



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 4, 2015****Members Present**

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

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and all the residents of the Northwest Territories a happy and healthy New Year.

We are entering what could be deemed the final stretches of the 17th Legislative Assembly and I know that both Regular Members and Cabinet have much left to do. It will be a busy time and will demand the very best of all of us.

We get to enjoy the presence of approximately 40 students from 10 Northwest Territories communities who will be participating in our Page Program.

It is my great pleasure to welcome the Pages who will be assisting us over the course of this sitting. The students will be from the following communities: Fort McPherson, Hay River, Wrigley, Fort Resolution, Inuvik, Deline, Whati, Paulatuk, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. To the students, I hope your experiences in the Legislative Assembly will be informative, that you will make some lasting friendships and obtain a better understanding of how our government works.

To the parents, the teachers and the staff who make this program possible, I know I speak for all my colleagues when I say thank you for your efforts.

On a much sadder note, I know that many of our communities have suffered devastating losses over the last few months. Please join me in extending the condolences of the House to those families and communities who are mourning the loss of loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Before we begin, let me once again remind you of your responsibility as Members of this Assembly to adhere to the rules you have adopted. You have agreed to carry out your work with integrity and honour, with respect for the dignity of the institution we serve and the constituents who depend on us. My responsibility is to continue to assist you in your work and I pledge to do that.

It is now my duty to advise the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. It reads:

"Dear Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, the passage of

- Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2015-2016
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 5, 2014-2015
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015 and
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2015-2016

during the Fifth Session of the 17th Legislative Assembly.

Yours truly, George L. Tuccaro, Commissioner."

Thank you, colleagues. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 130-17(5):
SESSIONAL STATEMENT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Members back for the continuation of the Fifth Session of the 17th Legislative Assembly.

As we near the end of our term, it is only natural to want to look back at what we have achieved. While we have accomplished many of the goals and objectives we set for ourselves when we first met in October 2011, there is still more work to be done. Now is not the time to rest on our laurels.

We have a vision of strong individuals and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories.

We decided we would pursue that vision by strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and other governments to build a strong, sustainable future.

We committed ourselves to increasing employment opportunities where they are most needed.

We identified the importance of a strong, diversified economy in all communities and regions.

We agreed to address housing needs and to support our people to be healthy and free from addictions.

These priorities are not ends in themselves, Mr. Speaker. These priorities are important because they will help to create a territory where our people can prosper and thrive, a territory where our people can enjoy a high quality of life, good health and a healthy environment, a territory where everyone has the support they need to be full participants in their community and to achieve their aspirations for themselves and their families.

This Assembly has made good progress towards realizing our vision for this kind of territory. We have achieved devolution; we are implementing the Land Use and Sustainability Framework; we have plans to address poverty, mental health and addictions and community safety. We are supporting economic growth and diversification through the Economic Opportunities Strategy, Mineral Development Strategy and expected Oil and Gas Strategy. We are investing in our people through education reform and early childhood development.

But we cannot take this progress for granted, Mr. Speaker. Some of the challenges, like the high cost of living and the high cost of energy, have been persistent, requiring the attention of many previous Assemblies. Some of the challenges have arisen during our term, such as falling oil prices and slowing oil and gas exploration that threaten our economic growth and limit available jobs for Northerners.

Completing the work we started in 2011 so that Northerners have the opportunity to benefit from strong communities, a healthy environment and vibrant economy means maintaining the momentum we have achieved. It means keeping our focus and continuing to identify opportunities for dealing with the issues that matter to Northerners.

Addressing the high cost of living is one of those issues, Mr. Speaker. We know that many people across the North struggle to get by, especially in our smaller communities.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to taking action where it can to address this challenge for all our residents. We have increased the minimum wage to ensure that working Northerners have a better chance to earn the money they need to live affordably. We have borne the increased cost of low water in the Snare Hydro System, sparing residents all across the Northwest Territories the increased power bills that it would have meant.

Of course, subsidizing energy costs is only a short-term solution, one that this government will ultimately not be able to afford. That is why we convened a second Energy Charrette last

December to look for new, practical ideas to address the energy question and address it soon.

We know that we cannot continue to rely on expensive, imported diesel. The cost is too high to our wallets and to the environment. Finding affordable and more environmentally-friendly alternatives to diesel generation will be an important part of our plan for lowering energy and living costs.

We know that there are opportunities for generating power more affordably in more communities. The Inuvik LNG project is proving to be successful, even with the cost of trucking fuel from British Columbia. As LNG supplies move closer to us, costs will drop and we can consider options for expanding to other communities along the transportation route.

We also continue to pursue renewable energy options. The Northwest Territories leads the country in the installation of commercial-scale biomass heating systems, many in Government of the Northwest Territories buildings. Not only does biomass hold out the promise of cheaper energy for residents, it also provides economic development opportunities for Northwest Territories harvesters and wood pellet manufacturers that we are supporting through forest management agreements.

We are also seeing success with solar and wind energy installations and have opportunities for mini-hydro in several communities.

Taking action to lower high costs will only go so far. Some of the factors that contribute to the high cost of living will always be outside our control, like the long distances between our communities and the climate we live in.

Where we cannot lower costs, we will have to find ways to increase the general prosperity of Northerners. People need good jobs and good salaries so they can afford to live in their communities, Mr. Speaker. We can achieve some of that through decentralization of Government of the Northwest Territories jobs, and we continue to make that a priority, along with an increased focus on regional recruitment.

At the same time, it is business that creates jobs, not government. Government's role is to create a supportive environment in which businesses can thrive and create the jobs and economic opportunities people depend on. If we want to create sustainable, affordable communities, we have to continue our work to grow a strong, diversified economy in all communities and regions of the Northwest Territories.

A key part of that is investing in the kind of infrastructure the territory needs to support continued economic growth: communications infrastructure, energy infrastructure, transportation infrastructure.

Investing in this kind of infrastructure has been a priority throughout this Assembly. We broke ground on the Mackenzie Valley fibre line last month and are in our second season of construction on the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway, on schedule and on budget. We continue to develop our plans for completing the Mackenzie Valley Highway and are pursuing funding under the federal government's New Building Canada Plan. We are looking at options for an all-weather road into the Slave Geologic Province, potentially linking up with a road in Nunavut.

This is a resource-rich territory, Mr. Speaker, but those resources are going untapped and Northerners continue to struggle when they should be enjoying the kind of prosperity that the responsible development of those resources can bring. We have an estimated \$3 billion infrastructure deficit in this territory. We are already addressing this deficit to help transform potential into prosperity, and we need partners to join us.

Last week a delegation of Ministers, Members of the Legislative, Aboriginal leaders, business people and a non-governmental organizations' representative took this message to Ottawa for our second NWT Days. In meetings with the Prime Minister, federal Ministers, embassies and stakeholders, and in media interviews, we talked about how northern resource potential can contribute to national prosperity. We also talked about the critical importance of infrastructure investment if we hope to realize that potential and the need for partners, like the Government of Canada and industry, to join us in that infrastructure investment.

The borrowing limit was also on the agenda for our discussions. Our ability to make any of the investments we have talked about will be severely limited with our current borrowing limit. I spoke to the Prime Minister about how the Government of the Northwest Territories needs the fiscal flexibility of a higher borrowing limit to be able to make the strategic infrastructure investments the territory needs for economic growth. I expect we will have an answer on our request by April.

We also talked about the need to consider the potential of the Mackenzie Valley as an energy, information and transportation corridor that can serve as a path to tidewater for northern and Canadian resources.

For 40 years our attention has been focused on finding ways to ship our resources to markets in the south with limited success. If we are going to benefit from them, we have to consider all our options for responsibly developing and moving our resources, including a northern option.

Talking to people about a northern option is an important part of raising the profile of the territory. Over the years, it has been hard to get national

attention for the Northwest Territories and its potential. People know about Ontario's Ring of Fire and the job opportunities that until very recently have drawn Canadians from all across the country to Fort McMurray, Alberta. Few people seem to know what the North has to offer or why it might be in the national interest to invest here, and few people will invest here unless we work to promote our potential nationally and internationally.

