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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tuesday, February 12, 2008**

Members Present

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Hon. Norman Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. Hon. Jackson Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 9-16(2)
PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL SUBSIDY
SURVEY RESULTS AND
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, in November 2007 I advised Members that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the N.W.T. Housing Corporation had initiated a review of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy program. At that time I committed to providing Members with results of the review and a plan of action being taken to address issues related to delivery of the program.

Members will recall that the Public Housing Rental Subsidy transfer from the N.W.T. Housing Corporation to Education, Culture and Employment was the result of the larger Income Security reform of the last government. It is under that framework that we have reviewed the program and identified actions that are being taken to make improvements as needed.

First, I'd like to very briefly provide you with a summary of review activities. There were several parts to the review. Information was gathered from front-line staff from the N.W.T. Housing Corporation; Education, Culture and Employment; and local housing authorities about the administration of the program. A Public Housing Rental Subsidy client satisfaction survey was administered by the N.W.T. Bureau of Statistics that sought feedback directly from public housing tenants from all the regions of the Northwest Territories about the quality of administrative

services. A review of best practices in public housing administration across Canada and documentation of the administrative process and analysis of potential gaps and issues surrounding the program were incorporated.

The regional meetings and client satisfaction survey were completed in November and December 2007. The final survey results were reported by the N.W.T. Bureau of Statistics in January 2008.

The results of the review so far show the system is working overall, but there is a need for slight administrative changes to be made. The customer satisfaction survey administered by the Statistics Bureau shows that 75 per cent of the 780 respondents were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied. In the review, we have identified areas that require attention including communication, completion of timely assessments, ensuring policies are clear and comprehensive, and a need to review program components such as cost-of-living reductions and work incentives.

To deal with administrative issues, a policy working group including representatives of the N.W.T. Housing Corporation; Education, Culture and Employment; and local housing authorities has been established and has met and developed an action plan that details short- and long-term actions.

Short-term actions are already underway, and we have developed options for dealing with these challenges that require attention. These actions include improving communications, such as program promotional materials, advertising on local radio stations in all official languages, and ensuring Local Housing Organizations and Income Security staff meet regularly to review files; providing tenants with more options for reporting and providing their required documentation; a service commitment to a 48-hour turnaround time when all documentation is in place; assignment of client service officers focused primarily on Public Housing Rental Subsidy clients in larger centres; utilization of itinerant client service officers in the most needed areas; and where possible, co-location of Local Housing Organizations and Income Security offices.

From a policy perspective, we will be doing further work with respect to policies around exempting income for caregivers and eliminating the requirement for 15- to 18-year-old students in a household to report income, providing incentives to work. We will also review and update a cost-of-living rent reduction.

Other actions will be identified through ongoing work of the policy working group and through the continued joint efforts of all parties who play an important role in the delivery of public housing supports to people in need, namely the Department of Education, Culture and Employment; the N.W.T. Housing Corporation; and the Local Housing Organization.

I am pleased with the amount of work that has been done on this review in the past few months. I know that we still have some work to do to continue to make improvements where needed. The review has helped identify the areas that require short-term and long-term actions.

I will be reporting back to Members on the progress that we make in our identified actions at the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly in June 2008.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 10-16(2)
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD
2008 CORPORATE PLAN

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Under the new Workers' Compensation Acts that comes into force on April 1, the Workers' Compensation Board name will change to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC). This reflects the shift in philosophy to emphasize safety and prevention in addition to fair compensation for injured workers. Later today I will table the Workers' Compensation Board's "2008 Corporate Plan," a document encapsulating the WCB's enhanced direction.

The "2008 Corporate Plan" is proactive and sets the strategic direction for the coming year. It guides the organization to achieve its mission to promote workplace safety and care for injured workers. The corporate plan is developed in correlation with the annual report. The corporate plan looks forward, while the annual report responds to the objectives outlined in the corporate plan.

In developing the "2008 Corporate Plan," the WCB sought stakeholder participation to establish priorities and goals. The "2008 Corporate Plan" sets out and explains the importance of the WCB's priorities, the associated goals, and the means by which they will be measured. The corporate plan flows into the balanced scorecard, which is presented in the annual report. The scorecard highlights the WCB's results and measures

performance of the priorities and goals set in the corporate plan.

The Workers' Compensation Board values openness and transparency. As a means to foster this openness, the Governance Council also initiated activity reporting to provide stakeholders with frequent and current operations updates. The "Activities Report" presents a summary of WCB activities, programs and projects. The report is prepared and published quarterly and allows stakeholders to track progress and evaluate the WCB's success.

As I noted, the Workers' Compensation Board's name will be changed to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission on April 1. To make stakeholders aware of the name change as well as changes to the acts and its progress on objectives, the WCB implemented a communications strategy. The process of disseminating information has already started. Using existing and established mediums of communication — like the web site, the e-newsletter "Insight: A Look a Safety and Service" and *Reflections*, a semi-annual magazine — the WCB is committed to ensuring Northern workers and employers know how the WCB is changing and how the changes affect them.

Specific to the name change, the WCB will undertake an extensive media campaign during February and March. This includes notifying Northern and southern media outlets of the change through a media release, as well as placing a public notice in local and regional newspapers and announcing it on area radio and television stations.

The new Workers' Compensation Acts, strengthened reporting system and communications strategy support and further the board's mission to promote workplace safety and care for injured workers. They allow the board to better and more effectively serve the people of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I move that Member's Statement 9-16(2), a statement by Minister Lafferty regarding Public Housing Rental Subsidy survey results and plans for the future, be moved to the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Do we have a seconder for the motion? Mr. Krutko.

Motion carried; Minister's Statement 9-16(2) referred to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker: Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. McLeod.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONTRACT TENDERS FOR REGIONAL MATERIALS AND SERVICES

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the G.N.W.T. puts a lot of tenders out there across the Northwest Territories worth millions of dollars. The economic benefits from these tenders should apply to all people and all businesses and regions.

The regional businesses should have an opportunity to submit prices on building materials supplied by the N.W.T. Housing Corp in their region. The reason I raise this is that there was a recent material tender put out for the supply of material commodities for N.W.T. projects throughout the N.W.T. You had to bid all or nothing. That's part of the problem. If you want to bid on material in the Beaufort Delta, you had to submit a bid for commodities across the N.W.T. It's all or nothing, Mr. Speaker.

It's not fair to the regional businesses to bid on supplying material in their region and their community but don't yet have the capacity to bid across the N.W.T. It's not fair to expect a supplier to bid on supplying two-by-fours in one of the coastal communities when their centre is in Fort Smith or Hay River or even Yellowknife. It costs them a lot of money. And I've seen a few cases of contracts that, in my opinion, are tailored for certain businesses.

As a government, Mr. Speaker, we can't allow this to happen under our watch. We can't be a party to this. We have to create a fair and a level playing field for businesses all across the N.W.T., because this is a way of tailor-made tenders and the awarding of tenders to certain businesses. It's not creating a level playing field.

It's something I would like to see us address as a government. We can't be a party to this. We talked about everybody benefitting from the contracts and the economy across the Northwest Territories. By doing this, we're not going by what we say. It's something this government needs to address as soon as possible. It's not a fair process. And I personally don't want to be a part of this process if that's how we're going to continue to do business.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERN ARTWORK IN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Mr. Menicoche: [English translation not provided.]

During the 15th Assembly I introduced a motion requesting the government to establish a policy that would spend up to 1 per cent of the budget on each G.N.W.T. building or major renovation on Northern

arts creations displayed or integrated into the design of that building.

This motion passed, supported by the government of the day. Premier Handley at that time promised an arts enhancement policy that was supposedly already in the works at that time.

Now a new community building is being built in Fort Simpson that will replace the Deh Cho Hall. This is the perfect opportunity to ensure that art is included in the building. The Deh Cho complex will be central to the life of the community. What better place to make the community members proud, and indeed the N.W.T. tradition of artistic expression is exposed to the public anytime that people gather there.

