also download some additional dollars, because we are taking on these additional responsibilities, even though when you look at the comparison of RCMP members in the Northwest Territories to the province of British Columbia, certainly, they will feel the impact more in their health care system as to the Northwest Territories.

Is the federal government willing, or it's take it or leave it? No. It's you're going to do this, this is what it's going to cost you, and find money within the system to cover the additional costs to take on this download in service that they no longer have to budget for.

Is there any campaign, or is that past the point already of no, we have to take it, we have to eat it? What is the additional cost to this government as a result of the federal government's position on downloading this responsibility to us?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As I indicated previously, the federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Justice did raise this with the federal Minister. This was an area of concern. They were seeking continued financial support as opposed to having these costs completely downloaded on to the individual jurisdictions like the Northwest Territories. The answer was no.

Mr. Yakeleya's third description is pretty much it. It's done. We're not getting additional funds from the federal government to cover these costs, and for us on average it's been about \$228,000 a year that we've been able to invoice back that we will no longer be able to invoice back. Those costs are ours now.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** That's an additional \$228,000 that we have to look for somewhere within our small government to take on the devolution, I guess, of some of the responsibilities now that we've taken on that the federal government has downloaded to the provinces and the territories.

Is there any type of flexibility when you negotiate the renewal of the RCMP's agreement with the federal government to bring in some of these costs

that now we are seeing within our own territorial health dollars?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** There may be, but it's going to be 17 years away. We've just signed a 20-year contract three years ago; two years ago, 18 years away.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** That's a long time. I don't know if I'm going to be around that long, but at least it's on the record. I guess it's a done deal. We will have to bite the bullet on this one here. I'm not too sure what type of impact it's going to have on some of our requests for health and social services care in the Northwest Territories. It's one of those things where the federal government has the majority to sort of tell us what to do and it's not the best of positions we want to be in, so I guess I will just have to leave my questions on that and, hopefully, in 18 years from now a Member will bring this up again and have some discussions. I'll leave it at that.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. If committee is agreed there are no further general comments, we will proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill. Clause 1.

---Clauses 1 through 4 inclusive approved

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** To the bill as a whole.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Is committee agreed that Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act, is ready for third reading?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please proceed with escorting the witnesses out of the Chamber.

If committee is agreed, we will proceed to Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015. General comments. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just wanted a chance to comment on the budget address generally. Along with my colleague Mr. Blake, I think nursing in our small communities is one of our priorities I would say, and trying to get that in the budget is proving to be difficult. I would sure like to get support in one of these budgets and say, look, having equal services in the small communities compared to the larger communities is just as important, so I will continue to push with that. I'll proceed with a Member's statement during this sitting, along with that as well.

Decentralization and devolution, decentralization is a key to MLAs from the regions and communities as well as I'm pleased that the budget address does mention that housing is critical, and I would

imagine office buildings, as well, but I think the key thing is a huge opportunity to get more jobs out to the regions and communities and I certainly support that and balance too.

I guess the big thing here is that once we get the jobs devolved to the Northwest Territories that people taking the jobs are advised that they won't be entrenched in Yellowknife. At least some of the jobs that are potentially going to be moved to the communities at some point in time, it would be nice to have the discussion and start identifying how many would be transferred in the future.

I've always told my constituents that once devolution happens, there's also decentralization, and to do my job, to have a big win, I would see a small mini-department set up in the community of Fort Simpson, which is a regional centre. There are 10 to 15 jobs potentially. That's what I see in my mind. It would be a huge boost to the community.