Studying a potential northern corridor is one way to do that.

Northerners are already familiar with the potential here and have heard many ideas for responsibly developing and transporting our resources to market. Through the years the Government of the Northwest Territories has studied many of the ideas and is already moving ahead with projects like the Mackenzie Valley fibre line and the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We will continue with these kinds of investments in our infrastructure, and more.

But building up the infrastructure we will need to support economic growth will take outside investment, and competition for investment dollars is intense. Letting people know there are business opportunities here, and clearly describing them, will help to attract investment to our territory.

Being able to clearly describe the challenges and some of the unique considerations that will face anybody working in the North is a critical part of creating success. We have seen uncertainty and lack of information stall projects here before. Gathering the information and filling knowledge gaps by undertaking a comprehensive study is an appropriate role for government as we continue to promote awareness of this territory and its potential.

Casting a wider net and seeking new markets and business partners outside of Canada is also important. It was with that in mind that Minister Ramsay and I undertook our second trade mission together to China and Japan at the beginning of this year. If we need to work hard to get recognized on the national stage, we need to work even harder to get recognized on the international stage.

Asia represents huge market opportunities for Northwest Territories products and a potential source of investment in both infrastructure and resource development projects. Exports to China have increased \$8 million, or 22 percent, since 2008, and there is already Chinese investment in Northwest Territories mining. The Japanese have shown interest in oil and gas and LNG and have previously funded the Mallik Gas Hydrate Project. On the tourism front, Aurora tourism visitations hit record highs in 2013 and 2014, and we have seen Chinese tourist visits double every year since 2010.

We have achieved this kind of growth by building relationships with potential investors and

government officials, and we continue to invest in those relationships to ensure the benefits continue.

Mr. Speaker, building a better future for this territory and its people has been a constant theme during this Assembly. Through the last three years we have advanced an agenda based on investing in our people, our economy and our environment to achieve that future. But it is a long-term project and the work will not end with us.

Tomorrow Minister Miltenberger will table the 2015-2016 budget. This will be the final budget that we will debate here as Members of the 17th Legislative Assembly. This budget will give us an opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved in the past three years. At the same time, budgets are about the future and this is an opportunity to consider the future, our future priorities, our future plans and our future commitments.

As we enter the final months of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we will keep up the momentum that has brought us this far. We will complete the work that is near to completion and we will start identifying the opportunities that will let future governments take advantage of the work we have done. I look forward to continuing to work with all Members during the coming session and in the remaining months to achieve the priorities that have guided our work throughout the 17th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 131-17(5):
NOTICE OF BUDGET ADDRESS

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will deliver the budget address on Thursday, February 5, 2015. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WORLD CANCER DAY 2015

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is February 4th, World Cancer Day. World Cancer Day originated in Paris in 2000 at the World Summit Against Cancer. Today organizations and health professionals around the world are taking this opportunity to raise awareness of cancer and encourage its prevention, detection and treatment.

This year the campaign will focus on four key areas: choosing healthy lives, delivering early detection, achieving treatment for all and maximizing quality of life.

Canadian Cancer Society's 2014 cancer statistics report that cancer is the leading cause of death

among Canadians, representing 30 percent of all deaths in Canada. Close to 200,000 Canadians were diagnosed with cancer in 2014 and about 76,000 Canadians are estimated to have died of cancer in 2014.

Cancer is one of the most dreaded diseases as it claims many lives every year. In women, breast cancer, cervical cancer and ovarian cancer are the most common, whereas men are more susceptible to oral cancers, intestinal and prostate cancer.

Although there is still a long way to go to providing a cure for cancer, we are grateful when we look at how much has been achieved in recent decades. Millions of people suffer with cancer and not all of them are lost, thanks to the ongoing dedication of those who fight for this cause.

The theme for World Cancer Day this year is Not Beyond Us. This theme highlights the fact that there are many practical ways that we as individuals and communities can reduce our risk of cancer. Most cancers are preventable through lifestyle changes, early detection and treatment. These lifestyle choices include eating a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains and limiting our fat intake; avoiding tobacco in any form, as both smoking and chewing tobacco are linked to causing cancer; set moderate drinking limits when consuming alcohol; exercise by being physically active for at least 30 minutes every day; avoid direct sun for long periods of time and always use high SPF sunscreen; get regular medical care and check-ups.

Treating the early stage of disease could reduce your risk of developing cancer. A healthy lifestyle can't guarantee someone won't get cancer, but it certainly can stack the odds in your favour. Remember the lifestyle choices that you make every day, no matter how small they are, can make a big difference in your life and your future.

I believe that in our communities around the North today there will be activities going on to recognize World Cancer Day, and I believe here in Yellowknife, if I'm not mistaken, at the Prince of Wales Museum this evening at 5:00 – the Health Minister is giving me the sign language here – we will be able to share in the stories of the journey of some of the people in our communities, our friends, our neighbours, who have been diagnosed with cancer and have volunteered to share their very interesting stories with us. So that is on in Yellowknife tonight and I encourage everyone to attend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT
TRAVEL EXPENDITURES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One cannot avoid, as of late, observing all the traveling occurring within our government. Taxpayers see travel to places such as China and Japan for fur and mineral exports and, most recently, to Ottawa in support for NWT Days. Most residents would agree the Government of the Northwest Territories has an obligation to support and promote, both globally and nationally, an open-for-business position. This is a given. But it's the blurred line of government travel that always has to be put in perspective.

Without exception, our presence in a competitive world economy is paramount, but the question is: how do we as a government evaluate such expenditure, what are our performance indicators for such spending, and how do we weigh the merits of multiple excursions to far off lands? With a population base of only 40,000 and with our limited budget, we have an obligation to proceed with utmost caution and to weigh potential consequences in all our government travel and spending.

To put this to the test, last session this Chamber undertook a great debate on the issue of junior kindergarten and its questionable rollout, but more importantly of its ill-conceived funding model. Although this JK rollout cost only a mere \$750,000, it was deemed impossible for this government to find money from within current budgets, and sadly, to this day, they continue to dig their heels in defiance.

I'm sure many of us have been asking the question if they, being Cabinet, can find three-quarters of a million dollars for travel to China and Ottawa from within their budgets, then surely we can do the same for such ill-funded new initiatives as junior kindergarten. Yes, we know this government has a spending problem; yes, we have hit a debt wall of worry again; and yes, we have heard from our Finance Minister that we need to do more than just keep the lights on. All I ask, Mr. Speaker, let's put in perspective what we spend, how we spend it and what's really important to the people we serve. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BIDS FOR
2018 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome everybody back to the Assembly for a six-week session. Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, two regions in the North have been working on bids for the Arctic Winter Games in 2018. The

Beau-Delta and the South Slave have been working hard on these proposals. They're rallying all their volunteers in all their different sports.

These will be exciting games. It has been decades since the Arctic Winter Games have been outside the capital of the Northwest Territories. It will be exciting to have them back in our regional centres.

I would like to thank all the volunteers in the South Slave region who worked so hard to put this bid together for the South Slave. The International Committee came to the Northwest Territories, seeing all the communities, all the facilities, and we are hoping that they are impressed with our South Slave bid.

In 1978 Hay River and Pine Point hosted the Arctic Winter Games, and we're hoping that 2018 will be the 40th anniversary of a South Slave Arctic Winter Games.

Again, I would like to congratulate the bid committees for all their hard work, and as the ongoing joke is, the MLAs from the South Slave will be happy to pick up the Beau-Del representatives at the airport in Hay River.

On a following note, I'd like to congratulate some of the participants that are going to the Canada Winter Games in Prince George. The Canada Games will be from February 13th to March 1st and I have four participants. I have Novelyn Bordey, Dawson McMeekin, Amanda Roach, and Curtis Rowe as a coach. Congratulations to them. Good luck in Canada Winter Games. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
STATUS OF DEHCHO PROCESS
NEGOTIATIONS

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We have talked a lot about a government that is fair and open and accountable. That is how we Regular MLAs try to conduct ourselves, very strongly with these principles. I expect no less of Cabinet Members and every department they lead. It might be even more important for them because they ultimately manage the money and most of the land.

