



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 15, 2018****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuynne

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

---Singing of O Canada

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Masi, Olivia Rockwell. That was an ever beautiful voice. Olivia is serving as a Page in the Assembly, and we thank her and all of the other Pages for their hard work.

Colleagues, today marks the 53rd anniversary of the national flag of Canada. It was on February 15, 1965, that our Canadian flag first flew above our nation's capital. Our national flag has been flown with pride since that day. In 1996, February 15th was declared National Flag of Canada Day, to commemorate and celebrate what has become one of the most iconic and recognizable flags across the world. Not only is our flag recognized the world over as a symbol of this great country, but it is associated with the rights, freedoms, and ideals that we embrace as Canadians.

In 2018, the national flag of Canada is celebrating its 53rd anniversary during the 2018 Winter Olympics. This important symbol of our identity will be flown, cheering on our Canadian Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Members, please join me in celebration of national flag of Canada day. Thank you, colleagues.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 28-18(3):
POST-SECONDARY MANDATE PROGRESS**

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Mr. Speaker, it is critical to ensure that the northern post-secondary education system meets the changing needs of our students and the demands of the Northwest Territories labour market.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment's long-term labour market assessment tells us that 78 per cent of Northwest Territories jobs in the next 15 years will require a post-

secondary education. This government has an ambitious agenda that will help us establish a modern post-secondary education system to support our residents' academic and employment success.

Mr. Speaker, the department is examining all aspects of post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories. We need to make strategic decisions that will result in more graduates working and leading productive lives in the Northwest Territories.

Our first step was to conduct a labour market review through the Skills 4 Success Initiative, completed in April 2016. This information is the grounds for our next steps in making sure post-secondary education and training programs support Northwest Territories labour market demand, and that they help to close the gap between residents' education levels and labour market needs.

The next step in meeting our commitments is the completion of the Aurora College Foundational Review. I updated Members on the progress of the review earlier in this sitting. The review will be a tool to help establish a renewed foundation for the college and will help and inform its long-term strategic plan. Finally, Mr. Speaker, we committed in the mandate to develop new legislation that will outline a quality assurance system, on the basis of which post-secondary institutions will be recognized or authorized in the Northwest Territories.

We envision a new legislative framework that will govern all post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories. The primary objective of this framework is to create a process of recognition for post-secondary institutions that ensures they are effectively governed, that they have appropriate quality assurance measures in place, and that their programs are in alignment with national and international standards and best practices. This legislation will give students the confidence that the post-secondary institution they attend is recognized or registered by the Government of the Northwest Territories, and that it has met the standards for its designation.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed new legislation will create transparency and clarity for new post-secondary institutions in the Northwest Territories. It will also create opportunities for existing qualified

institutions to obtain degree-granting status. However, it will not replace the Aurora College Act. The legislative process will include engagement with all key stakeholders. The framework will be a collaborative effort, reflecting the unique cultural, social, economic, and geographic contexts in the Northwest Territories today.

Mr. Speaker, the development of a skilled workforce is a pillar of the Government of the Northwest Territories' vision for a strong territorial economy. By making system-wide, foundational improvements to the adult and post-secondary education and skills training system, these initiatives will foster sound, modern, and sustainable post-secondary institutions and programs for the Northwest Territories and a thriving Northwest Territories workforce.

Our proposed post-secondary legislation, the Aurora College Foundational Review, and the new Aurora College strategic plan are all significant pieces of work, but they do not stand alone. They are aligned with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's comprehensive frameworks, including Education Renewal and Skills 4 Success, and with strategies like Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification, Immigration, and, soon, Small Communities Employment.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been working hard to carry out our agenda for post-secondary education and make a better future for our residents. These three major pieces of work, along with the work of other departments, governments, stakeholders, and this House, are coming together to create a stronger social, economic, and educational foundation for the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 29-18(3):
UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MARINE
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie River is our marine highway to the Arctic Ocean. A reliable shipping route for generations, the Mackenzie River is the northernmost link of an intermodal supply chain that stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to the Beaufort Sea and beyond.

2017 marked the year that the Government of the Northwest Territories assumed responsibility for scheduled tug and barge services to our communities on Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River, and the Arctic coast. In 2017, the Government of the Northwest Territories Marine

Transportation Services Division registered and reactivated six tugboats, transported more than 37 million litres of fuel, and carried more than 10,000 tonnes of deck cargo to communities and commercial clients.

Other key accomplishments included maintenance work on Canadian Coast Guard vessels and substantial charter work for large industrial clients. The cost-effective and effective delivery of such services to NWT businesses is one example of how the Government of the Northwest Territories is fulfilling its mandate to strengthen connections with private sector partners in transportation infrastructure.

At the peak of last season, Marine Transportation Services employed over 140 people. Sixty of those were from the Northwest Territories. Last season, Marine Transportation Services issued almost \$3 million in contracts to Northwest Territories businesses and created many indirect spinoffs for local businesses.

Continued investment in our supporting marine infrastructure, including Canada's northernmost inland shipyard, will allow us to take advantage of such opportunities. The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to pursue opportunities for funding that may be available through initiatives such as the federal Oceans Protection Plan. As we prepare for the 2018 sailing season, we begin from a much better operational situation than we did from our first season. Experience from the 2017 sailing season is informing service improvement strategies, and work to determine an appropriate business model for the longer term continues. Commercial, industrial, and tourism activity in the Arctic is increasing, along with the economic and development opportunities that go with it.

To support this anticipated growth, we are pleased with the recent announcement by Transport Canada that they will provide funding to the Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium to establish a Marine Training Centre in the Northwest Territories. The establishment of a centre for marine-related training is a strategic investment that supports the government's priority to develop a skilled Northern workforce.

Mr. Speaker, our priority remains that essential goods will be delivered without fail and at a reasonable cost to residents who rely on Marine Transportation Services. We are committed to building new business relationships, training our people, creating jobs, and stimulating the economy of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROCUREMENT POLICIES

MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, our Premier has stated that the dreams of Northerners are dying. If that's the case, then to many residents, the answers this House received yesterday on questions of government procurement must have sounded like hammer strikes, each one driving yet another nail deeper into the coffin of those dreams.

Despite the fact that four Members of this House, all Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, raised concerns about government procurement, the Minister of Infrastructure denied the existence of any problems. This stance is based in part on his claim that only two or three people have contacted him personally about this issue. Mr. Speaker, as MLAs, we are the people's conduits to the government. To me, if an MLA brings an issue to a Minister, that's the same as a constituent speaking directly to the Minister. That's Democracy 101.

The Minister also cited the numbers of complaints received through the department's vendor complaint process as proof that there are no issues, 22 complaints since 2010 and only two deemed valid. Mr. Speaker, that process is designed to ensure that the very practices that we are criticizing are followed. It's not designed to address the systemic issues we're concerned with. A complaint can only be made about a specific RFP by someone who bid on that RFP. The department can dismiss the claim without consideration.

However, there was a glimmer of hope during question period. Over the pounding of the nails, the Premier heard the dreams of Northerners clawing at the lid of the coffin. He was open to listening to the concerns of MLAs and admitted that it is in the realm of possibility that procurement practices may not be perfect. This harkened back to 2015, when then MLA McLeod, in his bid for the office of Premier, stated that "The Government of the Northwest Territories needs to look at its own procurement and contracting practices." There is hope after all, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to hear that the Premier is open to change because Infrastructure isn't the only government entity involved in procurement. The Housing Corporation does its own procurement, and it has actually made some of the changes that we are asking for to the benefit of Northerners.

Finance is also involved in procurement by housing the GNWT's Procurement Policy, negotiating P3s, and setting sole-source procurement thresholds.

Today, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance about those thresholds and how it is ensuring they are not doing a disservice to Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES IMMIGRATION POLICIES

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last government made a commitment to increase territorial population by 2,000 new residents by 2020. While we are still far from this target in our mandate, this government restated the commitment to increase the number of immigrants settling here.

Immigration is good. It brings diversity, innovation, optimism, and fresh perspectives to our territory, while increasing our tax base, investments, and territorial financing formula. It makes sense that we split the nominee program into two streams; one administered by Education, Culture and Employment, and the other by Industry, Tourism and Investment.

The ECE stream is connected to employers seeking skilled workers, while ITI's stream focuses on new investment in the form of business development. ECE's employers' stream is seeing some success. In 2015, we welcomed about 103 new residents, and 125 in 2016. That meets the department's goal of increasing immigration by 25 per cent. At this pace, we will bring in 823 new residents by 2019.

