



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

6th Session

Day 11

14th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, February 25, 2003

Pages 297 – 330

The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Tony Whitford

(Kam Lake)

Hon. Stephen Kakfwi

(Sahtu)

Premier

Executive Council

Minister Responsible for

Intergovernmental Affairs

Minister Responsible for the Status of

Women

Hon. Jim Antoine

(Nahendeh)

Deputy Premier

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs

Minister Responsible for the

Intergovernmental Forum

Minister of Resources, Wildlife and

Economic Development

Hon. Roger T. Allen

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

Minister of Justice

Minister Responsible for NWT

Housing Corporation

Minister Responsible for Public

Utilities Board

Minister Responsible for Youth

Hon. Joseph L. Handley

(Weledeh)

Minister Responsible for Energy and

Hydro Secretariats

Minister of Finance

Minister Responsible for the Financial

Management Board

Minister Responsible for the Northwest

Territories Power Corporation

Minister of Transportation

Minister Responsible for the Workers'

Compensation Board

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

(Thebacha)

Minister of Health and Social Services

Minister Responsible for Persons with

Disabilities

Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Jake Ootes

(Yellowknife Centre)

Minister of Education, Culture and

Employment

Hon. Vince R. Steen

(Nunakput)

Minister of Public Works and Services

Minister of Municipal and Community

Affairs

Mr. Brendan Bell

(Yellowknife South)

Mr. Bill Braden

(Great Slave)

Mr. Paul Delorey

(Hay River North)

Mr. Charles Dent

(Frame Lake)

Mrs. Jane Groenewegen

(Hay River South)

Mr. David Krutko

(Mackenzie Delta)

Mr. Leon Lafferty

(North Slave)

Ms. Sandy Lee

(Range Lake)

Mr. Michael McLeod

(Deh Cho)

Mr. Steven Nitah

(Tu Nedhe)

Mr. Floyd Roland

(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. David M. Hamilton

Deputy Clerk

Mr. Doug Schauerte

Clerk of Committees

Mr. Dave Inch

Law Clerks

Ms. Katherine R. Peterson, Q.C.

Mr. Charles Thompson

Sergeant-at-Arms

Ms. Nicole Latour-Theede

Editor of Hansard

Michele Vanthull

Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	297
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	297
22-14(6) - TAKING ACTION ON TOBACCO.....	297
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	298
MR. ROLAND ON 2003 NORTHERN GAMES.....	298
MR. MCLEOD ON INVESTING IN NORTHERN PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND SMALL BUSINESSES.....	298
MR. NITAH ON CAPITALIZING ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT.....	298
MR. DELOREY ON RECOGNITION OF ALF MANSELL AWARD WINNER LLOYD BRUNES.....	299
MR. LAFFERTY ON NORTH SLAVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.....	299
MR. DENT ON DRAFT DISABILITY FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN.....	299
MS. LEE ON 2003 YOUNG WOMEN'S "POWER UP" CONFERENCE.....	300
MR. BRADEN ON EMERGING CULTURAL TOURISM SECTOR.....	300
MR. BELL ON COMPREHENSIVE SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAM REQUIRED.....	301
ORAL QUESTIONS	301
RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS	312
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	312
MOTIONS	312
3-14(6) - EXTENSION OF THE MANDATE OF THE SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON NON-TAX-BASED COMMUNITY AFFAIRS.....	312
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	313
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	328
ORDERS OF THE DAY	329

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 25, 2003****Members Present**

Honourable Roger Allen, Honourable Jim Antoine, Mr. Bell, Mr. Braden, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. McLeod, Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Nitah, Honourable Jake Ootes, Mr. Roland, Honourable Vince Steen

ITEM 1: PRAYER

-- Prayer

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 22-14(6): Taking Action On Tobacco**

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, smoking represents one of the NWT's most acute public health concerns:

- we all know that our smoking rates, particularly in our youth and young adults, are alarmingly high;
- we are also aware of the fact that many infants and children constantly breathe in tobacco smoke in their homes and public places;
- and we know that many people are exposed to environmental tobacco smoke every day while they work.

