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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
Wednesday, March 5, 2014
Members Present

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

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

Ministers' Statement

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 50-17(5):
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General of Canada's Report on Child and Family Services was tabled in this House. The Auditor General's findings indicate that the health and social services system is not adequately meeting its key responsibilities for the protection and well-being of children, youth and families. This is a serious concern for all of us.

The conclusions in the report confirm the findings of the 16th Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Programs' review of the Child and Family Services Act. As a participant in that review, I care deeply about ensuring that we take aggressive action to improve our supports to children and families. The department has accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations, and in many cases work has already begun. Although the Auditor General's findings tell us that we have not made enough progress, nor moved fast enough, there has in fact been substantial foundational work already done to respond to the 16th Assembly's report.

Mr. Speaker, that report recognized that most cases of child protection do not involve abuse, but involve neglect of children due to factors such as addictions and poverty. It emphasized the need to build stronger supports for communities and families and, in this spirit, provided eight essential recommendations that were seen as foundational for improving the system. We have made significant progress on some of these:

- We have completed an updated Early Childhood Development Framework and Action

Plan that emphasizes support to families. The Healthy Family Program has been expanded to every region of the territory and work is underway to adapt it for smaller communities. We are funding early childhood programs at transitional housing in Yellowknife to support the most vulnerable families from across the territory. We will establish an early intervention service to provide direct support to families.

- We have made significant new investments to address addictions by expanding the options available to our residents. We have listened to the communities and are putting in place on-the-land healing options. We have put in place a system to fast-track referrals to addictions treatment.
- Based on recommendations of both the 16th and 17th Legislative Assemblies, we have developed an Anti-Poverty Strategy, and completed an action plan that includes supports for child and youth resiliency and programs to provide nutritious food.

Recognizing that 90 percent of children in care are Aboriginal, our new Aboriginal health and community wellness division is focusing their efforts on working with communities to support inter-agency committees and develop community-based solutions for supporting families.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, all these initiatives will help us to reach our ultimate goal of ensuring that no child needs to take advantage of child protection services.

But we know that day is a long way off, and the department has also worked hard to respond to many of the recommendations from the 16th Assembly that speak directly to improving our child protection programs.

Tremendous effort has been put into working with communities to try to establish child and family service committees over the past three years. Staff were dedicated to this project, and explicit direction was given to health and social services authorities to make this a priority. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to report that, despite years of effort, there are no child and family services committees currently operational. What we heard from communities is that the model proposed in our current legislation simply will not work. Communities are concerned

about financial and legal requirements, about capacity and about the difficult task of engaging in making tough decisions about the lives of friends and family. We need to find a better way to achieve the goal of giving communities a role in supporting families in need.

But many other recommendations of the report have been addressed:

- Plain-language materials have been developed and are available in Aboriginal languages to explain to families what services are available and how they can access them.
- Statutory training programs for child protection workers have been updated to reflect best practices, and a new training program has been developed to target senior managers in health and services authorities, including chief executive officers.
- A business case was completed for a new child and family information system, and funding is included in the 2014-2015 Capital Estimates. This project, estimated to be complete within three years, will greatly improve the authorities' and department's ability to monitor compliance with policy and regulation and ensure appropriate follow-up on individual cases.
- The report included recommendations for numerous amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. A legislative proposal has been completed, drafting is underway and we intend to bring forward this legislation in February of 2015.
- Revisions to the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual, which provides guidance to child protection workers across all regions, are nearly complete and will be distributed this summer. These amendments will include a new approach to child and family services committees, and potentially an expanded role for committees.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report speaks to the lack of accountability within the health and social services system. This is a bigger issue and affects our ability to guarantee consistent and effective program delivery in all our mandate areas. As I have informed this House, I intend to bring forward legislation to improve and enhance accountability.

Mr. Speaker, there has been progress, but I acknowledge that it is not enough. Since becoming Minister four months ago, I have directed the department to take immediate action to designate chief executive officers of authorities as assistant directors of child and family services under the act. This appointment will make them directly responsible for ensuring that our system does not drop the ball on any child welfare case. I will be

directing the chairs and public administrators of authorities to ensure that this is included in the CEOs' performance objectives and that improvements are monitored.

I have directed the department to fill the gap with respect to annual reports which, as the Auditor General noted, have not been provided to the Minister for over a decade. Beginning this year, I have directed that I receive a report by October of each year, which can be tabled in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's website tells us that the purpose of their reports is to achieve positive change. I intend to use this report and recommendations to do just that. I intend to work with the Standing Committee on Social Programs not only to build on the recommendations in the Auditor General's report but to build a system of supports for children and families that ensures every child in the Northwest Territories is safe and that their families are supported. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy, Minister of Justice, Mr. Ramsay.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 51-17(5):
REPORT ON EFFORTS OF THE
LEGAL AID OUTREACH LAWYER

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, our Legal Aid program is one of the best in the country. We are pleased that the Department of Justice and the Legal Services Board have expanded their scope of coverage to provide legal support for civil law matters through the services of a legal aid outreach lawyer. We realize people in need require additional support to deal with family or other civil law matters to reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, the Legal Services Board started the Legal Aid Outreach Program as a pilot project in 2010 and it has run continually since that time. Outreach services address legal issues that can affect someone's livelihood, physical or mental health. It's a streamlined, simplified service that provides direct support and appropriate referrals.

These services may be accessed by anyone in several ways. In Yellowknife, clinics are run every Tuesday for anyone who needs to receive some free basic legal advice. Additionally, the legal aid outreach lawyer travels to NWT communities in order to allow people to have access to justice through clinics or information sessions.

The legal aid outreach lawyer helps residents with issues relating to employment and disabilities, preparation of wills, housing and landlord-tenant disputes, mental health and guardianship applications as well as child protection and elder abuse.

Working closely with court workers, sessions are tailored to take a community's interests and needs

into consideration. For example, we have heard from the court worker in Fort Good Hope that the elders there are very interested in the preparation of wills and powers of attorney. The legal aid outreach lawyer will be delivering a presentation on wills and then scheduling individual appointments for those who are interested. A general clinic will be scheduled for people who have interest in other legal issues. That trip is planned for the last week of this month.

Earlier this year clinics were provided in Fort Simpson and Wrigley. Services will be available in Fort Smith next week and the legal aid outreach lawyer is planning a visit to Deline in the near future.

We are committed to improving access to justice. Through this program, we are providing support to those who need it the most and building on the strengths of Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF SAHTU RESIDENTS MICHAEL KOCHON AND CRAIG SCOTT

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I received some sad news from the Sahtu. I stand here with a heavy heart with my people in the Sahtu.

I guess I'm trying to say something that's in my heart that's so sad it's hard to be written down. We have lost two people in the Sahtu who are very good people, two men, one from Colville Lake and one from Norman Wells. These two men were very loved by their people. They did a lot of good things in their communities.

One fellow is from Colville Lake and he grew up on the land, he knew the land, he came from the land and now he has returned back to the land. He provided for his family from the land. With skill, he put food on the table for his children. He taught his children. This young fellow will greatly be missed in Colville Lake. I ask Members to help with the prayers sent to Colville Lake. I saw him last Friday in Norman Wells. His name is Michael Kochon.

Also, I want to say to the family and friends in Norman Wells, we lost a very good man also, Mr. Craig Scott. He also provided for his family from the oil and gas industry. He was well loved and we send prayers to his family and to the people of Norman Wells.

We're in mourning right now because of our great loss. We may be few in the Sahtu, but when we're

together as a family we're very powerful. I want to say, also, that the Legislative Assembly Members, I know from time to time you go through these hard and difficult times and send prayers to the people.

I asked my wife what's different between these two men. One lived on the land and one worked in the oil and gas industry. They both did well to provide food for their families and they were good people. Mr. Scott always teased my wife and always asked my wife, why did you marry that old man. He had that kind of humour and he will be thoroughly missed.

People of Colville Lake and Norman Wells are in shock. Please send prayers out to them in their time of mourning. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GYMNASIUM FOR ECOLE BOREALE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night there was a public meeting held in Hay River. It was sponsored by the local district education authority, our DEA, which is elected members of our community who are mandated with overseeing education issues.

A number of months back, my colleague Mr. Bouchard and I were brought into a briefing with the Department of Education to talk about how the Government of the Northwest Territories was going to solve the issue of there not being a gymnasium at the Ecole Boreale French school.

Ecole Boreale is a French first language school that was built in Hay River, and at the time that it was developed and planned for, there was no gymnasium associated with it. It does introduce another dynamic option for education in the community of Hay River, but the fact is that these students, as other students, require a gymnasium.

There are some different scenarios. We agreed to step back and let the Department of Education deal with the DEA and talk about options. So the MLAs stood back and let those communications go forward. They have gone forward and there has been offerings back and forth, but it would appear by the public input that was acquired at that meeting last night in Hay River that there is not support for the concept of swapping one of our other public schools for the French school. It still leaves a school and a body of children at a disadvantage, unfortunately.

This government places a lot of emphasis on healthy choices, healthy living and activity. Physical education is an integral part of the education system. So today, now that we have heard from the DEA and they have had these discussions, as MLAs, I and Mr. Bouchard, we would like to start to

begin a dialogue, including what we're saying in the House today, on this very important issue.

It puts Ecole Boreale in an awkward position as well. Certainly, people are very attached to their school facility, that's where their children go to school, and it puts them in an awkward position, but we certainly do understand the input of all of our residents and all of our constituents.

I think our government has spent a fair amount of money, fighting having to build a school at Ecole Boreale, in the courts. I think that money would be better spent into some planning to get a gymnasium built for that school.

Later today I will have questions for the Minister of Education of other options of how we can move forward to address this very important need in the community of Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GYMNASIUM FACILITIES FOR HAY RIVER SCHOOLS

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleague, last night I attended a meeting on the Hay River school swap. I'd like to thank the DEA for hosting this meeting; it has been a meeting long time coming. The community was glad to hear all the information.

I can probably sum up the message that should be sent to the Department of Education and maybe my colleagues across the way. From Facebook, a comment from one of my constituents: "It's a bad idea, just a quick fix, but it puts more students out without a gym. They should just pony up the dough and build a French school gym."

The whole concept of the meeting was to discuss the percentages; if they made the swap; do they swap; if the DEA takes over Ecole Boreale will they put their JK to three there; will they put six and seven there; some of the occupancy levels of when the French school takes over, if the French school takes over Harry Camsell, what the percentages would be, so it was very informative. But I think the message was clear that the community would like to see other options and other considerations being done.

Obviously, Hay River wasn't just there to complain, they rallied together and said, as a community we can do this, we can find the solution here. They talked about doing fundraising; they talked about – you know, we put a bid together for Arctic Winter Games – if we received that money and we won the bid, maybe some of those funds could be used there to have a gymnasium for the Arctic Winter Games, also any other ideas, such as federal funding.

We would like Cabinet to reconsider their process of what they're doing with the French school gym and reconsider what they're doing to the community of Hay River. They're dividing up the two organizations, two great organizations in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SCHOOLS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand together with my band of small community brothers and we will be asking for attention and asking questions for our poor, outdated schools in the small communities.

Our constituents are mainly Aboriginal people. We're calling on the government to ensure the quality of small school facilities are on par with the likes of the new East Three in Inuvik and the rebuilt Mildred Hall in Yellowknife.

The quality of small community schools is pitiful compared to the quality of schools in the regional centres. It is time for a change.

Our constituents are fed up with the double standard. Numerous times I've declared in this House that my constituents in Trout Lake need a stand-alone school. Officially known as Charles Tetcho School, it is currently housed in the multi-purpose community hall. The school portion essentially consists of a single classroom. The school is overcrowded and the facilities are inadequate. The Minister of Education toured the school and he witnessed the problems firsthand.

Trout Lake has grown in size in recent years and school enrollment has grown with it. Enrollment is expected to rein steady or even increase in the coming years. Recent upgrades were made to the community hall, but that was just a band aid solution. Upgrades don't address the fundamental problem. The school isn't big enough and it has no autonomy.

According to the department's capital planning schedule, improvements are likely to be made to Trout Lake's school by 2018, but we have no assurance of that. In any case, four years is too long of a wait.

The quality and feel of a school facility has enormous impacts on student morale and the calibre of their work. Indeed, the quality of school facilities should be a consideration of government's well publicized goal to eliminate the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Every single NWT student deserves a quality education regardless of where they live. Planning studies should be undertaken to guarantee a level

playing field across the Territories. Indeed, with the Education Renewal Initiative on the horizon and junior kindergarten, now is the right time for a concerted territorial effort to enhance school facilities for Aboriginal children in our small communities. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MOOSE KERR SCHOOL

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I spoke about the timeline for replacing Moose Kerr School in Aklavik. Moose Kerr School was constructed in 1969, exactly the same time as Samuel Hearne Secondary School that was built in Inuvik and now replaced.

My constituents would like to know why Moose Kerr School is still standing. At 45 years old it's overdue for replacement. I believe that Moose Kerr School is the oldest school in this territory at the moment.

The Minister of Education stated last week that Moose Kerr School is slated for replacement or renovation in 2019. That is five years from now. Safety is also an issue with traffic and parking at the present location. Also, the school is right next to the airstrip in the community, another hazard.

We also need to have available trade facilities in our schools to give our students an idea of what they would like to be once they are finished school. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many Members know, I'm pretty familiar with many of the rules around the House and I can easily say that many of the rules are black and white. But there is area that I often refer to as grey areas and, of course, they're not tied to a specific rule or a breach, but sometimes more of an error of opinion or insight. Sometimes we can refer to them as someone has gingerly strolled away from the spirit and the intent of consensus government.

I'm having trouble personally putting a specific finger around what rule may have been breached, but I can tell you once I've stepped back, like an onion, when you peel it away it starts to make your eyes water and you start to wonder what has truly been revealed.

Pray tell, what am I talking about? Well, guess what. The Minister of Health and Social Services just over a week ago did, in my view, a pre-emptive strike on what was released yesterday tabled by

yourself, the Auditor General's report. On February 25th he read a Minister's statement in this House as innocent as the day and seemed to try to paint the picture of child and family services that things are all okay.

I think this was a result of an effort to downplay the results that were pending. Was there a freight train coming and they thought let's throw something to put a twist in the tracks?

I draw this House's attention to the Minister's statement on page 3 where they refer to procedural manuals, updating, major revisions, and by the way, they'll be done next year. There are very similar responses of the spirit and intent of what was on chapter 39 of the AG's report. Did the Minister get ahead of the report? I'm starting to notice a trend. The trend continues on page 4 of his statement. The Minister goes on and talks about detailed training, and the Auditor General report as well talks about training, not just once but on chapter 19, 41, chapter 42 and even 80. Was the Minister trying to get ahead of the report or, as he said on CBC last night, well, there are just a few things they need to tweak, I think he said.

This is a serious moral breach. It's not a technical breach. There are no rules in our green books to tell us what rule has been broken, but I can tell you, getting ahead of the Auditor General's report and trying to play it down, I think is a moral breach of the spirit and the intent of consensus government that we live and run every day in this building.