ITI's business stream has been much less successful. Between 2015 and 2017, we had only three applications, totalling 10 new immigrants. I would like to know if ITI has identified the reasons for the lack of success of the business stream, and what it plans to do to address it. Mr. Speaker, it is important to know how other jurisdictions attract foreign nationals. After all, they are our competition. As an example, British Columbia requires potential new residents to invest \$200,000 in a new or purchased business. The NWT requires \$300,000, if located in Yellowknife. One can imagine that new Canadians might rather invest less and enjoy a milder climate and more amenities and opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we Northerners know we live in the best place in the world, but it is not always easy to attract southern Canadians to the NWT, let alone

people from the rest of the world. I commend the government on its success inviting immigration, but the NWT needs skills, dedication, new ideas, and energy. Not to mention, we need the investment new residents will bring. We need to improve our immigration process to attract bright, creative, energetic new residents to contribute to our growing community of Northerners. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister of ITI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELDERS' SUBSIDY PROGRAMS

MR. MCNEELY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Our NWT elders deserve the utmost respect and expect their government's support on elders' subsidy programs; their well-earned financial securities are designed to support their retirement. The Government of the Northwest Territories offers a variety of security benefits to the elders' community. It is comforting to know that both federal and territorial levels of government are there to assist.

Mr. Speaker, offering eligibility and screening the applications is and can be questionable. Like many other policies offered by the government, reviews on efficiencies can be entertained. Elders' retirement security as a personal choice and achievement. Disclosure of financial information is a possession that only the elder can decide on releasing. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment fuel subsidy program is complementary; however, disclosure of financial security and information in fulfilling the policy is, as I mentioned earlier, questionable.

Mr. Speaker, later I will have questions for the Minister of ECE. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FEDERAL INDIGENOUS RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past week Indigenous activists across Canada have raised their voices in frustration and anger over the ongoing effects of colonization in our country, and they have reinforced the clear message that there can be no peace or harmony unless there is justice.

We must all admit as a society that successive governments have tried, sometimes intentionally, sometimes in ignorance, to absorb Indigenous peoples into Canadian society, thus eliminating them as distinct peoples. Policies pursued over the

decades have undermined and almost erased Indigenous cultures, identities, and languages. This was profoundly wrong, and it must be addressed by every government in Canada. To bring about this fundamental change, Canadians need to understand that Indigenous people are nations, and we must have a nation-to-nation relationship. That is why today I acknowledge the efforts of the Prime Minister of Canada and his intention to give new life to Section 35 of the Constitution Act, which recognizes and affirms Indigenous peoples' rights and treaty rights.

Instead of outright recognizing and affirming Indigenous rights, as we promised we would, Indigenous peoples were forced to prove time and time again through costly and drawn-out court challenges that their rights existed and must be recognized and implemented. A rethink of Indigenous rights will allow Indigenous peoples to pursue greater self-determination, with the ultimate goal of addressing entrenched economic and social problems in Indigenous communities. To that end, the federal government has said it will develop a new recognition and implementation of Indigenous rights framework through consultation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

This will result in legislation that will be introduced later this year, with full implementation ahead of the next election, October 2019. I am pleased again to see the federal government supporting this important initiative and bringing us closer to reconciliation. Events like the tragic circumstances surrounding Colten Boushie remind us that there is still so much work to be done in our society, and to always listen to Indigenous people when they raise their voices around perceived injustice and real injustice that we see throughout our society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MACKENZIE GAS PROJECT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On December 22nd of last year the Mackenzie Gas Project partners announced their decision not to proceed with the development. Not only is there no interest in offshore hydrocarbon, onshore interest has evaporated. As the Premier predicted, there is no interest in NWT oil and gas, and it will not come back for a long time, if ever.

Some government leaders are blaming the review processes for the demise of the project. Nothing could be further from the truth. Had the project gone ahead, it would now be a multi-billion-dollar white elephant.

This project never had any confirmed shippers beyond the anchor fields, but applied for a pipeline to handle much more. The Environmental Impact Statement was submitted by the developers less than two months after the right was requested. Six rounds of information requests took up precious time and resources. This points to a poor job by the developers. In total, the developers requested delays or extensions 30 times during the joint review process. These delays and extensions totalled 500 days, although some of these happened concurrently.

The job of the Review Board and the National Energy Board was made much more difficult because the federal and territorial governments limited the participation of employees to provide their expertise and knowledge, a process now formalized in this Cabinet's project assessment policy. Non-governmental organizations were often put in the position of providing expert evidence and doing the job of governments, despite not being resourced at all, in some cases.

What lessons can we learn from the Mackenzie Gas Project? Here are a few, Mr. Speaker:

- Pinning all your hopes on one or a few large projects is not sound economic development planning;
- You can try to rush projects through, but this will come back to bite you in the end; and
- While using hydrocarbon resources locally may make some sense, investing more time and effort into oil and gas development in the Northwest Territories is not a wise use of our efforts.

It is not clear whether our Cabinet has learned much from the Mackenzie Gas Project. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FORT LIARD MEDICAL TRAVEL ISSUES

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have been asked for the past two years about connecting the residents of Fort Liard with Fort Nelson Hospital. The last Minister's tour, as I was told by a number of the residents, this has been an issue for the past 25 years. You heard me correctly, Mr. Speaker, 25 years. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am going to share with you words from some elders who would like to see this issue resolved once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, most of the people of Fort Liard prefer to go to Fort Nelson for medical appointments and access to hospital services. It is a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Fort Nelson, compared to a three-and-a-half-hour drive to Fort Simpson, then a two-hour plane ride to Yellowknife, then a short drive to the hospital for an appointment, then a long wait for the return flight, and then another long ride home.

Some of the issues they have experienced: no interpreters available; drivers dropping them off without support or direction for their appointments; some of their plane rides were very scary, and they felt very stressed; there have been numerous flight delays in which appointments are cancelled or need to be rearranged. They and I feel it would be more cost-efficient and less stressful for the people to go to Fort Nelson. Some patients with little English or no English are sent home without an idea of what is wrong with them, what the aftercare plan is about, or what to do next.

Mr. Speaker, I have stated before: the elders prefer to travel to Fort Nelson. They like the fact that they have friends and families close by. There are places to rent and stay that are less costly for family members. Mr. Speaker, as elders stated, "Our lives and health are important." Unfortunately, we have lost too many of our loved ones to health issues, and it seems that the GNWT does not seem to care. They tell me, "We do live in Canada. BC and NWT are in Canada. We are status, and we should be treated as such and be covered in Canada." They want our help to have the proper medical care in place, which means using the closest hospital, too. As well, they would like to have access to more Dene treatments. Presently, medical travel only seems to cover travel in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ST. PATRICK SERVES

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure today to go to a unique event hosted by Ecole St. Patrick, called "St. Pat's Serves." The intent of the day was to engage students in a variety of work done by organizations that fight for social justice and provide various volunteer services and opportunities, here in Yellowknife.

A total of 24 organizations participated, including non-profits like Food Rescue and the Tree of Peace, volunteer organizations like the Rotary Club

and Alternatives North, as well as faith-based organizations. It was a very impressive list.

Each group had up to half an hour to talk about their work and to answer questions. Students chose which sessions to attend and had the opportunity to ask questions. Throughout the lunch hour, the organizations participated in a fair set up in the gym, where students could chat with groups whose presentations they did not get to.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon students will hear from Alvin Law, a highly motivating speaker. He was born without arms because his mother used the drug thalidomide while she was pregnant. Mr. Law learned to use his feet to accomplish daily tasks, including driving. He is also a great musical talent who plays the drums with his feet. His story is truly inspiring.

I was impressed with how many students at St. Patrick's School already volunteer as coaches and mentors in schools and in non-profits. I was also impressed with the number who want to do more. Hats off to the organizers of this uplifting day.

Mr. Speaker, I was there to talk about a day of services I organize for people with low or no income. Yes We Care Day is held twice a year. The main draw is the opportunity to have a professional haircut free of charge from Yellowknife hairdressers and a barber who volunteer their time. The greatest reward is seeing people downtown the next day, looking good and walking tall. Students from St. Pat's have always volunteered at this event to serve food, wash dishes, and sweep up hair.

Mr. Speaker, these students are our future. I am confident they will continue the tradition of caring and sharing in Yellowknife. We are in good hands. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time and opportunity to recognize my wife of 38 years, Judy, who is up in the gallery, also a constituent of Inuvik Boot Lake. I would also like to use this opportunity to recognize two of the Pages we have in here from Inuvik. We have Keely Voudrach, and we have Breeanna Lennie. I would like to thank them and all the other Pages for the work they do on our behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Olivia Rockwell, who did an amazing job on the rendition of O Canada later today. She is a resident of Yellowknife North. I also want to thank the Pages for all the work that they do for us here in the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to recognize two Pages today from my constituency in Kam Lake, Noah Zoe and Stella Smyslo. It is great to have you in the House helping us out this week, and I really appreciate it, and I appreciate all the work of the Pages, as well. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 113-18(3): PROCUREMENT POLICIES

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Early in the life of this Assembly, the Department of Finance raised the sole-source procurement threshold for goods and services to \$10,000 and \$25,000 respectively. This means that those GNWT employees with the appropriate purchasing authority can purchase an item worth less than \$10,000 without going to RFP and have no reporting on that spending. I have had some constituents who support this increase, but I have also had some who are very concerned with it. This has been raised in the House numerous times by multiple MLAs. My first question is: it was my understanding that the increased thresholds were going to be reviewed by the end of this fiscal year. If that review has been completed, I would like the Minister to share those findings with the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Finance.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct. We did raise the limits. It has been well received by a lot of businesses across the NWT. Of course, there are always concerns with a lot of the initiatives that we take on. I have committed the Department of Finance to review the impact of the increase. The procurement committee is just developing the terms of reference and are looking at getting an independent contractor to review the policy.