The effects of smoking can already be seen in our high rates of respiratory illness and ear infections in infants and children, in our cancer rates in adults and seniors and in the high proportion of smoking-related deaths in our society. The outlook for the future does not look good if today's youth become tomorrow's life-long smokers.

As part of National Non-Smoking Week in January, the Department of Health and Social Services released a discussion paper on options for tobacco legislation in the NWT. This paper presents the various legislation and experiences of other jurisdictions. Research is showing which types of legislative controls can make a difference, and we can use this information to decide what will work best for the NWT.

As indicated in the discussion paper, there are two areas that may bring the most benefit to our communities. The first is to require smoke-free public places and work places to reduce the daily exposure to tobacco smoke currently experienced by any NWT residents. In addition to this obvious benefit, research also shows that this assists smokers to quit and sends a powerful message to the public that smoking is no longer an accepted behaviour. Even though these do not specifically target youth, research has confirmed such restrictions lower smoking rates in youth.

A second area is to focus on making it difficult for youth to access tobacco products, and to ensure that the vendor does not display promotional material for the sale of tobacco.

Research shows that addiction to tobacco starts in the teen years, and that the best way to reduce teen smoking is to prevent it from starting in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, the discussion paper represents preliminary work that will help us explore public interest in tobacco legislation. Should the feedback indicate support to pursue legislation, the department will begin more in-depth research on options for the NWT. The department has already begun to hear from the public. Close to 90 people have sent in their views on our on line feedback form, and we certainly expect to hear from more, through our web site and regular correspondence, over the next six weeks.

Of course, we know that success against tobacco will not be achieved through legislative means alone. It must be complemented by other work, like support programs for those who wish to quit, and education programs. As Members of this House are aware, Mr. Speaker, we have a territorial strategy, Action on Tobacco, which identifies these and other kinds of activities. Examples of the work underway include:

- partners with the NWT chapter of the Canadian Public Health Association to sponsor the NWT's first ever Quit and Win Contest;
- sponsoring a territorial conference for youth on smoking earlier this year;
- developing a tobacco component for the NWT school health curriculum;
- funding community-based tobacco initiatives;
- developing a public awareness campaign targeting NWT youth; and,
- working with federal tobacco inspectors to educate vendors on their important role on preventing the sale of tobacco to minors.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the upcoming visit of Ms. Heather Crowe to the NWT and Nunavut. As Members may know, Ms. Crowe has terminal lung cancer as a result of long-term exposure to second-hand smoke in her work environment. Ms. Crowe has chosen to dedicate her time to advocate on the importance of smoke-free places and the dangers of smoking. She has been featured on national anti-smoking ads on television and we are extremely fortunate that she agreed to travel to the North to speak to various groups, including this Legislature and the NWT Workers' Compensation Board. Ms. Crowe has also graciously agreed to have her NWT/Nunavut visit filmed so that we can prepare an

educational video of her trip for distribution to other groups and communities.

Ms. Crowe will be in Yellowknife during March 13th to 16th. I encourage all Members to take in the events planned for her visit, including a luncheon in the Great Hall of the Legislative Assembly on March 13th followed by a public meeting at 7:00 p.m. that same day in Northern United Place.

Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, the courageous work of Ms. Crowe connects us more personally to the health issues and statistics on smoking that we read about nationally and here at home. It is through the stories of Ms. Crowe and many others that we will continue our efforts to promote the smoke-free society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On 2003 Northern Games

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 2003 Northern Winter Games demonstration was held January 30th to February 2nd. It was a success this year. More than 100 participants from the western Arctic region attended from Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Holman, Fort McPherson, Inuvik and also a youth from Whitehorse.

This year's games were mostly geared towards youth. We did have an 82-year-old elder, Mrs. Eunice Mitchell, who won a couple of events. First place at muskrat skinning...