I will continue on this trek of saying, why did he do this? We need to have a serious discussion about the way we do business here.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard not to take a moment to discuss the recent scathing Auditor General's Report on the Child and Family Services in the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, what is an embarrassment to the Minister's office and senior management of Health and Social Services is equally troublesome to every legislator in this room. How did we allow this to proceed under our watch in a consensus government? Clearly, this gold standard in auditing pointed out areas of concern that were discussed, debated and allegedly resolved by Members of the 16th Assembly, so why did we not see a paradigm shift in thinking for our most vulnerable in society? What were the barriers to making the required changes for monitoring, proper reporting and, ultimately, protection of our children?

This is merely not as simple as the Minister has commented publicly as tinkering around the edges. There is much more behind this story than the statistics. The concern is accountability. According to the report, there appears to be zero guidance and no tools to support delivery of these services. Furthermore, the report mentions time and time again that under the act, the director of child and family services is the one accountable for all decisions made by child protection workers. Furthermore, this same director is required to report annually to the Minister of Health on the performance of the child and family services system. Shamefully, according to the report, no reporting had taken place for the past 10 years. Ten years! Without any dashboard indicators, I question what the senior management and Ministers of the day used to assure themselves the system was adequately meeting the needs of children and families. They must be using a Ouija board or fortune cookies.

We know the Auditor General's report is now before the Standing Committee of Government Operations for a formal review, but until the committee comes back with their recommendations, I hope the Minister and the department think long and hard on what they're going to do today for those who breach accountability and put our children at risk, because lip service ain't gonna cut it anymore. Not on this one.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've heard, the Report of the Office of the Auditor General on Child and Family Services was tabled in the House yesterday. I read the report last night and again today. There is so much in it it's hard to know where to start. The assistant auditor general, Mr. Campbell, called it troubling, and considering the contents of the report, I see that as an understatement.

After reading the report, there was a mixture of emotions for me: gratitude to the office of the Auditor General for their work. As always, they were thorough, fair, in-depth, to the point, and extremely helpful to us as legislators. But I also felt disappointment and despair. Despair because I was part of the standing committee of the 16th Assembly which invested many, many hours in 2010 doing an in-depth review of the Child and Family Services Act. The report from that committee included over 70 recommendations, and the committee members had high hopes for change, high hopes for improvement in a system which we had heard was not working.

Now, three years later, the Auditor General's report indicates little change occurred; few recommendations were heeded. In fact, this review points out that similar recommendations from a report tabled way back in 2000 have yet to be acted on. Right now our child and family services system is operational but dysfunctional. Using the Health and Social Services department's own guidelines, and that's the Child and Family Services Act, as a measure, the system can be said to be in crisis.

Here are just some of the observations from the office of the Auditor General's report:

- There is no accountability framework; therefore, a huge lack of accountability at the health and social service authorities and at the department.
- Concerns brought to the attention of workers and some necessary investigations were not acted on.
- Plans of care for children have not been followed up on.
- Foster homes have not been properly vetted or monitored.
- There are still no services for youth 16 to 18 years old.
- There is an identified need for the department and the authorities to provide greater guidance for child and family service workers, to assist them with prevention activities so they can, in turn, assist families in trouble.
- There is a lack of both financial and human resources to adequately deliver child and family services in the NWT.

The Minister and the department have responded swiftly to the report, as we have heard.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: The Minister's response indicates either genuine concern or an attempt to douse the flames. I sincerely hope it is the former. I look forward to working with the Minister to enact some real and positive change for the children and families of the NWT who use the child and family services system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been about 30 months since we've been in this government here, and recommendations from the 16th Legislative Assembly specifically on the report that was tabled in the House yesterday with the

child and family services, which I believe the current and the previous Ministers of Health and Social Services were very strong advocates on, and yet we see this report in front of us today.

As stated from some of my colleagues, there are many areas that we can focus on with this report, but I would like to talk a little about the accountability. In the report it states that the Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for the overall management of the child and family service system. It also states that the Minister has authorized southern health and social services authorities to assist the director in the management, control and operation of child and family services.

That director also has many of the rights and responsibilities of a parent when children are receiving services. In turn, these responsibilities are passed on to the child protection workers, and the child protection workers then exercise many duties and powers of the director but are employees of the regional authorities, so this accountability is all mixed up in there somewhere. However, the director does remain accountable for all decisions made by the child protection workers.

I am going to talk a little bit about these child protection workers. There are 93 of them in the Northwest Territories. They work with children and families on a daily basis. Some of the things they have to deal with are they are exposed to traumatic and stressful situations, other duties include they manage children's cases, prepare legal documents, appear in court while dealing with child protection situations that require immediate attention. There are a lot of problems there, a lot of work.

Last year, '12-13, 1,042 children received services with only 93 child protection workers. That is a concern. When you look at measuring success results, it states that the percentage of children receiving services in their own community was 87.5 percent. That means that there are more children receiving services in their own community, putting more stress on our child protection workers. So, when we are going forward, we are not only looking at the children but we have to look at the employees that do services on behalf of the government.

The Minister did state that he is going to be working with the Standing Committee on Social Programs and I look forward to those discussions and dialogues and how we can address this problem. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELIMINATION OF POVERTY TRAPS IN THE INCOME SECURITY SYSTEM

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to continue looking at our income security system and how it has created a series of poverty traps. You may remember I was telling a story about Charles and his three children. Charles is not a real person, but his story will be familiar to many people.

Let's imagine that Charles lives in Fort Good Hope, because the Nutrition North Program keeps track of food costs there, allowing us to see how much it costs Charles to feed his family.

Nutrition North, what used to be called Food Mail, reported on their website last March that in Fort Good Hope it costs \$440 to feed a family of four for one week, or about \$1,750 a month. But when it comes to food, clothing, school supplies and everything else, income support only provides Charles and his family a grand total of \$1,300, a figure from the department's response to a written question tabled earlier this session.

Using the government's own numbers, Charles is at least \$500 short every month just to be able to buy food. Fortunately, Charles' housing, power and heating bills are covered separately, but Charles is stressed to say the least. How is he going to put these growing children through school when he is struggling to feed them? They're going to need clothes, school supplies, they should be involved with sports, and these days they will need Internet just to do their homework.

Charles has done his taxes and is surprised to see that he qualifies for a GST rebate and a child tax credit. These payments come in every three months, and when the first one shows up, he goes out to buy some clothes for the children. But guess what. On his next visit to income support, they tell him that the extra income from the tax rebates means he made too much money and his income support payment will be reduced.

So now Charles has to really struggle to get to the end of the month. Fortunately, a company from down south comes into town and needs someone to do a few days of work in the bush. Charles drops his children off at a friend's place, saying he'll pay them for looking after his kids. After three days, the work is done and the company puts 600 bucks in his bank account. Charles figures he's got a good chance to get work with them again.

But we all know what happens next. Income support finds the money on his bank statement and reduces his income support again. Charles now owes money for child care and still does not have enough to feed his family.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: Charles now owes money for child care and still does not have enough to feed his family. I wish I could say this story has a happy ending, but Charles is having a hard time seeing a way out.

This is what I mean when I talk about poverty traps. Our Income Security programs are inadequate and the built-in clawbacks create a disincentive to work. I must point out again, that rather than providing the stable home children need to succeed, living in a poverty trap means toxic stress, leading to delays in early childhood development that will, sadly, be costly for all and for lifetimes.

This morning I heard CBC's Lorne McInnes asking the Auditor General's office what the story was behind his devastating report. Poverty traps are part of the story behind the Auditor General's long list of failures in the way this government, of which I am currently a part, are fulfilling our fiduciary duty to look after the children.

I will have questions. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS UPDATE

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing committees of the Legislative Assembly are where the Regular Members of the Legislative Assembly roll up their sleeves and get down to work on behalf of the people of the NWT.

As the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, I'm pleased to advise the public and the House of the work that is underway in this committee. The committee just completed an extensive public review of the GNWT's public accounts for 2012-2013 and tabled its report on that review in the House just a few weeks ago.

We have also just completed our public review of the Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission for 2012-2013 and we look forward to tabling a report on the review before the end of this session.

In the coming weeks, the Standing Committee on Government Operations will be undertaking two more reviews that members of the public will be invited to participate in. The first, we will be holding a public meeting to prepare a review of the 2012-2013 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner and we look forward to tabling the report in the spring session.

Similarly, plans are underway to publicly review the Report of the Auditor General on the Department of Health and Social Services Child and Family Services Program in April 2014.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations is also prepared to undertake the five-year review of the Northwest Territories Official Languages Act. The standing committee will be meeting with members of the public and interested parties on this important review, and we look forward to updating the public and the Members of this House as this work progresses.

Standing committees work hard to hold government accountable for its spending and its performance, with the intent of improving services provided to NWT residents. I invite anyone who is interested in the work of the standing committees to keep their eyes open for notices of standing committee meetings that are published in the newspaper, or to take a look at the reports of the standing committees which are published on the Legislative Assembly's website. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I'd like to welcome all the visitors here in the public gallery here today. Thanks for taking an interest in our proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 219-17(5): HAY RIVER SCHOOL EXCHANGE

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll follow up with questions from my Member's statement about the Hay River DEA and the school swap. My questions are for the Minister of Education. In the meeting some people had some questions about the financial rationale behind the school swap.

Can the Minister indicate to me what they expect this school swap to cost the Department of Education?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We first initiated the discussion with the Hay River DEA and, of course, the Commission scolaire francophone on the whole idea that we have yet to go through the appeals process with the court. It was just exploratory discussions that we've had, and obviously, my officials met with the chair of the DEA and the parents that represented the Hay River DEA. So those are the discussions we've been having.

From the board's perspective, we'll work with the community and my department. To date, we're compiling the information on what the expenditure would be on the school swap because it would

depend on the facility itself, the spaces. So that is information that we are currently compiling from the DEA with my department. Mahsi.

MR. BOUCHARD: I would like the Minister to also include some of that analysis of the costs, I guess the cost of the whole process. What have they put into legal fees, what are they going to have to put into the school swap? We know the cost, \$28 million for both schools in both communities, \$13 million for Hay River.

Would the Minister commit to giving us a full analysis of what the government has spent on this whole fiasco, I guess?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. The Member is correct about the \$28 million. That's, overall, the target that we are working with between Hay River and Yellowknife. Again, we are compiling the financial background on how much we've expended on this particular school swap and then also the court appeals and so forth. So, I can assure the Member that they will receive that information. Mahsi.

MR. BOUCHARD: Obviously, our Hay River DEA and the French school were concerned about the repercussions now.

Now that the DEA has said that they're not interested in signing the MOU, what will the Department of Education do going forward, what are the expectations of Cabinet and what are the expectations of the GNWT to go forward? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. We just heard last night from the Member, of course, both Members, that the Hay River DEA is not in a position to move forward on a school swap. From their meeting with the parents, my understanding is that there was a great turnout from the general public and I must commend them for having the engagement of the public. We have not heard back from the Commission scolaire francophone, who are meeting in Hay River with the parents tonight. So we will be hearing from them and until we hear back from them, there are no decisions on the next steps as of yet. Mahsi.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they've put some deadlines on the DEA, and obviously, I look forward to hearing what happens in Hay River tonight. I apologize, I can't make it, but I guess the question is that, going forward, we know that there are some dates coming up in March that are very important and key.

When will the Minister get back to us on these numbers and on the decision going forward on this issue? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. The Member is quite correct; there is a deadline we have to meet. I believe it's March 24. Those are the court dates that we have to follow through with. Part of the plan will be to meet with both Hay River MLAs. I was hoping sometime next week to give them the status of what's happening and what will be the next step, so I will be briefing both Members.

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

QUESTION 220-17(5):

HAY RIVER SCHOOL EXCHANGE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I have a lot of questions, but let me start in my little preamble, my short preamble to say that we talk, as a government, about regional capacity and building capacity. Part of that capacity building in Hay River is our schools, and right now I realize that the occupancy levels in our schools are not as high as they could be, and I think that's what left the door open for this idea of this swap, but I do want to say that with this government's commitment to decentralization and some of the economic initiatives that are on the horizon in Hay River, we are going to need all four of our schools. I would like to ask the Minister if he has, well, it sounds like the decision to pursue the school swap idea pre-empted a lot of numbers being put together. I don't want to talk about Yellowknife. Yellowknife has seven MLAs; they can look after Yellowknife. I want to talk about Hay River. Okay?

Are there preliminary estimates on what it would cost to build? As per the court order, what would need to be built at Ecole Boreale? Do they have preliminary cost estimates?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I believe Member Bouchard also mentioned approximately \$13 million. If there are no alternatives to building an addition to Ecole Boreale in Hay River, the cost to the NWT will be approximately \$13 million. That's the number that we've been working with with the DEA and commission with my department. Those are just some of the numbers that we have been working with.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I, like my colleague, would also like to know what money we've already spent on looking at the school swap and what kind of money we have spent trying to fight building a gymnasium for Ecole Boreale. I mean, that would be an interesting number and I hope that the Minister could possibly be forthcoming with that. I think we should stop spending that money and we

should start spending money on planning to build a new facility.

The deadline, again, that my colleague spoke of, Minister Lafferty refers to March 24th. I would like to ask the Minister, is there a date before that, even within the next few days, where there is a decision imminently going to be made by this government and by this Cabinet?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Once we hear back from Commission scolaire francophone on the outcome of their meeting tonight, then we will be updating both MLAs. Eventually – the Member is quite correct – we need to make a decision by the Cabinet prior to March 24th what will be the next step. I will be briefing both Members sometime next week at the earliest possibility.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I do realize that they need to hear from the French school board, but the MOU proposed to the DEA, we've been officially notified by the chair that this has been rejected.

I'd like to ask the Minister, just for the benefit of people in Hay River to know, by what date would this Cabinet be making a decision on what avenue they are going to take to proceed? I know that the court deadline is March 24th. By what date does this Cabinet need to make a decision to expend the \$13 million to build the gymnasium for Hay River?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, keeping in mind that obviously March 24th is the date that we need to make this a priority to government to make a decision, and I need to present that to my Cabinet colleagues, possibly we have Thursday's Cabinet meeting. Those are the discussions that we need to have with the Cabinet on what will be the next steps. But I want to inform the Regular Members prior to that, sit down with them and this is what we've heard, what should we do as the next steps. Those are the discussions we need to have prior to me going to my Cabinet colleagues. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister, very succinctly, what option does this government have, other than to comply with the court order, to spend the money and build the gymnasium for Ecole Boreale in Hay River? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, there are only two options: proceed or not to proceed. Those are the two options that we have been working with and we were trying to find an alternative solution to this so that at least it would save the GNWT money over time. We are very limited on timing now, so again, we will be updating those two Hay River Members next week and give them more detailed information at that time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 221-17(5):
MOOSE KERR SCHOOL

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions for the Minister of Public Works and Services. It has to do with my Member's statement here today.

I would like to ask the Minister, has there been any action to address the traffic and parking concerns raised at the Moose Kerr School? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that information here with me. I understand that the Member was concerned about the road being very close to the school. I will have the Department of Public Works contact the administrator of the school and see if there is anything that can be done immediately to address that issue. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, also in my statement I mentioned that in 2019 there will be either a replacement or a renovation of the school, so I would like to ask the Minister...