The latter fact and the power that goes with it should not get in the way of having fair negotiations with First Nations over land and self-government, but I believe that is happening. Today I call on the Premier to correct it. The state of negotiations in the Dehcho Process is alarming. Alarming, Mr. Speaker.

My information is that our government is offering the Dehcho First Nations less land than Canada is offering. Not more, less. How can that be? How can it be that this government is working against its own people? How can it be that this government is

blocking progress when even the usually stingy federal government is willing to do better?

I want to make it clear that the Dehcho First Nations are not asking for some grandiose, out-of-the-line quantum of land. The Dehcho First Nations have made a practical and realistic proposal. Their proposal is in line with what's in the Tlicho Agreement that this government signed and celebrated. The Deh Cho agreement-in-principle would be a great benefit to all the Northwest Territories and it is within reach.

We can do this if we are reasonable and use a little common sense. Instead, I fear we are trying to bully the Dehcho First Nations into a deal that is not as good as other regions have achieved. That is not fair.

I fear our government talks a good line in the media about working with Aboriginal governments but throws bricks at the negotiations table. My understanding is that if our government does not get its own way, which means getting more land for the GNWT to control instead of the Dehcho First Nations, our Premier has threatened to walk away from the talks.

I do not want negotiations in the media or in this House, but I do want fairness to the Dehcho First Nations. I'm convinced that if there's fairness, a deal can be made. I'll be asking the Premier about his priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ECE INCOME SUPPORT POLICY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, colleagues, welcome back. It's good to see everyone here in the House after our Christmas break. I'm sure we're all ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work on the budget and legislation which we'll see come before us in the next few weeks.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things which need to be talked about, I had to choose from a long list for my statement today, but I decided to start with a long-standing, seemingly never-ending issue, that of income support.

An inquiry recently came to my office. It was a plea for help to assist a constituent with an income support application and the policies which govern that application. These are not new policies. We have all as MLAs run into them during our terms. We've encountered the oppressive, depressing policies which our residents are subjected to when they need some financial assistance from our government.

Mr. Speaker, consider this situation. A resident who has been employed quite successfully for some time but earning a small wage, enough to live on, mind you, but not a big salary, but enough for them

to be able to remain independent. This individual has had their job reduced to half time and now struggles to make ends meet, not hard to understand when the income is less than \$1,000 a month. So, income support was applied for. But wait. They have an RRSP, a Registered Retirement Savings Plan, carefully saved over the years of a better wage. Good planning, I say, and kudos to them for being proactive and ensuring financial stability in their later years, but not so ECE.

Income Support Policy demands that the resident cash in any extra money, money such as an RRSP or the value of a vehicle. Use that up before income support can be granted, says Education, Culture and Employment.

We as a government seem determined to force people into poverty so we can dole out a few dollars to help them get by. We remove any independence from the individual and force them to be completely reliant on government to live. How does that meet ECE's stated goal of moving income support clients to independence? This "cash in all your extra money policy" ensures the individual is kept reliant on government, ensures that government will have to continue to provide financially for this person when they could be given the help they asked for and not be a bigger drain on our resources.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: I have to ask, is it the goal of the Minister and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to force our people into poverty or to lift them out of it? When was the last time ECE considered our income support policies, all of them, together? Is the contradiction in policy recognized by the Minister and the department, and if so, why has it not been corrected? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister at a later time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BUDGET DIALOGUE PRIORITIES

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome all Members and staff back into the House for our long operational budget session.

Today I'd like to talk about a commitment that this government has made since 2012, and that's the tour that our Minister of Finance goes on every year and gets input from residents of the Northwest Territories, entitled the Budget Dialogue. In fact, there are three reports that are written and tabled in the House.

The most current Budget Dialogue was done on October 8, 2014. It lasted about two months. Some concern for me was that in a territory of about 42,000 people, we only had 97 people come out to

these meetings in seven regional centres, and we also had 11 individuals and organizations make submissions. However, we continue to hear concerns from people across the Northwest Territories.

The focus of these budget dialogues were on the GNWT's fiscal situation, which was expressed in our Premier's opening remarks sessional statement. We want to talk about top priorities for investment moving forward as well as how can the GNWT better manage our expenditures. As you've heard here, and you've heard many times, we are spending a lot more money than we are getting in terms of revenues.

Some topics that were discussed and outlined in the Taking Stock Budget Dialogue include program spending, growing our economy, energy was a big one, as well as strategic infrastructure.

I had the opportunity to attend the session in Inuvik, and there was a lot of passion and concern expressed in two areas. One is the slow economy that we're currently experiencing, but also was on energy-focused initiatives and how can we focus on energy to lower the high cost of living that we currently see in the Northwest Territories.

On the eve of the budget address, Members on this side of the House as well as residents of the Northwest Territories want to in fact see if the government is actually listening to what is being said in these budget dialogues over the last three years. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later, on how it's being addressed in the operational budget.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENT OF SAHTU RESOURCES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to just follow my colleague here. I too read the Budget Dialogue Taking Stock report, and the Minister certainly came into the Sahtu with having some of my people sit and listen to the Minister give the current fiscal realities of our government, giving us the realities of the size of our population and the fiscal picture if we don't get any type of economic development moving in the Northwest Territories.

Some of our regions are wealthy in the resources, and like the Yellowknife area around here rich in diamond mines, there is lots of revenue royalty coming out of it. The other day I was at Tim Horton's grabbing something to eat there and I saw two young fellows come in from Deline, and they went to the mining project training here. These two young fellows were pretty excited, because once they finished the mining training project they had jobs at the diamond mine. They were happy and excited. Actually, one young guy has an eight-month-old daughter, and he said I'm doing

something good for my daughter. The other guy is working here because of the mines.

Come out to the Sahtu and our people are hungry for work. Our people want to work. They know the realities, and right now we are hooped because we do not have infrastructure such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway going into the Sahtu. Potential is there for a lot of energy, a lot of work, and we can see it now today. We cannot move our resources, and that's a shame in this government here.

I'm hoping that the Premier, the Minister and the Cabinet Ministers do the best they can to get the borrowing limit raised. If not, we've got to make some tough decisions, and right now it's cold out there, and that's the reality.

I'm going to be asking questions on the budget. It's a good report, but it tells me wake up and smell the coffee because some hard times are coming if we don't get the borrowing limit raised and we don't get the infrastructure that we need.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MEDEVAC SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health and Social Services announced a new medevac contract in January of this year. The new eight-year contract combines the medevac and clinical services as well as provides for newer aircraft and new equipment to serve all of our communities in the Northwest Territories. This is designed to improve the quality of service and response times.

In my constituency in recent years, there have been two instances where people felt that our medevac system failed them. Firstly, in May of 2013, the medevac took six hours to reach the community of Trout Lake, a mere 430 air kilometres. Secondly, there was a huge delay in getting to Fort Liard due to no automated weather observation system. Sadly, these two specific cases involved fatalities, so my constituents were very disheartened and concerned deeply that the medevac system fell short of delivering quality service.

I did raise these issues with the Minister of Health and Social Services at that time, and I am hopeful that these two specific concerns were taken into account when they deliberated this new contract.

Later today I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services how exactly will this new medevac contract benefit our small and remote communities. There is provision in the new contract for guaranteed response times. I am hopeful that they mean all of our communities, even those that have smaller airports.

With these improvements, I want our people in smaller, remote communities to have their confidence restored that their medical and medevac needs in distressing and challenging times will be taken care of in a timely manner. Mahsi cho.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNITION OF ANNAH HANTHORN
COMPETING AT 2015 JUNIOR WORLD CROSS
COUNTRY SKIING CHAMPIONSHIP**

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the highlights in our communities is celebrating success. Today I want to acknowledge Annah Hanthorn from Fort McPherson. Nineteen-year-old Annah, as we speak, is in Almaty, Kazakhstan, competing in the 2015 Junior World Cross Country Ski Championships.