---Applause

...and second place in caribou hide skinning. The best man of this year goes to Abe Mitchell and the best woman goes to Jean Gruben from Tuktoyaktuk. We had a record-breaking event. Matthew Anikina from Tuktoyaktuk broke the Alaskan high kick record and he went to the height of seven feet, four inches. The best overall categories, eight to 10 years of age, girls, Francis Esau from Sachs Harbour; boys, Miller Kasook of Inuvik. Eleven to 13 years of age, girls, Christina Esau of Sachs Harbour; boys, Greg Elias of Inuvik. Fourteen to 16 years, girls, Heather Okheena of Holman; boys, Craig Gruben of Tuktoyaktuk. Seventeen and over, girls, Katy Smith of Inuvik; and, Phillip Jacobson from Inuvik for boys.

Every year, these kinds of events bring our communities together and it's good to see the youth playing and challenging themselves with traditional games. It is also an honour to have our elders still participating despite their age. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Investing In Northern People, Communities And Small Businesses

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak about our small northern businesses that are

investing in our people and in our communities. Resource development in the NWT has impacted our overall economy in the past several years. This impact has caused our government and the federal government to focus on training for jobs resulting from this development. It is important that in addition to training, we also have programs in place to support and encourage small business to grow and prosper by taking advantage of development opportunities in the North. There has been very little discussion on the role this government and the federal government will play to ensure that business opportunities are captured by our northern residents and existing businesses. In the past, we've seen a trend where southern firms negotiate one-sided joint ventures with associations or with our northern partners.

In many instances, these ventures provide minimal, if any, real return to our northern partners. Our Aboriginal northern entrepreneurs are finding it difficult to negotiate agreements due to limited human and financial human resources. As an example, Mr. Speaker, one such resource is gaining access to capital. It is no secret that the chartered banks are reluctant and most unwilling to work with small businesses in the North and more so if that business operates outside the larger centres such as Yellowknife.

If it weren't for lending agencies such as the NWTDC, Business Credit Corporation, Community Futures, and the Metis-Dene Development Fund, businesses in the small communities would not exist today. These businesses not only provide employment but also provide important services. Mr. Speaker, this government must put some emphasis and focus on the development of our Northern business community. This assistance can be delivered by developing and offering programs that are identified by our business communities. This may mean developing new and innovative lending programs and they result in having the use of this government's position to ensure access to business opportunities through revising existing legislation. However it has to be developed with consultation and cooperation of the business community. At the end of the day we must try to continue to provide employment for Northerners. Therefore, as a body elected by northern people, it is this government's responsibility to provide the resources and support required to increase and maximize northern businesses and northern business opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Member's Statement On Capitalizing On Employment Opportunities Through Educational Achievement

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this being Education Week, I'm going to make a little statement on education and how it relates to employment. As well, Mr. Speaker, the North is facing -- I guess the word facing is no longer an appropriate term -- is right in the middle of the most economic history of our history. We've seen major developments in the mining sector, we're seeing major developments down the road for oil and gas, specifically the pipeline. We sometimes concentrate on the negative aspects of these opportunities. The negative aspect that we see is too many fly-in people working our lines in our explorations for oil and gas. One of the problems there, Mr. Speaker, is our very low education rate and our people who are not ready for these opportunities. I know the Minister and his department have

been working quite hard in the last couple of years to reduce that gap. I'll be asking the Minister some questions to see the latest developments in that area.

Mr. Speaker, we have one of the better opportunities in Canada and North America as young people. We have an education system that's free to a lot of Northerners that come back and work in the North. I challenge my young colleagues in the Northwest Territories to meet the challenge, get their education, get their diplomas in whatever areas or professions they want to get into. The opportunities are limitless. When we look at a mine it's not just truck drivers, we have to look at managers, administrators, accountants, mechanics and all professions. It's like running a little town in these mines and all kinds of professions are required.