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, Mr. Blake. I would like to remind Members, while they are in this House, shut the ringers off on your phones. Put them on vibrate or silent. Mr. Blake, I'm sorry, continue.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start again. In my statement I mentioned that in 2019 the school will either be renovated or replaced. I would like to ask the Minister, will the price to renovate Moose Kerr School in 2019 be close to the cost of a new facility? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, when we are doing a midlife retrofit, such as what the plan is here, I understand that there was already a bit of a retrofit in Moose Kerr School. I believe that was in 2000. If we are referring to this after the 40 years, in 2019, there is a certain point under which we make a decision to replace the facility, if it exceeds a certain percent, if the renovation would exceed a certain percentage of cost of a totally brand new unit. When a retrofit can be brought in and the life of the facility can be extended to a reasonable time period, then that retrofit is done and everything can be replaced and the extension can be done lower than a certain percent of the cost of a new school. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, in 2019 the school will be 50 years old. I would like to ask the department, will the department replace Moose Kerr School? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, determining whether or not this facility will be replaced, again, will be based on the judgment on whether or not the school can be brought up to the standard of the day, with a certain percentage towards what it would cost to replace the whole entire school. But at 50 years old, I imagine that it would be a very close examination with the Department of Education on whether or not it would be more feasible to replace the school. Thank you.

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

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we could learn something from the Housing department that was going to renovate the Joe Greenland Centre and ended up replacing it.

Will the Minister make sure that the Moose Kerr School is on the red flag list? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: From what I understand, the school is in the capital plan. So it's not a situation where it would be put on a red flag list to enter into a capital plan. The school is actually in the capital plan and scheduled for a major renovation or replacement in 2019. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 222-17(5):
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health Minister will tell you he does not have early access to the Auditor General's report. Of course, he'll probably tell you it's all arm's length, and of course, he doesn't know anything about it until it's tabled by yourself, Mr. Speaker. This is a paradox that now sits before this House.

Can the Minister of Health explain why the wording in the Minister's statement given on February 25th of this year mimics much of the wording in the report tabled by yourself, Mr. Speaker, yesterday, and the report I'm referring to is the Auditor General's report. Is this a case, and only the Minister can answer this, of the Department of Health and Social Services, Minister Abernethy as Minister, getting ahead of the report before the public had its shot fairly to review this? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I got my first briefing on the Auditor General's report the day before the Auditor General tabled it and I got that report and that briefing from the Auditor General himself. I did not see the report until yesterday when it was tabled. In fact, I read it while sitting here in Committee of the Whole and that was the first time that I saw the document.

But I'm not a moron; I was involved in the review of the Child and Family Services Act in the 16th Assembly and I participated with Mr. Bromley and Ms. Bisaro and Mr. Krutko and Mr. Beaulieu while we travelled throughout the Northwest Territories and listened clearly to the people of the Northwest Territories about the challenges that they were facing with respect to child and family services. I became the Minister four months ago. Immediately after I became the Minister of Health and Social Services, I sat down and I read the review of the Child and Family Services Act from the 16th Assembly and it doesn't take rocket science to look at the report, dig into the department and realize that there are challenges. I reviewed the act, I started having discussions with the department and, clearly, without question – and it doesn't take an idiot to figure this out – we have accountability issues, we have reporting issues, we have performance issues and I am the Minister of Health and Social Services and I'm committed to making these improvements. I was one of the ones who championed for the review in the 16th Assembly and I truly care about the child and families of the Northwest Territories.

I wanted to make a statement in the House to let the Members know that things are happening. It came up in committee, it came up in front of the House when we did the budget review. So I appreciate the Member's opinion, but I accept it for what it is, an opinion. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: I won't call a point of order on the Minister's opinion of himself, but I will leave it at that.

The arm's length of this report must be pretty short because they're using such similar language as it is in the report tabled by you, delivered by the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's statement on February 25th stands on the record of saying why is this information very, very similar in your statement as the department's response. It says the department was trying to get ahead of this by saying, here are the answers and when it shows up a week later just pretend, oh, we're tweaking everything. Can the Minister, without a long story about how great the world is in the 16th Assembly and his good friends hanging out with him, explain why the wording is so, so similar? It tells me that they're trying to get ahead of this. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. It kind of sounds like the Member didn't review the Child and Family Services Act from the 16th Assembly because the two are very similar. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: The answers provided by the departments are very, I don't know how to describe it, are exceptionally similar to the answers provided in the Auditor General's report. So I would say this: Why are they identical? Only the Minister can answer this and if he wants to continue to dodge

and try to play games about, oh well, it's this or it's this, and now the Member hasn't read the report, he can play games, but the public can see this. The fact is there's zero accountability on this and they're getting ahead of the Auditor General, which breaks the spirit and the intent of consensus government and that has to stop.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. I'd hardly say that we got ahead. I was talking about some of the positive things that we were doing and the Auditor General clearly indicated that we're not. So I would say that the things I was speaking to are the good things that we're trying to do in response to the 16th Assembly. Frankly, much of the wording in both of those documents is consistent and I would encourage the Member to maybe review or read the review of the Child and Family Services Act from the 16th Assembly. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: I've read that report. I don't need to be schooled by the Minister. The facts lay simply before themselves. The Minister's statement on February 25th, the language is practically identical to chapters 39, 41, 19, 42 and 80, as oh, things are wonderful, but yet if you read the Auditor General's report pointing to those sections, it's similar. It only draws one conclusion of the everyday person: the department doesn't want to be responsible for these things so they're downplaying them upfront and then they're going to use the angle, oh, but don't worry we're on the file, so let's not get too excited.

Can the Minister explain simply why the wording is identical and we'll deal with that so we can all move forward? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. It's awfully cynical and it seems to be attributing motive, which is not really the case. I was involved in the file. I am the Minister of Health and Social Services and I have taken an active interest in this file. I have had many discussions with the department, and the department, yes, is involved in preparing responses to the audit, which I don't get to see until the audit is actually out there, but at the end of the day, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that we need to do a lot more on this file, and I'm taking action and I have been taking action and I didn't wait for the audit to come out to start taking action on this file because, quite frankly, we all knew it needed to be done.

I've had those discussions with committee and I'll continue to have those discussions with committee. Once again, I appreciate the Member's opinion, but once again, it is just simply an opinion. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 223-17(5):
STRATEGY TO ENHANCE SCHOOL
FACILITIES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education. Just a follow-up on my Member's statement.

I have been asking for a new school in Trout Lake for the past 10 years and the Minister said he's in Cabinet Thursday. Will he raise that as well? When will the education priority of small communities be heard? We need new schools and new gymnasiums in the small communities. When will the government be doing that?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We are clearly hearing the Members, especially from the small communities. That's part of the reason why we're developing this whole Education Renewal Innovation because part of the pillars will be focused on small communities and also the formula funding for the small communities, so it will capture that as we move forward as long-term objectives.

Today we are following the capital planning process, and every single time there are capital projects going forward we've been stressing for the small communities. Those are badly needed and we've been developing some planning studies, business case scenarios and with this budget going forward, 2014-15, as part of the capital planning process we will be investing approximately \$95,000 towards the Charles Tetcho School in Trout Lake in the planning study.

Those are just some of the discussions we've been having, now we're putting them into action and from there the outcome will be to move forward on major capital projects. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. During the Minister's visit to Trout Lake we showed him how small the school was, we showed him it's full to capacity and now we have junior kindergarten, which is a new additional factor that has to be addressed. Are there enough resources to do an adequate planning study in the community of Trout Lake and its needs? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. With respect to the major capital retrofits, we need to have a planning study done, so this is part of the process. Based on the needs of the community, the size of the school, how it's structured as we move forward, what kind of school would the community be entitled to, the square footage and the classroom sizes, so those are the discussions that we need to have with the regional school board. We are moving forward on this. Planning studies will be on the way.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I know that when it comes to replacing health facilities, we've got standard plans for type B, C facilities, et cetera. Is that something similar the Minister of Education and his department is working on, template schools for our small communities, because I think what will really help is moving forward. Yes, we're doing planning studies, but we also need, I think, Class D estimates. We need to know the ballpark figure we're working with so we can get it accelerated in our capital planning processes because these schools need replacing right away.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: As of today, part of the capital planning process, we have to work very closely with the Department of Public Works and Services, because there are set criteria that we have to follow with any major infrastructure, not only schools but other major infrastructure in the Northwest Territories. They have to follow the criteria.

Again, we have been told over and over to think outside the box, focus on small communities. That is exactly what we're pursuing. Part of the action plan with the education renewal and innovation is that we're going to be developing plans of action focusing on the needs of the small communities. Yes, we are moving towards that.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to hear the Minister say those words. The time for building the large schools are over. We've spent hundreds of millions of dollars in all our regional centres and I believe it's time to start concentrating on our small communities, get those done. The costs are not in the hundreds of millions. It will probably be – I can't even estimate – probably about \$2 million or \$3 million for a school in a small community.

I'd like to ask the Minister, can he start the initial planning, get some Class D estimates, and share it with myself and my colleagues that need new schools in their communities?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We will compile that information on the process of the capital planning. Every year we go through this and there are set criteria. The planning process is on the way and we will be sharing that information with the Member. There is going to be engagement through the education renewal and innovation with the community and with the DEAs, and I'll definitely be seeking input from the Member as well.

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

QUESTION 224-17(5):
POVERTY TRAPS IN THE
INCOME SECURITY SYSTEM

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are in follow up to my statement earlier today on poverty traps and directed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Yesterday and today I think I made it clear that our social safety net has some pretty serious poverty traps in it, but I would like to give the Minister a chance to demonstrate differently. We track people on income support more than anyone else in the NWT. We know month by month what is in their bank account.

Will the Minister tell us how many people our system has helped rise out of poverty in the last year or any year?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I think I see another written question coming. The Member is asking for detailed information. I don't have the actual numbers of how many people we track on the detailed information that's required, verification and so forth, to confirm that there's going to be a payment. But we must keep in mind that income support is a last resort as a subsidy program to the community members. We do what we can to help the most vulnerable in the communities. As I stated yesterday, as well, that part of the labour market, we have to improve and encourage those individuals to fill those potential job opportunities. We are doing what we can to provide the productive choices training on-the-job program. The funding is available, so we have to encourage those individuals. My department continues to do that and will continue to relay that message on to the communities.

MR. BROMLEY: I can assure the Minister that I do track that information and we have the poorest 20 percent of people in this jurisdiction in the country and it's not improving. I appreciate that we do what we can, the Minister does what he can, but what I'm suggesting here is ways that we can do more with less.

As I mentioned, Nutrition North does food basket surveys on what it costs to feed a family of four in our communities. Their data shows that the amount provided by income support is only half of what is needed. Maintaining our focus on the most critical element underserved here – that's children – how does the Minister expect children to succeed in school when their parents cannot afford to feed them?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Income support is not the only avenue that we provide funding to the most vulnerable that the Member is referring to. We work closely with the Department of Health and

Social Services, the Wellness Program. There are all these different subsidy programs that are out there. Income support is just one area that we subsidize the most vulnerable. Yes, we need to prepare our community members and Northwest Territories residents, especially the young ones, for them to enter the education field and eventually graduate and to come back and be a part of the northern workforce. Those are the overall goals and objectives of this government, the wellness of our people, the most educated. This is what we do. Part of the Labour Market Development Agreement, we provide those subsidies. Income support is another venue, SFA and the child services as well. Those are just some of the areas that we continue to provide services.

MR. BROMLEY: To the Minister, we've heard all about this amazing and costly maze of support, ineffective supports, that we have out there. We're trying to move on here.

There are additional supports available to people in poverty, such as the GST rebate and the child tax credit. Despite their intent to help, our system takes that money away from families. I very much doubt that the money we save from chasing after these meagre funds even covers the cost of the government workers chasing after them.

How can the Minister justify clawing back payments that are meant to alleviate poverty when people are already struggling just to buy food?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, it is a last resort venue that we have as the income support division. It's not a money-making machine. We're there to assist those most vulnerable individuals in the communities. Just as an example, I can use the Sahtu region as an example where there's a very hot economy that's happening there. There is all this different training that's been developed and job creation. Based on that, people are getting off income support. That's the whole objective of this government. We need to push that forward.

Canada's job grant that's coming down from the federal government, we're fully on board with the changes that are coming down. That is a decision that we've made and we're going forward as the territorial government working with the federal government. Along with the Department of Health and Social Services and my department and ITI, we're going to move forward on this.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not totally sure the Minister has been hearing my description of poverty traps. This guy is stuck at home with children and when he tries to work a little bit, it gets clawed back and he's even worse off. When the Minister or myself make an extra \$1,000, we pay income tax. We are not living in poverty, so

we contribute about \$400 of that back to society, and I think we would agree, all of us, that that's money well spent. But when someone on income support makes an extra \$1,000, they only get to keep \$150.

How can the Minister or any government official possibly justify an 85 percent effective tax rate on income for people who are trying to get out of poverty when the most well paid people in the NWT only pay 40 percent?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I, too, would like to encourage those individuals to enter the workforce, and all of us here, 19 of us, fully support that. We want individuals to be successful in the Northwest Territories, throughout Canada, internationally, so we have to provide them the tools. Part of the tools that we're providing them is productive choices within our income support division, and part of the productive choices is putting them on on-the-job training and preparing them for resume writing. All these different tools that we are providing them are there for individuals such as what Mr. Bromley is referring to as part of the clientele. There is also a \$1,200 exemption that individuals can qualify for within the income support division.

We do have a subsidy program for those most vulnerable. We will continue to support that. It is key that we have to support those individuals that are in the system to make them a success in their lives. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 225-17(5):
EDUCATION RENEWAL AND
INNOVATION ACTION PLAN

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The Minister undertook an educational renewal and innovation engagement process with our people in the Northwest Territories. The comprehensive review of the education, we looked at operating in the Northwest Territories. We know things need to be changed and improved. We've got to think differently. There is a multi-year plan how to make these changes in the North.

I want to ask the Minister in regards to the Education Renewal and Innovation Action Plan that was scheduled to be coming out at the end of February 2014. Is the plan ready for us to review on this side of the House? Today is March 5th.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, we want to hear feedback from the general public of the Northwest Territories, especially the grassroots people, the educators, the

parents, the grandparents, so we have developed a committee to establish an engagement process. Part of that will be listening to those individuals who are in the system, as well, and the community members.