MR. SIMPSON: I have a feeling that the procurement committee might hate me by the end

of this Assembly. I am going to switch around my questions here. I am going to jump to the third one that I provided to the Minister. So, the increase has resulted in many government purchases not going to RFP, which means that, small businesses, not only do they not have a chance to bid on these, they do not even know these are going out. Purchases might be being made based on friendships, you know: the person in the government, his buddy might own a store, and that is where they get these purchases from. When you are looking at \$10,000 per item, that can add up. Will the Minister commit to looking at what impact these increased thresholds have had on small businesses?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: First of all, we would like to think that the folks who are working for the GNWT first of all will look at getting value for money in the products. If there are situations such as the Member described, then I would not approve of that and I would have to get to the bottom of it and do an investigation into using friends and such. Going back to the Member's question, that could be one of the parts of the review, is to have a look at how it has impacted smaller businesses.

MR. SIMPSON: He mentioned value for money. That is the other thing I am concerned about. The public is not aware of these purchases. We do not know what is going on, and the public often is the one pointing out if we are not getting good value for money. You know, there are a lot of people out there who pay attention to what we do. I suppose, since they are still determining the terms of reference, how is this committee going to ensure that we are getting value for money? What is the plan going forward?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As part of the review and in my conversation that I will have with the department, I want to ensure that the government gets value for money. If it means a different type of reporting, then that is something that I would commit to having a discussion with my officials about because, at the end of the day, I want to ensure that the government gets value money and there are also opportunities for a lot of smaller businesses to take advantage of some of the sole-source contracts that we have.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned yesterday that I had over half a dozen business owners and representatives in my office discussing procurement. This was one of the major themes that we discussed, so I'm going to sit down with the Minister and bring up some of those specific examples so I can show him what I mean about value for money. I guess I would like to know:

when can we expect this review to be completed and presented to the House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I look forward to having the conversation with the Member because we're always interested in some of the concerns that are raised across the Northwest Territories. Not only on this particular issue, but other issues. I look forward to having that conversation. I will commit that I will follow up on any discussions that we may have as far as the timeline. As I said before, we're developing the terms of references and, as I become aware of the timeline when we actually get this out, I will keep the Member and this House informed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 114-18(3):
FORT LIARD MEDICAL TRAVEL

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my Member's statement today to the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I stated previously, the issue of trying to get patients referred from Fort Liard to Fort Nelson to deal with their medical conditions has been a concern that has been going on for 25 years. I was really shocked when I heard that, and I've talked to the Minister about it. I realize he's only been in this portfolio for four years, I believe it is, so I feel sorry for him, but: can the Minister of Health and Social Services please provide the status of the agreement with the BC government to allow residents from Fort Liard and Nahanni Butte to be deferred to the Fort Nelson Hospital? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue first came to my attention about three and a half years ago, when I travelled to the communities of Fort Liard and Nahanni Butte with the former MLA for the Nahendeh riding. At that time, I indicated that we would certainly be willing to have a discussion with Fort Nelson and the Government of British Columbia to put in place any protocols that would allow us to refer our residents from Fort Liard to Fort Nelson. At that time, I did say we would wait until we finished our negotiations with the Alberta government that we're currently updating our protocols on. Unfortunately, that has taken far longer than I had hoped. Last fall, I had a discussion with the department and got an update on both files. At that time, I did direct the Department of Health and Social Services to work with the Government of British Columbia and to speak to Fort Nelson to establish some protocols

that would allow us to refer residents of both Fort Liard and Nahanni Butte to Fort Norman in British Columbia, which, as the Member said, is a two-hour drive away instead of a three-hour drive away and a two-hour flight away and then an overnight stay and then a return. We're interested in providing best health and best care to our residents, and I think this is an important protocol that we have to put in place.

The department has done some initial research and an analysis, and they will be travelling to Fort Nelson later in March. Hopefully at that time they will also be meeting with leadership in the community to try to determine the best ways to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for giving us that update. I appreciate the hard work he and his department are doing. Again, you can understand the confusion and the willingness or unwillingness. The community is saying it's been 25 years, and I appreciate the work he's doing right now, and the department is doing. Can the Minister please tell us what challenges are stopping this agreement from being completed?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a couple of things. First off, I want to say, as Canadian citizens, all residents of the Northwest Territories can go anywhere they want to receive acute care and primary care services. Residents of Fort Liard can go to Fort Nelson now, and those services will be covered. It's the referrals that I think are the problem. Right now if we make a referral, they're referring to our system, which means often they'll end up in Yellowknife or Edmonton, which is I think the main issue that's being raised.

One of the challenges we have is in gauging the level of interest in Fort Nelson and British Columbia to actually open up more their services than they currently do. Right now, a large number of our residents from Fort Liard do go to Nelson, but there are no formal protocols. We need to determine what level of support or what level of services they want to make available. We need to understand the costs of providing medical travel there as opposed to other things. There might be an opportunity for controlling some spending, which is good. We also need to make sure what types of services are available in Liard so that people are receiving services in Liard when they're there and are being referred accordingly. So there are some challenges and some details we have to work up, but we are committed to getting that work done.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for the answer. In my conversations with some of the residents, they were concerned about exchanging of medical information between British Columbia and the hospital there in Fort Liard. I guess my

question to the Minister in regards to that is: has this been one of the challenges that we see, and how are you able to resolve this issue?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Privacy rights of our patients is certainly an issue. A number of years ago, we come up with a new health privacy legislation here in the Northwest Territories. Having that legislation actually, I think, will help us in this particular situation because we know what the expectations are, as opposed to when all privacy was under the Access to Information and Privacy. I think we're actually in a better place to have a more informed discussion on this, but it is absolutely a factor. I mean, the rights of all patients to have privacy and their information not ending up where it shouldn't be is paramount, and we need to make sure that is addressed and taken care of in all of our discussions. If we're going to open up to having referrals to a jurisdiction that we don't currently have a relationship with, we need to make sure that that relationship is solid and that there are protocols in place to make sure that our residents' privacy is protected, while at the same time providing high-quality health services to all residents.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer. It did help clarify a number of issues from what I've heard, and I think the Minister has heard those same concerns previously. When will the residents of Fort Liard and Nahendeh finally see an agreement in place so that they can be sent to Fort Nelson for their medical treatment in the future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I have indicated, I have already provided direction to the department to move forward on this initiative and to engage British Columbia, but this is a negotiation between the Northwest Territories and the Government of British Columbia. I'm cautious about sending out or setting a finite date, because there is a third party here. There's the Government of British Columbia that will have certain expectations and criteria they want. This may not be as big of a priority for them as it is for us, but we'll have a better sense, I think, towards the end of March on what kind of timelines and what kind of workload this is going to take. When I know, I'll certainly let the Member know and he'll be able to share that information with his community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 115-18(3):
FEDERAL INDIGENOUS RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I talked about the federal government's new plan, and that's for the Prime Minister to implement a new Indigenous Rights Framework. Some of this stems from the Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples, which dates back to the 1990s. In particular, it's a call for the federal government to help foster autonomy by moving communities away from restrictions of the colonial-era Indian Act, which has impacts on Canada, but it also has impacts on self-government. I'd like to ask the Premier if this government has a position on the newly announced Legislative Framework for Indigenous Rights in Canada? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government supports any initiatives that will enhance the situation of Aboriginal Peoples and also reinforce their Aboriginal rights and treaties. Certainly, I will be consulting with the Aboriginal governments to see if they are in full support of the announcement by the Prime Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Obviously undoing 150 years of colonization will not be easy. It will be a complicated process. So is the Premier prepared to support these efforts at the territorial level and give our Indigenous nations the opportunity to participate in any process as it relates to consultation with the federal government on this framework?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I think we have had this discussion before. We will certainly work with our Aboriginal government partners. If they are in support, we will fully support the initiative, as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 116-18(3):
SUBSIDY PROGRAMS FOR ELDERS

MR. MCNEELY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I was making reference to questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. My first question is: can the Minister explain what subsidy programs are available to the NWT elders' community? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can only really speak to my department, where we do have the Senior Home Heating Subsidy, as well as in September of last year we did do an increase to the Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit. I know Housing has some programs. Health and Social

Services has some programs. I mean, all departments can work together to get that information. We also do work very closely with the NWT Seniors' Society. The Yellowknife Seniors' Society, they have a really great handbook in terms of the programs and services that are provided to seniors. I would encourage the Member to also contact them to get that information for his constituents, and any Member to get that information to share with their seniors in their respective hometowns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MCNEELY: I am glad to hear there is a wide variety of programs available to our elders. Can the Minister explain the elders' fuel subsidy program in general detail? For example, does the rate of subsidy differ from smaller communities to regional communities?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: The Member is correct. Depending on the household income and the community in which you live in is the amount of subsidy in terms of home heating that you will get. This is for all Members and all residents of the NWT: seniors are eligible to receive a set amount of wood, oil, propane, gas, and/or electricity. As I mentioned, it is dependent on the household income and the community in which they live in. Our client service officers do a good job of informing our seniors and residents of what they are capable of accessing and encourage any seniors who have any questions on this to go and see one of our employees.