Five of the fastest and competitive women from across our country have been selected to represent Canada at this huge event, and one of our very own from the Northwest Territories, Annah Hanthorn, is ranked top five in Canada.

---Applause

Fort McPherson over the years has had a population of 900 to 1,000 people. We have no ski club and no ski shack. Yet, with hard work and determination, Annah has disciplined herself to train and become the best in the Northwest Territories, in Canada, and now the world.

In order to adjust to the 13-hour time change and acclimatize her body to the temperature, she left Canada on January 25th to begin her training and preparing for the races, which began on February 2, 2015. The races are every two days and end on the 8th of February. This Canadian team will compete against the best athletes in the world. Good luck, Annah. The whole NWT is behind you, especially everyone in Fort McPherson.

Mr. Speaker and Members, please join me in giving Annah a huge applause and sending her good luck and best wishes for good, clean races all week. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Before we go on today, colleagues, I'd like to welcome the Speaker of the Yukon, Mr. David Laxton – welcome to the House, Mr. Laxton, Mr. Speaker – and the Honourable Elaine Taylor, Deputy Premier of the Yukon, welcome to the House. Also, I have visiting us all the way from Texas Cam Innes, Michael Merchant and Rick Sperandio. Welcome to the House.

Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to the gallery Mr. Charlie Furlong, mayor of Aklavik and president of the NWT Housing Corporation, as well as Joanne Deneron. Welcome to the House. Annette Hopkins and Tasha Bergman from the nine-month-old Department of Lands are taking in our proceedings for the first time. Welcome.

I'd also like to welcome my support counterpart in the Yukon who along with former Minister Kusugak from Nunavut were very instrumental in pushing to have the Alternate Games of those sports that were eliminated from the 2016 in Nuuk, and we appreciate the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government for agreeing to host these games. Minister Taylor was very instrumental in bringing that about, and we look forward to some of the results in Whitehorse and, of course, seeing Northwest Territories come out on top again. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a few folks in the gallery today that I'd like to recognize, a number of BDIC board members. I'll start with the chair, Mr. Darrell Beaulieu, we've got Mr. Charlie Furlong, Joanne Deneron, Ruby Landry and Gwen Robak. Thank you so very for being here this afternoon.

I also wanted to recognize Deputy Premier Taylor and Speaker Laxton. I'm glad to have you guys here.

Also, a constituent of mine, Mr. Lloyd Lush, president of the Legion here in Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Minister Elaine Taylor, who's here with us today from the Yukon and Minister responsible for Language, she's also francophone and she's also Minister of Culture and Deputy Premier as well. So I just wanted to welcome her. Thanks for being here with us.

Also in the gallery is Mr. John Stephenson, who's here with us from YK1. I'd like to recognize him, he's the chair. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge my constituent Charlie Furlong, the mayor of Aklavik; also Joanne Deneron and the delegation from the Yukon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize Ms. Joanne Deneron from Fort Liard, along with Charlie Furlong. Welcome to the gallery. If your grandchildren check Hansard, you're going to see that your names are mentioned about five or six times in the House on February 4, 2015. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery here, at least from the public, but in particular I wanted to acknowledge the presence of a constituent of mine from Kakisa. I rarely ever see visitors from my constituency, but I'm extremely proud to recognize Ruby Landry, a constituent and a leader from Kakisa as well. I understand she is up in the gallery. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Gwen Robak, a Hay River resident, as well as friends Ruby Simba and Lloyd Lush. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Colleagues, I'd like to welcome here for her first day of sitting, Mrs. Danielle Mager, the new Clerk of the Table in the House. So, welcome.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. Mr. Menicoche.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 545-17(5): MEDEVAC SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services some questions from the statement I gave earlier.

How exactly did this new medevac contract benefit our small and remote communities, given those two circumstances that I spoke about in my Member's statement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In negotiating the final contract, the communities of Jean Marie River, Nahanni Butte and Trout Lake runways currently require aircraft with a short take-off distance. As a result of this contract, we've set it up so that the turnaround time on these particular airports, the shorter runways, is two hours, compared to four hours like it used to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Given the Trout Lake situation with the old contract to actually go out and find a Twin Otter outfit, I think that was part of the delay.

I wasn't clear from the Minister's response. Is there a specific airplane that can respond to the smaller runways in the smaller communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, in the contract there has been identification that the providers have to have planes that can get into the shorter runways within the time specified. For those shorter runways, the time specified has been two hours, and that determines the conditions that have been met.

This contract goes live on April 1st, so effective April 1st it will be a two-hour turnaround time, barring, of course, weather conditions that may limit us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I think the incident in Fort Liard was the issue of whether at that time they were able to get somebody to state the weather conditions. I think the CARS at that time was also unattended. So I think there was a recommendation by the coroner's office to install automated observation systems for circumstances like that, because I think the medevac plane actually got there – oh God – in excess of six hours in the wee hours of the morning, but there was a fatality there.

But given that – I know that they're trying to address that – what provisions for weather and weather reporting are there in this specific contract? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, the management of the airports is actually done by the Department of Transportation, and we will continue to work with Transportation to ensure that those requirements are met.

But I would like to say that as a result of these incidents, we have made other changes in our system outside of the contract that we've currently negotiated. We have developed what is called a Med-Response unit within the department. It's a territorial program. One of the key functions of this Med-Response unit is to provide air ambulance triage and make sure that the right people are on the phone at the right time in order to expedite air ambulances and get them to where they need to be as quickly as they can.

We did the soft launch of this Med-Response program in November and we're going with the hard launch in February. We've had an opportunity to learn an awful lot about our program, to make some enhancements and improvements, to make sure that the people in the communities have this tool available to them, to help triage air ambulance and get maximum benefit and maximum time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the contract combines, of course, the medevac and clinical services. So when you're talking about improvement to the services, is the prime contractor welcomed by this service that you just spoke about medical triage? Maybe the Minister can explain that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, the triage service is actually something that's provided by the Government of the Northwest Territories, and we will be working incredibly closely with the airline and the med responders as well as our health providers in the individual communities, whether it's a CHR or community health nurse. They'll be able to call into a central line where they'll have medical staff as well as someone to dispatch the airplane to make sure that all the people that need to make decisions with respect to getting an airplane into a community are on the line at the same time in order to get maximum use of time and resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 546-17(5):

DEVELOPMENT OF SAHTU RESOURCES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance, given the Budget Dialogue 2014 Taking Stock. In the report the Minister gives a good fiscal performance record. Moody's has given us good rating and we have good fiscal policy.

In his report the Minister talks about the priorities, given the feedback from the people on the priorities, given the sombre realities of slow revenue growth.

Can the Minister tell the House what causes the slow revenue growth? What are the factors, knowing that we have some priorities in our communities? What does the revenue situation look like in the coming years?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not wanting to get ahead of my budget address, I will make the observation that projections are for flat revenue growth between now and 2019, 2020. Anticipated growth of about less than half a percent, which means that the challenge for us is going to be to make sure that our expenditure growth does not exceed our revenue growth so that we can in fact maintain our Aa1 credit rating and all the other good financial indicators that we do have, like our debt to GDP ratio.

MR. YAKELEYA: The other comments I heard in the discussions in the Sahtu are that we need to do more for our economy. In the Sahtu we have world-class oil and gas there, and they have the technology now in today's world on the hydraulic fracking and there's potential there, but we don't have the infrastructure to get to our oil and gas revenue.

I want to ask the Minister, what are some of the things that he's doing to see how we can improve our revenue? We need to have the economy to do things like health and social services, hospitals, roads and schools. We need the money.

Can the Minister inform the House as to what he has in the plans in regard to improving the economy?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Specifically in relation to the Sahtu, there are a number of things that are underway and being contemplated. The Member was at the budget dialogues, and the discussion was very clear the focus was on the next section of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Norman Wells to Wrigley section, and the need for roads.