Once we share that, the feedback, we're hoping by May-June session we are going to have some information, but prior to that, I believe I did make a commitment in this House, I want to share that with the standing committee. It will be in draft format, obviously, but once it's in my hands, I will make a point of sharing that with standing committee as a presentation. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, Members on this side of the House are telling the Minister right now that they represent the grassroots people, the people in their communities. They are saying they need new gyms and they are saying fix old schools, build new schools, get gymnasiums. We heard it. Social passing, we don't have good directors. We've heard all that. The Minister has gone out. The Minister stated in this report that there is going to be an assessment, there's going to be an ER Action Plan. The development of this plan was supposed to be out in February 2014. I am waiting for this action plan. We know what it is. I think the time has stopped for saying these things and we need some action now. So I am asking this Minister, when is the action plan going to be out? We know what's happening with our education system.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, when we initiated our discussions back in let's say in late fall, that's the date that we had thrown around, possibly February or March, and now we have to engage the school boards, and in order to get feedback, it takes time to engage the school boards, the parents and, again, the grandparents and educators, so we will be waiting for feedback from them and then delivering the package as an action plan to the standing committee. I'm hoping that by May/June we have that final detailed information. In due time, I will be sharing that with the standing committee when the time is available. Mahsi.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the Minister, through the ASA educational workshop in the Sahtu, certainly heard from our people. I think this Minister needs to get on the books, put the action plan before us. It's stated here August 2013 to February 2014, development of an ER Action Plan implementation schedule. Now the Minister is moving it down.

We need to get on this right away, so I will ask the Minister, why the delay, why we are taking so long? We have told you numerous times through the educational renewal, our education system is not working in the Northwest Territories. There are many factors that the Minister listened to in the

Sahtu and other communities. We need to think differently, we need to start within the time limit of this government.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative, the engagement we had was very successful. This is embarking on that, we are strengthening that, enhancing that through education renewal renovation. It's not me that's delaying the whole tactic, it's the engagement.

I am a firm believer in engaging people, engaging the public, the communities, to share their perspectives, the grassroots people, and to share their perspective and putting it in the action plan. Upon that time, I will be delivering that to the standing committee once it is delivered in my office. Possibly, we have given a target of May or June and then delivering that to standing committee. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Minister is looking and blaming the people. The people have spoken to him. I went to the workshop in the Sahtu; we had some dynamite discussions. We were hoping that in 2010 with this discussion, this will push... This issue has been long standing in the Sahtu and also for the people of the Northwest Territories. We are saying our education system in the North is broken. Fix it. Our students need to be well educated, our schools need to be well functioned. We know the system and why it's not producing what we want it to produce. Let's get on with it. Let's not stall anymore by continuing to wait. You know, we are sitting and not moving.

I want to know that this Minister is a Minister of action and get something done.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, Action Jackson is here to...

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I am hearing the Member and we are moving forward with the action plan and that is coming in early spring. It will be delivered through the standing committee and also in this House. It will be a very substantial piece of work that we are moving forward.

The Member has referred to that it has been long awaited. Yes, patience is a virtue, as well, but we are going to be delivering an action plan by this summer. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 226-17(5):
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services and I want to follow up on my statement and ask some questions to the Minister about the office of the Auditor General's report recently released.

The Minister has mentioned that he and I were both on the Standing Committee on Social Programs in the 16th Assembly and we did that in-depth review. I believe the Minister is probably even more passionate about that review of the 16th Assembly than I am. There were 70 recommendations in that report. Those recommendations, if implemented, would have had a very large impact on our system.

So, a couple of questions here. What has happened to those recommendations? How did we get to where we are today? How did we get here? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Health, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, after the Auditor General report came out, I did send a letter to the Standing Committee on Social Programs and I was looking for an opportunity to sit with them and talk about the 16th Assembly report and also some direction that I have given to the department over the last couple of weeks and last couple of months with respect to the recommendations in that report.

I have talked a little bit about some of the foundational work that has been done, which is great, and I don't believe it's enough. I feel like we've been tinkering around the edges, that we haven't actually jumped into the meat of the issue.

When we did the review, we had an opportunity to meet and discuss this with so many wonderful people. I met some really passionate people on the file. At one point we had an opportunity to meet with an executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. She actually travelled with us on that review. She talked a lot about differential, providing these types of services on a differential basis. This is something that we were all passionate about at the time and this is something that I would like us, as an Assembly, to pursue. It was one of the recommendations.

We have been moving forward on the recommendations. I'm looking forward to sitting in front of committee at their earliest convenience, go through the report, talk about some of the things we are doing and how we can move forward to improve all services to our children and families in the Northwest Territories.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. I didn't really hear an answer to my question. I'm going more to we are in a dire situation right now. There are a lot of things that have been pointed out in the report which have not been done over the last 10 to 15 years, from the sounds of things.

My question to the Minister, again, is: How did we end up in this situation. How did we get from there to here?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I think the Auditor General kind of hit it on the head when they referred to the lack of accountability in the system. I think it was Mr. Moses who outlined the structure where the Minister is responsible and then the director is responsible for the provisions of the act and they delegated responsibilities down to staff who actually report it in authority and move up, so there's limited accountability in the authority which means it may not have been a priority to the degree we needed it to be, certainly not to the degree the Standing Committee on Social Programs in the 16th Assembly believed it needed to be.

I'm committed, as Minister of Health and Social Services, to make changes. One of the first changes I've made – and I've made the direction already – is from this point forward starting in July – it's going to take us a bit of time to do the paperwork and get the job descriptions rewritten and the training done – the CEOs will be the directors, the assistant directors under the act, and they will be accountable at an authority level.

As far as why these things didn't roll out as quickly as we'd hoped, there has been some work. It has been in the development phase. They have been working on the foundation. I want it to go faster and I want to see results in the life of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: I appreciate that some things have happened. I appreciate that it was difficult to put all 70-plus recommendations from the 16th Assembly report in place all at once, but it's awful slow. I'm particularly concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the gap in services for 16 to 18-year-olds. I mentioned that in my statement. That is something which certainly could have been acted on from the time in October 2010 when that report was tabled in the Assembly until now. There could have been amendments to the act that were done. I appreciate the Minister says we are now – the royal "we" – his department is working on legislation, an LP has been forwarded and we are now working on the legislation, but it's several years too late, in my estimation.

Can the Minister provide me with an indication of some of the changes we are likely to see in this legislation when it comes forward? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's never too late. We need to get it done and we will get it done. With respect to the 16 to 18-year-olds, I'm sure the

Member recalls if an individual between 16 and 18 wishes to have services, they still can volunteer for support. To deal with some of the other changes we have all discussed during the reviews of the Child and Family Services Act in the 16th Assembly, we are going to need some legislative changes. In the meantime, it needs to be across the department, because we talked about some individuals who choose not to receive services are not eligible for things like income support, so I have directed my department to meet with representatives of Education, Culture and Employment to see what we can do to make sure those individuals who choose not to take the volunteer services can receive coverage.

With respect to the act and what is coming forward, I have provided the LP; I have received some feedback from committee on things they would like us to include as we move forward. I'm happy to sit down and if I can get a meeting with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, we can have these discussions because I don't think you want me to start listing these things off. We'd be here all day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I don't want to be here all day, but I was hoping you'd give us a bit of an indication of some changes upcoming.

The situation we're in indicates that major change is called for. For a long time I've thought that the Department of Health and Social Services is too big. It's a huge monster. It's like a massive cargo ship in the ocean and it's very difficult for it to make change.

I'd like to suggest to the Minister – this is something I've thought about for quite some time and it would be reverting to something we had a number of Assemblies ago – that social services be removed from the Department of Health and Social Services and set up as a stand-alone department or perhaps a department with one or two other small areas. I'd like to know if this is something the Minister would consider and bring to Cabinet for discussion.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It's something that I've actually thought of at different times. I've had an opportunity to talk to professionals who were around in the day when the two departments were brought together or the many departments were brought together and services were shipped out to Education, Culture and Employment in other areas as well.

I've also had an opportunity to talk to a significant number of professionals in the system. At the end of the day, it's my opinion what we want is an integrated system. We want social workers and social service providers able to work collaboratively

with our health providers. I don't believe there's going to be benefit in the long term for us to split this up and create new silos when what we really want to do is find ways to work together. The Member is not wrong. Things have taken too long to happen. We need to take some action. We need some fundamental change, which is why I've said we need to stop tinkering around the edges and dig in and make some changes.

Once again, I'd love to have those conversations with committee and I'm looking forward to that opportunity. At this point, I'm not prepared to take forward an idea of splitting these departments. I think integration, working together and not creating more silos – we've all heard everybody say no more silos – isn't going to help us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 227-17(5): TOBACCO TAX AND COLLECTION

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during question period the Member for Range Lake was placed on notice by the Finance Minister for the second time this session. This time I have questions about tobacco tax collection, so I'm hoping the esteemed Minister had a chance to review and refresh himself with the recently tabled public accounts before the House. I hope we can return to questions without scoring a hat trick of unfortunate notices.

Can the Minister of Finance indicate to the House where his department gets their statistical data on tobacco purchases, use, tax collection and audits and is this information publicly available? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We get it from a variety of sources, from the people who sell it, from the people who retail it, from our own officials. I will pull together those facts and document and I will share it with the Member. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the Minister's cooperation. I do ask that the department make that information available publicly and not only to the Member, if that would be something they could look at.

Can the Minister clearly articulate to the House, according to our recent tabled public accounts, why our actual tobacco tax collection was so way off from our 2013 Main Estimates? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There are a number of possibilities which we're checking into. I can't definitely give him a clear answer on that as

the matter is still being checked into. I have gone back to the officials after our discussion in the House yesterday, as well, so I will, once again, have that information, when it's ready, provided to the Member. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I appreciate the department and Minister investigating this huge shortfall. I think it was very problematic for those who actually reviewed the public accounts at the time.

Can the Minister give a bit more of an indication, is that including audits, and if so, are audits being performed on out-of-province wholesalers? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We've, in fact, added a couple of auditors to the Finance operations to enhance their capabilities. We continue to monitor the whole chain from the wholesaler up to the retailer. We want to try to work, as well, with other departments as we try to track the impact and look at what Stats Can can tell us.

I would point out that when it comes to measuring 42,000 people amongst the 30-some million Canadians there are, we tend to be referred to as statistically insignificant and it is problematic when they do make their numbers available. Oftentimes, we are even less than a rounding error in terms of the quantity of people in the Northwest Territories compared to Canada at large. Thank you.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister has mentioned the issue of statistically unviable information from the Northwest Territories, but we clearly know, if we want, we can provide these statistics. We do have the means. We have a stats bureau that can do all this stuff for us.

Can the Minister indicate what safeguards or policies has the Department of Finance formalized to mitigate these yearly variances that we're seeing in tobacco tax collection in our territory? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. I don't think you're ever going to get away from potential variation. For example, we believe, and we have some of the numbers to show us, that there has been a significant switch from rolled cigarettes to loose tobacco because it's considerably cheaper. Our cigarettes are the second highest in the county. We do our utmost to check and keep track of contraband cigarettes, counterfeit cigarettes as well. So we're always going to have some variation. Plus we're spending a considerable amount of money as a government trying to get people to quit smoking and that shows some signs of success in certain age demographics. So we are always going to have that kind of variability, I believe. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 228-17(5):
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to return to the Minister of Health's answers here and I wanted to continue to ask questions. So let's break down some of the departmental response in the Auditor General's report. For the record, we all know in this building that the policies and procedures manual has been worked on for at least eight years. So, in other words, it makes it clear and relevant that everyone knows what's going on, but I'll save the questions of why didn't they act sooner for the appropriate committee that will be reviewing the report line by line, and I'm speaking broadly, not to particular chapters.

So my question for the Minister is simply this: Noting the departmental response provided to the Auditor General on each of those chapters, when was this response provided to the Auditor General in writing and by whom and when would the Minister have been briefed on the types of responses provided to the Auditor General? The written responses. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that's a pretty detailed question and I certainly don't have that detail in front of me, but I'd be happy to get it for the Member. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. We could only assume that the department would inform the Minister as to what they're doing. So, that said, when would the Minister have been informed that the department is responding to the Auditor General and, as such, as they prepared the Minister's statement that was read into the House February 25th, in other words, the pre-work in advance of the Minister's statement before the Minister read it? I assume, as he said earlier, clearly, that he's on top of his job and he's a smart guy, he said that he would have understood the statement he was going to read. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. My statement made on February 25th is actually incredibly consistent with the exact conversations that I've had in committee on other occasions. This is not new information; this is not some brand new thing that we're doing. I believe the former Minister has actually made similar statements. As the Minister, I have the ability to select what statements I'm going to make and the child and family service file was an important one to me. It has been an important one since I was elected for my first term and it will continue to be important to me and I'll

continue to make statements. But once again, what I said on the 25th is not inconsistent with what I've said in committee or in front of the House when I was being questioned by Committee of the Whole.

So, as far as what the Member is maybe trying to suggest, frankly, once again, it's an opinion and he's entitled to his opinion. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. Well, the Minister can keep repeating I have an opinion and that's fine. I mean, the public sees it for what it is.

My next question for the Minister is: Who writes his Minister's statements when they specifically target areas to talk about, which is child and family services matters? In other words, who would have written that? If he doesn't want to name the name, name the section or the position. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. When it comes to the Department of Health and Social Services, I decide what statements I want to make and I direct the department to draft a statement with the types of messaging that I would like to have in there, which is what I did in this case. Given that this was a Minister's statement on child and family services, it would have been the child and family services unit and the director of that division who would have helped put together the language on that statement. But ultimately it's my statement.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The probability is unreachable in any realm to put a bet on this, but let's put it this way. With the likelihood of the statement as highlighted by the Minister that it's written by the unit of the childhood family services area, they are, as we can only assume, the same unit that would have responded to the Auditor General of Canada in their written response represented by the department. Is it not probable that those are the same people writing the Minister's statement and the response to the Auditor General? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. Of course it's a possibility, absolutely. We've got only a finite number of employees within the GNWT with the technical expertise in their different areas, but it's absolutely irrelevant. The Member's statement or the Minister's statement was mine, I directed the department on what I wanted to say, I wanted to follow up on the types of things that are going on in the department and regardless of who writes it, it's still my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Madam Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 8-17(5): HUMAN RESOURCE FUNDING TRANSFERS AND REALLOCATIONS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am in receipt of a return to written question asked by Mr. Hawkins on February 12, 2014, to the Honourable J. Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Finance, regarding human resource funding transfers and reallocations.

The information the Member is seeking is not available and cannot be provided. There is also the concern of dedicating scarce human and financial resources in order to comb through excessive amounts of data going back 10 fiscal years on what is, for all intents and purposes, a subjective exercise, trying to guess why managers of years past made certain staffing decisions. None of our systems, past or present, track the type of information the Member is requesting.

The Financial Administration Act gives the deputy minister for the respective department the ability to make interactivity transfer as a management tool. For interactivity transfers over \$250,000, I table a report during every session in my role as Minister of Finance. The information contained in the reports may alleviate some of the Member's concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 9-17(5): DORMANT GNWT POSITIONS

I am in receipt of a return to written question asked by Mr. Hawkins on February 12, 2014, to the Honourable Tom Beaulieu, Minister of Human Resources, regarding dormant GNWT positions.

Mr. Speaker, in response to question 1, vacancy analysis as of October 31, 2013, indicates that there were 161 vacant GNWT positions that were categorized as inactive by departments and agencies. "Inactive" is the position status used to describe positions where there is no incumbent and no staffing action taking place in the immediate future.