MR. MCNEELY: Will the Minister work with me to draft some information for a couple of clients who have brought to my attention the disclosure of their personal information? They have found it difficult as to why the department is asking for their personal retirement savings that they have earned prior to retirement. Will the Minister work with me to get the information to the appropriate clients?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, I will work with the Member if he can provide us with the names and information of any constituents who are having any concerns with accessing the Senior Home Heating Subsidy. As I mentioned, there are different indicators of being eligible to receive the Senior Home Heating Subsidy. I will work with the Member and ask him to provide us with the names of his constituents.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question prior to the long weekend is: will the Minister, along with the Minister responsible for Seniors and the Minister responsible for HSS, taking Minister Moses' lead on our request, coordinate a seniors' gathering in preparation for

the opening of the Sahtu Regional Health Centre later this spring? Mahsi.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I will work with the Minister responsible for Seniors, who is also the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, to look at options for such an event and get back to the Member and also work with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 117-18(3):
IMMIGRATION RECRUITMENT

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you noted, it is National Flag Day. It is only befitting that I talk about immigration. Our country is obviously a great one. Arguably, our territory is one of the greatest things about it. I appreciate the effort the government is making as it relates to attracting immigrants here to the North. My questions are for the Minister of ITI. I would like to start to ask the Minister: as mentioned in my Member's statement, ITI's business stream for attracting immigration doesn't appear to have been that successful over the past few years. Can the Minister advise us if the department's latest numbers indicate any improvement in recruiting immigration to the business stream? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest numbers that I have in front of me here, I will read them out so everyone can hear them:

- Arrived in NWT for operating businesses, we had four applicants, for a total investment of \$1.2 million;
- Signed a BPA and awaiting arrival in NWT is 10 applicants, for \$3.9 million;
- Submitted application for the Northwest Territories Nominee Program's staffing analysis is one, for \$300,000; and
- Received an invitation to apply and staff awaiting applicants is seven, for \$2.3 million.

A total of 22, with a total investment of almost \$8 million. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Those are, I suppose, maybe good statistics to hear. Can the Minister indicate to us if the department feels that they are meeting their intentions with regard to attracting immigrants into the business stream? I appreciate getting the

statistics. Are those numbers what we are trying to achieve? Are we behind or are we ahead of our goals?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: If we go based on the number that is always thrown around, attracting 2,000 immigrants to the Northwest Territories, if you put ECE's file and mine together, we are nowhere near the 2,000 number. We are working diligently to try to improve that. Myself and the department have had conversations about how we can approach the business stream of things and how we can maybe change things up to attract more people into the Northwest Territories. The department is working very hard on this initiative by launching a new website, working to streamline the process and make it simpler, and these sorts of things.

I think one of the conversations that has taken place that I can update Members on is with myself and the department. We are looking at the challenges. The federal government takes so long to approve some of these applicants. That is a hindrance to the whole process. Maybe we start looking at attracting immigrants from inside the country, newly arrived immigrants who have moved to Canada and maybe want to relocate and look at moving somewhere else, or business opportunities and that sort of matter. That is one of the things the department and I have talked about.

One of the other things we are talking about and we want to sit down with is the three diamond mines, and see if there is an opportunity there with the people who are flying in and outside of our territory. We would prefer them to be living here. Is there a group of immigrants who we can attract from outside the country who could potentially relocate and move to the Northwest Territories and work in these mines? These are the kinds of conversations that are taking place. We want to try to increase the numbers.

MR. VANTHUYNE: I appreciate the Minister providing that fulsome answer. It seems as though he is having some genuine conversations and putting considerable effort into this important area, which is applauded by me, quite frankly. We have seen success in the past as it relates to attracting the immigrants here. The Minister will recall that the secondary diamond industry brought a number of folks here, Armenians in particular. It is those kinds of efforts I would like to see us undertake in the future.

Specifically to the business stream, you heard me speak earlier today about other jurisdictions making some changes to attract people. In British Columbia, the initial investment has to be \$200,000 to have an immigrant come in and invest in small business. Ours is \$300,000 for the City of Yellowknife. Is there any kind of consideration

being given to that investment that can help attract immigrants more to the North?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a conversation that I have not had with the department. If the fee is a hindrance to the people moving here, I will take that up with the department and get back to the Member if that's a possibility of having a look at that.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. That is a critical factor. I mean, obviously, how much somebody has to take out of their savings to invest in a new country where they are not familiar with the rules and the policies, it's a big risk. Recognizing that we are also competing with other jurisdictions, I think if we can give that some serious consideration, then it will be to our benefit.

I am wondering if the Minister has taken the opportunity to reach out to others in terms of industry and small business. You mentioned the diamond mines, but are there others that the Minister and the department are reaching out to, to learn from where it is that we need additional capacity? Where we need new skills sets? Where we need new investment? I gave the example of the secondary diamond industry. Are there other opportunities we could exploit?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Yes, those are two exactly that I have raised. It's funny that he's mentioned the secondary diamond industry. As we all know, Almod Diamonds have purchased the one site out on Airport Road, and the issue they are having right now around getting that up and running is through Immigration Canada and how long it takes, and I'm referring back to that. As far as other industries, I have not talked to anyone else about "Is there an opportunity to do this?" The business side of it is for new investment dollars for businesses in the Northwest Territories. I get the Member's point around if we're not being cost competitive with a sister territory, like a province like BC, if they're \$200,000 and we're \$350,000, that takes us out of the market. This is a high cost of a country to doing business, and we will have to have a serious look at that. I'm open to any kind of input from all Members or residents of the Northwest Territories on how we can increase the numbers in the business stream. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, who also has responsibility for oil and gas. We spoke of the developer's decision to not proceed with the Mackenzie Gas Project in December 2017. GNWT ended its financial contributions to the Aboriginal Pipeline Group in 2017-2018. I would like to know from the Minister: what, if any, support does our government continue to provide for the Aboriginal Pipeline Group now, and are new contributions or support being planned? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is right. Last year was the last time we supported them, but moving through this business cycle, we have no plans on providing funding to APG.

MR. O'REILLY: I'd like to thank the Minister for his response on the last question. One of the mandate commitments that Cabinet pushed was to develop a long-term strategy to attract investment in oil and gas. The mandate tracking webpage shows that this item was completed in late 2016, but it still hasn't seen the light of day. Companies are voting with their feet and wallets and leaving. Where is the long-term strategy, and why would we continue to try to attract investment when industry has no interest?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Our territory has considerable petroleum potential, and we have committed in our mandate to deliver a long-term strategy and capitalize on these reserves. With that said, though, this isn't an isolated initiative. It directly links to the important work we are doing as a government in the Northwest Territories. We have the energy strategy, the climate change strategic framework, and we are moving all three initiatives together. This is a shared vision that we have to work towards the new energy climate change strategic framework going forward, and the initiatives that we've signed on to. We are looking at publicizing these three documents, hopefully in April.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you to the Minister for letting us know that this oil and gas strategy is supposed to be made available in April. Clearly, there's no interest in exploration in the offshore. Now, onshore oil and gas. As shown by the demise of the Mackenzie Gas Project and the decision by Husky to not frack any further in the Sahtu, the Premier predicted the end of oil and gas, and even Matthews Energy Consulting says we need to shift our oil and gas focus from exploration to remediation. Will the Minister start to refocus our efforts on oil and gas to remediation and small-

scale development that could provide local energy rather than the mega-project approach?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: When we bring our strategy forward and table it in the House here shortly, it recognizes that we have to address the needs of climate change. That is the first priority of this government. Also, we've got to take in the current political environment around what we consider moving this forward with the knowledge economy as such, and what advantages does it ensure residents of the NWT. I can reassure the Member for sure, in the strategy when we table it, there is going to be a focus of using local energy for local use. That is one of them, but we still have to have a long-term strategy going forward on how to develop our resources.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. That's welcome news from the Minister. I look forward to the strategy. Lastly, in my Member's statement, I spoke about lessons learned from the Mackenzie Gas Project about putting all of our eggs in a non-renewable resource mega-project basket. We learned about trying to cut corners on project assessment; that eventually sort of comes back to bite you. Perhaps the biggest lesson is the need to move past oil and gas to diversify our economy. I would like to know from the Minister: what lessons has he learned from the demise of the Mackenzie Gas Project?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: You can answer this a number of ways. I'm going to answer it the way I want to answer it. First of all, the demise of the Mackenzie Gas Project was due to the current market prices of the day. It went from \$11 down to \$1.90. Market prices dictated that they shut down. At the same time I think some of the lessons learned, and the Premier has talked about this a number of times when we're travelling around is the Aboriginal Pipeline Group, how good that was. It was the heart and strength of that initiative, and it is a landmark partnership that, when we're out there speaking to the public, and travelling around, and doing FPTs, it's a model for future development, not just in our territory, but the country could take as an approach, as to how they can move some of these big, large initiatives forward. The other side of it, too, is the environmental process, how long it's taken. Seven years to get this initiative through is way too long. I'm glad to see the federal government come out with their new legislative proposals or initiatives coming forward with environmental regulations. It's going to be a two-year process, max, on some of these initiatives, and that's going to bring some of these projects forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 119-18(3):
MEDICAL TRAVEL COVERAGE