I have to mention, of course, my two favorite words, Highway 7. Of course, that's in the capital that we talk about in the springtime, but just as important is the operating and maintenance. Highway No. 7 still needs attention from the operating and maintenance budget, and I look forward to that. I made a statement in the House already that we try to get out there early, try to get our maintenance done just to avoid the embarrassment of getting vehicles stuck again, stuck on our highway right in the springtime, which is an embarrassment because tourists watch that. In fact, Highway No. 7, talking with Ted Grant, he's so well known internationally that people actually call him from the tourism companies from Germany, from all the different areas that he's been involved in, and ask him about Highway No. 7 and what shape it's in. He has to be honest about it and tell them that people are getting stuck on there, so that hurts potential tourism traffic and that's one of the things that I've always been saying, is that Highway No. 7 would be a good boost to Northwest Territories tourism, if we were able to complete the Dehcho loop right from the BC border and back out by the Alberta border. Along with Highway No. 7, too, residents of Fort Liard continue to stress to me at each of my visits that that's how they make their living, they are on that highway all the time. So that's why I continue to push for it and will continue to do so.

I'm pleased that we're going to have a stable tax system, which means that the federal government announced that they won't be raising personal taxes and I'm glad about that as well. We are already pressured as a workforce, pressured in the communities, pressured with the higher cost of living, gasoline, power, et cetera. It's tough out there in the communities.

As well, the Minister spoke about increasing the workforce by 2,000 individuals to help with the revenue side of the budget, and earlier today, in my

Member's statement, I think that we begin by filling our existing vacancies that there is, not to make those entry level jobs seem like you need a professional degree, you need five years' experience, you need an accounting degree to become an accounting clerk. That is entry level stuff. I think one of my colleagues raised that in the House, saying who writes these job descriptions? We have to be more mindful of that. Sometimes the criticism in the community is that managers are actually writing those jobs for their friends. That is the criticism they get. Everybody knows it's just an entry level position, so we have to be mindful of that and strive for that.

As well, I am concerned about our Affirmative Action Program, our representative workforce strategy. I think we have to continue to work hard about it, work hard on it and try to continue to hire our people from the communities in those community jobs, because that's another criticism. They're saying, I've been here, I have similar skills and somebody else comes in and gets that job and I have the same skills. That continues to be a criticism. We talk about employing our residents and our Northerners and they should be first.

Those are just my comments on the budget right now. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Member for his comments. The issue of managing within our resources, trying to meet the demands, the issues that the Member has talked about, as has some of his colleagues, nursing in the small communities is a challenge that, as the Member said, is still yet to be met.

I agree with him on the opportunity that decentralization and devolution are presenting us, that there are opportunities we have committed as a government to a decentralization plan. We're moving into phase 3. There are going to be benefits in regional centres like Simpson, Smith, Inuvik, Hay River where the Lands department, for example, is going to be established, and we are looking across government to see what other discreet functions make sense to move outside of Yellowknife, so there is a strong commitment by the government to move forward with that phase 3.

We are committed to the Housing Initiative that's in the budget, where we're putting houses in small communities. As well, we're going to be doing in the larger centres where there are jobs coming, to look to make sure office space issues are dealt with. There is some opportunity with devolution in terms of accessing one-time funding for that type of investment, so we're looking very carefully at that.

Highway No. 7, the good news is today the federal budget, and we are expecting, I don't have the number, but Minister Flaherty we are hoping will be speaking specifically with a number about what is going to be in Build Canada and how that would affect us in Corridors III. The other good news is with the steps we're taking to manage our money, we will be in a position to make sure we can take advantage of every cost-shared dollar that there is.

As well, as the Member has pointed out, there is money on an ongoing basis for the next number of years for his beloved Highway No. 7. We are very sensitized to the Member's concern whenever he stands up in this House, because we know somewhere in his statement he's going to mention Highway No. 7. The good news is we think there's going to be some opportunity there for that.

I appreciate his comments about the stable tax system, an issue which implies a support for growing our economic base as opposed to adding more taxes.

The 2,000 person increase, we're going to have to look at every opportunity, but definitely it's filling vacancies. Our first choice and our first port of call will be Northerners, resident Northerners, students that are now in school that will be graduating, doing a better job to encourage them to come home to work and live in the North and making sure that we make that opportunity as painless as possible. We agree with him there.