The government has submitted, through the Minister of Transportation, an application for a special pot of money that exists at the federal level for initiatives and projects of national significance. We are making the case that this particular stretch of highway should meet that test. That's one piece.

The other piece, as the Premier mentioned in his sessional statement, of course, is that we need the ability to make critical economic investments for infrastructure that is going to help promote and create the conditions for economic development. That's the borrowing limit, and we're waiting to see what happens in April because a lot of the initiatives and vision we have to implement are predicated on our ability as a mature government to be able to make those kinds of critical investments.

MR. YAKELEYA: I heard the Premier and the Minister also at some point, and probably some of the Ministers also at some forum and the Assembly, say that we need to keep the dollars in our communities to keep the economy going. Right now, because of the low oil prices, in the Sahtu there is really no racking up of the Husky's or the Conoco's, so right now most of the economy is driven by the government infrastructure. However, because of the prices that we are challenged with, is there a policy within the government that says northern contractors will be first priority so the dollars would stay in the Sahtu rather than having contractors come out to the Sahtu, like the South, that are coming into the region because they can appreciate a lower price to do the work? Is there a policy to strengthen the economy in the Sahtu that they will have northern contractors given special consideration?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: There are two tools that are available that are in existence and have been for some time. Of course, the first one being the Business Incentive Policy which provides northern preference, in some cases local preference. Then, of course, there's the opportunity from time to time, if all the right conditions are met, where negotiated contracts will be considered.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the other comments that the Minister talked about with the people and what I understood from the report is that we were going to have to do some tightening of our belts and taking some responsibility of our lifestyle and the way we live.

Is there any type of initiative from this government going forward to inform our people that there are some things we have to do now, such as stopping drinking, stopping smoking, in order to save money for the government so they can do other things because our health costs are going sky high and those things that people are doing are costing our government and that's where a lot of our money is going, dealing with some of the illnesses that are associated with these behaviours?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Very clearly the Member has identified a very important issue, the issue of personal choice, personal choice as it relates to a number of things. As the Member indicated, there are four basic choices that are driving a lot of our costs that are easily changed. That's not abusing alcohol, don't smoke, proper diet and exercise. Those four things, if they were managed properly through proper personal choice, would have an immediate impact on our bottom line.

Simple things like babies being born healthy without being affected by FASD, for example. So, the departments of Health and Social Services, Education and MACA are focused on prevention, active living, all these good things. But as the Member so clearly indicated, at the end of the day it's a personal choice that's going to make people do the right things, eat the right food, get off the couch, put that beer down and grab a glass of water before you go jogging. Only individual choice is going to get us there, but we can't give up. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Colleagues, before we go on today, I'd like to welcome Ms. Cindy Dolynny in the House, Member Dolynny's wife. Welcome, Cindy. The Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 547-17(5):
INCOME SUPPORT POLICY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education,

Culture and Employment and I want to follow up on my statement about income support policies and the impact that they have on those of our residents who apply for income support.

I'd like, first of all, to ask the Minister if he could please explain to me and explain to the House and explain to residents the rationale for the policy, which says that a Registered Retirement Savings Plan must be cashed in before a resident can access any income support. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Minister responsible for income support, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Income assistance provides adequate benefits to clients, while considering household income as a family resource. Clients are expected to avail themselves of all financial resources. We've done that for so many years now.

RRSPs are considered to be a rainy day fund. As such, they should be used prior to accessing IA, income assistance, but the Registered Education Savings Plan and Disabilities Savings Plan are not counted as income. So these are just some of the rules that we have.

We must be financially responsible and also adhere to the rules of this House and the Auditor General of Canada when spending public money. These are the policies that we have and all the regulations within our GNWT. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I'm somewhat perplexed by the Minister's answer, but I accept that he has provided us with some rationale. That the Registered Retirement Savings Plan is considered a rainy day fund, I would like to suggest that it's going to be raining awfully hard when people reach retirement age, and if they have no pension from their work, which many of our residents do not, then it's going to be raining very hard. I can't accept that rationale.

I'd like to ask the Minister, I mentioned a contradiction in my statement, and in terms of contradictions it is the requirement of the department basically that the individual be reliant on government. The Minister says that we provide for residents. I don't think \$9 a day for food is very much of a provision for residents; however, we provide for our residents, but on the other hand we want them to make productive choices and to become independent. So please, Minister, can you explain how those two things are not contradictory? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The Income Assistance program is based on need. All participants must demonstrate their financial needs as set out in the program legislation and regulations and also policies that we have to ensure all people are treated fairly across the Northwest Territories in a consistent manner. So when an individual has an

RRSP – most of the Income Assistance clientele do not have anything – so we must be fair to that clientele. That is part of the reason we have regulations in place, policies in place.

We do make changes over time. We've made some drastic changes to income security in 2007 and 2011. We are going through other changes in 2014-2015, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister, but I have to frown on what I heard the Minister say, that it's okay to penalize people for good planning. It's okay to tell people that you've managed to save, you've got this money, use it up before we give you any money to help you out, especially when somebody has been successful and they've encountered a bit of a rough patch. They don't need a lot of money, they need some money, but let's make them destitute and then the government will look after them.

I would like to ask the Minister, he mentioned that there are some changes that are coming. I would like to know in line with these changes, when income support policies were last considered and all of the policies, not just one or two, but I'd like to know all of the policies in total.

Has the department looked at all policies, seen contradictions in those policies and done something about it? When was that done? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Every opportunity that we have to review and make changes to our policies within income security programming, we've made changes along the way in 2007 and 2011. Now we're onto 2014-2015. This is based on the feedback that we've received from clientele themselves and also the general public. We're always open to those ideas, input and feedback. I will be presenting to standing committee on the changes that are coming in 2014-2015. We will update the standing committee. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister, I was going to ask what changes are coming. I guess I will wait with bated breath for them to come to committee.

I would like to know, when the Minister says they are constantly looking at things, are they looking at things in total? I suspect they are looking at an individual policy in isolation.

Have they considered the total impact of a change on the whole of the policies within their department, or do they simply look at one policy at a time? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That all depends on the circumstances. If an individual client presents, say, a suggestion to us, then we will seriously look

at it. From the general public, if there is more than one policy that they want us to make some amendments to, those are areas we will seriously consider looking at. When the Member is asking if we change the whole overall policy within the GNWT Income Assistance program, I believe at this point we haven't amended all policies within GNWT, but those are areas we are looking at from the feedback we receive from the public. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 548-17(5): BUDGET DIALOGUE PRIORITIES

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To my Member's statement earlier in terms of the Budget Dialogue, as Members know we do go through our business planning session in September and as soon as that's done, we have a really strong debate and try to get into the budget in terms of programs and services for the residents of the Northwest Territories. In some cases, it's been pretty challenging and tough at times. Earlier in my Member's statement, I did talk about how the Minister of Finance took his Budget Dialogue out on the road starting October 8th after the business planning session.

At what avenue and how do recommendations from the dialogues from the seven regional centres or recommendations coming in from the 11 individuals and organizations, how can these recommendations that we're getting from people of the Northwest Territories get into the budget when, as Members, we have challenges to get some of our priorities in the operational budget? What avenue is the Minister using to get priorities brought forth by territorial organizations into the budget that we are going to be starting tomorrow? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out this is my third go-around in the Northwest Territories and we did three round tables in Yellowknife last government where we brought people in. What has become clear to me – and it's credit, I would suggest, both to having small communities and a small government – a lot of the concerns that I've heard going from community to community in the regional centres is very consistent with the concerns I've heard raised by the Members in this House. A lot of them focus on almost identical issues.

The people are very, for the most part, well informed who show up. They have issues they want to talk about and we take those concerns into consideration, the concerns about economic investment and critical infrastructure, more training

prevention, managing our money, don't go into debt, but not too far. There is the issue to manage the cost of living. There are very, very consistent themes. They want to put more money into the social program areas, as I will lay out in the budget address tomorrow.