I approached the Minister of Public Works and Services about the government's plans to include arts and crafts in the new Deh Cho Hall. I was very saddened to hear that there is no budget at all for these arts and crafts. Several constituents have urged me to address this issue and urge government to move forward with this important initiative.

Artists and artisans of Nahendeh and the N.W.T. have been recognized for their outstanding arts and crafts. This should be on public display in all our government buildings. One of the goals of the 16th Assembly....

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

Mr. Speaker: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and colleagues.

One of the goals of the 16th Assembly is to create a diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities and choices. This priority specifically includes the arts sector.

There are many ways to improve the cost of living and reduce costs, and the other side is to provide income through sales of products. Such was the intent of this motion and the consequential arts enhancement policy.

Let's put action to these words. Let's integrate arts and crafts in the new Deh Cho complex and all government buildings and call it the beginning of the N.W.T. arts enhancement policy.

Mahsi cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY
OF NOEL ABEL

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

I'd like to pass my condolences to the family of Noel Abel, from Lutselk'e, who passed away just before lunch yesterday, February 11. Noel Abel was 84 years old and lived in Lutselk'e all his life. Noel Abel was one of 17 siblings and was the last living man of the family. I believe there is only one member of that family still alive, and that's Vicky Sanderson, also from Lutselk'e.

Noel had many, many relatives. I spoke to a couple of his nieces yesterday, and they tell me that Noel had 50 to 100 very close relatives, counting all his siblings' children and so on. His nieces and nephews still have a few in-laws that are living well in Lutselk'e.

It's with great sorrow that I pass my condolences on to the Abel family in Lutselk'e, and advise that funeral services for the late Noel Abel will be held this coming Saturday.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PROACTIVE N.W.T. STRATEGY
ON CARBON EMISSIONS

Mr. Bromley: Yesterday our Premier indicated that the term "carbon-neutral" had not been heard before in this House. I would like to build on one aspect of this concept: economic tools for eliminating carbon emissions and thus mitigating climate change.

A new report of the National Round Table on the Economy and the Environment, entitled "Getting to 2050: Canada's Transition to a Low-Emission Future," states the obvious: climate change is upon us.

Of key interest to me, however, was the authors' conclusions that with a proactive and immediate response, we can also take advantage of some unique opportunities. We have some great opportunities right here in the Northwest Territories if we immediately provide the leadership required in managing our carbon emissions in a progressive and predictable way.

In the past few weeks alone, chief economist executives from CIBC, TD Bank and the C.D. Howe Institute have spoken out in favour of the economic and environmental benefits of carbon pricing to manage emissions.

The Conference Board of Canada just released a report demanding immediate action on carbon valuations. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers is prepared to move on a carbon tax.

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives has recognized the need for economy-wide action on carbon reduction mechanisms.

Mr. Speaker, these institutions are all representative of those industries that are most active in the N.W.T. — active both in generating our economy and, unfortunately, also at generating the cause and cost of climate change here and around the world. They just want a certain, predictable and fair system within which to plan and grow their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, it is only the final ingredient that is missing, and that ingredient is political will. I believe that here in the 16th Assembly we can demonstrate the political will and leadership to make this happen. Be it a carbon trading or carbon tax policy, be it the Mackenzie gas pipeline, my furnace at home or the vehicle or airline that transports us to meetings, a fair, well-designed and predictable carbon pricing system will provide revenue while paying back benefits through reduced taxes, energy savings and reduced and avoided environmental costs of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, representing the source of more than half of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, are all currently....

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Bromley, your time for Members' statements has expired.

Mr. Bromley: I request permission to continue my statement. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Members, the Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, colleagues.

More than half of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are all currently in talks to set up a carbon cap and trade system. Did we consider joining them at the recent Premiers' conference on climate change? Are we moving aggressively to implement a carbon tax to provide the level playing field for all our businesses and to stimulate environmentally and socially responsible economic development?

This is a responsible leadership opportunity, Mr. Speaker. The time to move is now. I will measure the strength of this House on the political will and leadership we demonstrate on this pressing issue in the immediate future.

I will have questions related to this issue and the Premiers' conference on climate change. Mahsi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ROLE OF G.N.W.T. CIVIL SERVICE
IN BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My hearing is going; I didn't hear you the first time.

Mr. Speaker, since the Finance Minister's fiscal strategy announcement, which outlined the need for massive budget reductions for 2008-2009, Members have all been working very hard considering how to reduce expenditures, the implications of reductions and how to minimize the impacts of those reductions.

One of the unforeseen impacts that has resulted from the announcement of the fiscal strategy is the effect it has had on G.N.W.T. employees and the non-governmental employees who deliver programs and services for the G.N.W.T. The uncertainty with regard to job security that now exists in the public service is very unfortunate.

This situation has highlighted for me a culture in the public service that must be changed. Employees are our best and most valuable resource, a resource we don't tap into often enough. Senior management, including ministers, must recognize this value and be open to suggestions from any and all employees. In fact, good change and the best ideas often come from those in the trenches, so to speak. But do we ask for those ideas? Not often enough. We need better communication with our employees at all levels — communication that flows in both directions, not just to employees but also coming from employees.

Communication must be honest, it must be open and it must be often. Feedback from the government's human resources, our employees, must be welcomed. It has been proven many times over in other jurisdictions and in private industry that staff can and do positively contribute to programs, services and savings. The staff doing the on-the-ground work know best how to improve service delivery or to make changes to garner savings.

Mr. Speaker, we must encourage staff input and give credit for speaking up. We must support and develop a culture of creativity and imagination. That can only happen in an open, inviting, risk-free environment, and that environment we don't have at the moment.

The G.N.W.T. needs to establish a government-wide incentive program, one with monetary awards to promote savings through staff suggestions. We are looking for ways to reduce expenditures. This can be one of them. I think we will be surprised at what comes forward.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ECONOMIC LOSSES FROM
MIGRANT WORKERS

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about an issue that continues to cause a great deal of concern and frustration to many Northerners. That issue, Mr. Speaker, is the proliferation of migrant workers in this Territory. The latest numbers put the figure at over 3,300 migrant workers. These out-of-Territory workers take with them over \$350 million every year to southern Canada. Not only does this money not circulate in our local economies, Northerners looking for work are being denied access to jobs.

The extraction and removal of non-renewable resources and the benefits which should accrue to the people who live here has to be adjusted in a much more vigorous and vigilant way by this government. Far too often Northerners' companies or joint ventures are subcontracted to companies in southern Canada. Companies and contractors should be monitored to ensure that they are maximizing Northern human resources in the execution of these contracts.

I want to share with you, briefly, a snapshot of what is happening. Northern company A gets a construction contract with Diamond Mine X. They subcontract the work to a southern company, which hires 40 people to do the work. Thirty-two are from Newfoundland, three from the other provinces and five are from the Northwest Territories, of which four are aboriginal. Of the roughly \$400,000 in wages per rotation available, \$330,000 leaves this Territory — \$300,000 to Newfoundland alone. This is every rotation, Mr. Speaker, and just on one contract. In addition, wages for southern employees are subsidized to pay for their airfare back to and from their home province.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is also guilty of bringing in migrant workers, many of whom are former employees working on contract for the government of the Northwest Territories. If former employees don't live here, don't bring them back. That is quite simple, Mr. Speaker. We badly need a strategy to address migrant workers. It is bad enough that our share of resource revenue goes to Ottawa, but when money, jobs and opportunities are given away to southern Canada, then we need to do something about it.

We need to be working with industry to ensure any Northerner that is able-bodied and has the ability to work is given top priority. We need subsidized airfare from Yellowknife to Inuvik and to Fort Smith, rather than from Deer Lake and Gander, Mr. Speaker.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MUSKOX HUNT IN SACHS HARBOUR

Mr. Jacobson: Today I'd like to talk about a community event that is truly a community event, the muskox hunt that will be soon be happening in Sachs Harbour. In talking to community members, the hunt is a very good thing for the whole community. Currently there are 16 residents employed for the hunt in the cutting and distribution of the harvested meat. As many as 30 people will be put to work — not bad for a community of 115 people.