In response to question 1(a), every department and agency, with the exception of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, had positions they categorized as inactive as of October 31, 2013. In response to question 1(b), inactive positions are located in Yellowknife; in the regional centres of Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Norman Wells, Inuvik; and in 16 smaller communities. In response to 1(c), there is very little funding associated with the positions that were categorized as inactive as of October 31, 2013. Some positions were identified as inactive because they are scheduled to sunset March 31, 2014. Others were inactive, pending job evaluation review due to

change of scope. Some others were inactive and are being re-profiled to fill other operational needs.

Mr. Speaker, in the October 31, 2013, vacancy analysis, departments also reported a total of 571 positions categorized as "to be staffed" in the immediate future. Given the dynamic nature of the GNWT public service, the number of positions to be staffed changes daily. The GNWT uses a range of methods within our legislative and policy framework for human resource management to fill positions across the public service. Departments and agencies are responsible for initiating recruitment to their positions and the Department of Human Resources provided expertise on options and approaches to best fill the position. In 2013 we had 1,265 staffing actions, including hires, transfers and promotions.

Mr. Speaker, in response to question 2(a), all departments and agencies identified positions in this category and these positions were located in 26 communities across the Northwest Territories. With regards to question 2(b), not all of the 571 positions were funded positions; for example, relief positions are included. Departments utilize funding approved by the Legislative Assembly to hire staff to effectively implement their mandated programs and services within the parameters of the Financial Administration Act and other budgetary controls.

With regards to question 2(c), departments use a variety of approaches to advertise positions. Many jobs are advertised on eRecruit, through our careers website at gnwjobs.ca. Job posters are also sent to communities outside the regional centres to advertise job openings in the community. In addition to advertised job competitions, internal processes such as transfer assignments and direct appointments are used to get the right skill set into the job, support employee development and meet short-term needs. Finally, with regards to question 2(d), positions are typically vacant for no more than a month or two; however, on occasion, a position may be vacant for longer given unique recruitment challenges related to the occupation, position location or other factors. The Department of Human Resources is finalizing a hard to recruit methodology that will assist departments in addressing these recruitment challenges.

Mr. Speaker, to summarize, the public service is a large and diverse organization. It is not static. Employees join us, they move around, they take extended leave, they part company from us and we have to staff once again. At the same time, positions are created, filled or made inactive. The information collected on vacant positions informs program design and strategies which, in turn, assists with staffing, to support recruitment and retention efforts across the GNWT. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item

12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills, Ms. Bisaro.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 1:
REINDEER ACT

BILL 2:
ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES ACT

BILL 3:
SURFACE RIGHTS BOARD ACT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning has completed its review of Bill 1, Reindeer Act; Bill 2, Archeological Sites Act; and Bill 3, Surface Rights Board Act.

The committee wishes to report that Bill 1 and Bill 2 are ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole, and Bill 3 is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole as amended and reprinted. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 59-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO MOTION 6-17(5),
STRENGTHENING MUNICIPAL ENFORCEMENT
OF LIQUOR LAWS

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 6-17(5), Strengthening Municipal Enforcement of Liquor Laws." Thank you.

TABLED DOCUMENT 60-17(5):
ANNUAL REPORT – NWT LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY PENSION PLANS,
MARCH 31, 2014

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Pursuant to Section 21. (1) of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act and Section 11.1. of the Supplementary Retiring Allowance Act, I wish to table the Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plans, March 31, 2013.

Item 15, notices of motion. Ms. Bisaro.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 15-17(5):
PUBLIC ACCESS TO AUTOMATED
EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, March 7, 2014, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take the steps necessary to ensure widespread access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs); and further, that the government work with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the NWT Association of Communities, the NWT fire marshal's office and the NWT fire chiefs, and the RCMP to ensure access to defibrillators across the NWT by designating locations where AEDs must be made available, and require mandatory registration of all installed AEDs; and further, that the government develop protocols to ensure the monitoring and maintenance of all defibrillators in NWT communities; and further, that the government make funding available to NWT communities for training of staff in public buildings where defibrillators are placed; and furthermore, that the government provide a response to this motion within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 19:
APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), 2014-2015

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, March 7, 2014, I will move that Bill 19, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2014-2015, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 17, motions. Mr. Yakeleya.

Motions

MOTION 13-17(5):
TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION WORKERS,
CARRIED

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I have a motion.

WHEREAS our children are our future and the way we treat them will have impacts that will be felt for generations;

AND WHEREAS the literature on early childhood education demonstrates that the success of junior kindergarten depends upon the requirement that high quality programs be delivered by fully trained early childhood education workers;

AND WHEREAS Kerry McCuaig of the Atkinson Institute and junior kindergarten implementation consultant to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has written that the requirement for high quality programming through fully trained early childhood education workers is non-negotiable;

AND WHEREAS research also shows that low quality programming can have a detrimental effect and actually delay the full and healthy development of our children;

AND WHEREAS the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is proposing implementation of junior kindergarten in small communities using elementary school teachers while encouraging them to take course work in early childhood education;

AND WHEREAS early childhood education workers are professionals that should be paid the same as wages as our teachers;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment be required to ensure that there is at least one fully trained early childhood education worker for every junior kindergarten group before the program is implemented;

AND FURTHER, that early childhood education workers be recognized as education professionals and paid wages accordingly;

AND FURTHER, that Aurora College immediately implement a training program that graduates fully qualified early childhood education workers who meet federal standards;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 90 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues, for allowing this motion to come forward to have a debate on it.

This motion is a good news story for the small communities. Certainly, there are a wide range of opinions as to the program and how it's going to be implemented and how it's going to be rolled out in the coming years.

Our small communities, at least 10 of them, some of our communities do not have some type of programming for our junior kindergarten schools.

As in the newspaper, it's been quoted from Mr. Kochon, that's welcome news to Colville Lake.

Twenty-nine communities next year will have this program. It will help them have the children get ready for kindergarten. It's optional, and this program is setting up our students for the long term to do well in their educational career. Also, in the News/North report that we had a pilot program in Norman Wells and all indications have shown that the program is being successfully run and that the teacher was saying that the program is doing well. I support this program. I think it's good news and I think we're embarking on a long-term goal that families in these small communities now have an option to bring their children to school and have them in a structured environment that will get them prepared for their life-long career and their education.

I welcome debate on this motion. It's a good program, and we need to stop sitting and start doing some things in our communities that will make a difference for the families and the people in our small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I'll allow the seconder to the motion to speak. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to second this motion. Residents in my communities are supportive of junior kindergarten, and the more and more I learn about how we're going to implement and the need for early childhood education workers is a critical component of junior kindergarten. Right now, I don't know how many early childhood education workers we have that we can integrate into the Junior Kindergarten Program, and that's what this motion speaks about, about getting them involved, getting them involved early. There's something to be said about teachers not being prepared for early childhood years, which is the four-year-olds in junior kindergarten, and I certainly see that need for early childhood education workers.

The motion, in the paragraph "now therefore I move," indicates that we want early childhood education workers for every junior kindergarten group before the program is implemented. I have issues with that, because that motion would say to government stop everything unless there are early childhood workers. I know that the resources aren't there. The Minister did speak in the House that there is a commitment to get early childhood education workers, and perhaps in his rebuttal he can address that, but for now, I believe that the motion is too strong and might delay implementation of the junior kindergarten. Our communities are looking forward to it.

With that, I'd like to move an amendment to the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the amendment. Mr. Menicoche.

MOTION TO AMEND MOTION 13-17(5):
TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION WORKERS,
CARRIED

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honorable Member for Sahtu, that Motion 13-17(5) be amended by deleting the words "before the program is implemented" from the first paragraph of the resolution portion of the motion. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. We're dealing with the amendment then we're dealing with the motion. To the amendment. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, there is good support for junior kindergarten in the small communities. I'm very pleased that in the first year of the program it will be in the small communities, and we're looking forward to that and looking forward with the inclusion and a plan to include and have more early childhood education workers to support the junior kindergarten program. However, like I said, the way the motion reads is government don't do it unless. You have to do it before the program is implemented. When it reads that way it has implications for my communities. I know that they want it and they want it this coming fall as proposed by the government. That's why, as a seconder, I have no problem amending it to delete "before the program is implemented."

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the amendment. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't support the amendment. The whole intent of this motion is to make sure that the spaces, the programs for our junior kindergarten, four-year-old aged children, to make sure that it's a quality program, and in order to make sure it's a quality program we need to have early childhood educators who are running the program. We need to have people who are trained in early childhood education techniques. We need to have people who will ensure that the quality of the program is of a high quality. There's not much point in running a Junior Kindergarten Program if we're simply going to throw them in and treat them like school-aged children and put them into a classroom, sit them in desks. That's not the intent of early childhood education. Without a trained early childhood educator, there's not much point in having this motion. The whole intent is to provide quality staff for a quality program. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This phrase is awkward, but it is the kernel of the motion, I believe. I think what Mr. Menicoche is saying, and I agree, is we don't want the whole program stopped if some community, JK group, doesn't have an ECE worker. It's just that that particular JK group should not go ahead until there is an early childhood education worker. On that basis, Mr. Chair, I would like to propose an amendment to the amendment. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: An amendment to the amendment. The Clerk is advising we take a five-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Bromley, to your amendment.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the amendment to Motion 13-17(5) be amended by adding the following after the phrase "first paragraph after the resolution portion of the motion": and replacing them with the words "before that group begins in that community". I think we need one more minute, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Madam Clerk, would you see Mr. Bromley.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bromley.

AMENDMENT TO MOTION TO AMEND
MOTION 13-17(5):
TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION WORKERS,
DEFEATED

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe my amendment to the amendment is now before the House, but I will repeat it.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the amendment to Motion 13-17(5) be amended by adding the following after the phrase "first paragraph after the resolution portion of the motion": and replacing them with the words "before that group begins in that community". I would like to speak to the motion, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the amendment, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the point here. The point is we don't want to hold up the program, but we do want to make sure that a community JK, junior kindergarten, group begins that there is a fully qualified early education worker on staff there. I appreciate that amendment and this motion, this amendment to the amendment, supports Mr. Menicoche's suggestion to delete the phrase "group before the program is implemented" and replace

that so that it says there is at least one fully trained early education worker for every junior kindergarten group before that group begins in that community. So it makes that specific and the intent therefore allows the program to go ahead, but with all community groups having to meet the condition of having a fully trained early childhood education worker on staff before that community group begins.

So that's the amendment to the amendment. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Is there any discussion from the Members on the amendment to the amendment? Everybody agreed? Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way I read the amendment to the amendment, would basically allow those larger communities that have the trained people to have junior kindergarten right away, and those communities that don't have the benefit of meeting the terms of this motion would get delayed or postponed until, in fact, they have those trained people there. The way I am understanding this would disadvantage, once again, the very communities that we're targeting to start first, which would be the small communities. So, to me it is very problematic and we wouldn't support the amendment to the amendment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Any more questions to the amendment to the amendment? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I just need to try and suggest that we are starting with small communities. This program is intended to start in September of 2014 in 29 small communities, so I don't know where the Minister is bringing forward the red herring of the large communities.

There's no point in starting a program if we don't have qualified staff. I know that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment recognizes that we need qualified staff, but this motion is intending to make sure that a program does not go forward in any particular community if they don't have the qualified staff. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. More comments to the amendment to the amendment? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Just one more quick thing. I know that Mr. Bromley's intentions about getting qualified early childhood education workers is well intended, but at the same time it is a need in the small communities, and once again, the wording is just so bad it's restrictive to the small communities in getting them started. I cannot support the amendment to the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the amendment to the amendment. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along the same lines as Mr. Menicoche's comments, in a small community there may be a teacher who is not working who does not have early childhood education credentials, but could potentially work in the Junior Kindergarten Program. I think it is restrictive to say that they must have those credentials. There could be other people who have... Working on a program on-line I know is available through the college. I think it is restrictive and I think it does create the possibility, as Mr. Miltenberger says, of being a detriment to those small communities who have the same struggles for other types of professionals as well. I think that we have to look a little bit beyond the very specific line that this amendment to the amendment takes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the amendment to the amendment. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I concur with Mrs. Groenewegen and Mr. Menicoche to this amendment to the amendment. We do have qualified teachers, they are called mothers, grandmothers. They may not have their qualifications as an institution, but they are special people in our communities.

These are four-year-olds. Think back on your child or grandchild as a four-year-old. This is about teaching some social development skills, language, play, respect and values. So these are small children that some of the qualified people that are not recognized in our education system may be recognized in our communities in how to look after little ones, get them ready, so they are special people in our communities. I believe that this is going to shut the door on them and restrict them in saying that we can only have qualified early childhood educators. They are already qualified. If they are qualified to have a little one, they certainly know how to raise them, so we have got to be very careful and keep the door open for our small communities with the Aboriginal teaching of our parents and our grandparents. They may not fit the "academic" type of qualifications but they fit many other different qualifications. We have got to remember that. We have got to honour the culture and the traditions of these communities that we represent.

These are two different views and I think that this view here will say that in the small communities we have to have qualified people in there, so it's very tricky. This is embarking on a new type of educating and looking after our little ones, so I would have to not support this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the amendment to the amendment to the motion. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Junior kindergarten in the small communities is very important. Looking at all the discussions back and forth and starting with the small communities, I know we've had discussions and presentation dialogues in briefings before and we talk about the children that are being developmentally delayed that are entering the school system right now and any type of program that this government can offer, whether it is junior kindergarten or even early childhood development programs. But going with the Junior Kindergarten Program, the plan for the next three years, starting with the small communities, I am in big support of that, based on the fact that we see these high statistics of students entering the school system with such developmentally delayed issues and concerns and also looking at the early framework. The gist of the whole motion itself, the early framework that developed in BC in the occupational competencies that come along with that, I think that also needs to be developed in order to start focussing on some of the really early childhood things that we do.

To the amendment to the amendment, I can't support it because it looks like it will be restricting getting these programs started, when in fact, right now I don't think that our government can even certify early childhood workers right now to have that capacity.

For that, I would like to see the Junior Kindergarten Program started up in the new school year and start getting our kids ready for the school system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the amendment to the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The amendment to the amendment is defeated.

---Defeated

To the amendment. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. I stand by the original amended motion, Mr. Speaker, just to delete before the program is implemented. Only, once again, it is too restrictive to small communities and their needs and their desire to move forward junior kindergarten. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Motion is carried. The amendment is carried.

---Carried

To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did not speak to the motion, now that we're back to the motion.

Mr. Speaker, in the whereas, and it says "and whereas early childhood education workers are professionals that should be paid the same wages as our teachers," I have an issue with that because I don't know what the early childhood education requirements are for credentials to teach early childhood education compared to teachers. I am pretty sure that teachers need some kind of a degree. I don't know how long it takes to get a diploma or certificate in early childhood education.

So, we are now telling all the teachers in the Northwest Territories, who have gone out and got their Bachelor of Education degrees, that we are going to bring in people who have taken a 10-month course and we're going to say they need to be paid the same as our teachers.