The issue of job requirements is an ongoing struggle. I agree with the Member that sometimes we suffer from what has been referred to as creeping credentialism, where we add more and more credentials to job requirements. At the same time, we sometimes minimize the value of equivalencies, local knowledge, being bilingual and on-the-job training skills. Those are all part and parcel of the work that HR is doing along with the affirmative action initiatives with regional hiring experts and the work we're doing with students, SFA, hiring, all those types of things. We're very set on maximizing northern employment. So, I appreciate the Member's comments. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few brief comments to the main estimates. I, too, like Mr. Menicoche, have a lot of concerns from the communities. For example, Tsiigehtchic is still in need of nursing and also policing. I was hoping to see something here with some promises from the Minister, but I have yet to see that.

On a positive note, there are a lot of great initiatives there that we can expect to see in the communities.

Also, there are a lot of concerns in the region for Highway No. 8, the Dempster Highway. This fall we had terrible conditions, really moist, a lot of rain. We

had some places where there was over a foot of mud on the road. A lot of people with small vehicles had a lot of problems, transmissions freezing up, couldn't get into gear. The warranties wouldn't cover that so people were stuck with a lot of costs this fall. Some were \$600 to \$1,000, but they had to pay it to get their trucks fixed. We have to do a lot more for the maintenance on our highways.

Another thing, there's no work to be done on the Dempster widening project this coming summer. The people in my riding and also the Beaufort-Delta are really disappointed. We were doing a great job the last two years widening from the border to Inuvik. I know during the discussions on the Inuvik-Tuk highway, we had a talk with the Minister and the plan was to prepare to widen the Dempster Highway and prepare for increased traffic of tourists to the Beaufort Sea. Hopefully we will see what the federal budget is later today, but it is in reference to exactly what our portion will be. I'm very confident in the Conservative government. They have helped our territory a lot in the last couple of years that I've been part of this government. I'm really thankful for that. Moving forward, I hope we can increase the services. Our committee has made a lot of recommendations – hopefully we can implement those – just to increase the services we are providing now. We are doing a great job compared to other territories and provinces, especially in the southern part of Canada. When it comes to taking care of our elders and people of our territory, I think our people are very fortunate.

With that, those are my comments. Thank you.

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

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the Member for his comments. Just to point out what we know now, there are two calls with deputy ministers from across the country both for infrastructure and transportation with their respective Ministers. In a lot of cases, the appropriate federal or territorial Ministers will be involved in the calls to talk about follow-up from the budget today. We will be looking at, probably in the very near future, some detail about what that means for us as we look at our planning and the cost-shared dollars and the degree of cost-shared portions – is it 50/50, 60/40 – and the amount of money.

We recognize the two highways. I know Mr. Menicoche talks about Highway No. 7, but Highway No. 8 is also up near the top that needs work, highway infrastructure. So we're looking for an opportunity here and some resources to follow through on that.

I appreciate the Member's comments about his general sense of the bill. We are going to work hard to implement all the initiatives in there. We're going to continue to work with regions and communities

on services, especially to seniors. Of course, comments I made about small community concerns apply equally to the Member's constituency. The challenge we have on a go-forward basis is trying to address the long-outstanding issues. As the Member and I have discussed over supper a number of times the nurse at Tsiigehtchic, for example, is an issue. We are very cognizant of that concern and I appreciate the Member's comments. Thank you.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, hope one day we will have some discussions on Highway No. 9.

---Laughter

Hearing the Minister and just listening to my two colleagues, up in the region where the Mackenzie Valley winter road is still active and we still have our ice winter paving program there, we'd like to look at the infrastructure, but also to do with the O and M on the Mackenzie Valley winter road is the bridging. One of the major bottlenecks to continue our work is the Bear River Bridge. Just hearing some of the good news, I'm hopefully crossing my fingers on the federal infrastructure budget. Hopefully we can look to the government to see if they can look at Corridors III work and upgrade and move the project of the Bear River Bridge up so it can be an enhancement to the economic potential in the Sahtu region. I would greatly appreciate that.

On the other hand, I was hoping that through this O and M budget we would start seeing some indication from the government that the Sahtu would start moving into a stand-alone region on its own. There is some indication that we are moving in that direction with the decentralization. For example, the Department of Transportation started making a discussion paper on moving some of the responsibilities into the Sahtu, especially during our winter road seasonal operation. Even the airports are operated from outside the Sahtu. The government needs to start looking at the Sahtu becoming its own stand-alone region with the region making decisions on the work that needs to happen.