In addition to the meat, the hunt will provide an immediate economic boost for the community, as plans are underway to sell the delicious meat throughout the Northwest Territories, as well as selling the kiviak to buyers all the way over to Italy. A total of 500 muskox will be harvested. That's a lot of freezer space, Mr. Speaker.

The community hasn't had a hunt since 2005, so it has been three years in the waiting. I'd like to recognize the efforts of a few key individuals who worked hard to make this happen. Mr. Warren Esau of the local hunters and trappers association has been working hard since last summer, and his efforts have been rewarded. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to acknowledge the elders of the community and the important role they play in guiding and keeping this traditional event alive and well. I am not sure if all of you have had the opportunity to taste this truly Northern delicacy, but if you have the opportunity, I recommend it. You won't be disappointed.

Good luck to the hunters and to the community. I look forward to some freshly hunted muskox meat. By the way, Mr. Speaker, I just got off the phone with the mayor, Bob Eldridge. The temperature is minus 51 with the wind chill in the community, and they're still heading out.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the time to thank the Minister of ITI, Mr. Bob McLeod, and his staff for making this muskox hunt possible for the community.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
AIR QUALITY CONCERNS
AT DIAMOND JENNESS HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, we learned of the urgent matter of the possible contamination of the air quality in Hay River's Diamond Jenness school. I'm very upset to hear that our students may have been subjected to harm. We've been raising concerns about the air handling and air quality for a number of years, but I had no idea that asbestos particles might have even been a possibility.

During the last government I learned of a technical review that had taken place on the school. I was

unable to get a copy of it because it was confidential. In the closing days of the last government, Mr. Krutko, then Minister of PWS, did provide me with a copy of the document on a confidential basis.

At the earliest possible opportunity we raised the issues with the new Minister, leading to a recent visit to Hay River. I was raising issues such as air quality, water quality, air handling, extreme heat in the spring, cold areas in the winter and possible fire-code violations. But never did I think there was a possibility that the insulation on the heating pipes and elbows had deteriorated, possibly allowing airborne asbestos particles to mix with the air circulated throughout the school.

I don't want to cause undue alarm to students, staff or former students, but I have to wonder how long this potentially compromised environment may have existed. Air samples are being taken regularly now, and the samples are being sent to Edmonton for analysis. While this process is taking place, not knowing what the results will indicate, it's difficult to know what to do to prepare for those results. If the school is deemed to be unsafe to occupy, arrangements will need to be made for alternate accommodations for the high school students. The closure of the school for this week will be disruptive enough, not to mention that we need to find alternate classroom spaces if we require them for a period of time.

I would like to be assured that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will treat this matter as the utmost priority. Right now I'm sure students, staff and parents alike will have many questions on their minds. The school administration and the DEA will need the support of this government in undertaking to answer questions and communicate with anyone who might have been impacted while we wait for these results.

Mr. Speaker, I heard principal Greg Storey interviewed on the radio this morning. I want to commend him for the initiative that he took in requesting the inspection which resulted in this information coming to light. I believe he made the best decision possible to close the school. The well-being of our students and staff must be our highest priority.

I look forward to being kept fully apprised in a timely manner of the results of the testing being undertaken and any contingency plans that must be made in follow-up.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES
IN THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

Mr. Hawkins: Today I will speak on behalf of many of my constituents who rent their accommodations in Yellowknife Centre.

The Residential Tenancies Act allows landlords to raise the rents once per year with adequate notice. This puts tenants at a disadvantage when it comes time to renegotiate a lease. They can be left in a position with little options: they can be offered a 12-month lease with a rental increase, or they can enter into a month-by-month lease with even a larger increase.

The problem arises as to whether you commit yourself to a long-term lease and realize some savings, or you lose the flexibility. Or do you keep paying whatever rate they're offering?

Mr. Speaker, long-term leases have their place. They give landlords the peace of mind that their properties are rented and allow the renters some certainty for budgeting over a long period of time. However, I believe when the economy is hot and the vacancy rate is low, there should be some mechanism that makes it easier for a renter to break the terms of a lease to help people follow potential opportunities. Rental increases need to have merit, based on modesty, not on gluttony. A new Norman Rockwell artwork in the lobby shouldn't constitute a need for a rent increase. I'm talking about what's affordable and about fairness.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lack of reasonable protection in the act for renters at this time. With these types of consumer-protection clauses that I talked about today, I certainly hope that we'll be looking at that when the proposed Residential Tenancies Act comes forward to this Assembly for deliberation.

I want to close on two points. The first one is quite clear: you could double someone's rent, and there's nothing that could be done about it. The fact that somebody may say, "We would never do that," doesn't mean they don't have the possibility to do that. The second point. Pontius Pilate once washed his hands of responsibility for making a fateful decision. He let the crowd determine the justice. Don't let this government wash its hands of the responsibility for protecting our consumers, our constituents, our people, our family.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PARTICIPATION OF
G.N.W.T. STAFF VOLUNTEERS AT THE
2008 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Abernethy: Mr. Speaker, the 2008 Arctic Winter Games are rapidly approaching. We have roughly three weeks before athletes begin to

descend upon Yellowknife and the N.W.T. By all accounts these games are going to be huge and will be good for the city of Yellowknife and the N.W.T. as a whole.

To make these games a success, it's going to take a significant amount of time and effort from all parties: the Arctic Winter Games staff, the city of Yellowknife, the G.N.W.T., the many sponsors and, most importantly, the volunteers. In fact, to run the games approximately 2,500 volunteers will be required.

To ensure that the games are a success, the Arctic Winter Games has requested that the government allow G.N.W.T. staff — about 60 people in key roles — time off for the week of the games. In addition, they requested that additional staff registered as volunteers with the games office be allowed to leave at 3 p.m. without penalty when they are scheduled as a volunteer for 4 p.m. I would like to applaud the government for allowing the 60 volunteers in key roles up to eight working days per year to participate. This goes a long way in helping deliver a successful games.

Unfortunately, the Department of Human Resources has declined the second request. The department has indicated that any additional G.N.W.T. volunteers must liquidate annual leave or lieu time if they wish to participate. This limits the number of volunteers as well as complicates scheduling. This direction is directly contrary to the decision made in 1998 when the games were last held in Yellowknife. At that time staff were allowed to leave at 3 p.m. when scheduled to do a voluntary duty at 4 p.m., without affecting their personal leave credits.

This year's rigid and short-sighted application of their policies is not in the best interest of the G.N.W.T. staff or the games as a whole. Supporting dedicated staff who are willing to contribute their time is in the best interests of the community and of the North and is worth the investment. Let's work with staff and the Arctic Winter Games to ensure that the games run smoothly and are representative of the N.W.T. and those of us who are proud to call it our home. Let's reduce the paperwork, let's support our staff, and let's support the games.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I'll be asking the Minister of Human Resources questions concerning their rigid application of the policy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
AKLAVIK WATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, we all heard in the news over the last number of weeks about the in-depth study that's going on in Aklavik, where they're testing all the residents of Aklavik because of the stomach cancer concerns and the high number of

people with stomach cancer in that community. We as a government are responsible for the infrastructure in a lot of our communities, and a lot of the concerns in regard to the findings of this study will let us know exactly what some of the causes of this stomach cancer are in the community. The community residents have always been concerned with the water process that's being used in regard to the treatment of water, the distribution of water and also disposable water in our communities.

H. pylori is something that's been around for some time. I've raised this even going all the way back to the 13th Assembly in regard to Fort McPherson, where we had a THM outbreak in regard to the water source in that community. We now have a new water source. Again, it all comes down to this government's commitment to ensuring that the infrastructure in all our communities, especially in aboriginal communities, are meeting the public safety standards of healthy drinking water and making sure that our public is being safely served with the water we provide.