I think we're getting way into things that we don't know anything about. I think that there is a union, there's a teachers' association. There are ways that jobs are classified. There are ways that job descriptions are written. There is remuneration associated with those jobs and credentials. So we're getting very specific in this motion suggesting that we should pay early childhood education workers who may not be teachers the same wages as teachers. I can't support that part of the motion.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an amendment to the motion to delete that particular whereas and I'd like to change it to "whereas early childhood education workers are professionals that should be paid an amount consistent with the industry standard or best practices from other jurisdictions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. With that, we're going to have to take another break to get our Clerk's office to deal with it. We'll take another break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Groenewegen.

MOTION TO AMEND MOTION 13-17(5):
TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION WORKERS,
CARRIED

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that Motion 13-17(5) be amended by deleting the sixth paragraph of the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the amendment, Mr. Menicoche. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe in deleting this, we have not failed to speak of the wages because further down in the motion it says that early childhood education workers be recognized as education professionals and paid wages accordingly. I think that covers the issue of the pay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called.

---Carried

The motion is carried as amended. Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Now to the motion.

---Laughter

To the motion as amended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called.

---Carried

Yes, motion is carried as amended. Item 18, first reading of bills, the honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 15: OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS ACT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Kam Lake, that Bill 15, Oil and Gas Operations Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 15 has had first reading.

---Carried

Mr. Premier.

BILL 16: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON LANDS AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 16, Northwest Territories Intergovernmental Agreement on Lands and Resources Management Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 16 has had first reading.

---Carried

Mr. Premier.

BILL 17:
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT
ON RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING
AGREEMENT ACT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 17, Northwest Territories Intergovernmental Agreement on Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 17 has had first reading.

---Carried

Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

**Consideration in Committee of the Whole
of Bills and Other Matters**

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order today. What is the wish of the committee? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We would like to deal with Tabled Document 44-17(5), Tabled Document 45-17(5), Tabled Document 51-17(5), Tabled Document 52-17(5) and, if we have time, Bill 5. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Might I take this moment to remind Members that we are having a group photo taken in the Great Hall at the break and then we'll have a very brief break after that since we kind of already had a break. We'll resume shortly. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. According to the list provided earlier by Ms. Bisaro, we're going to start with Tabled Document 44-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014. With that, we'll go to the Minister for opening comments. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am here to present Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014. This document provides for an increase of \$3.553 million for capital investment expenditures in the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

The more significant items in this supplementary estimate include:

1. \$2.75 million for the Department of Public Works and Services to advance funding from 2014-15 for the early completion of the Yellowknife General Purpose Office Building.
2. \$453,000 for the implementation of a new Mineral Information Tenure System to support the administration of the NWT Mining Regulations as part of the transfer of responsibilities associated with devolution. The net impact on government operations is nil as these costs will be offset with funding received from the federal government.

I am prepared to review the details of the supplementary estimates document.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Minister Miltenberger, do you have witnesses that you would like to bring into the House.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Does committee agree? Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Minister Miltenberger, if you could introduce your witnesses to the Chamber please.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Deputy Minister Mike Aumond and deputy secretary to the FMB, Mr. Sandy Kalgutkar.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Kalgutkar and Mr. Aumond, welcome back to the House. Committee, General comments. I'm hearing detail.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Committee, if I can get you to turn to page 5 of Supplementary Appropriation, 2013-2014, No. 4, (Infrastructure Expenditures). Public Works and Services, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$2.750 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$2.750 million. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a question on this Yellowknife general purpose office building, I understand this is money to continue the project. The project is ahead of schedule. I am assuming, and maybe if I could just get clarification, we're on budget as well.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the project is. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Any further questions? Sorry, folks. Supplementary Appropriation, No. 4, (Infrastructure Expenditures), Public Works and Services, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$2.750 million. Total department, not previously authorized, \$2.750 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Turn to page 6. Education, Culture and Employment, capital investment expenditures, education and culture, not previously authorized, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Advanced education, not previously authorized, \$150,000. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have to make a comment here. I think almost invariably every year we see leasehold improvements or spending of some sort on the Lahm Ridge Tower, and albeit I appreciate that this is restructuring of a business services division or strategic and business services division within ECE, and I think it was overdue, and I think the restructuring is positive, I have to comment on the fact that we've probably spent more on this building in the last 10 years than the building is worth, so albeit I approve this expense, I had to make a comment.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We'll make note of the Member's comment and thank her for her comments.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Any other further questions? Again, Education, Culture and Employment, capital investment expenditures, education and culture, not previously authorized, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Advanced education, not previously authorized, \$150,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$250,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Page 7, Transportation, capital investment expenditures, highways, not previously authorized, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$100,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Page 8, Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investment expenditures, minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$453,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$453,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Does committee agree we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 44-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 25-17(5):
CONCURRENCE OF
TABLED DOCUMENT 44-17(5):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2013-2014,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 44-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 44-17(5) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We're just going to circulate that motion. Committee, the motion is in order and the motion is not debatable. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee, we're going to continue on with Tabled Document 45-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2014-2015, with opening comments from the Minister. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I am here to present Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2014-2015. This document provides for a decrease of \$542,000 to the capital budget.

The more significant items in this supplementary estimates include:

1. \$1.418 million for the Department of Public Works and Services to facilitate tenant improvements required with the transfer of federal office space and 259 positions being

devolved to the GNWT related to devolution implementation. The net impact on government operations is nil as these costs will be offset by funding received from the federal government.

2. A reduction of \$2.75 million for the Department of Public Works and Services to provide funding in 2013-14 for the early completion of the Yellowknife General Purpose Office Building.
3. \$500,000 for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for the new lighting systems project at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. The net effect of this project is nil as the cost will be offset by other sources of funding.
4. \$350,000 to provide for the transfer of operations funding to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment for the implementation of a new Mineral Information Tenure System to support the administration of the NWT Mining Regulations, effective April 1, 2014. The net impact on government operations is nil as these costs will be offset by funding received from the federal government.

I am prepared to review the details of the supplementary estimates document. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Miltenberger, if you can just reintroduce your witnesses for the Chamber, please.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me the deputy minister, Mike Aumond, from Finance; and from Finance, as well, deputy secretary to FMB, Mr. Sandy Kalgutkar. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Again, Mr. Kalgutkar and Mr. Aumond, welcome. Committee, we are going to open this up to general comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Committee, we'll go to detail. I will ask you to turn to page 5 of your supplementary estimates. Committee, 2014-15 Supplementary Estimates, No. 2, (Infrastructure Expenditures), Public Works and Services, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, negative \$1.392 million, total department not previously authorized, negative \$1.392 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you. Page 6, Education, Culture and Employment, capital investment expenditures, education and culture, not previously authorized, \$500,000, total department not previously authorized, \$500,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 45-17(5)? Oh, I'm so sorry. Back page, page 7, Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investment expenditures, mineral and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$350,000, total department not previously authorized, \$350,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 45-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2014-15?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, committee. Ms. Bisaro.

COMMITTEE MOTION 26-17(5):
CONCURRENCE OF
TABLED DOCUMENT 45-17(5),
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 2, 2014-2015,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 45-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2014-15, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 45-17(5) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We're just going to circulate that motion.

Thank you, committee. The motion is order. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee, we are going to continue on to Tabled Document 51-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2012-2013. We will go to Minister Miltenberger for opening comments.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am here to present Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2012-13. This document outlines an increase of \$3.794 million in operations expenditures for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

The supplementary estimates consist of one item of \$3.794 million for the Department of Health and Social Services for operating costs that exceeded the department's appropriation authority as reflected in the 2012-13 Public Accounts.

I am prepared to review the details of the supplementary estimates document. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Minister Miltenberger, if you can once again please introduce your witnesses to the House.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me the deputy minister of Finance, Mr. Mike Aumond; and the deputy secretary to the FMB, Mr. Sandy Kalgutkar. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Kalgutkar and Mr. Aumond, again, thank you very much for your patience.

Committee, I will open it up to general comments. General comments. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of brief comments. This is the completion of fiscal year 2012-2013. We are now almost to the end of year 2014-15 and I appreciate that there are adjustments that have to be made at the end of any fiscal year, accounting bits and pieces have to be moved around and I can appreciate that, but I had great difficulty when I first became aware of these expenditures, understanding why it has taken almost two years for us to get this information and for these expenditures to come to light and to require us to approve them as an appropriation. I don't have a problem with any of the particular details that are in this particular appropriation, but I do have, in general, difficulty in understanding why it takes us this long to get to doing year-end adjustments for two fiscal years back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is an annual event, but I will ask Mr. Kalgutkar if he would provide further detail as to the particulars of the process. Thank you.

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

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The main reason for the delay was that we were just trying to finalize the 2012-13 Public Accounts which were tabled last fall. If the Member does wish to see the amounts earlier, we could likely use the non-consolidated financial statements which these numbers are primarily based on, so we could likely have this supp presented at an earlier time that it is currently being presented now. Thank you.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Chair. It was just a comment. That's all I've got.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. General comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I am hearing detail. Thank you, committee. If I can get you to turn to page 3, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2012-2013, Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$124,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Program delivery support, not previously authorized, \$392,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Health services programs, not previously authorized, \$2.623 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Supplementary health programs, not previously authorized, \$162,000

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Community wellness and social services, not previously authorized, \$493,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$3.794 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Does committee agree that we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 51-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 4, 2012-2013?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 27-17(5):
CONCURRENCE OF
TABLED DOCUMENT 51-17(5),
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2012-2013,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 51-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 4, 2012-2013, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 51-17(5) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Just give us a second to circulate that motion.

Committee, the motion is in order. Motion is carried.

---Carried

We are going to continue on with Tabled Document 52-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014. We will go to the Minister responsible for opening comments. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm here to present Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 4, 2013-14. This document outlines an increase of \$30.525 million in operations expenditures for the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

The more significant items included in the supplementary estimates are:

1. \$6.6 million for the Department of Health and Social Services for increased costs for the provision of health care services to non-NWT residents. These costs will be recovered from the patient's home province or territory.
2. \$5.9 million for the Department of Health and Social Services for increased costs associated with adults in residential care outside the Northwest Territories.
3. \$3.8 million for the Department of Health and Social Services for increased costs associated with the provision of health care services for NWT residents in non-NWT hospitals.
4. \$3.4 million for the Department of Health and Social Services for increased costs associated with children in residential care outside the Northwest Territories.
5. 2.5 million for the Department of Health and Social Services for increased costs for medical travel.
6. \$1,728,000 for the Department of Public Works and Services for increases in electricity rates.

I am prepared to review the details of the supplementary estimates document. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Miltenberger, if you can one final time introduce your witnesses to the House.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me Mr. Mike Aumond, deputy minister of Finance; Mr. Sandy Kalgutkar, deputy secretary to the FMB. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Again, thanks to Mr. Kalgutkar and Mr. Aumond for joining us today. Committee, general comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, this expenditure will drive us well beyond our supplementary reserve. In fact, it blows it right out of the water. In the supportive

documents, I keep seeing the word shortfall. What's happened here is we have done a very shoddy job on budgeting. This is riddled with examples of entirely predictable costs and it reflects to me a really irresponsible approach to budgeting in the first place, and here we are again putting our supplementary reserve into major deficit. This isn't the first time this has been brought up. We have been bringing this up repeatedly. Again, I have to question what's going on here.

Again, many of these things are known well in advance. I will be pointing out examples as we go, but I'd say this practice has to stop. These are major dollars. Obviously, we are not through the year yet, who knows what we'll come up in a year or two from now for this fiscal year. But I am very disappointed to see these sorts of things coming forward when we're not even through our year here.

That's just an...(inaudible)...comment there and I will be commenting as we go. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will accept the Member has the right to make his comments. I would take exception to the characterization of shoddy and irresponsible. We take this work very seriously. This is a \$1.6 billion operation. It's very complex. There are many variables we can't control. There are many demand-driven services. I have and this Assembly has full confidence in the Department of Finance and the budget because we just approved it in the Committee of the Whole yesterday, I think, with the exception of one vote against, everybody else supported it. So we will have the discussion. Yes, there are costs that exceed our Supplementary Reserve Fund, but to characterize the work of the Finance department as shoddy and irresponsible is one, as Minister, I take exception to. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Perhaps I could ask what the purpose of the Reserve Fund is and why it's set at the point that it's set at and why we are exceeding that by \$26 million.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, the intent of the fund is to allow us to address unanticipated pressures that we may not have anticipated in the budget. Many are demand-driven programs and you look at one of the big drivers is some of the significant costs related to services to adults and children in southern jurisdictions for example. It gives us a target. We try to hold it, along with our forced growth costs, we try to maintain that, but there are some costs that we can't anticipate and there are costs that we have to be prepared to pay. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I think many entities would budget with this in mind. If the supplementary reserve is insufficient, let's change it. But what

happens is we end up stealing from Peter to pay Paul here when in fact we could allocate responsibly right in the beginning. As I say, this degree of correction is unacceptable in my mind. Many of these things, as I say, are predictable and pretty well known. This government's been operating a long time.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I'm trying to find a question in there. I will leave it at that, I guess. General comments. I have Mr. Menicoche, followed by Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I know it's a pretty significant budget at \$30 million and I think the term mini-budget is usually termed when you have some such large expenditures. Of course, they are largely unforeseen. I can certainly concur with that.

I have a couple of questions. Firstly, are any of these from the supplementary appropriation list of \$30 million, is any of that included in the base going forward into 2014-15 fiscal year at all?

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of the health items, such as children and adults out-of-territory care, blood and plasma protein products and some medical travel, Health and Social Services did get an additional \$10 million starting in '14-15 for those four items in particular. Some examples of some of the stuff that we've taken from this supp list and provided base funding adjustments for in the '14-15 fiscal year. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Because it was a significant over-expenditure again, as well, for the predicted 2013-14, are we looking at then a deficit budget based on these new numbers that we have before us?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: No, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you. I think he said no. Okay. Can he explain – that is such a significant \$30 million adjustment to the 2013-14 budget – how we can be under?

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The projected, I guess, the additional, we'll be in a deficit for our supp reserve by about \$26 million. We were projecting a budget in '13-14 in excess of \$100 million to help fund our capital plan that we

approved for '14-15, so we're in no danger of this putting us in a deficit position.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just one further question then. We have enough revenue for '13-14, but Mr. Aumond mentioned, of course, it looks like we have less money for capital for '14-15. Is that what he's alluding to?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're going to keep the capital plan at the agreed to rates. It will just be short-term borrowing to cover those costs.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. I'm done.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My comments are similar to my colleagues'. In looking at the amount of this appropriation and the impact that it has on our Reserve Fund, it's pretty mind-blowing. This appropriation is some \$30 million. About \$7 million is recoverable, but it leaves us with \$24 million or so which, added to our \$1.7 million negative already in our Reserve Fund, brings our Reserve Fund up to \$26 million in the hole.

I agree with my colleagues that some of these increased pressures happen year after year after year and we should be able to predict them, and I'm very glad to hear that we have added to the base for, I think, four items, I believe the Minister mentioned. That, in my mind, is how we should be budgeting. We finally got to the point about two years ago now that we budgeted a far more realistic figure for fire activities during the summer. Previously, we budgeted an absolute bare minimum and every year the department had to come back and ask for a supplementary appropriation when we knew full well that we were not going to spend just the minimum amount in that budget.