We are, as a legislature and government, responsive to nearly all those issues raised. We don't have the resources maybe to address them all to the level people would like, but we do listen carefully.

I just want to once again comment on the link between what we hear in an MLA's constituency from the people who are there and what we hear from the MLA, which I think reflects well on this process and the MLAs in this House. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: When I look at the document, as well as attending the meetings, there are very sound, practical recommendations that are made and they also come from this side of the House when we are looking at making investments into residents of the Northwest Territories and programs. I just want to know how after the business planning session that we had and getting reasons why we can't get them in and the Minister stating that he's hearing the same thing from the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I would like to ask him, I know he's listening to our residents, but at what cost is it to the taxpayer going out across the Northwest Territories and still not being able to put some of these recommendations into the business planning or into our operational budget? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This round of budget consultation will be just a shade over \$40,000. I would also submit to this House and to the Member that a lot of the suggestions that we get from the people out in the communities are not "just give us more money." They have all sorts of good concerns. How we hire people, for example. The need to not create roadblocks in that hiring process, creeping credentials, lack of a really good equivalency, slow turnaround in how we respond to people. We, as well, have started the 2,000 people in five years initiative. A lot of the things we are talking about, people are talking about, as well, in terms of being responsive, recruiting our own students and doing a better job in a whole host of areas where we're already spending a significant amount of money.

These are not futile, after the fact processes that have no bearing, but as we can show you budget to budget and as I will lay it out tomorrow, we have been listening very carefully over the years about how much money we put into social programs, the types of areas that work on prevention. All those things we have done our best to address and we are really prepared to make significant investments with the borrowing limit sorted out and addressing

the cost of living related to energy costs and other areas where we need to apply ourselves and make those critical investments. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: During the discussions, GNWT asked residents of the Northwest Territories, how can we manage our expenditures? Our operational budget has increased over the years to the tune of about one point six. We'll be seeing and hearing tomorrow.

Some suggestions, back from the 2012 report, were how can we manage government expenditures better? One was duplication of programs, duplication between departments, or duplication between departments and non-government organizations.

Has any work or action been taken in this area to see how we could be more efficient in spending our dollars and even support non-government organizations who run programs on behalf of government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Health and Social Services, for example, is engaged in a transformative exercise to address that very issue, looking at avoiding duplication, the back office improvements, efficiencies, and move away from multiple disconnected boards to a more efficient one-board model. So that's one example.

As well, we know there's an interest and there's a recognition between departments on the infrastructure side, where departments are now collaborating on building infrastructure that we need in communities: garages, warehouses, those types of things. We've had discussions with Deline, for example, where there's an interest in the community of Deline to build a community infrastructure that's going to allow ENR, Housing, the municipal works, public works, to pool their money to build one energy-efficient, right-sized, integrated piece of infrastructure that will allow everybody to pool their money, so rather than five underfunded little pieces of infrastructure we have one good, solid, long-term, well-built, energy-efficient piece of infrastructure that'll serve multiple community needs. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the operations budget as big as it is, questions out there are being asked whether or not this government can sustain such a high expenditure for operations. The Minister has been noted that we're looking at trying to increase our debt ceiling.

If that doesn't go through, can I ask the Minister, what is the plan of action should our debt ceiling not be increased? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: One of the issues, if I may digress just for a second, one of the

big issues of great, great interest in Inuvik, of course, was the fibre optic line that is now under construction. That's going to have a major impact on Inuvik and it's an \$80 million investment by the Government of the Northwest Territories that's going to look at Inuvik as a major remote sensing site for satellite remote sensing and the fact that we're going to tie in all the communities on the way down with fibre optic connections or microwave. So that is another big piece that came up and was discussed extensively in Inuvik.

In regards to managing the money, there are two things. We have to continue to practice fiscal discipline and diligence to make sure that our expenditures don't exceed our revenues. If we are unsuccessful and we are left with an \$800 million borrowing limit, then our capacity to do anything new, to be able to build the Northwest Territories, to implement the vision of the people of the Northwest Territories with things like the Mackenzie Valley Highway link from Norman Wells to Wrigley, the winter road here, converting that to an all-weather road, they need to look at generation and driving the costs of energy down in the communities, Yellowknife and all the other thermal communities are going to be severely curtailed and limited, and then we will be reduced to concluding the projects we have on our books to try to free up some capital.

We have \$350 million allocated, roughly, for the Stanton renovation, for example, which is going to take up a lot of our room. We have the conclusion of the Tuk-Inuvik highway and the Fibre Optic Link. So, without the borrowing limit increase, we are going to be severely constrained for the life of this government and for the next. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 549-17(5):
FUNDING FOR
WINTER SPORT FACILITIES

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few questions for the Minister of sport and recreation from my Member's statement. As I mentioned in my statement, we do not have a ski club or a ski shack in Fort McPherson.

I'd like to ask the Minister, are there funds available that the community can access to have that in place and also to have the proper equipment to maintain ski trails?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we are very proud of our athletes' achievements here in the Northwest Territories, and I think it's been proven in the past that a number of our athletes are competing at an international level.

As far as the ski club goes, the community does have it within their means to provide that sort of infrastructure if they choose to. We can, as the department, work with the community to see how they can best use their infrastructure money that we give them to help with that. As far as equipment goes, there might be opportunities for some purchase of equipment with the money that they receive too. But we would be more than happy to work with the community to point out some of the options that they might have.

MR. BLAKE: It seems like only the regional centres have ski clubs in this territory, so is this government willing to work with the smaller communities to make sure that they do have sufficient funds to have proper ski trails which can be used also for snowshoeing and even walking trails? We need proper equipment. For example, snowcats and groomers. I know those are a little costly, but these are needed. We have world-class sport athletes here in our territory and we need to ensure that they have the proper facilities in our communities.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As a government we do support the achievements of our high performance athletes. We try to assist them getting on to a national scale. Once they get on to a national scale, then there are other opportunities there for sponsorship. I take the Member's point that in the communities they need to try and develop their athletes. We've seen a number of communities where they have strong snowshoeing programs because it's a community pushed event.

If the community of Fort McPherson would want to do something on a ski trail and that, again, they have it within their means and our government will work with them to identify some of the options that they might have at their disposal. The regional centres do have ski clubs because members of the communities get together and they push for a ski club and try to find any assistance they can. But we will be more than happy to work with the community to help them with some of the options that they may have and what they may have at their disposal as far as spending goes.

MR. BLAKE: Sometimes communities don't have that as their priority. For example, the ski trails, as I mentioned. Can an organization within the community... Right now we have volunteers that provide these trails for our athletes with homemade groomers, yet we have world-class athletes. We need to ensure they have the proper equipment.

Will the Minister work with one of the organizations in the community to ensure that we have proper equipment?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, we will work with the community and help them identify some of their options. If there's a group there that's interested, we will work with them to help them identify some of their options.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 550-17(5):
STATUS OF DEHCHO PROCESS
NEGOTIATIONS

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I've on occasion made statements regarding the Dehcho Process. I support the Dehcho Process mainly because I'm from the Deh Cho and I'd like to see it succeed, and at some point it will have a settled agreement between the Dehcho First Nations, Canada and the GNWT. Some people might be familiar that the negotiations have, in one perspective, advanced since 1921. There are people that believe negotiations just started recently. But what is important is that there used to be a spirit of being flexible and open, at the same time respecting the differences of, perhaps, governments and First Nations people, but with the intent and spirit of trying to be creative and trying to look at some unique models.

My question is to the Premier. There is the federal offer of land quantum, plus the GNWT as well have a different perspective on it. But my question is simple: Why is our government currently offering the Dehcho First Nations less land than Canada is willing to offer, by at least 2,000 square kilometres?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the Member asked me the question so that I could present the facts so that he can provide the correct information when he talks to his people.