I think it's important that we as government not only look at water delivery as simply taking water from a source, putting it to a treatment facility, delivering it to a community or home by way of a water truck, and then disposing of it into a lagoon or our rivers and lakes. I think it's important that this government invests and upgrades the systems we have in our communities for the outdated and obsolete that are not meeting Northern and national standards.

I believe the government of the Northwest Territories is in negotiation with the federal government for a new fund called the Building Canada Fund. At the appropriate time I will be asking the Premier questions on exactly how communities can access this fund to improve the infrastructure in the communities, especially dealing with the importance of our water treatment facilities in our communities, to ensure that all people in the N.W.T. have safe drinking water.

Mr. Speaker: Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery, Mr. Beaulieu.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, today I wish to recognize individually Chipewyan interpreter trainees and elders from Tu Nedhe. We have Elizabeth Boucher, Nancy Casaway, Henry Catholique, Bernadette Lockhart, Mary Jane Michel, Alizette Abel, Joyce Isadore — all from Lutselk'e — Terry Villeneuve, Pete King, Archie Smith, Joyce Hessdorfer and the instructor Sabet Biscaye. Terry and Pete are from Fort Resolution,

Archie is from Thebacha, Joyce Isadore and Sabet are from Tetlit'Zheh.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. We are aware that these folks will be in the House on Thursday and Friday, practicing their Chipewyan, and we are looking forward to that.

Mr. McLeod: I would like to use this opportunity to recognize my son Ryan, who is down here visiting me. But because we have been so busy, we haven't really seen that much of each other.

Mr. Speaker: If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you enjoy the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here.

Item 7, acknowledgements, Hon. Jackson Lafferty.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 3-16(2)
MS. GISELLE MARION – TLICHO LAWYER

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: [English translation not provided].

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Ms. Giselle Marion of Behchoko, who recently passed the N.W.T. bar exam. Ms. Marion is a role model among Tlicho youth. She has demonstrated to her peers that with hard work and perseverance, most dreams can come true. It is Ms. Marion's intention to return to the North, to get back to her community. It is her wish to work with the Tlicho.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Tlicho Nation and the government of the Northwest Territories, I would like to recognize this young woman for her achievement. We are very proud of her. I wish her all the luck in her future endeavours. Mahsi.

Applause.

Mr. Speaker: Item 8, oral questions, Mrs. Goenewegen.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 49-16(2)
AIR QUALITY CONCERNS AT
DIAMOND JENNESS SCHOOL

Mrs. Goenewegen: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, I don't wish to cause any undue alarm in Hay River. However, if I were the parent of a student who had been attending the school and now they knew there were issues around air quality and possible asbestos particle contamination, this week would seem like a very long week, waiting to find out if in fact there was the presence of this in there.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services if she is aware of any kind of testing that exists that would definitely determine if people had been exposed to asbestos particles in the air — any kind of medical test.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for the question.

It is my understanding that tests have been done but the results are not out yet. We are expecting the results today.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I wasn't referring to the tests of the air quality in the school; I was referring to any test of the students and the staff that might indicate if they had been exposed to any kind of asbestos contamination. Is the Minister aware of any such medical test?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I should advise the Member and the House that this matter is within the jurisdiction of the DPW and WCB at the moment. They are doing studies of the level of asbestos in the building that's suspected. Once these results are out, we'll be moving to the next stage. The Department of Health and Social Services will become involved at that time.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I can switch to a different minister on the same topic or not. I was going to ask the Minister of Public Works some questions on the same topic, but I'll have to get back on the list again. Thank you.

QUESTION 50-16(2)
AKLAVIK WATER
TREATMENT FACILITIES

Mr. Krutko: In light of my statement in regard to the issue in Aklavik, where they're testing the residents of the community for H. pylori, an infection of the stomach, there has been a high number of cases of stomach cancer in that community. There is an in-depth study going on right now with regard to Dr. Morris and a bunch of people from different universities in southern Canada who have taken on this endeavour.

I would like to ask the Minister, in light of the funding situation we're in — and we're looking at a possible new source of funding by way of the Building Canada Fund — if those funds will be earmarked for communities that have problems such as issues related to water treatment, water delivery, or even dealing with water disposal in small communities so we can access some of those funds to deal with these types of instances in the Northwest Territories.

Hon. Michael McLeod: I trust that question was posed to me.

There are a number of sources of funding that have been flowing to the communities up to now that deal with water quality, water supply and things of that nature.

The Member is right. We are discussing and negotiating a new source of funding with the Government of Canada called the Building Canada Fund. We're also talking about an extension to the gas tax. Mr. Speaker, both these sources can be utilized for community infrastructure. At this time it's really difficult to see how much of it will be earmarked for communities, but a portion, we believe, will be going towards communities.

Mr. Krutko: In regard to the water treatment facilities, in the case of Aklavik, they do get their raw water from the Peel River which flows down from the Yukon. There are questions about contamination in that watershed.

I'm just wondering, as a government, these types of surveys that go on.... What role does MACA play in regard to following those surveys to see exactly what the implications of the outcomes could be for the government of the Northwest Territories by having to replace or upgrade our infrastructure in those communities?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Our government takes a multi-barrier approach to dealing with water and water quality in communities. It's a real area of concern, as Members would agree. We have a number of different departments working on water supply to communities. We have the ENR, which works on the source of water. We have MACA, which has testing of water treatment plant and also does the training. We have the Department of Health which does the testing for health purposes, and Public Works which works on some of the infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different departments and a number of barriers. We're trying to make it so we so that we have safe systems across the board. That's why we have so many departments involved.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the in-depth review that's going on in Aklavik, my question was more directed to what role this government plays in regard to that survey and the in-depth study that's going on in that community. As a government, are we involved in giving input by way of providing information surveys and whatnot that's been done? Are we going to be called so that when they do determine the source of the problem, we've given them as much information as we can so they can make a good decision, whatever the outcome is?

So my question is more in line of what government's role is in providing information to this group that's doing this survey.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the question is beyond my responsibility as MACA's mandate and jurisdiction. It should be directed towards Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, I would expect that all departments are paying close attention to the survey and the evaluation that's going on in Aklavik and will respond accordingly.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, in regard to my final supplementary, I'd just like to get some assurances from the Minister of MACA that community infrastructure will be considered when you're looking at setting your priorities for the Building Community Fund. In light of the area such as possible water contamination or problems with our water systems in our communities, those get top priority when it comes to distributing that fund from the federal government.

Hon. Michael McLeod: That's an easy response. I believe we've already agreed that municipalities should be receiving some of this money. We're having some early discussions with the local government association, and also we're talking to associations in the communities about how can we distribute this money and what kind of dollars are we talking about.

We need to set some criteria, and we need to be able to decide how that money will flow. So those things are ongoing. I can assure the Member that it will get serious consideration from this new line of funding from the government.

QUESTION 51-16(2)
ECONOMIC LOSSES FROM
MIGRANT WORKERS

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. It gets back to my Member's statement from earlier today, where I talked about migrant workers. According to the last information I have, it's 3,300 and counting — and these 3,300 migrant workers take with them \$350 million per year out of our Territorial economy.

I'd like to start off with asking the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment if the government has a plan to address or mitigate the situation that we're in today with the 3,300 migrant workers.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The issue of migrant workers has been a troublesome one for our government for some time. First of all, we have to recognize that we live in a democracy, so people are free to move and live wherever they want, as provided for under the Constitution of Canada.

We have been attempting to address the issues through the negotiation of socio-economic agreements with the mining industry companies, specifically diamond mines, through the negotiation of a socio-economic agreement with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline proponents.

Now, it's more difficult in the oil and gas sector, because that's a responsibility of the federal government. The federal government, through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, provides for benefit agreements with the oil and gas companies.

The way we looked at it, the best way to keep migrant workers living in the North is to make the Northwest Territories an attractive place for them to live. The best way to do that is to provide and make sure there is affordable housing and a lot of the benefits that we enjoy by living here. But the reality is it's becoming harder to attract skilled workers. There's a lot of competition for these workers, and the mining companies are finding that they have to offer these additional benefits.