I think being more realistic in what it's actually going to cost us is a good idea, and I'm very glad to see that some of these things have been moved into base funding for the Department of Health and Social Services. I would encourage the Department of Finance to look with a very critical eye when they're doing the next budget, look with a critical eye over the last two or three years and don't budget below what we have tended to spend on a particular item. Budget what we think we're going to spend in the next year.

I think sometimes we underestimate in our budgeting. I'm not quite sure why. Maybe because it looks better or maybe because, you know, yeah, well, that's okay, we can always come back and ask for more money. But as I've said often, we can't do that in our own personal budgets. We have X amount of dollars in our household budget and we can't go back to ourselves and ask for more. Well, we can, but it puts us into debt. That's the situation that we're in here.

My question to the Minister is: With \$26 million in the hole, I believe it was mentioned that we are going to have to incur short-term borrowing in order for us to get over this hump and this lack of funds and cash flow and so on, so what are the costs that we are going to incur because of this overspending and because of the negative amount in our Reserve Fund?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would point out that if it was in the base or if it's here as an over-expenditure in our supplementary reserve, we would still be paying the costs that have been incurred for these programs and services, and we come back on a regular basis. This is my 19th budget, and the Health and Social Services big ticket items that we constantly come back for are hospital care services and for children and adults, usually in southern facilities. In addition to the supplementary reserve, which is going to go into the base in those areas, we also have forced growth that we try to top up these high pressure areas and programs. Even with that, these are still demand-driven programs and we are here, and if you did a review looking back on what are the program areas that come in most regularly with the biggest amounts of money, you would find that they are very consistent with what's before this House.

With this budget, this supplementary appropriation in our budget, we are at \$128 million left of borrowing room, and we're looking at keeping that \$100 million cushion. We have some flexibility, modest as it is, so we are paying the service, the debt, the short-term debt. Some of it's already self-liquidating, but that money, we borrow it at the rate we get as a government, and if that's what the Member is asking, I'd have to ask the deputy minister if we have those costs. If not, we can get them for committee.

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We would have to go back and provide that information to committee.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for his comments, and to the deputy minister. It would be interesting to know what this negative amount in our reserve is going to cost us. I mean, the Minister is constantly reminding us that we need to not spend more money because we're in a short-term borrowing situation. We have to borrow periodically during the year and the number of times that we have to borrow, apparently, is getting to be more and more frequent. There's a cost to doing this and I would be interested in knowing that cost.

The other thing, if it's not too much work, I would be interested in knowing for, say, the last three to five years, I would be interested in knowing the cost for even the four items that were mentioned by the Minister, blood and plasma protein products, southern placements for children and adults, and medical travel. I'd be interested in knowing what we budgeted and what we had to come back for as a supplementary appropriation, just so that I could get a sense of a trend. If there's any other big ticket items that the department cares to provide that information for, I think it would be very, very useful. No question there, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We'll ask Minister Miltenberger just for that one comment. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We'll provide the requested information going back three to five years for those particular four areas and we'll include supplementary appropriations plus whatever money has been added for forced growth as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Committee, general comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. I'm hearing detail. Committee, I'll ask you to turn to page 3 in your supplementary estimates. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 4, 2013-14, Legislative Assembly, operation expenditures, Office of the Clerk, not previously authorized, \$170,000. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What is the total budget here that this \$170,000 is being added to and what will the total be at the end of the year?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't have that information from the Ledge, but we can request that information from the Legislative Assembly and provide it to committee.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you. I'd appreciate it if that could be provided to the House and tabled. Why the increase here?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The indication from the Speaker is that there have been cost pressures that have driven both these areas of expenditures up and we bring it forward to the Legislature for payment and we'll, once again, ask for that information.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. This sounds like a significant increase here and I'm surprised that the process is such that the Minister is not able to be prepared to answer very simple questions here. I would ask that this House consider a process to make sure the Minister has that information when bringing forward requests for increases such as this. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: If there are improvements in the process that are needed, then we would, of course, look for those. But standard practice is the Department of Finance brings forward the request and it's the Legislature that disposes and it's the Speaker that requests, all we do is incorporate it into the budget. We don't question it, we don't defend it, we just process and bring the request to this House. So, we will get the information that was requested. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Committee, page 3, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2013. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just had a question about the \$35,000 in the Office of the Speaker. Does the Minister know the information on that?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There was a scholarship set up, but when the Building Society concluded its work and wrapped up, they turned over I think it was \$400,000 to the Legislature and part of it was to go to a scholarship, which is why the net effect is nil. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Committee, page 3, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-14. Legislative Assembly, operations expenditures, Office of the Clerk, not previously authorized, \$170,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Office of the Speaker, not previously authorized, \$35,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Statutory offices, not previously authorized, \$120,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$325,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 4, Executive, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, negative \$450,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Ministers' offices, not previously authorized, \$25,000

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, negative \$428,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Committee, I was just notified by the Clerk that I may have said the one number wrong, so just for the record, directorate, not previously authorized, negative \$453,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Human Resources, operations expenditures, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, not previously authorized, \$345,000. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe you didn't do the Red Cross.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Actually, Mr. Blake, I did read in the \$25,000. Thank you, I appreciate it.

Committee, for clarity, and for the record, we will redo page 4. Mr. Blake is paying attention; that's great. Thank you.

Executive, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, negative \$453,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Ministers' offices, not previously authorized, \$25,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, negative \$428,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 5 Human Resources, operations expenditures, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, not previously authorized, \$345,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Employee services, not previously authorized, \$1.141 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$1.486 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 6, Public Works and Services, operations expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$2.054 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$2.054 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand a good proportion of this is due to the 7 percent increase in electrical rates. This is a formula we have known several years in advance; this is a good example of my perplexity of why we are dealing with this in a supp when we know well ahead of time that we are having a 7 percent increase in our electrical rates. I don't doubt that there are other factors involved here, but clearly a big proportion of that is the 7 percent increase, a substantive increase as we've had for the last three years. We know we are going to have a 5 percent increase next year. Is the Minister aware of that? Will he budget that 5 percent in?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have asked the deputy to provide the information to why it came forward as a supp this year but, yes, next year it will be built in and won't come forward as a supp, but with your indulgence, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reason it's in a supp is that actual rates were not approved by the PUB until July 9, 2013, and Public Works and Services, after that, did their data compilation, so that's why it's appearing as a supp and it will be a base adjustment going forward after that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Committee, we are on page 6, Public Works and Services, operation expenditures, asset management not previously authorized, \$2.054 million. Total department not previously authorized, \$2.054 million. Does Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 7, Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$120,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Program delivery support, not previously authorized, \$567,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Somel

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Health services programs, not previously authorized, \$12.568 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe this is dealing with increased costs for health care services, non-NWT residents and NWT residents, and I believe we are collecting or recovering costs for the non-NWT residents. Is the amount that we are increasing for health care services provided to residents outside the NWT? Is this above normal and what is the full expenditures for that item, the increased costs for health care services outside the NWT? Rather than the increase, what is the full cost to give some context to that \$3.775 million? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. For that we will go to Mr. Aumond.

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Including the \$6.6 million in this supp, the total costs, projected costs for services, is \$15.447 million.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to be clear, is that for total costs for health care services for residents outside the NWT?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We just want to clarify the numbers that Mr. Aumond was speaking to, or for insured services for non-NWT residents, so now we will respond to the question that Mr. Bromley had asked. I will ask the deputy.

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

MR. AUMOND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For out-of-territory hospitals, the total projected cost in '13-14 is about \$22.9 million.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Aumond. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know these costs are always going up. Is this amount generally going up from year to year, the \$22.9 million, for example? Are we always requesting these extra dollars for the increased costs? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Across the country, the health costs are going up on an annual basis. In some cases, it's a

modest amount, a few percent. In many cases it is 6 to 9 percent. Yes, as this supp indicates, these costs pressures are consistent and inexorable. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. Does our budgeting process allow us the flexibility of saying we're going to assume a 5 percent increase this year when we're budgeting for these costs, or do we have to basically go on what it was last year and deal with the extra costs through a supp? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, there's going to be a target adjustment and this money will go to the base that we're requesting. As opposed to taking 5 percent, we know that there is a \$3.7 million shortfall, so that's going to be approved now and then added to the base for next year. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for that information. It sounds like we're never allowed to get ahead. We're allowed to count for what the actual costs are this year through this unfortunate process, but wouldn't it be great if we could do it at the beginning of the year so that we actually knew what our costs were roughly? We might even feed back a few thousand bucks at the end of the year, who knows? But I would be happy with a conservative estimate of increases based on our experience. It would just greatly reduce these sorts of costs, or at least adjustments. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Chairman, the Legislature and the Government of the Northwest Territories have learned over the decades that what seems to be the best way to manage the money is putting a base budget, and if you are over, come back when you can justify the expense as opposed to anticipating at the beginning of the year a number, however big it would be, and then hoping it's enough and that the things don't expand, just spend the money available in the budget. Hard practice has shown and I know, if I can use fire fighting for example, they used to have a very rich budget. It ended up, when there was a small fire season, a lot of other things got done but the fire budget stayed the same even if they didn't use the money. So for this and other program areas, it came to practice to give them a good base budget, and if there are costs over and above that, then come back and we will make the case to the Legislature why we should get paid for that. That's the approach that has been consistent in my time here in this Legislature. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: It sounds like that's the hard reality and our budgeting system does not have flexibility to do this and redefine that base even conservatively. We know typically this year the numbers I have have increased about 5.5 percent. I think in the order of 4 to 6 percent is typical across Canada, so we could adjust it by 3 or 3.5 percent

theoretically, but it doesn't sound like we have that flexibility. So, onwards.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I will take that as a final comment. I do have Mr. Nadli on this page as well. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just an observation in terms of this section of the budget, it seems rather high, but I realize that patients that have serious injuries in some circumstances have to be sent down south because we don't have the specialized care here in the NWT. I just wanted to get the Minister to perhaps share his vision in terms of trying to curb the costs but at the same time looking at perhaps a concept of at least a legacy in terms of ensuring that we have homemade solutions here and we have institutions that are tailored to deal with industrial-type accidents, whether that is perhaps the vision that the Minister has in his department. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Minister of Finance, we put forward a budget that has a very hard cap on forced growth and we're trying to control our supplementary appropriations. We are trying to make sure that we manage those expenditures.

In regards to the vision of Health and Social Services to address some of the issues that the Member talked about, I'd ask the Minister of Health and Social Services if he wanted to make some comments as the Minister responsible and the man with the plan.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We will go to Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I understand the question correctly, it's about expenditure control within the department and the authorities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Just to get clarity, Mr. Abernethy, we will ask Mr. Nadli to summarize his question one more time. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you. I think the point is in the realm of expenditure control, but at what point do we reckon with the fact that we do need a facility or an institution of some kind here in the NWT, rather than sending patients down south that require specialized care? Say we have an increasing rate of resource development on the scale of industrial activity and thus our labour force is perhaps highly susceptible to serious injuries that involve perhaps special brain injuries that require specialized care. At what point do we look at the concept of perhaps studying the idea of a facility or institution of that nature up here?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, in the areas we see the asks here with respect to children in

southern placement and adults in southern placement, we have asked for money in the '14-15 budget which has been moved forward, added to the base so that we don't have to come back for as large of supps in the future, but the Member does raise a good point. Having said that, the individuals that are in these southern placements are usually high needs individuals with a range of conditions. I have asked the department to do a file review of all the individuals, recognizing that many of them are very complex and we don't have the capacity to support them, to see if there are any similar or like clients with the same type of needs. If there's an opportunity for us to repatriate any of them through, as you said, maybe a facility, it might be cheaper to bring a group of people with similar needs back to the North and support them in the North closer to their homes. We are doing that review to see if there are any opportunities there. It's going to take a while because each file is so different and so unique, but I will keep the committee posted as we move forward. If we do find an opportunity there to repatriate a block based on similar needs, we will certainly be coming to committee for some further discussion.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no further questions.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Committee, we are on page 7, Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$120,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Program delivery support, not previously authorized, \$567,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Health services programs, not previously authorized, \$12.568 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Supplementary health programs, not previously authorized, \$2.521 million. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see this is a request for Medical Travel Program costs. Again, I'm disappointed here. Basically we have poured in, in both during the 16th and 17th Assemblies, tens of millions of dollars to increase the efficiency of our medical travel system. Specifically on electronic medical records, telehealth, call forward physician access, community pharmaceutical supplies, community electronic imaging capacity. I am just again wondering what's happening here on the increasing costs that we're seeing, or is it a budgeting issue? I understand that Stanton Territorial Hospital Authority is already in

substantial operating deficit and perhaps some of it is related to this, I don't know. What are our substantial investments in the medical travel system getting us in terms of efficiencies? Why the ongoing unexpected, apparently, or unbudgeted costs here? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I'd just note that we've done the calculations as we're sitting here. The 2014 budget that we've just approved is a 9 percent increase, roughly, over last year. It's the largest growth department, as it is just about every government of the land.

There have been some efficiencies with the changes we've made to personnel, how it's managed, the navigator we put in place, the back office work were with various regions, but there are some significant cost-drivers here, the scheduled air travel, the tickets, ticket prices that have increased, reduced flight schedules. The Minister of Health indicated in the House yesterday or this week, just by not having any more flights in the mornings means you have to tack on an extra day on medical travel.

The medevac personnel contract has gone up considerably, four-hundred-and-some thousand dollars. The Edmonton city centre closure had a cost to us, and boarding home contracts, as well, have gone up. There has been a reduction in NIHB, what they pay, so that cost has been downloaded to us, unrecoverable costs, over \$400,000.

So we have those pressures that drive up the cost. The other big issue is it's demand driven, once again, the amount of travel required to move people around either in the North or from the North to the South. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister. I recognize that many of the costs he mentioned are indeed increasing. In terms of the increased travel, the intent of all our tens of millions of dollars of investments was to directly address that. I think studies have shown upwards of 50 percent of medical travel patients were out on the street an hour after they had their appointment and didn't really need that travel. With what we've invested now in telehealth, electronic imaging, the direct access to physicians and so on, hopefully we'll be saving quite a bit on that front. I'll just leave that as a comment, but welcome any further response.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. We'll leave that as a comment. Committee, page 7, Health and Social Services,

operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$120,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Program delivery support, not previously authorized, \$567,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Health services programs, not previously authorized, \$12.568 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Supplementary health programs, not previously authorized, \$2.521 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Community wellness and social services, not previously authorized, \$9.258 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$25.034 million. Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Page 8, Justice, operations expenditures, policing services, not previously authorized, \$1.307 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Court services, not previously authorized, \$597,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$1.904 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 9, Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, directorate and administration, not previously authorized, negative \$150,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Education and culture, not previously authorized, negative \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, negative \$250,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Page 10, Transportation, operations expenditures, highways, not previously authorized, \$400,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Total department, not previously authorized, \$400,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. Does committee agree that we've concluded consideration of Tabled Document 52-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 28-17(5):
CONCURRENCE OF
TABLED DOCUMENT 52-17(5),
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2013-2014,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 52-17(5), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 52-17(5) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you. The motion is in order. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I'd like to thank Mr. Kalgutkar and Mr. Aumond for joining us this evening. Thanks for your time. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could escort the witnesses out of the Chamber, please.