Mr. Chair, the budget does speak to the junior kindergarten initiatives that are going to come into our communities. As I stated earlier, the reports on how well we are doing in our small communities doesn't look very good. Any type of help we can give would be greatly appreciated. We would certainly welcome that. For some time now, the education standards and qualities have somehow been in a position of always catching up to the other schools, especially the smaller communities. We don't quite have all the resources that we would like to see. We always compare ourselves to the larger centres and it's disheartening to see that

some of the other schools have some pretty good facilities and programs and services while some of the smaller communities, the teachers, the parents have to do some fundraising to get additional resources in their communities.

More importantly, now we're starting to see that the government is focusing on the junior kindergarten for the younger kids so we can bring up the standards and the quality of education in giving our students a good foundation to kick-start their educational career.

I want to say to this government that it looks like some of these initiatives that we talked about as small communities are going to happen within this budget. I also wanted to say that the initiative to put into the small communities housing programs, and I know that we desperately need them, not only for the people that we want to attract to our region but even for our own people in our communities who are looking for homes to build their life in that community and have an opportunity to get a good job. As I've stated many times, there are only so many jobs that a small community can handle and there's a cap on those jobs and a lot of people are looking for employment either with industry, government or the private sector. To attract our people back to our communities, we need to have some good support mechanisms in our communities.

More importantly, once our students leave our high schools and our communities, we've got to have some sort of tracking system to see how they're doing. I hope the government is going to be doing that. Now education is so critical for an individual to have success in the bush or have success in the working economy, we need to have programs that are flexible in our community that can meet their needs.

So, these are my comments for the Minister for the budget.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We, as well, have hopes for Highway No. 9. As I pointed out to the Member, not over supper but we did have a chat, I don't think there's been a budget that I can recollect where the Norman Wells to Wrigley portion of the Mackenzie Highway has received as much attention, because it is a critical chunk, or the next segment of the Mackenzie Highway. So we are, once again, looking at that.

The Bear River Bridge, as well, is on our shortlist of bridges. As I indicated, there are calls in the next few days with Ministers and deputies to look at what the federal government has put on the table and what it means and how it's going to flow.

The issue of a stand-alone region has been a journey for the Sahtu. I recollect when I was Health Minister where we moved health responsibility into the Sahtu. So it's coming incrementally, and as the activity in the Sahtu picks up, the areas that the Member has talked about with transportation and such are going to follow as a natural evolution of authorities and responsibilities as we pick them up at the territorial level. Regions that are struggling on that same path of development will pick those up in a timely, measured way. So that is going to come.

I appreciate the comments about junior kindergarten and the Housing Program. We agree that when it comes to our own students, we have to do a much better job of tracking them as they graduate from high school, as they go off to school. We can't wait until the fourth year to talk to them again.

We know clearly that other jurisdictions go into universities and recruit students in engineering, teaching classes, wherever there is a need. They are much more aggressive than we are. By the time we get around to it, decisions have been made, minds have been made up or, worse yet, we don't contact them at all. Then they come back and we face some of the challenges that the Members have raised here where they get caught in that catch-22 situation where they have education but no experience so they can't get a job, and because they can't get a job, they can't get experience. So there's a whole number of things we have to look at in a more critical way and we definitely have to step up our game in that area. That's part of our broader strategy as we look at raising our population from 2,000 in five years. So, I thank the Member for his comments.

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

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

---Carried

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard):** 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. Bouchard.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act; and Tabled Document 22-17(5), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2014-2015, and would like to report progress and that Bill 6 is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Do I have a seconder? Mr. Beaulieu.

---Carried

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

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois):** Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Wednesday, February 12, 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
    - Motion 8-17(5), Allocation of Resource Revenues to NWT Heritage Fund
  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
  22. Report of Committee of the Whole
  23. Third Reading of Bills
    - Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act
  24. Orders of the Day
- MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:46 p.m.