We've been working for over two years to find a way to resolve some long-standing land issues with the Dehcho First Nations. We created a working group of senior officials where we spent over two years where we did come up with an agreement on how we could move forward. Those were rejected out of hand by the Dehcho First Nations leadership. I might add that the Government of the Northwest Territories increased the offer substantially that was made by Canada in 2007. That was rejected out of hand by the Dehcho First Nations.

MR. NADLI: Why, in the Premier's opinion, shouldn't the Deh Cho land quantum be at least equal to the Tlicho's adjustment for population?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The GNWT offer and what's been negotiated in negotiations with the Dehcho First Nations is the most favourable ever made in the Northwest Territories, if not Canada.

MR. NADLI: It's pretty clear that the Premier in his opening statement said that my people are from the Deh Cho. The Premier is from Fort Providence. The Premier is a Metis from Fort Providence. He has an opportunity to help advance the Dehcho Dene and Metis of Fort Providence and the Dehcho First

Nations to come to an agreement. At the same time, I think this negotiation is sliding perilously into positional negotiations for both sides to become more entrenched and no movement will happen and people will walk away. I don't want to see that. I'm sure the Premier does not want to see that as well. The question is: What happens after February 20th? Why would the Premier threaten to leave negotiations with the Dehcho First Nations if they cannot agree with the GNWT's current position? Is that the path of trust and respect?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'm glad for the opportunity to clarify statements attributed to me. We have not threatened to walk away. All we raise is the fact that despite all these best offers to the Dehcho First Nations, they're all rejected out of hand, and so we should take that into consideration going forward.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just an observation from being part of leadership and negotiations for some time. When two leaders meet, what happens is that there is a spirit and intent, and that's the spirit of the treaties that have been negotiated for a long time, and it's based on honesty and integrity. When two leaders meet, they make a pact and an understanding, and when they walk away they ask their staff to implement it, and sometimes the staff or the department doesn't believe in those decisions, and I think that's the problem.

Will the Premier revisit his government's strategy with a view to making headway instead of causing a breakdown of negotiations?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I would be glad to hear any suggestions from the Member. This is the best offer that's ever been made and it's been rejected, so we will continue to work through the land claims table.

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

QUESTION 551-17(5):
POWER RATES AND
DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to this opportunity to get some clarity on some of our power rates here. The cost of living burden continues to weigh down on the everyday family, as we all know and we certainly hear about this. The question really continues to come to me is this McLeod government continuing to do the best that they can, and the question that arises is they're concerned they're not. Everybody knows the three components to the power issue, which is generation, distribution and certainly the customer access.

So I guess the question really comes down to, while we continue to squeeze generation and consumer

efficiency is at an all-time high but power rates continue to skyrocket, what is this government doing with the distribution issue of the power rates here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a distribution system that's been in place for some time. We have the Public Utilities Board that has been operating very effectively and we will continue to follow the policies of this government. From time to time we will review it to see if those policies should continue to be in place. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: I look to the gallery and my Yukon colleagues when I say this, Yellowknife is number one, and I say this as we have the highest power rate bill, be it Whitehorse, Iqaluit and Northwest Territories. Yellowknife, we have the highest power rate. So, we're number one. The problem is, I don't want to be number one anymore, nor does anyone in this city.

So the question now becomes why do we have southern distributors here in the Northwest Territories when we have an option to start squeezing this problem towards a positive solution. We have a southern distributor working here in the Northwest Territories who has an insatiable appetite for profit at a time when people's cost of living factor has gone through the roof that they can no longer carry.

Would the Premier agree it is time to re-evaluate our distribution policy by maybe closing the door on that problem? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'm not sure what the Member means when he says we're number one. All of the power and the communities and the rest of the Northwest Territories would be very pleased to have the power rates that we enjoy here in Yellowknife.

As far as power distribution, we manage it very carefully through the Public Utilities Board. Every rate increase goes through a regulatory review process, and as we go forward as a government we have the ability to review our policies to see if they are in our best interest to move away from the existing distribution system. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: When is it better than now, in this particular case, for us to start reviewing and maybe eliminate the process we have in place? We could eliminate and refine our distribution process by getting rid of this by allowing NWT Power Corporation to manage the power distribution to our communities by getting rid of the third-party process through the franchise agreement.

What could kick that process off, and I want to hear the Premier asking what path and journey can we

take to finally have a true discussion about lowering our power rates because we could lower them 10 cents a kilowatt, in that range, immediately, if we reorganized our power distribution.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I would be very interested in seeing what kind of mathematics he used to come up to that conclusion. As a policy, we decided to go with the existing until such time as we decided to do otherwise. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. A point of order has been called, Mr. Hawkins.

POINT OF ORDER

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to call a point of order on the Member for Hay River South for accusing my last comments as all lies. I can refer to several sections, such as I felt that it's imputing ill motive and in some ways some might even describe that as insulting, bad language. So we could spend time going through all of these, but they were a statement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mrs. Groenewegen, do you have something to say on the point of order?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would look to you to say whether my comments were on the record or not. I didn't have the microphone at the time. I know I'm prone to heckling more than I should in this House so I will retract my comment. I do not believe it was recorded through the official Hansard, but I will retract my heckling comment that I made. Thank you.

SPEAKER'S RULING

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. No point of order. Thank you. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's time that we start working on this particular problem. If I described it as a sandwich, we keep shaving down the two pieces of bread without worrying about what's in the middle and we're ignoring this problem. Millions of dollars through the PUB process get acknowledged that turn into profits that go to this southern company. Even the Town of Hay River is saying that they need to do business differently.

So I call upon this government with a little action maybe the Premier could explain to us here clearly, not just to me but all Northerners, how we can review this distribution process so we can work to achieve the same goal, making living affordable here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I presume the Member has some hard and fast figures that can prove his research in that the price of power will decrease by 10 cents a kilowatt hour, but on this side we don't have the luxury of making those statements without

thorough review and due diligence. Communities have the authority to decide on their distribution. Hay River has a franchise agreement that will come due in November 2016 and we know that everybody is interested in reducing the cost of living. We will consider what Hay River is doing, we would look at it, taking all of the policy issues into consideration on this very complex issue and there are a number of very complex policy issues that we would have to look at. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 552-17(5):
EMERGING GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last couple of weeks we've seen many announcements coming from the executive office setting some new course directions for the 17th Legislative Assembly.

Surprisingly, some of these new plot-a-course settings were the first to be heard of by Members, some escaped the due process of the House and others were never properly vetted by standing committees. So my questions today will be for the Premier.

On January 28, 2015, and with only limited notice to Regular Members, the public was made aware of the creation of a volunteer Mining Industry Advisory Board. This board will apparently advise the government on mine regulations and environmental and social standards. Although this may be a creature of the Mineral Development Strategy, this announcement bypassed the vetting and due process of standing committee. Can the Premier indicate why? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the Members opposite read every piece of paper that we present and it was prominently identified in the Mineral Development Strategy. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: I'm sure committee will be commenting on that one. Again on January 28, 2015, the public was made aware of a meeting between our Premier and Prime Minister Harper describing a discussion on sustainable economic development. Part of this discussion involved the completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway but, more importantly, an all-weather road into the Slave Geologic Province.

Can the Premier indicate to the House when and by what process has the substantiation for this all-weather road into the Slave Geologic Province ever been discussed with Regular Members of the 17th Assembly? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I know he's a new MLA in this 17th Assembly. It was started talking about it in

the 16th Assembly and it's been around ever since, so we've been talking about it for at least five years. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. Unfortunately, this was not a priority of the 17th and I can't make commitments for the 16th or prior Assemblies.

On January 29, 2015, in keeping with surprises, the executive office announced the GNWT is exploring the feasibility of an energy, transportation and communication corridor study along the Mackenzie Valley. Again, to be clear, this was not for any specific infrastructure project but a new bold direction that did escape the vetting process of the Assembly.

Can the Premier indicate to the House where does this feasibility study fit into any of our current framework or action plans for the 17th Assembly? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We've been looking at a corridor for years, I think for over 40 years since the first Arctic gas pipeline was talked about, and we think that now is the time to go. At the appropriate time, when we have the process clearly laid out, when we have accessed all the funding sources, we will be in a position to more fully describe this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if we can continue to dredge up old priorities and squeeze them into the 17th Assembly.