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the second part of my Member's statement briefly talked about accessing traditional Dene treatment or Dene medicine, and there seems to be some confusion on how they can access that when I was talking with the elders in Fort Liard. My question for the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Speaker: presently it is my understanding that medical travel only covers travel to the NWT borders, when they are accessing traditional Dene treatments. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services please confirm what the process is and how it is done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, medical travel doesn't actually cover travel for individuals who wish to attend traditional Dene-type healing in the Northwest Territories, or even outside the Northwest Territories. However, the federal NIHB program may actually cover some of the transportation costs, offer individuals to access traditional healer service, but that must be preauthorized by Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, so they need to apply through NIHB. It is not something that is currently covered through GNWT or Medical Travel.

MR. THOMPSON: That is really great information to understand and hear. Will the Minister be willing to get that information or show us where we can get this information so that we can share with the residents of the Northwest Territories?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, absolutely. Certainly, and, as a note, we do administer NIHB on behalf of the federal government. We do not make program decisions. We do not make funding-level decisions, but we do administer it, and I do know that staff are happy to help individuals fill out applications if they are interested in pursuing these types of opportunities, either in the North or the South.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for that answer. I guess I am just looking for: are there some information packages that he can share with us so that we can share it with our constituents?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, the information on the NIHB, the Non-Insured Health Benefits, is online. It is available. I am happy to sit

down with the Member and find out exactly what he is looking for as far as content and to figure out how best we can flow that information through MLAs on both sides of this House so that our residents who are interested can certainly apply for support through NIHB. As I indicated, they still have to get prior approval, so we can help figure out that process for residents, as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will work with the Minister and sit down and talk to him about it to try to get some more information for the constituents. Maybe I will be able to share with other Members who are interested, so I thank the Minister for that commitment.

Has the department, Mr. Speaker, looked at bringing Dene healers up from down south to help residents, especially elders, when it is regarding their concern for their health? I will just leave it with that question, there.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I look forward to working with the Member to help get some of that information. There are, unfortunately, some limitations. I understand that NIHB will only cover individuals as far as provincial boundaries or borders, which actually, I think, goes to the Member's second question.

In the Northwest Territories we want to support traditional healing and wellness. We want to do things differently, and up until now there really has been nothing done to support traditional health or wellness in the Northwest Territories. We are trying to change that right now. We want to have more options for residents, and I think it is really important to recognize all the incredible partners out there who are doing work.

The Arctic Indigenous Women's Foundation is doing really important work to bring traditional wellness and healing to the Northwest Territories. We are working with them by making space available on the Stanton campus so that they can move forward with the wellness compound, wellness complex. We also are working with a group, I believe, in Fort Good Hope to test some models of some traditional healing opportunities in the Sahtu. The Stanton Hospital is getting ready to pilot an elders-in-residence program to bring more traditional healing and wellness.

We have put together a terms of reference in partnership with Indigenous governments from across the Northwest Territories to form a wellness advisory group to provide advice and guidance to us on how we can better incorporate traditional healing and wellness into our system as a whole so

that people do not even have to look outside to programs and services in the South, that we can truly be an integrated system here that incorporates both traditional as well as western medicine to provide holistic care for all residents of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 120-18(3):
PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS IN THE JUSTICE
SYSTEM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of concerns raised by Indigenous activists about the integrity or procedural fairness in our justice system. I would like to ask the Minister of Justice if he has taken any steps to review these concerns and how they apply to our role in the Canadian justice system? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot, of course, and it would be improper for me to, discuss any specific case before the courts, but there has been a good deal of commentary about the jury system across Canada. I can advise that I have been thinking about this issue and would like to hear from the public and also from members of the local bar who practice in this area. I am a little concerned that radical changes to the jury system would be ill advised. This system has served us well for a thousand years.

MR. TESTART: I do have some familiarity with the jury system, as the former jury administrator for this government. I am pleased to hear the Minister is considering opening this discussion up to the public. Is this just an idea he is having, or is he planning on launching some sort of public consultation on these, the issues that have been raised around fairness in our justice system?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No, I was not thinking of having a public consultation. I, too, have a good deal of experience with the jury system and have found that it has worked very well in our jurisdiction, dealing with many jury trials in my home community of Fort Smith and also in at least one or two other communities. I certainly will, and I often do, meet with members of my profession and would like to hear from them. Certainly, if the public wishes to write me or contact me in some way, I would also be interested in hearing their concerns, but I am not planning any formal public process at this time.

MR. TESTART: I appreciate this is a sensitive issue, but it is also an important issue, and people need to be heard. I might be asking the wrong

Minister, but if the Minister could talk to the Minister responsible for Public Engagement and perhaps consult with that Minister to develop a consultation, a round table discussion, anything really, it does not have to be terribly expensive, but can the Minister commit to having some sort of public engagement around these issues and the broader issue of reconciliation in the Northwest Territories and Canada?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Of course the legislation, the criminal legislation, is a federal concern, and I think that it would be more appropriate for the federal Minister to be addressed in this area. The Member also alluded to the broader area of reconciliation, and Members will know that the Government of the Northwest Territories is dedicated to that concept of reconciliation.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just because it is a federal issue does not mean we do not have a responsibility to raise these issues that are being raised by our constituents and by people who are leading rallies and protests outside this building to get our attention, so will the Minister commit to bringing this to the federal Minister of Justice or to the FPT table to see if there can be a national conversation or see if the NWT can join the national conversation, and if he can find a way to do this without delay? Thank you.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I imagine this matter will be discussed at the next FPT so, should it be on the agenda, certainly we will be involved with that discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 121-18(3):
TERRAX PTARMIGAN MINE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I would like to continue the conversation that I had yesterday with the Minister of Lands on mine site reclamation. Yesterday he said that he was sure that GNWT had not given any kind of a release or indemnity to TerraX with regard to work that they may want to carry out at the Ptarmigan Mine site, so I am wondering if the Minister would be willing to check with his federal counterparts about whether the federal government had issued any kind of indemnity or release to TerraX with regard to their work on the Ptarmigan Mine site? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Lands.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for his question, but must take the question as notice.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The question has been taken as notice. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 5-18(3):
SOLE-SOURCE CONTRACTS REPORT

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Sole-Source Contracts Report for the period April 1 to December 31, 2017. They ask for a rationale for contracting on a sole source basis for specific goods and services.

Could the Minister please provide:

1. With respect to sole source #02865 for \$7,200,000 and #2922 for \$14,800,000 with Imperial Oil Ltd for the supply of petroleum products, an explanation why this purchase was necessary through sole-source purchase and not by public tender;
2. With respect to sole-source #2949 for \$200,000 with the Inuvialuit Development Corporation for "as and when financial advisory services," an explanation of the specific scope of these services and why they are not sourced in-house from GNWT advisors;
3. With respect to sole source #3559 for \$10,130,000 with Offshore Recruiting Services Inc. for the Marine Transportation Services, an explanation of what is meant by "offshore recruiting services"; and
4. With respect to sole-source #2811 for \$855,000 with Fireside Project Management Inc. for a Stanton Territorial Hospital Renewal project manager, an explanation of why this function was not fulfilled with GNWT in-house resources or by the Boreal Health Partnership.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Written questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent to go to item number 5 in the orders of the day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (reversion)

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for allowing us to come back to it. I would like to welcome a long-time friend Steven Cooper to the Assembly. Steven is the lead counsel for the Labrador residential school claim and currently the counsel for the 60's Scoop class, and most recently, the Indian Hospital Case Act. As well, I'd like to recognize Andrew Geisterfer, and I apologize if I got your name wrong that way, but who is in the process of becoming a member of the Law Society of the NWT and Nunavut, and this is his first trip to Yellowknife. Welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my constituent, Ms. Kelly Martin. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. It's been a busy week, and I forgot earlier to mention that there's a Page from my constituency serving in the Assembly, so I would like to recognize and thank Sarah Cassaway for her work and for all the work of the Pages during this very busy budget session. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 9, returns to written questions. Madam Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 4-18(3): NEW STANTON HOSPITAL - FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Kay): Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 4-18(3) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 7, 2018, to the Minister of Finance regarding the new Stanton Hospital funding arrangements.