Committee, as previously discussed, we are going to commence review of Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act. Before we do, I'd like to draw your attention to the gallery. We have some members here from the Department of Transportation road licensing and policy staff. We have Ms. Gabrielle Moser and Ms. Meagan Birch. Thank you for joining us today.

---Applause

With Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, we'll turn it over to the Minister responsible for this bill, Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Amendments proposed under Bill 5 will improve driver and motor vehicle services provided to the public and will improve the safety of our transportation system.

The department is in the process of expanding the High Risk Drivers Program. Through this program, the Department of Transportation will address the risks to public safety posed by drivers that are continually caught driving while impaired or engaged in other high risk activities such as excessive speeding or reckless driving. The changes proposed in Bill 5 will allow the registrar

more options and flexibility regarding driver's licence sanctions, reinstatement conditions, duration of suspensions, and cancellations. Extending the registrar's authority will allow the department to tailor sanctions and remedial actions to the specific needs of the offender.

Changes are also introduced that will improve service for clients with driving restrictions related to medical conditions. The proposed amendments will allow the registrar the authority to request medical examinations and additional driver testing. This provision will ensure accuracy and fairness in determining driver fitness. The registrar will also be able to suspend a licence, instead of just being able to cancel a driver's licence. This will reduce the administrative burden and hoops clients will have to go through to have a licence re-instated in the case of short-term medical conditions that would restrict driving.

The protection of a client's personal information is critical to the department. Amendments proposed in the bill will allow the registrar more discretion relating to the disclosure of personal information and the circumstances under which it can be used. The amendments also reduce duplication for items already covered in the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The department is constantly amending processes to improve service delivery to clients. We have recognized the need for more flexibility in relation to renewal options for driver licences. With the proposed amendments, clients will be able to renew their licence one year in advance of expiry and extend its validity by up to three months. This will enable students and other individuals who are away from home for extended periods of time more flexibility if their renewal dates occur during a period they are away.

It is proposed that certificates of registration will have their validity extended up to 18 months, a requirement related to the implementation of on-line services. On-line services already include e-notification services to remind clients when it is time to renew and vehicle registration renewals. The expansion of on-line driver and motor vehicle services is part of the GNWT's Service Innovation Strategy to help meet the 17th Assembly goal of effective and efficient government by reducing red tape and making it easier for NWT residents and businesses to access the information and services they need.

Additional safety-related amendments include the restriction of individuals from riding on motorcycles if they cannot reach the foot-pegs or floorboards, removing the prohibition on the use of red and amber lights, and more clearly defining school and construction zones. Proposed amendments also clarify who can be held liable if a child is not properly secured in a vehicle and extend the liability

for any Motor Vehicles Act offence to drivers or owners of commercial vehicles.

Finally, the bill includes amendments to address various administrative matters, including spelling, grammar, paragraph structure and formatting errors. Outdated terms are proposed to be repealed and new terms defined. These miscellaneous amendments will improve the overall clarity and understanding of the Motor Vehicles Act.

Together, the amendments advance our continuing goal of improving road safety and services we provide to all NWT residents and visitors to our territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. With that, we'll ask the chairman of the Standing Committee on EDI if they have any comments on the bill. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will read them into the official record at this time. Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, includes amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act to increase options and flexibility regarding drivers' licences and sanctions, reinstatement conditions, duration of suspension and cancellation to support the NWT High Risk Drivers Program, to clarify the registrar's authority and responsibilities of medical professionals respecting driver medical examinations and requirements, and to address offence provisions related to driving in school zones and construction zones and other public safety provisions.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure conducted a public hearing on Bill 5 in Yellowknife on January 22, 2013. The committee heard comments from members of the Yellowknife and the NWT Seniors' societies regarding issues including medical fitness examination. The committee also received a written submission from an NWT private business owner regarding vehicle owner's liability and the definition of an unsafe driver. The committee thanks all witnesses for their participation and thoughtful comments.

The committee decided that items were appropriately addressed through policy and existing regulations. Members support the proposed amendments and thank the Minister and his staff for presenting the bill.

Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, to the Assembly as ready for further consideration in Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the opening remarks on Bill 5. Individual Members may have additional questions and comments as we proceed.

Again, I want to thank those folks who did come out to the public hearing, especially the written

submission by someone from the Hay River community. I appreciate the effort the public has put into this bill.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins, for the comments from the committee. Minister Beaulieu, do you have witnesses that you'd like to bring into the House today?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I do.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses in.

Minister Beaulieu, for the record, if you can introduce your witnesses to the House, please.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is Russell Neudorf, deputy minister of Transportation. To my immediate right is Steve Loutitt, director of road licensing and safety, Transportation. To my far left is Ian Rennie, legislative counsel, Department of Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Rennie, Mr. Loutitt, Mr. Neudorf, welcome to the Chamber this evening. Committee, general comments. Ms. Bisaro

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question which came from a constituent, and I don't believe it was addressed. It certainly wasn't addressed at the public hearing when I was there. The question is this: Do the changes in the act and the act in general apply to quad vehicles?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. They do not. They are a part of the ATV Act.

MS. BISARO: That's good. Thanks very much. I guess, not knowing the ATV Act, maybe the Minister can advise whether or not the ATV Act needs changes similar to what we've done for the Motor Vehicles Act to make sure that licensing and driver qualifications are where they should be for ATVs and quads.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I'm going to ask the deputy minister to provide more detail on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Deputy Minister Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The ATV Act basically delegates the authority to municipalities to make bylaws related to ATVs, so if they wanted to make the changes then they could do that in the bylaws.

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

MS. BISARO: That's good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): General comments. I have Mr. Hawkins followed by Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to spend a lot of time asking a bunch of questions, but a particular issue that has arisen, and I thought it was well dealt with both in committee and certainly by the department, which was one of the questions posed by our seniors community, of course, is the issue of having to do medical examination. Although I'm familiar with the answer, and I've taken the answer and accepted it, I do think that there are some people who are curious on the public record. Those who watch at home and, believe it or not, actually a lot of seniors do watch our proceedings at home, so they would probably like to hear the highlights that explain why at certain ages and when medical examinations need to be done and at what age. Rather than me trying to explain it here, I thought for everyone's benefit, be it the public, the Minister could go through just sort of a general snapshot as to ages and the reason and where that falls under that authority.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Section 4.3 of this standard requires non-commercial drivers to complete a review of the driver's fitness and undergo a medical at age 75, at age 80 again, and every two years over the age of 80.

MR. HAWKINS: The last question I'd like to ask, maybe in this particular area: Is this contiguous across Canada or do we find this happens in some regions versus others, and perhaps if they know off the top of their head or they're familiar with any region, be it province or other territory, that requires a similar type of process where medical exams are required after a certain age. Again, this is an issue, actually, that had arisen during our discussion of this bill, inquired by some of the seniors and the public, although some who were there, I think, understood or appreciated the answer, but I would say there are some people at home who would still like to hear a little more detail on this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. For that we'll go to Deputy Minister Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the NWT we follow the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, their recommendations for best practices. We did a review of other jurisdictions to see what they have on age requirements related to medical testing and there was no standard. Some of the jurisdictions do also follow the practice,

others don't and others have different requirements altogether. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: That is fine, Mr. Chairman, I just thought it was important because it was an issue that came up, and as I mentioned, it's surprising how many seniors watch our proceedings and certainly read our Hansard. I guess they just love watching us and following us, so maybe that's...(inaudible)... But that said, on a serious note, that was a real question brought forward and I thought it would be nice to hear it from the department and officials. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Continuing on with general comments, I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The second paragraph to the opening remarks to Bill 5, I just want some clarification in regards to the driving restrictions related to medical conditions. The proposed amendment allows the registrar the authority to request a medical examination and additional driver testing.

Speaking from a small community such as Colville Lake or Deline or Tulita or Fort Good Hope and the Wells or any other small communities, the registrar has the authority to request a medical examination. We don't have some of the facilities and resources in our communities for this request to come in, or for additional drivers testing. Is there some mechanism that would not delay a person from taking a proper... I don't know what kind of medical testing, maybe just for the eyes; I don't know. That registrar has the authority here even for additional driver testing. Can the Minister help me out here?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. For that we will go to Mr. Loutitt.

MR. LOUTITT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The act changes allow the registrar discretionary power to request a medical, with reasonable grounds, and it's something that we would have to do if it is for the safety of the highways. It is something that we would work with the clients to make sure that they can facilitate it in a timely manner.

MR. YAKELEYA: I like that answer there, so I will see how we could work on that provision. Also, the provision will ensure accuracy and fairness in determining drivers' fitness. I guess the mechanism... How do you determine a driver's fitness, I guess, especially in the small communities? He may not look fit, but once you get an old-timer out in the bush, boy, they are fitter than us. So, how do you determine the fitness? You know, some of our elders are 75 or 80 but they are more fit than us sitting around this table here. You go in the bush with them and they will put us to shame. So, I guess I am taking somewhat that

approach. I think you know where I'm going with this in determining the fitness of a driver. Is there going to be a campaign or something like that? Thank you.

MR. LOUTITT: When we're discussing the fitness of a driver, we're looking at their medical fitness, basically the advice of the doctor after their medical examination. It's not so much the physical fitness levels, it's the medical, how their medical pans out, I guess.

MR. YAKELEYA: Okay, I'll just have to wait and see how it pans out there, I guess, with some of the issues that we might have from the Sahtu.

My last one, if you can help me out here, Mr. Chair, I want to ask on the last three sentences of this paragraph it says, "burdens and hoops clients..." What's hoops clients? What's that? H-O-O-P-S.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. We will go to Deputy Minister Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is referring to some of the additional tools that the changes to the act will give the registrar, particularly in relation to the High Risk Drivers Program. In the past, the only option available was to cancel the driver's licence, which meant that then if the individual wanted to get the driver's licence reinstated they would have to take a test, a driver's written test, to get it back again. That may not be appropriate in all cases, so this provides more flexibility to allow us to just suspend drivers if that is the appropriate tool to undertake. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: It's true, Mr. Chairman, every day you learn something new. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Minister.

I wanted to say that hopefully this bill here, then, will certainly help us in the Sahtu. There's willingness and some flexibility, say, in like Colville Lake. There are people there that drive vehicles that are pretty fit and they are over the age of 75, 80, and are still driving. We need to have some flexibility in our smaller communities. The age of 75, so I don't really have to worry because I have a long way to go yet, so I'm okay. Those are my closing comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya, for those comments. For general comments, I have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of questions. The first one came up during hearings. It was the liability on the commercial vehicles of the owner of the vehicle and the responsibility of the driver to report incidents to the owner of the vehicle and the liability that that entails. I was just wondering if the department has

had a closer look at that, if they've looked at the liabilities and how the owner is supposed to be contacted when there is an incident with the vehicle that they own.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The changes here, and proposed in the act, will allow our officers to charge either the driver of the vehicle or the owner of the vehicle, depending on the specific infraction. If it's a charge against the driver of the vehicle, according to the commercial carrier vehicle regulations, that driver is required to report that fine to the owner within 14 days, so the onus is on the driver to report. We do check on that. We do audits of companies to ensure that they are following regulations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. BOUCHARD: I guess the issue that came up was that the owner of a company doesn't actually get a notice that there has been an infraction put on his company. It's been done through the driver. Obviously, if a driver has an infraction, there is a potential that as the employee he has concerns about reporting this to the employer. The issue was brought up by a company owner and he said, how do I know that I've been charged with something? The onus is on the driver to report it to me, but it is to their disadvantage to report it to me. I am just wondering how we're going to clarify that.

MR. NEUDORF: As I indicated before, the onus is on the driver. We do audit to check. There would be tools available to a company. If they wanted to, they could request driver abstracts periodically and have their own check if they wished. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. BOUCHARD: Then I guess the other information I was looking for is how does the driver inform this? If you become a commercial driver of a vehicle... If you all of a sudden become a driver of a commercial vehicle, do you know... Like, I wouldn't know unless I was reading this amendment here, but the average person driving a commercial vehicle doesn't know when there's an infraction to contact the owner that the infraction has happened. Thank you.

MR. NEUDORF: Of course, there's lots of training that would go along with becoming a commercial driver. Part of that training is to understand the regulations and the rules around the operation of the vehicles. Again, the onus is on the driver to make sure he is fully informed for whatever job he's doing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. BOUCHARD: My next question is about motorcycles. I was driving home the other day and this guy was talking to me about motorcycles and the fact that we don't have a permitting process for off-road motorcycles. In order to register your motorcycle, you need a Class 6 driver's licence.

You legally shouldn't be riding a motorcycle, not on a highway, but even in the ditches or like we use them in Pine Point. There are no regulations or no way to get an off-road plate. Has the department looked at this and is this the appropriate bill to be looking at that?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Motor Vehicles Act does not regulate off-road vehicles. Again, this would go back to the ATV Act for the off-road vehicles.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Beaulieu. Does committee agree that we proceed with clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that the chair can call clauses in groups of five?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Committee, clauses 1 to 5.

---Clauses 1 through 5 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 6 to 10.

---Clauses 6 through 10 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 11 to 15.

---Clauses 11 through 15 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 16 to 20.

---Clauses 16 through 20 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 21 to 25.

---Clauses 21 through 25 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 26 to 30.

---Clauses 26 through 30 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 31 to 35.

---Clauses 31 through 35 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 36 to 40.

---Clauses 36 through 40 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Clauses 41 to 43.

---Clauses 41 through 43 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Bill as a whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Does committee agree that Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, is ready for third reading?

---Bill 5 as a whole approved for third reading

Thank you, committee. Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act is now ready for third reading.

I'd like to thank our witnesses this evening, of course, Minister Beaulieu for joining us and Mr. Neudorf, Mr. Loutitt and Mr. Rennie.

Committee, noting the time, I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 44, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014; Tabled Document 45, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2014-2015; Tabled Document 51, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2012-2013; Tabled Document 52, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2013-2014; and Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, and I would like to report progress with four motions being adopted and that Bill 5 is ready for third reading and that consideration of Tabled Documents 44-17(5), 45-17(5), 51-17(5) and 52-17(5) are concluded and that the House concur in those estimates and that an appropriation bill based thereon be introduced without delay. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Good job. Do I have a seconder? Ms. Bisaro.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK, CORPORATE AND INTERPARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (Ms. Bennett): Orders of the day for Thursday, March 6, 2014, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Opening Address

12. Petitions
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
 - Motion 14-17(5), Expansion of Policing and Nursing Services
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 15, Oil and Gas Operations Act
 - Bill 16, NWT Intergovernmental Agreement on Lands and Resources Management Act
 - Bill 17, NWT Intergovernmental Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement Act
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 4-17(5), Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2013 Final Report
 - Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act
 - Bill 10, Northwest Territories Lands Act
 - Bill 11, Petroleum Resources Act
 - Bill 13, Devolution Measures Act
 - Bill 14, Waters Act
 - Committee Report 2-17(5), Report on the Review of the 2012-2013 Public Accounts

21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 6th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:07 p.m.