Our plan is to go on the record and continue to express our concern about these activities to the mining companies. We hope to set up a process with the mining companies to work together to come up with solutions to this problem. We will certainly be communicating our concern to the federal government so they can take further action with regard to the workers involved in the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Ramsay: Specifically, I'd like to ask what campaign? When I gave my Member's statement, I mentioned a scenario. That was just for construction workers. It wasn't skilled labour we were talking about. Out of the 40 employees, maybe five or six were skilled labour. The rest were labourers being trained, most of them from Newfoundland.

I'm wondering what type of campaign our government has to show industry and these migrant workers that there are communities here in the Northwest Territories that have affordable housing and that are livable.

Hon. Bob McLeod: For those areas of responsibility such as construction contracts that are awarded by our government, we will certainly follow up to make sure that the requirements of the various contracts are adhered to.

With regard to workers from Newfoundland who are brought in to do construction projects rather than hiring local citizens, we would have to bring this to the attention of the federal government, which has responsibility for labour standards.

Mr. Ramsay: The large pockets of unemployment in the Northwest Territories are located in our

smaller communities. I'm wondering if the department and the government could work with communities to identify individuals in the small communities, guys who have skills and the ability to work. If we had a list or some type of avenue that would allow communities to get a list of individuals inside the community who wanted to work, it would make more sense to subsidize the airfare from here to Inuvik or to Fort Smith, rather than back to Newfoundland.

Is it possible for the department to look into setting up something like that in the communities on the ground level that is going to identify individuals for work in our resource sector? Thank you.

Hon. Bob McLeod: My understanding is that at one time, we did have such a registry of employees in the Northwest Territories. I would commit to finding out what happened to that registry. We may still have one. It only makes sense to do so.

In the oil and gas industry, there was a process whereby you expanded your area of coverage, so if you couldn't find people locally, you would go to the next level, which would be within the region, and then you would go to the Northwest Territories — sort of in concentric circles of employment. I would think that would be something that we would espouse.

I know that some of the smaller communities do have informal arrangements whereby they all know what skills are available. Then when they bid on jobs and contracts, they know who to get to, and they work together to make sure that communities get the benefits of contracts. Certainly, this is something that we'll be looking at.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: One other question. When the payroll tax was first introduced, it was a way to try to get some revenue from migrant workers. It was increased a couple of years ago to 2 per cent.

If a company — a Northern company — subcontracts with a company in the south, and the payroll is paid out of the south, are we not getting the 2 per cent payroll tax? Because the payroll is coming out of southern Canada to these workers who are working in our backyard and not paying the payroll tax. I'm wondering if there is some slippage there.

Hon. Bob McLeod: That certainly was the intention of the payroll tax. It comes down to a question of monitoring and enforcement. Wherever we are aware of it, the Department of Finance follows up to make sure that the payroll tax is imposed. It's more difficult to impose when the payments to individual workers are made outside of the Northwest Territories. That would be an area where we would have to look to see how we can

improve the monitoring and follow-up and collection of payroll taxes.

QUESTION 52-16(2)
CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES
IN THE RESIDENTIAL
TENANCIES ACT

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, today I raise the issue of concerns I have with the Residential Tenancies Act. I know it's coming forward eventually, and let's hope it comes forward in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the issue is about concern with protection, and the fact that I, not unlike in many other constituencies hereabouts in Yellowknife and throughout the Territories, have many rental units. It was told to me that someone was forced to sign a lease of.... I don't want to belabour the circumstances, but it was like: you sign here and pay this much, or basically get out if you don't like it, and the cost to leave.... People are being forced and squirmed into unusual circumstances that I don't think are fair.

My question to the Minister of Justice, who will oversee the update of this act, is: will he take that into consideration, in that we can help build modest increases to leases and rentals if they can be somewhat justified, as opposed to whatever they feel necessary?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, the Residential Tenancies Act will be given over to this House. It's forthcoming. I did manage to meet with the Standing Committee on Social Programs on January 21 just to give them a brief on the actual changes to the act itself and to get some more feedback from the committee as well. We are at the point where the act is within our department. There are changes that need to take place, and we are still accepting recommendations to the act itself. I will certainly take that into consideration, to work with my department, and how we can fit into our current act that will be in place. Mahsi.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for that. But one of the issues I highlighted in my Member's statement is that if somebody gets a job — and let's say they're a renter here in Yellowknife, and they get a job maybe somewhere in Nunakut, like my good colleague here — they have to break their lease. What if they've just signed a year's lease? This isn't a hypothetical question, because this actually does happen. So they're forced to pay out the remainder of the lease if they want to take a great job advancement somewhere else. The protection doesn't exist to allow them.... They only get out of the lease if there are good graces by that landlord. Those are the types of protections I'm talking about.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister inform this House if he'll take that into consideration when the review of this Residential Tenancies Act does come forward for a final decision?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, we will be taking into consideration what is brought forward here today, because the act is still in the works. It has been presented to the Social Programs Committee, and it will be brought to the House. I can certainly take those suggestions into consideration, work with my department, and see if we can integrate that through our discussion paper on the act itself. Mahsi.

Mr. Hawkins: I wasn't 100 per cent clear on the Minister's answers there. Did he say he would take into consideration those two areas of concern I raised: the way increases happen in the context of the amount; and further, about helping people get out of their leases if they're built into contracts and they have to leave the normal municipality they live in?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, these leases the Member is referring to.... There are different areas, different avenues, whether it be private contractors or at the community level. But certainly those suggestions will be taken into consideration in my discussion with my department, and possibly integrating that through the act that will be proposed. Certainly this is an ongoing discussion with our department — the act itself — so that will be taken into consideration for discussion. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the Minister has offered to do there, and I'll take his commitment on that.

Can I get a sense of the timeframe on when he expects that — updates, or the act to be made public — so we can have some public discussion on that? Further, can he assure me that he will deliver any updates on those suggestions to me as soon as possible?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly hoping to give notice of introduction of the bill later on this week. Mahsi.

QUESTION 53-16(2)
PROACTIVE N.W.T. STRATEGY ON
CARBON EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, climate change currently costs the Northwest Territories millions of dollars per year and a number of accidental deaths related to an increasingly unpredictable environment. Globally it is costing millions of lives and billions of dollars. Costs now extend to the loss of wildlife species, plants. It includes water contamination, infrastructure damage and so on.

Clearly some provinces are moving forward aggressively and acting on this issue.

What commitments did our Premier make at the recent Premiers' conference on climate change to act and provide leadership on presenting and adapting to climate change?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the area of climate change, as the Member stated, is one that we had a discussion on, driven by the Council of the Federation of Ministers and Premiers. The Premier of British Columbia had hosted that climate change conference. We made a presentation on climate adaptation for the Northwest Territories. As the Member pointed out in his Member's statement, we are feeling front and centre — although last week we seemed to be back into the days of cold weather in the North.

We have put forward a position that the country needs to recognize as we're front line on the changes that are occurring. We need to have help in adapting to the impact as well as take a role in how we can lessen our footprints on the environment.

Mr. Bromley: You know, I don't doubt that we could use help, and everybody would like to minimize our costs and so on. But I think we have a huge potential to do lots of things ourselves. I am again looking for leadership on this issue. I am sure the Premier picked up a lot of things, with the sharing of ideas and so on.

What insights did the Premier pick up that will enable us to move forward with or without help from outside this jurisdiction, given that our population is quite concerned and the costs are accruing to us?

Hon. Floyd Roland: We have done a number of things. Past governments have, for example, replaced old appliances with more efficient appliances, the way we build our homes, the construction techniques that we use for public infrastructure, as well as some of our own transportation infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I use the example of mitigating the impact of permafrost. We are putting SM insulation underneath tarmac in a number of our facilities across the North. We are trying to take those types of steps.