We have a government that's delivering programs to meet those needs. We have industry that is partnering with government; we are challenging the Northwest Territories to take on that responsibility and meet the needs so that we don't have to fly people in from the south. We could have our own home-grown workforce meeting the challenges. I'll be asking the Minister responsible what kinds of programs they have to close that gap. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Member's Statement On Recognition Of Alf Mansell Award Winner Lloyd Brunas

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday evening I flew home to Hay River to attend the Hay River Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting. Mr. Speaker, I listened to an enlightened speech given by Randy Ottenbreit, the manager of the Mackenzie Gas project with Imperial Oil Resources. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Jim Antoine for also attending and delivering a message on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

One of the highlights of the evening, Mr. Speaker, was the awarding of the Alf Mansell Citizen of the Year Award. It was awarded to my constituent Mr. Lloyd Brunas. Mr. Speaker I have known Lloyd for some 25 years and I can attest that he is indeed a very worthy recipient of this award. Lloyd has been a very dedicated volunteer in Hay River for many years, Mr. Speaker, even when he was holding down a full-time job as superintendent of public works for the town of Hay River for some 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, Lloyd is a long-serving member of both the Royal Canadian Legion and the West Channel Fishermen's Heritage Committee. He is also presently serving his third two-year term as a member of the Hay River Housing Authority board of directors. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Lloyd has contributed his wealth of experience and knowledge for many years to the Hay River Flood Control Committee. Mr. Speaker, Lloyd is the chairperson of the Hay River Community Health Board. In addition, he is the president of the Hay River Seniors' Society and he is also an executive member of the Northwest Territories Seniors' Society, having served as their president for the past two years. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Lloyd is also currently serving his second two-year term as the Northwest Territories' representative to the National Advisory Council on Aging.

Mr. Speaker, at the Chamber of Commerce dinner when Lloyd was honoured it was mentioned that, and I quote: "Whether or not he is doing his share does not seem to be a consideration with Lloyd, but whether a job has to be done and he can do it. He is deserving of recognition for just being a good neighbour and is known for helping wherever he sees the need, whether it is delivering some fire wood or hanging a door." Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Lloyd Brunas as a very worthy recipient to the Alf Mansell Citizen of the Year Award.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 3, Member's statements. Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement On North Slave Housing Development

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Often in this House, I take the opportunity to speak on issues where improvements are needed. Today, I would like to focus on an area where improvements are beginning to happen.

On January 22nd a productive housing meeting was held in Rae. The Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, the staff and I met with the chief and members of the housing board to reach an agreement on a number of principles to improve housing services in the Dogrib communities.

The basic principles that will guide housing in the North Slave include an independent local housing organization which will be created and presented to the grand chief and council so that it progresses with self-government. This framework will then be brought to the public for consultation and final ratification. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will engage in an agreement with the Dogrib Rae band to provide public housing and some of the programs. Mr. Speaker, housing concerns are without a doubt the most frequent issue that I hear about. Hopefully this new agreement will set us on the right path as we move towards self-government.

Mr. Speaker, at the meeting in January we agreed that the ideas for the formation of a fully-elected board will be brought before the grand chief and council on or before the end of this week for ratification. After the input from the chief and council, the Minister and I will have a public meeting in Rae-Edzo. Our aim is to finalize the mandate of this new housing organization with as much public input as possible. We hope to complete this process and be ready for implementation by April 1st of 2003. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Member's Statement On Draft Disability Framework And Action Plan

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly recently received a report from the Northwest Territories Council of Persons with Disabilities entitled the draft disability framework and action plan. From this framework, an action plan will now be developed.

Mr. Speaker, the framework document was accompanied by a report from focus group meetings held in December, both in Inuvik and Yellowknife, to talk about the framework. This framework is the result of much hard work and dedication to the

cause of persons with disabilities and a remarkable partnership including government and non-government organizations monitored by aboriginal organizations. They were asked to take on this task by the Premier in 2001.

Mr. Speaker it looks like this hard work will see real results. The framework document calls for an integrated collaborative approach between the Government of the Northwest Territories, NGOs and Aboriginal organizations in setting strategic direction for programs and services. The vision of the framework is full citizenship; it was guided by the values of quality, inclusion, accessibility and participation. It outlines the major needs, current status, the goals, priorities and promising practices for each priority area. The priority areas are set out very clearly. They are called building blocks and they are education, employment, income, disability supports and housing.