Finally, on January 29, 2015, the Premier's speaking notes at the North Star Gala in Ottawa were made public. Upon review, it's clear the Premier was there to promote an economic and resource development agenda. Mr. Speaker, I'm very okay with this; however, what was missing from the tonality of this address, and I'm sure most Northerners would agree, there was a need to lower our cost of living in the North.

Can the Premier indicate why no reference to lowering cost of living was mentioned in Ottawa? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We always talk about cost of living whenever we go to Ottawa, we just don't put it in all of our press releases or communiques. We know that we talk to most of the Ministers about the fact that we're the only jurisdiction in Canada whose population has been declining, and the biggest reason for that is the high cost of living. We've benefited from the lower costs of gasoline and heating fuel in the last six months, at least in the larger centres, and we have talked about what can be done taxation-wise or otherwise how we can work with the Government of Canada to reduce the cost of living. The borrowing limit I think will go a

long ways to assist us in that regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 553-17(5):
POWER RATES AND
DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the NWT Power Corp Minister about the rates and the profits noted through the PUB process for each distribution area.

Is the Minister able to speak to those types of profits that are made by our franchise agreements that are struck so they can make power distribution through our communities? I'll leave it up to him to provide what level of detail he's able to start with and we'll kick it off from there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm able to speak as the Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation to what is within the purview of the Power Corporation, which is the rates that we have set, the thermal zone and the hydro zone, the rates being subsidized to the Yellowknife rate for our residences at a 700 kilowatt an hour cap and those types of things. I'm not in a position to speak on the NUL what I understand the Member's asking about or anything that's not within the specific purview of the Power Corporation. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Is the Minister able to speak to the range of dollar value that, for example, our power distributors earn each year? It's my understanding that they take at least several multi-million dollars out of the year due to profits and they provide to their insatiably hungry companies that are looking for profit. So maybe is the Minister in a position, as Minister of the NWT Power Corporation, with his familiarity with that type of issue and number so we can work from there? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mrs. Groenewegen, point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that we do have a rule in this House that speaks to attacking or making derogatory remarks about a person or an entity that is not in a position to defend themselves on the floor of this House, and I've heard Mr. Hawkins refer to a private company that's been in the Northwest Territories for over 70 years as a private company. I've heard him refer to them as a southern company. I've heard him refer to them as having an insatiable appetite for profit, and profit hungry and things like this.

Now, I'm just saying that this company that he's referring to is not represented by the Minister and not here in this Chamber to defend themselves against derogatory or unsubstantial comments like that, so I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to please, I guess, ensure that that rule that we have of not attacking people who are not present be upheld.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Hawkins, would you like to comment on that point of order?

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure Mrs. Groenewegen has a point of order. First of all, the company isn't particularly named. Second of all, the profits that they're able to make are listed through the PUB process, so that is public information, and when they're earning millions and millions of dollars one can describe it with whatever adjectives they reasonably feel.

That said, Mrs. Groenewegen should also come clear with her connection, if there is any that we need to get on the record, a reason why she is defending the company. I don't understand what may or may not be, but a few minutes ago I was accused of lying and now I'm being heckled on the side on my concerns, on my choice of adjectives when it comes to the cost of living.

That said, in summary, I'm not sure, other than being interrupted when I've been trying to do my statement and my questions, I'm not sure there's a point of order because I didn't specifically accuse anyone of falsehood or terrible things.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I reminded Members at the start of the day before we began, so let me again remind you of your responsibly as Members of this Assembly to adhere to the rules that we have adopted. You have agreed to carry out the work with integrity and honour of the respect and dignity of this institution. We serve for our constituents and they depend on us to do our jobs here in this Assembly.

I have two points of order today already. I'm going to take that last point of order under advisement and I'll report back next week with my decision.

Second of all, with regard to the questioning for the Ministers, they should be questions to the Minister who has authority of the department, and make it short and sweet in regard to the questioning and respectful to one another.

Moving on from there, the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request the indulgence of the Speaker and the House. Listening to the debate on the point of order, I'm not sure if the Member's comments triggered a point of order and the question that he asked me. Am I still trying to answer that same question?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Hawkins, would you rephrase your question to the Minister?

MR. HAWKINS: That's fine, Mr. Speaker. I'll just keep trucking along. My concern is trying to find out what the value is on the public record so we can talk about these types of things. The issue I'm really trying to drive at is are there opportunities for other distributors such as the NWT Power Corporation who doesn't require to make a profit on the distribution rather than cover the cost, and that's what I'm fundamentally driving towards. What is in the best interests of Northerners, and that's the issue, is how do we distribute power in the most efficient and cost-effective way? Is there a door opening for the NWT Power Corporation to be the distributor of power in the North?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The broad issue that has generated this debate and the one that we have been looking at as a government and the Assembly and what the charrette was focused on was the cost of living and the need to bring down the cost of energy, the need to look at things like roads and creating the conditions for economic development. The broad discussion of how we're structured to deliver energy is an important one. The distribution side, the transmission side, for us, currently, as the Premier indicated, there is a franchise request possibly coming out from the Town of Hay River, and as the Premier indicated, we're looking very carefully at all the questions related to what that issue and what involving the Power Corporation in that franchise bid would possibly mean territorial-wide. Hay River is not just an isolated entity. We need to have those very careful considerations and do due diligence as we look at that, but we also need to keep in mind the broader discussion that is driving us, which is what do we do to drop the cost of living in all the communities, both the hydro zone and the thermal zone. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Northwest Territories government was to eliminate any outside distributors and, at the time, the reason I ask this question is because I've been talking to the department about this one. So, what analysis has been done if we eliminate the outside distributors, therefore we don't necessarily need a PUB and we roll the NWT Power Corporation into a department? Now, normally you describe this as a hypothetical, but this is work I know the department has been reviewing and evaluating. Where would this take us and what's the predicted or estimated cost of lowering the power rates? Could we peg that around to a figure of some sort so Northerners have an understanding? If we make changes to the

system, what benefits would be driven out of that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Those are questions currently under review, not exactly the way the Member has phrased them in terms of a formal department or getting rid of all the distributors other than the Power Corporation. We are doing due diligence on those questions and I'm not in a position at this point to answer specifically because we haven't concluded the work. Those are complex questions. There are economic questions; there are regulatory questions; there are policy questions and legal questions that we have to be clear in our minds before we formally stand up and take a final position on that issue, but that work is going to be considered so that we can in fact make as an informed decision as possible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 20-17(5):
NWT DEBT

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 20-17(5) asked by Mr. Dolynny on October 17, 2014, to the Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Finance, regarding Northwest Territories debt.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the document providing the requested information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Mr. Moses.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 38:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
JURY ACT

BILL 41:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
PARTNERSHIP ACT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Social Programs has reviewed Bill 38, An Act to Amend the Jury Act; and Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Partnership Act, and wish to report that Bills 38 and 41 are now ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 185-17(5):
NWT DEBT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Return to Written Question 20-17(5), I wish to table the following document, entitled "NWT Debt." Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

TABLED DOCUMENT 186-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO MOTION 31-17(5),
ESTABLISHMENT OF OMBUDSMAN OFFICE

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 31-17(5), Establishment of Ombudsman Office." Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Clerk.

TABLED DOCUMENT 187-17(5):
RESPONSE TO PETITION 4-17(5),
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
REGULATIONS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a response to a petition provided by the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, in response to a petition tabled by Mr. Bromley, Member for Weledeh, on November 3, 2014. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 43:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
BORROWING AUTHORIZATION ACT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, February 6, 2015, I will move that Bill 43, An Act to Amend the Borrowing Authorization Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Thursday, February 5, 2015, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Budget Address
3. Ministers' Statements
4. Members' Statements
5. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
6. Returns to Oral Questions
7. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to Opening Address
13. Petitions
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 5th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:26 p.m.