Other factors, Mr. Speaker: we have even initiated some work to be undertaken by Ministers within this government. Minister Miltenberger is the lead with ENR on climate change initiatives, including a number of departments. We are looking at the hydro potential in the Northwest Territories, and Minister McLeod is the lead minister on the energy file. We are taking those types of steps.

The Member talked about looking at the options out there. There are a number of jurisdictions out in front of us. Quebec, for example, talked about a

carbon tax. We are looking at those types of initiatives here in the Northwest Territories as well.

Mr. Bromley: Thanks to the Premier for that response. It's great to hear about those things, and I am sure our public will be on board to help out with those initiatives.

I don't want to cloud the issue of prevention or mitigation with adaptation. When we are spending money to change the way we build airport strips, that is adapting to the changes that are happening now. We need to balance that with efforts directed at preventing further climate change. So I'd like to keep those distinctions there.

I appreciate the moves that we're making to adapt to climate change, but adaptation is basically spending a lot of money, because climate change is happening. Obviously the preference is to prevent that. So again, I appreciate those responses.

What aggressive action are we taking to take full advantage of the federal programs that are out there? By way of example, I had the opportunity to work with the community of Whati. I suppose over two or three years, that community had enjoyed about \$750,000 to \$1 million of support from the federal government. The early bird gets the worm. How are we being that early bird and getting support from the federal government on the issues of climate change?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, through our departments we're working with the federal government on a number of fronts trying to take advantage of the dollars that are out there, and how we look at the developments or how we take part in trying to lessen our footprint here in the Northwest Territories in the sense of the impact on the environment. We've got our own greenhouse gas strategy and are building on that. The Department of ENR is, again, doing its work. As we set out our strategic initiatives, it's another avenue where we as the 16th Assembly can further look at the initiatives that we want to undertake as a government.

Mr. Speaker: Final short supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Again, I appreciate all the initiatives that I'm hearing about here. Probably the biggest single thing we can do is levy a carbon tax or some way of pricing our carbon emissions so that our industry, especially large industry, will get on board. Are the Premier and his cabinet contemplating that move?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, along with the fiscal environment we find ourselves in, we also need to look at revenue options. As I stated earlier, we are looking at a number of those options. A carbon tax is one of those on a list that we would

have to come back to this Assembly with to see if there's support for bringing something like that forward.

QUESTION 54-16(2)
ROLE OF G.N.W.T. CIVIL SERVICE
IN BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Bisaro: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow up on my statement in which I talked about using our employees as a resource. I'd like to ask the Minister of Human Resources what mechanisms currently exist for staff to provide input into our annual budget process?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize that human resources are our biggest asset, and we always try to get the input of individual staff and employees, because we find that they're the ones that work with the programs and services that we deliver. Generally they come up with some of the best ideas that we have.

We have developed, as a government, a communications strategy and approach for dealing with our budgeting process. We have requested our deputy ministers to send information to their managers, and all managers are familiar with the process.

I would suggest to employees that have any suggestions or comments and want to have input into the process, to raise them with their supervisors or managers. We would welcome their comments.

Ms. Bisaro: So I take it from the Minister's answer that there are no formal mechanisms and processes in regard to input for the budget.

I would ask the Minister whether or not there are any mechanisms in place, apart from the informal system that he's already outlined, for an individual or for staff to provide input into.... Sorry. Should they see that there are efficiencies to be gained in an operation or savings to be gained, is there a mechanism for them to have input into the department's operation?

Hon. Bob McLeod: As a government, we have a number of employee recognition programs in which we recognize employees who have provided service above and beyond the call of duty and have made recommendations or suggestions that have resulted in savings or improved efficiencies for the government. We have long service awards, we have Premier's awards of excellence, we have ministerial awards, and we have deputy minister recognition awards. We used to have a program whereby we would have financial rewards for employees, where they were reimbursed a nominal amount for any suggestions that resulted in real financial savings for the government. But that program is no longer in existence.

Ms. Bisaro: Mr. Speaker, having heard the Minister's answer, I'm sensing that there is not a strong formal program at the moment for input from staff.

Two questions, I guess. Maybe I'll ask them one at a time. The first one is whether or not the Minister can advise if there's any real input from staff, any real savings, any real efficiencies that come from the various recognition programs that he outlined.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I guess the best recognition is the performance pay that employees receive. If they perform well, they receive performance pay. I think the Member is looking for "dollars for ideas" type of programs. We don't have that, but we do have formal employee recognition programs that are provided on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Yes, I am looking for a formal program with monetary recognition. I think it's important. The Minister mentioned that there was a program earlier with nominal recognition. To my mind, something like 10 per cent of the amount of savings which are garnered would be an incentive. If somebody saves \$200,000 for this government, that certainly is going to give them incentive to do it. So I would ask the Minister if he would consider reinstating such a program.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, as a government we're always looking to find new ways of improving the morale of our employees and new ways to improve our performance. So it's certainly something that we would look into as part of our Employee Recognition Program.

QUESTION 55-16(2)
PARTICIPATION OF G.N.W.T. STAFF
VOLUNTEERS AT THE 2008
ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Abernethy: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Human Resources and are related to the Arctic Winter Games and the volunteers, G.N.W.T. staff in particular.

The question is very specific to a two-hour block — two hours maximum per day — where individuals would be allowed to volunteer without penalty against their lieu time or annual leave. So where operational requirements permit and where a G.N.W.T. staff is registered as a volunteer and is either scheduled from a 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. shift or a 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. shift, the government has said no. Basically, if you need that two hours at the beginning of the day or at the end of the day, you have to use lieu or annual.

It seems a bit short-sighted to me. It seems like we actually are creating a lot more work through entry

into PeopleSoft — through entry or verification and approval in PeopleSoft. It would be better if the people who met those conditions, if we were just to say, "Yeah, you can take that time where operational requirements permit." Unfortunately the answer was no.

Is there any way I can get the Minister to review and reverse that decision in order to reduce the paperwork, support our staff and support the Arctic Winter Games?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I too am looking forward to the Arctic Winter Games. We're looking forward to having the most successful games on record. I understand that the Arctic Winter Games Host Society have reached their quota for volunteers and have shut off their requests for assistance.

I think I should point out that we have followed the policies of the government, and any employees who require time off have not been denied. We haven't denied any reasonable requests. I think that as a government.... And we also have a commitment from our senior managers that we want to make the Arctic Winter Games a success.

We have provided time off, annual leave — or Arctic Winter Games leave, I guess I should call it — for athletes and coaches and also for chairs that have been identified by the host society. Senior managers are prepared to make flexible arrangements, or flex arrangements, with staff that require time off to go to the different venues and work out the arrangements so that our government operations can continue.

Mr. Abernethy: I happily acknowledge that the government is doing a lot for the Arctic Winter Games and that the commitments they've made are good commitments, but I come back to that two-hour block. You're asking people to take lieu and you're asking people to take annual. This volunteering is good for the community; it's good for the public service. In fact, it can almost be viewed as a public service.

You talked about the fact that they've already got the 2,500 volunteers. Yes, but now they're trying to schedule them. It's proving to be quite difficult as people don't want to work certain blocks because they can't afford to take lieu and they can't afford to take annual.

By allowing people up to two hours, which is, say, the equivalent that you've given casual time if they had a doctor's appointment, you would be supporting the Games to a greater extent. You'd be showing the government's commitment.

I didn't hear any sort of reference in your response as to whether you would review the decision, rescind the decision and allow our employees a two-hour maximum. If they want to work longer, I

could see lieu and annual. But I'm talking about a two-hour block at either the beginning of the day or the end of the day where Arctic Winter Games is having trouble filling schedules that G.N.W.T. employees would happily fill if they didn't have to liquidate their own time.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We certainly recognize the considerable effort required to host the Arctic Winter Games, and also the significant volunteer efforts required to make the Arctic Winter Games successful. Our senior managers have committed that they will be very flexible. They will make flexible arrangements for those government employees who are volunteers for the Arctic Winter Games, such that if they have to leave for two hours at three o'clock on any given day, they can make arrangements to be available for Arctic Winter Games work.