The project budget for the new Stanton Hospital is \$350 million. Of this total budget, \$290 million is the estimate for construction costs. Approximately 52 per cent of these construction costs, or \$152 million, is financed by the Government of the Northwest Territories, while the remaining 48 per cent, or \$138 million, is financed by Boreal Health Partnership. As of November 30, 2017, the GNWT has made quarterly payments, based on amounts certified by an independent engineer, of \$115 million.

The GNWT will begin making service payments to the Boreal Health Partnership on December 1, 2018. The service payment for 2018-2019 will be \$6.716 million. It is estimated that the average amount payable for a full year of service will be approximately \$18 million. Over the 30-year life of the agreement, the total amount of the service payments will be \$598.4 million.

The total amount paid through service payments to the Boreal Health Partnership over the 30-year agreement is broken down into four categories:

- \$45.9 million to cover lifecycle costs;
- \$255.5 million to cover the maintenance of the facility;
- \$227 million to cover the cost of servicing the debt; and
- \$70 million as a return on equity of 12 per cent.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a document entitled "Stanton Territorial Hospital Project Cash Flow." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address, day 6 of 7. Member for Kam Lake.

Replies to Budget Address

MR. TESTART'S REPLY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the third budget of the 18th Legislative Assembly, and the third time that Members have gone through the painstaking process of reviewing the draft budget and providing detailed input to the Minister of Finance and his Cabinet colleagues. I have to say, I am beginning to wonder why we bother.

Before I comment on the 2018-2019 Budget, let me say a few words for those who might be listening, about the role of the Regular Members in the business planning process. I think it is important to explain this process to members of the public. Although this government talks a lot about transparency, the business planning process remains shrouded in secrecy. I will come back to the topic of secrecy later, but for now, let me set out the process and the role Regular Members play in the budget cycle.

From our perspective the important stages of the budget planning process are:

- The development of the government's fiscal strategy;

- The development and review of the business plans;
- The budget address; and
- The presentation and review of the main estimates in the Legislative Assembly.

The GNWT's business planning process occurs on an annual cycle. It all starts with the development of the government's fiscal strategy.

This strategy is established by the Finance Minister in consultation with his Cabinet colleagues. It is developed by considering the GNWT's projected financial position based on a set of assumptions about revenues, expenditures, and federal transfer payments, and by considering parameters such as the government's federally set borrowing authority and its own Fiscal Responsibility Policy. The government comes to some decision about how much of a surplus it wants to carry, how much debt it can responsibly manage, and how to meet those objectives by balancing revenues with expenses. Once established, it is used by the Financial Management Board to set budget targets for each department.

Regular Members have some impact in shaping the fiscal strategy, but because it is ultimately the government's strategy, we must often resort to political pressure to effect any meaningful change. Two years ago, at the beginning of this Assembly, the GNWT started out with a fiscal strategy based on deep budgetary cuts to the tune of \$150 million in the first year alone. The Regular Members objected strongly to this approach, which, as anyone could see, was clearly based on drastic austerity measures, even though the Finance Minister said it was not.

Regular Members were not convinced that deep budget cuts were realistic or necessary, and we were concerned about their impact on our fragile northern economy, already destabilized by low commodity prices and flat population growth. We were told, however, by the honourable Minister of Finance that two years of belt-tightening would be followed by two years of greater spending. The cynic in me could not help but notice that this freer spending would conveniently occur in the lead-up to the next election.

Regular Members advocated instead for a more balanced approach. In fact, we brought forward a motion in the House to have the \$150 million reduction target removed from the government's mandate. Although this motion was carried, the target was nonetheless still touted in the Finance Minister's 2016 Budget Address, and it continues to reverberate in this year's budget.

In considering the context for business planning, it is important to note that the budget we are now considering is the GNWT's operating budget. There is a separate process for reviewing the government's capital infrastructure budget, but the two are intrinsically linked by the government's Fiscal Responsibility Policy.

This policy requires the government to fund at least 50 per cent of its capital infrastructure investments from the operating budget surpluses generated by government departments alone, excluding the boards, agencies, and Crown corporations that, for accounting purposes, make up the larger government reporting entity. What all this means is that if the government is going to afford the big-ticket infrastructure projects it wants to undertake, it must do so by reducing spending on vital programs and services.

We are not talking about modest capital infrastructure spending. According to this government's 2018-2019 Capital Estimates, the money allocated and spent on infrastructure from April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2019, totals \$998,765,000. That is almost a billion dollars in capital spending over three years, of which 50 per cent was or will be financed by this government through reduced spending and cuts to health care, education, and social development.

Mr. Speaker, now that we have this fiscal environment in mind, it sets the context within which the government's current business plans were developed and reviewed by the standing committees over an intensive three-week period in November 2017.

There are four standing committees that work collaboratively to complete this review. The three envelope committees, the Standing Committee on Government Operations, the Standing Committee on Social Development, and the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, share the work of reviewing the business plans of the GNWT's 10 departments and the NWT Housing Corporation. The committees make recommendations for changes to the business plans that are forwarded to the individual departments through the Minister of Finance.

The role of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning, which is composed of all Regular Members, is to review and prioritize the recommendations coming from the envelope committees that have a dollar impact on the budget; to make additional recommendations as needed; and to ensure that nothing has been overlooked.

It is a significant undertaking for the standing committees and their staff to carry out this work. In fact, we estimate that about 1,300 person hours

were spent on the business plan review alone. The three envelope committees made a combined total of 142 recommendations and requests for further information, all with a view to improving the 2018-2019 Budget and the overall operations of the government. In that regard, I should note that not all of these recommendations are related to the financial aspects of the budget. Many have to do with improving how information is presented and how the government organizes and prioritizes its work.

The Standing Committee on Social Development made 62 recommendations, including a safe-house pilot project for women and children fleeing family violence in communities without shelters; and a request to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to reverse all proposed reductions to the Social Work Diploma program and the Teacher Education Program and restore regular enrolment and program operations.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment made 42 recommendations, including ensuring adequate funding in Industry, Tourism and Investment's budget for the Business Development and Investment Corporation and for the Boreal Caribou Monitoring Program; and urging the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to make more substantive progress on the Climate Change Strategic Framework.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations, the committee for which I serve as Chair, made 38 recommendations, including requests that support for the Non-Governmental Organization Stabilization Fund administered by Municipal and Community Affairs be increased; that the GNWT support the establishment of more Single Window Service Centres staffed by Government Services Officers; and that the Ministers responsible for specialized portfolios be included in the Business Plan Review and be available to answer the standing committee's questions; an important step, in the committee's view, towards greater accountability by this government.

Overall, the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning, often referred to as P and P, made 39 recommendations and requests for information, some of which echoed the recommendations coming from the envelope committees. Some of these recommendations came in the form of opposition to proposed budget cuts and new funding proposals by the government, including opposition to:

- A proposed reduction of \$475,000 to ECE's budget that would have been used for school counselors;

- A proposed reduction of \$150,000 to ENR's Boreal Caribou Monitoring program;
- A proposed reduction of \$925,000 to ITI's budget for the Business Development and Investment Corporation;
- A proposed reduction to MACA's multisport games funding of \$650,000 over three years, with the first cut being \$250,000 in 2018-2019; and
- The proposed addition of \$387,000 to fund the GNWT's office in Ottawa.

Additionally, P and P sought new funding for under-resourced programming, including:

- A \$500,000 increase to support for the NWT Arts Council;
- \$100,000 for a touring artist grant program; and
- \$300,000 to establish Single Window Service Centres, staffed by Government Services officers, in two smaller communities and in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, having conducted a thorough review resulting in detailed, cogent recommendations from the standing committees, Regular Members broke for the holidays, secure in the knowledge that we had done our jobs and confident that our hard work to improve this budget would be accepted by our Cabinet colleagues.

Alas, Mr. Speaker, our confidence was clearly misplaced, as we learned when the standing committees had the opportunity to confidentially review the draft main estimates in January. These are the same draft main estimates that were tabled in the House after the Minister of Finance delivered his budget address last week.

Mr. Speaker, the Regular Members look eagerly to the main estimates to see if the labour we put into reviewing the business plans has borne fruit. What did we find there? Well, contrary to the advice of the standing committees, we found:

- A reduction of \$475,000 to ECE's budget that would have been used for school counselors;
- A reduction of \$150,000 to ENR's Boreal Caribou Monitoring program;
- A reduction of \$925,000 to ITI's budget for the BDIC;
- A \$250,000 reduction to MACA's multisport games funding; and
- The addition of \$387,000 to fund the GNWT's

office in Ottawa.

What did we fail to find, Mr. Speaker? We failed to find:

- The requested \$500,000 increase to support for the NWT Arts Council;
- \$100,000 for a new touring artist grant program;
- \$150,000 in additional funding for the NGO Stabilization Fund; or
- \$300,000 to establish three new Single Window Service Centres

All of which were recommended by the standing committees.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot begin to tell you how frustrating it is for Members on this side of the House to see such a poor response to our recommendations.