Mr. Abernethy: In 1998, when the Games were last here, we had similar policies in place and the government's decision at that time was, "Let the staff have the two hours." I'm wondering why, several years later, we now look at the same or very similar policies and we're rigidly applying them. We are not seeing the value in having our staff work on the Games. We are not seeing the value in giving them the time they need without taking credit away from them. We're saying, "Yeah, do it, it's great, but you have to use your own time," whereas in the past, we've stood up for employees and given them the time they need to support this valuable community and Territorial event.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I want to point out a couple of things. First of all, I am familiar with the letter that the Member is referring to. We've reviewed this request on at least two occasions and have expanded the original ruling to make Arctic Winter Games leave available to the chairs of the various committees and to the first-responders.

This is an area where we have had some responses from volunteers who are not G.N.W.T. employees, who don't think it's a good use of money when somebody working as a volunteer beside them is getting paid and they're volunteering their own time. We have to have a bit of a balance in this regard.

QUESTION 56-16(2)
NORTHERN ARTWORK IN
GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Mr. Menicoche: I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement and ask the Minister of Public Works and Services — perhaps the Premier would care to answer as well — a question with respect to our arts enhancement policy. I would like to know where this government stands with respect to that policy. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, the last government passed a motion and it was

accepted by the House. I would like to know where the government stands on this issue today. Mahsi.

Hon. Michael McLeod: The Public Works and Services standards for building construction usually focus on safety and design efficiencies, and not so much on artwork. It's something that we still haven't adopted as part of our government to include in our infrastructure. Adding an art component to our infrastructure sometimes doesn't make sense, as in the case of water treatment plants or sewer treatment facilities. It adds to the cost overall, and it really starts to complicate things when we start designing facilities and buildings and try to accommodate the artwork.

This is something we have to have further discussion on. I will commit to having that discussion with my cabinet colleagues.

Mr. Menicoche: The benefits of arts-enhancing policies are many. One of them, of course, is to provide revenues to our people as well as to stimulate our art and culture sector. That's the reasoning behind that policy. I'm surprised that the government hasn't done much work on this, and I thought they were.

I'd just like to ask the Minister how much work has been done to date. He said... I wasn't quite sure of the answer there.

Hon. Michael McLeod: I have to inform the Member that we haven't had the opportunity to discuss this policy recommendation to any degree at all. We do, however, incorporate some consideration when we deal with committees in terms of cultural setting and cultural enhancements. I will, however — I said earlier — undertake to have that discussion with my colleagues.

Mr. Menicoche: Just in terms of impact upon how much of a building can a program like this work.... We've got an \$8 million building being built in Fort Simpson and approximate \$80,000 in arts and crafts to stimulate the region and the whole North. Yes, there's a cost, but the benefits outweigh the cost in this instance. I'd like the assurance of the Minister that he'll analyze that as well — not only the cost aspects but the benefits aspects.

Hon. Michael McLeod: The Member has pointed out an excellent point that needs to be considered by all planning departments that deal with Public Works and Services. In the case of Fort Simpson, there's an additional cost of \$80,000. That's \$80,000 more than the department that the community would need to come up with.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's not a decision I can make in isolation. I have made the commitments to have that discussion.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: I'd like to know if the government or the Public Works department is going to look at any art purchases for this new building that's going up in Fort Simpson.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Public Works doesn't purchase art or provide for art. I would have to make that request to the planning department, and I'll do that.

QUESTION 57-16(2)
CONTRACT TENDERS FOR
REGIONAL MATERIALS AND SERVICES

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, going back to my Member's statement on the materials supply tender, the local and regional suppliers proved that they are capable of submitting competitive prices. I'm not here to tell N.W.T. Housing Corporation how to do their job. I am here to tell them that we want a fair and competitive process for all businesses, regardless of what they do.

I'd like to direct my question today to the Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Housing Corp. I'd like to ask him what the rationale was that the Housing Corp used for coming up with this process.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, the rationale for the Housing Corporation was based on trying to obtain efficiencies, economies of scale, logistical and quality control, returns to maximize transportation corridors. Mainly, in their view, it was better support of Northern suppliers. But the key one was economies of scale.

Mr. McLeod: Better support of Northern economies was a good statement to make, because that's where I'm coming from. Some of the regional suppliers have basically been left out of the mix, because they're capable of supplying the regions; wider-scale is a little harder on them because they're regionally based. I'm sure they could make the effort. But that's not my point.

I'd like to ask the Minister if the regional suppliers have been proven incapable of supplying this tender.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I don't think this is a reflection so much of the inability of regional suppliers, but on the attempt of the Housing Corporation to try to maximize the dollars they do have via the Affordable Housing Initiative. At this time, they are trying to do the repairs and improvements on the units they do have. So it was an issue of economies of scale, as opposed to a lack of capable Northern suppliers, when they were looking at supplying within their region.

Mr. McLeod: I do know for a fact that a lot of the regional suppliers have proved competitive in the past, and they have been able to submit quality bids for the supply in their region. So I'd like to ask

the Minister if it's proven that there's a significant cost savings to the way the Housing Corp is proposing to do business.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, the Housing Corporation is always interested in trying to be as efficient and effective and fair as possible. We'd be happy to discuss this issue with committees, to look at the numbers to make sure this is the best way possible. Are there other options? Right now it's based on 11 commodities Territory-wide. If there's a regional application base developed that is competitive, I'd certainly be prepared to look at that. I'd be more than happy to sit down with the appropriate committee to look at this.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister for that. I've seen cases where too many terms and conditions have been put on tenders that go out there, effectively eliminating a lot of people from being able to bid on this work.

I'd like to ask the Minister — and I think he made that commitment... I'd like a commitment to have the Housing Corp put out regional tenders for all regions in the N.W.T., so that they can bid on their region. If they choose to bid on the whole of the N.W.T., they have the option also. It's worked before, I believe, and I think it'll work again.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to, as a first step, is to share the rationale and the math, in terms of economies of scale, that allowed the Housing Corporation to come to the decision to adopt this particular policy. I'll share that with committee, and we'll see what those numbers add up to in terms of how a regional application compares Territory-wide, based on commodities. Together we can see what that information tells us and discuss the best way to move forward.

QUESTION 58-16(2)
AFTERCARE PROGRAMS FOR
ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, in November I raised the issue of follow-up on treatment programs for individuals. My questions were directed to the Minister of Health and Social Services. The Minister wrote me back, just a couple of days ago, in response to my concern about not having a follow-up process. One of the statements in her letter to me basically put the onus back on the person who's sought treatment programs and basically said it's their obligation to work through this process, and if they want to call in for support, it's up to them

Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the Minister is taking, back to my reference earlier, the Pontius Pilate approach: "You've come for treatment. Good

luck; see you later; you're on your own." I'd like the Minister to reconsider this approach by establishing a follow-up process for anyone who receives treatment, and have our employees give folks a call every once in a while to make sure they're doing okay. Would she reconsider that process?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I must say I have a different interpretation. I read that letter quite differently. I reviewed it a number of times, and a lot of thought was put into that. If I remember correctly, the letter I sent to him said that there is, in fact, an after-care program, where the Northern residents are sent to.

For anybody who is involved in wanting to deal with their addiction, the most important part of recovering and living an addiction-free life is self-motivation and self-discipline. The letter did indicate that where the residents are sent to institutional settings, they work out the after-care program with the places where they've been treated. They are encouraged to have an ongoing relationship and contact with them.

Any after-care programs that work together in partnership with the regional staff of the Department of Health and Social Services have wellness workers and addiction specialists who work with the people who want help. We in this House know addiction issues can only be addressed when the individuals involved take full control over the process.

Mr. Hawkins: My concern is what the Minister just pointed out right there. She read the letter and she reviewed the letter, but I'm concerned it wasn't written by the Minister or with the intent to call it what it was.

"There's a phone number here. They can call in." Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about taking the responsibility one level further. I'm sure employees aren't too busy to call folks once every three months to make sure they're doing okay.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister again: will she move forward by setting up a policy that encourages our staff to get out there? When someone goes through treatment, they call them and follow up and just say: "Hey, how are you doing? Are you feeling okay? If you need any help, here's the phone number and process to get back and re-engage." Would the Minister do that?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, the letter the Member is referring to is not before the House. I have a problem with the Member misquoting and misinterpreting that letter. I stand by that letter. That letter has some information that says our workers work in full partnership with anybody who wants help with their addiction issues, whether that be by working with the wellness and addictions workers or

by wanting to get treatment. The department and my staff are involved with the process throughout.

I'm just saying that those who go through programs like Poundmaker or any institutional setting, they have a separate relationship and a separate process that is designed by that institution, and the people involved have to take full control over that. I think the Member is completely misunderstanding that information.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, we're asking for a simple process. The Minister can set forward an initiative, a directive, by saying "Create a consultation process that phones people once every three months, six months" — whatever the Minister feels appropriate — "to re-engage folks." We're throwing money away if we send them out for treatment and we don't help them follow through. Treatment is a lifelong process. We just can't say, "Here's a pill. Take it. Good luck. See you later. You're on your own." I want to see that we follow up with people. It's a good investment for people; it shows the government cares.

Would the Minister send out a directive to create a follow-up process so people who seek treatment get continual care for a number of years, to make sure they know we care about them and their success?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I state for the Member again, that process is in place. Our wellness workers and addiction workers are continually with those who want help. I don't really understand. That work is being done, and that is my answer.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: I haven't tabled the letter yet, so I'm not going to read it word for word. But one of the facilities has a phone number for people to call when they so desire. I'm talking about changing that around. I think the Minister perhaps has not read the letter that was written for her closely enough, because it says the situation is the other way around.

Would the Minister set up a program as I have suggested?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm happy to repeat again that those who want to have an addiction-free life have to make that choice, and they have to access programs. All the help is available to them. It is not beyond good practice and policy to ask people to be engaged in their own healing process.

All the help is there. The numbers are there. Our workers are in communities. Wellness workers are there. It's a good policy. The programs are there for the people to access.

QUESTION 59-16(2)
 RETROFIT FOR DIAMOND
 JENNESS HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs. Groenewegen: My question is for the Minister Responsible for Public Works and Services.

There was a technical review done on the Diamond Jenness Secondary School quite a number of years ago which listed items of priority. Code requirements were one of the areas that were listed. Areas of life safety and health were listed separately.

It would appear that for quite some time, the department, through their assessment of this building, was aware that there was asbestos on heating pipes in this building.

Under "Code-required items, if renovation planned, not complete" was:

"Remove asbestos from heating system, piping elbows, and investigate pipe elbows in crawlspace for asbestos. Present asbestos within the facility is non-friable, is encapsulated, identified by signs, and logged in log book. No immediate action required as it is not hazardous to health as long as it is not disturbed."

I believe that the pipes and the elbows in question where the insulation containing asbestos was compromised were actually covered with duct tape, which apparently is not an acceptable practice.

This situation in the Diamond Jenness School has existed for some time, and it goes to the reason why a renovation retrofit should have been done a long time ago. Asbestos in buildings is a very sensitive issue. It has a long history of information about health risks.

I'd like to know from the Minister why this specific item was never completed, based on previous reports, which brings us to today's situation where the air handling being fed through the whole building has possibly come in contact with these corroded asbestos-coated pipes?

Hon. Michael McLeod: The Member is correct that there is a significant amount of upgrading and retrofit that's required in the school. Our report — I believe we're looking at the same report — confirms that. That information has been provided to the Department of Health.

In this case, we've had a situation where some material fell off the heating pipes. We haven't confirmed if it is asbestos as of yet. However, we have taken the precaution of having air quality testing done. We've taken the material and sent it south, and we're waiting for those results. We suspect that the material may contain some asbestos, but we have yet to confirm that.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, right now, the school has been closed. I anticipate that if no asbestos of significant amount is found, the school may reopen as soon as Friday. If that is not the case, we have a big problem on our hands.

I'd like to ask the Minister what the chances are of expediting the retrofit to this school at this time.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, our job is to do the evaluation and take an assessment of the condition of the school. We have done that. We've shared that with the principal and the MLAs. We've also forwarded it to the Department of Education. They are making an assessment and will make the decision to bring it forward.

Mr. Speaker: The time for question period has expired. However, I will allow the Member a supplementary question.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, the removal of the asbestos from the heating pipes would be a very major undertaking in the school. Many other things need to be addressed in the school besides this item.

Would it be possible to expedite or advance or move this work on the Diamond Jenness School forward, so that in the scenario of upheaval anyway, while the students are going to be removed from the school...? If they have to take the asbestos insulation off the pipes, it's going to take some significant time and effort, and the students won't be allowed to be there.

I just want to know, in the interests of addressing this and many other things, what kind of a time frame are we looking at for a contract for the rest of it?

Mr. Speaker: It may be beyond the Minister's jurisdiction. However, I'll allow the Minister to respond.

Hon. Michael McLeod: The decision will be made by the Department of Education whether to bring it forward. Mr. Speaker, the time frame will be revolving around the capital planning process and when the decisions are made there. That's the process we have to follow.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, in the capital planning process, one of the five criteria that will give priority to projects is protection of people — it's number one. For the benefit of the people who live in Hay River and who use the school, whose students attend there, I would like the Minister to confirm that the protection of people will be given the highest priority, given the scenario that currently exists.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I believe we've already done that. We've taken the review

from our staff and all the technical evaluation that was required and made note of where our concerns were. We have forwarded and are recommending to the department that they seriously come forward with a retrofit for this facility. It is 34 years old and is due for a serious upgrade to remove some of these areas of concern that the parents have and that their children may be facing.

Mr. Speaker: Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Hon. Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, entitled *Workers' Compensation Board 2008 Corporate Plan*.

Document 13-16(2), *Workers' Compensation Board 2008 Corporate Plan*, tabled.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, entitled *Part 2 — 18th Annual Report of the Victims Assistance Committee of the Northwest Territories*. Mahsi.

Document 14-16(2), *Part 2 — 18th Annual Report of the Victims Assistance Committee of the N.W.T.*, tabled.

Mr. Hawkins: Today, I'd like to table a letter sent to me by the Minister of Health and Social Services on February 5th. The title of the letter is: Follow-up to Oral Question 43-16(1), Addictions Treatment Program.

Document 15-16(2), Letter from Minister of Health and Social Services re: Addictions Treatment Program, tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Item 15, notices of motions. Mr. McLeod.

Notice of Motions

MOTION 2-16(2) HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 14, 2008, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Highway Maintenance Contract, CT100644 and CT100634, be produced and provided to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure for review and analysis, and that the committee report their findings back to this House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: Item 16, notices of motions for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Ministers' statements 1-16(2) and 9-16(2) with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

MINISTERS' STATEMENT 1-16(2) SESSIONAL STATEMENT

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 9-16(2) PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL SUBSIDY SURVEY RESULTS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Chair (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order in consideration of Ministers' Statements 1-16(2) and 9-16(2). What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I would like to move that we report progress.

Motion carried.

Chair (Mr. Krutko): The motion is carried. I'll rise and report progress.

Report of the Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Can I have the report from the Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

Mr. Speaker: Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member from Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Item 22, third reading of bills. Item 23, Orders of the Day, Mr. Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Priorities and Planning Committee at the rise of the House today. There will be meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee at 8 a.m. tomorrow.

Orders of the Day

Orders of the Day for Wednesday, February 13th, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 1: Interim Appropriation Act, 2008-2009
 - Bill 2: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2007-2008
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - MS 1-16(2): Sessional Statement
 - MS 9-16(2): Public Housing Rental Subsidy Survey Results and Plans for the Future
- 21) Report of Committee of the Whole
- 22) Third Reading of Bills
- 23) Orders of the Day

Mr. Speaker: Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 13, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 3:37 p.m.