Not a single one of the standing committees' recommendations with financial implications was included in the draft main estimates. Not one.

The requests made by the standing committees totalled somewhere in the vicinity of \$2.9 million out of a total budget in excess of \$1.7 billion dollars. These were not unreasonable or exorbitant requests; they total less than two-tenths of 1 per cent of the budget. Our requests were modest in their amount, consistent with the government's mandate and important to our constituents. What is a mere \$2.9 million dollars to enhance program spending, as compared with a same-year capital budget estimated at \$237 million? Cabinet couldn't meet us partway. In fact, I have to wonder if they even bothered to review the standing committees' input at all before printing the draft estimates.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it has been said that the leader sets the tone for a whole organization. When our Premier made a pitch to this Assembly to be considered for the office of the Honourable Premier for an historic second term, he said something that resonated with a lot of newly elected Members. He said, "During this election, it was clear to me that people were tired of adversarial politics and what was perceived as petty infighting. The Northwest Territories residents deserve a government that is focused on making good public policy, not scoring political points. I believe all of us here share that view, and I am committed to working with Regular Members to establish a new, more cooperative approach."

Let me ask you this, Mr. Speaker: do you think a reasonable person would consider Cabinet's response to our budget requests indicative of a

cooperative approach? I think not. Rather than cooperation, rather than good public policy, this Cabinet chose to force the hand of Regular Members. This is what necessitated the deferral of the budgets of the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment earlier this week, to give Members time to negotiate with Cabinet behind the scenes to get a better deal on this budget.

I am encouraged at this point in time that these discussions will result in some concessions on the part of Cabinet, but I want to remind the Premier of the commitment he made to every single one of the Members in this House to do business in a new, more cooperative way.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the subject of budget secrecy. There is a tradition of secrecy surrounding the development of budgets in Westminster-style parliaments. John Fraser, Speaker of the House of Commons, explained this tradition in a 1987 parliamentary debate. He said, "Budgetary secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention. Its purpose is to prevent anybody from gaining a private advantage by reason of obtaining advance budgetary information."

It was also touched upon in a 1976 budget address by the Liberal Minister of Finance Donald McDonald who noted that "the tradition of budget secrecy has two grounds. It is intended to deny to anyone financial advantage from advance information. It is intended to ensure that important statements of government economic policy are disclosed first to Members of the House of Commons." At that time, Minister McDonald suggested that "the time has come to consider whether some of the long-standing traditions that surround the budgetary process should be modified to serve better the needs of today."

As true as that may have been for the federal government in 1976, I believe it is even more relevant for the Government of the Northwest Territories in 2018. This is a consensus system, Mr. Speaker, built on traditions of respect, cooperation, and the sharing of information; principles that seem antithetical to the notion of secrecy. Also, as important as the GNWT's budget is to the people of the Northwest Territories, openness about proposed budget measures is unlikely to result in disruption to currency or stock markets or to anyone gaining tax advantages.

In fact, budget secrecy is, in some ways, an anachronism inherited from the British parliamentary system that is out of step with today's technologically fast-paced world. It inhibits consultation, it is contradictory to transparency, and, as it has been said, "does not take account of

the broad economic and social role which modern budgets must play." I believe it is time for this Assembly to consider the role of budget secrecy in our proceedings and to move to a more transparent and open process, so that the people of the Northwest Territories can see exactly what work their MLAs and Cabinet Ministers are doing for them. That would be consistent with the more cooperative approach that the Premier promised us at the start of this Assembly.

There are some things about this budget that trouble me. You have heard those. The budget is irresponsibly silent on the carbon tax and cannabis revenues and how these stack up against the costs of administering the new sales system. The Government of Canada expects revenues of \$400 million and costs of \$700 million. Surely, the situation is similar here in the NWT. This shows the GNWT still doesn't have a real plan to deal with cannabis or carbon.

I am concerned about the slow pace of legislative progress by this government, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned that it has left too much work to be done in the last two years, which will force standing committees to rush through their reviews of bills, as we have already been asked to do on the cannabis legislation. I am troubled by the fact that we have yet to see legislation to establish the Office of the Ombudsman, legislation that the GNWT promised in its mandate to introduce the first two years of this Assembly.

However, I want to close on a positive note, by pointing out that there are things in this budget that I am glad to see, such as new funding for friendship centres; additional resources for the settlement of lands, resources, and self-government agreements; increased investment in benefits to seniors, elders, and the working poor; and the continued support for mining exploration and investment, but most importantly, that there are no new tax increases being proposed. I am also hopeful that, before this week is out, Cabinet and Regular Members will come to an agreement on some outstanding matters arising from the standing committee's recommendations.

I'm glad Cabinet is waking up to the need to develop our economy and make strategic investments to create jobs and growth. Regular Members have been making these points for the last two years. As we review the individual department's budgets in Committee of the Whole, I will have more specific, detailed comments on the budget in the days to come. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Replies to budget address, day 6 of 7. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S REPLY

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in reply to the Minister of Finance's budget address from last Thursday. Over the past two years my replies have been somewhat critical of the Minister's budgets. This year I am pleased to say that, in general, the budget address gives me some optimism that we are heading in the right direction. Before we get too excited, let me say that it is also apparent that we still have plenty of work to do.

Earlier in the 18th Assembly we confronted what I called a "doomsday scenario," where Cabinet was convinced that austerity measures with massive cuts and job reductions were needed to save us from the poorhouse. Mr. Speaker, it was creativity and compromise that got us past that approach, not entirely unscathed, but with a happier outlook and a belief that positive change in the direction of our mandate was possible. Now today we are moving forward, but I am still feeling some reluctance toward taking truly bold steps. Bold steps are exactly what is required to move us ahead with some of our serious challenges.

So I want to take us back to a "principles first" approach rather than the "purse first" approach. Mr. Speaker, a society is not measured wholly by its GDP, by the latest oil prices, or by the rate in which innovation thrives. It is simply, quite frankly: a society is measured by its people. Mr. Speaker, it is measured by how our families are doing; how children and youth are doing in school; how is our health and well-being in our communities. Sadly, on many fronts, we continue to show that we are struggling as a society when measured by these means. The NWT continues to have some of the highest rates of incarceration in the country. Our unemployment rates in the communities still remain a constant concern. Many students are still not at the grade levels and graduation rates that we would expect in this day and age. Too many people continue to suffer from challenges surrounding mental health and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I raise these points is because the cost-benefit analysis of our investments, no matter if they are in infrastructure or programs and services, at the end of the day, they must show benefits to our children, our families, our elders, and our communities. How well our people are doing is the measure that matters most. That is the bottom line.

Mr. Speaker, there is one area that we will have to face and invest in significantly in over the coming years, whether we care to or not. We simply don't have a choice. The most important challenge facing us -- in fact, the world -- is climate change. Across the globe, it is affecting employment, health,

migration, food security, world ecosystems, and world population. We are feeling it first and most drastically here in the North.

I believe the government recognizes the drastic nature of this challenge. I commend the government for that acknowledgement by signing on to the Pan Canadian Framework for Clean Growth and Climate Change. The \$1.2 million allocated for climate change resilience and adaptation is important and very much welcomed. That said, only a few people in the public service and few resources are specifically assigned to the climate change file, Mr. Speaker. That is troubling because this critical global issue deserves much stronger resolve and much faster action than we have seen so far. I am hopeful that our Climate Change Framework will outline an aggressive approach to tackling this global challenge and that the government arms our departments with adequate resources to take on this daunting task.

Mr. Speaker, we know that mining is indeed the backbone of the economy. We have what the world needs in minerals and metals that will help sustain life on this earth. I say that with all seriousness. The world continues to move faster and faster into the realm of innovation and technology. The advancement of developing countries is at an all-time high. Our resources will be sought to support those advancements.

The government recognizes the importance of this and support for developing our own mineral exploration and development regime is important to attracting investment. I commend the government for moving forward with the Mineral Resources Act. To the same end, I do not take our environment lightly. We can look into any corner of our territory and see multiple scars with regard to contamination and past abuse of our lands and water. From those experiences, we have become much better at protecting our environment, and we are working with Indigenous governments, various regulatory bodies, and industry to put ourselves at the forefront of protecting our precious ecosystems.

It is with that proven ability to protect our environment that we must know when to apply common sense toward our regulatory requirements for exploration. Regulations should match the degree of impact. Exploration need not be treated with the same regulations as an operating mine. Let's promote exploration while applying the appropriate measures to protect our environment.

Still on the resources front, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, all indicators for the future of oil development in the North have signified that this prospect is bleak, but there are areas of potential that aren't mentioned. Since oil is on its last years in the Sahtu, in particular, Norman Wells, there will

be a major need for rehabilitation in that region. That opportunity could be a years-long project with a similar spending impact as the rehabilitation of Giant Mine. There will be opportunities for generational employment. We must be ready to accept the challenge, preserve the land, and reap the rewards.

Similarly, rather than bemoaning that Beaufort Oil "is stranded" in the Northern Sea, we should be seeking ways to exploit inland gas for the benefit of our own communities in that region. Using our own local resources to get off trucked fuels, lower our carbon footprint, and provide cheaper energy only makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, the South Slave region was once a thriving hub for agriculture in the NWT and fed many communities with fresh food up and down the valley. I believe we can get there once again, not only in the South Slave but throughout our entire territory. I appreciate that funding for the Agriculture Strategy was included in the Minister's address. Access to land is an important step, but it should be emphasized that not only must land be made available, it must also be made affordable if we are to see this sector truly grow and flourish.

I was somewhat discouraged to see limited mention of other economic areas that deserve the government's active and deliberate support. A truly diversified economy will have to include increased support for the creative arts industry. Our outdated Arts Strategy needs work to become modernized with the times. Let's make the commitment to engage our creative communities and seek to update the Arts Strategy.

Support for developing centres of excellence and the knowledge economy will be critical so we can take advantage of the creativity and the talents of our people, and create made-in-the-North innovations and technologies. We must remain strong on support for our traditional land- and water-based activities that enhance and celebrate our vibrant Indigenous cultures. Other diversification opportunities will require that we be flexible and responsive to changing times and take full advantage of new prospects, such as when cannabis is legalized later this year. People, businesses, and communities will be frustrated if only a few get to capitalize from this opportunity. We must waste no time in distributing the wealth when it comes to these new-found profits.

Tourism: this is perhaps the brightest light in our economic horizon, and it deserves our continued investment. In support of tourism, we need to ensure that there is no gap in the provision of visitors' services in Yellowknife. It is also high time that we fast-track changes to the CTV Act to allow municipalities to implement a hotel levy, so they

can develop their own destination marketing organizations and enjoy the gains that come from this thriving industry.

Mr. Speaker, another priority for fast-tracking is our land rights negotiations. While the Premier was able to offer an optimistic report on the progress of land rights negotiations last year, we have not heard anything new recently. I commend the \$1 million in funding that the government has set aside for this high priority, but we must commit to progress. Mr. Speaker, I don't need to emphasize, as I have before, that a vast majority of our other mandate priorities hinge on the certainty that will be created by the resolution of land rights.

There was so much hope at the beginning of the Assembly that land management would be a priority, but regrettably, land use plans are also taking far too long. The Yellowknife Periphery Recreational Land Use Plan was to be completed in the second year of this Assembly, but is still not done. Other important land use plans seem equally hung up. As one example: how do we promote agricultural development when land use and allocation remain undefined and unclear?

I have long supported our three major roadway projects, the Mackenzie Valley highway, the Whati all-season road, and the road into the Slave Geological Province. I support our road projects not only because they will help us develop our resource potential, but because they will lower the costs of living and create long-term generational opportunities for employment and small business. This is essential in so many ways to our small communities.

Another major contributor to the cost of living is the high cost of power across this territory. Power is not easy, Mr. Speaker, and we face more challenges than almost anywhere, but we need to continue to explore alternatives. Hydro is important to develop, and connecting to the southern grid is a strong long-term option, but it's only one option. Let's not put all our energy eggs in one basket. We have had success in developments of wind power at Diavik and solar power in Colville Lake. The City of Yellowknife's district heating initiative will soon be paying off. Biomass silos have quickly become a common sight in many communities. Even electric cars can now be utilized in the North, and we should be providing charging stations along the highway. All of these areas have potential and need to be emphasized and supported. I want to see an energy strategy that significantly reduces our reliance on fossil fuels, commits us to protecting the environment, and, most importantly, lowers the cost of living for Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, we followed the lead of our electorate and entered the 18th Assembly with a commitment

to creating a government of openness and transparency. I applaud the government for the steps that it has taken. Public hearings, better communication with the public, Cabinet meetings in the regions, and more recently the Minister of Finance's commitment the public overview of the budget process; these are all important steps forward, and many in my riding have appreciated the steps that have been taken.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there is more that we should be doing. Specifically, I would argue that the business planning process needs to be open to public participation. As an MLA providing feedback to government, I would appreciate being able to gather valuable, informed input from my constituents. That would allow me to offer more constructive and valuable feedback to this government, improving the planning process overall. It is frustrating, to say the least, when MLAs have been pitched by departments as to what the government intends to do in the coming year, yet we are not at liberty to go out and consult with constituents and get their thoughts and feedback. This is a backward approach, and we need to make new and open and transparent ways to deliberate on the business plans.

We also need to improve our practices with regard to bureaucracy and red tape. I know that we are hearing encouraging signals from industry, but we still carry the dubious reputation as the most over-regulated jurisdiction in Canada. As we heard with some energy in this Chamber yesterday, our procurement policies have earned us an "F" grade from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This kind of inefficiency discourages investment from outside and frustrates home-grown entrepreneurship. Let's focus on streamlining services, reviewing our procurement policies, and working towards achieving at least a "D" grade next year.

The speed of the legislation to which the 18th Assembly committed itself is very discouraging. I could go on and on here, but simply: where is the long-promised legislation to establish the Office of the Ombudsman? In the name of transparency, get it done already.

Mr. Speaker, part of achieving any ambitious mandate must be to build and lead a great team. To that end, we have a strong workforce in our government, comprised of talented, capable public servants. As any management professional will tell you, what people want is the opportunity to do their best work, utilize their talents, and make a contribution, but we have been without a collective agreement for over two years. To move forward with our team, we must settle our differences without delay and provide certainty and a path forward.

Mr. Speaker, there are many positive things in this budget on which I commend this government. The commitment of additional funding to junior kindergarten is important. Inclusive schooling in JK is a very important investment in the future, as is the inclusion of mental health support in our schools.

Support for long-term and home care, emphasis on dealing with addictions, help for youth in crisis; these are all very important priority areas. I also commend the government, in partnership with the City of Yellowknife, for committing funding for a sobering centre in Yellowknife.

I will make two final points, Mr. Speaker. The first is that we know a carbon tax is in our future. We must not allow a new tax to be a burden on our future. We must ensure that a carbon regime in the Northwest Territories is northern friendly and revenue neutral. Where our residents need to pay more, we must find a way to return it to them. The achievements of this tax must be a cleaner planet, yes, but not a higher cost of living for our people.

The second point is that we must be prepared to meet our end of the federal infrastructure investment. Half a billion dollars in federal money will be coming to the NWT over the next 10 years. We must not miss out. We must be prepared to match those dollars with our own and see it as a crucial investment in our upcoming generations.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe that we are more than halfway through our term, but I still come to work every day with the same optimism I started with. The challenges are daunting, but our achievements are significant. We should not be bound by the limitations of the past, but be inspired by the courage of possibility and the faith placed in us by our constituents to build a better future. Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by what I heard in the Minister of Finance's address, and notwithstanding that we have considerable debate before us, on the surface I am hopeful that, in the end, I can get up and support this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Replies to budget address, day 6 of 7. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 82-18(3):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO ORAL QUESTION 50-18(3): IMPACT OF COLLAPSE OF CARILLION ON STANTON RENEWAL PROJECT

TABLED DOCUMENT 83-18(3):
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL PROJECT
CASH FLOW

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents entitled "Follow-up Letter to Oral Question 50-18(3): Impact of Collapse of Carillion on Stanton Renewable Project"; and, further to my Return to Written Question 4-18(3), a document entitled "Stanton Territorial Hospital Project Cash Flow." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 5:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE SUMMARY
CONVICTION PROCEDURES ACT

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Wednesday, February 21, 2018, I will move that Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Motions

MOTION 9-18(3):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO
FEBRUARY 20, 2018,
CARRIED

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that notwithstanding rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 15, 2018, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, February 20, 2018;

AND FURTHER that at any time prior to February 20, 2018, 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. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Masi. 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: Minister's Statement 1-18(3), North Slave Correctional Complex Inmate Concerns; Minister's Statement 19-18(3), Aurora College Foundational Review Process; Tabled Document 63-18(3), Main Estimates 2018-2019, with the Member for Sahtu in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Calling committee to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the chair of the Committee of the Whole leave the chair and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Vice Chair. The motion is on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report, Member for Sahtu?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. MCNEELY: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Minister's Statement 1-18(3), North Slave Correctional Complex Inmate Concerns; Minister's Statement 19-18(3), Aurora College Foundational Review Process; Tabled Document 63-18(3), Main Estimates 2018-2019, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Do we have a seconder? Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Item 24, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Kay): Mr. Speaker, the orders of the day for Monday, February 20, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
12. Replies to Budget Address (Day 7 of 7)
13. Petitions
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 1-18(3), North Slave Correctional Complex Inmate Concerns
 - Minister's Statement 19-18(3), Aurora College Foundational Review Process
 - Tabled Document 63-18(3), Main Estimates 2018-2019
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 20, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:19 p.m.