The framework document points out a number of solutions, Mr. Speaker, some of which will need funding and others that will need only changes in policy or legislation. For example, among the recommendations to address issues related to income, they recommend separating entitlements for income supports from entitlement for health and disability related supports. As well, Mr. Speaker, we need to see the income support program re-examine the income exemption limits. Many persons with disabilities are employed but they should not be penalized because they are not consistently able to work. To improve employability, the government should negotiate with the federal government to get cost-shared funding for employment support. Respite care is needed for the families of persons with disabilities. So is training for families, caregivers and school staff who work with them. Mr. Speaker, a coordinated client-centred case management system must be put into place so that we meet the needs of individuals. The NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities needs to be involved as we move toward that goal. Mr. Speaker, I commend the Premier for having appointed a Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities are not asking for a living standard above any one else, just the ability to have one that is fair. The Minister must now continue to work with the partners to make this all happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement On 2003 Young Women's "Power Up" Conference

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about the Second Annual Power Up Young Women's Conference that was held in Yellowknife on February 3rd, organized by Skills Canada NWT and Nunavut. The idea behind this fantastic event is to have Grade 8 girls from schools across the NWT and Nunavut meet female mentors that work in non-traditional trades and occupations. The girls get to network, talk to their mentors about their careers and take part in hands-on workshops. This year 235 girls from 17 communities in the North attended the conference. I also attended the conference, as a mentor, Mr. Speaker. This is the second year I have done this and I cannot stress enough how valuable an event like this is for our young women.

Not too long ago, many young women did not actually consider the option of a career as a pilot, a carpenter, an aircraft maintenance engineer or a firefighter. These were just not things that came to a girl's mind when she was contemplating career choices. Fortunately, times have changed and these young women's conferences are helping to change them. We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are all kinds of career possibilities out there for those young women, they just need to learn and become more aware of what those are. The event gives them a host of career choices they may have never considered and it allows them to meet and talk with the female mentors in these professions.

I should also note, Mr. Speaker, that on February 10th, a young men's conference was held for the first time. Mr. Speaker, I thought the event last year was fantastic, but the event this year had gone up a whole new level. Knowing the organizers, I know it will get even better next year and that is attributable to the small staff at the NWT/Nunavut Skills Canada office in Yellowknife. The hard work of executive director Allyson Stroeder and her able assistants, Barb Kardash and Erin Mohr. They are the ones who got the numerous sponsors on side, found the mentors and volunteers to help out, and dealt with the logistics of hosting over 200 young women for a one-day event in Yellowknife. These ladies deserve a big pat on the back for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I know we have a real skills shortage in our Territory right now and our young women can be whatever they want to be. I applaud the young women's conference for doing so much to spread this message. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement On Emerging Cultural Tourism Sector

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to draw attention to something I am sure Yellowknifers and people across the Northwest Territories are going to be hearing more about in the coming months and years, and that is the movement in the tourism industry towards something called cultural tourism.

The Aurora Arts Society, Mr. Speaker, a group of volunteers here in Yellowknife from the arts and music community, came together over the last couple of years and with the assistance from our government -- I know RWED was a supporter -- has done an extensive research project and development piece here, which has laid the groundwork in the capital city for this exciting new approach.

Cultural tourism is something that in the modern tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, is a business as defined by our group here in Yellowknife: fostering, promoting, developing, and delivering year-round activities that reflect the unique arts and multicultural heritage of our community. This goes beyond what we might consider our traditional or usual ideas of culture or heritage. This goes into the history, the complexion, the stories and backgrounds of our entire region. Here in Yellowknife and in the North Slave, we have a history in aviation, in mining and in transportation, as well as the aboriginal and other cultural communities that are part of this region, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of this study, community leaders in the business and in the arts community from Aboriginal and other levels are coming together. They are looking at this as a way for the tourism industry to really come into its own and mature and grow. Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to see this because this really is a way for us to put a whole bunch of advantages and products and ideas together and really make them work together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Member's Statement On Comprehensive Smoking Cessation Program Required

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take this opportunity to respond in part to the Minister of Health's statement, Taking Action On Tobacco. I think that certainly there are many government initiatives, but this one correctly identifies the problem, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has said that we know our smoking rates are too high, particularly in our youth and young adults, alarmingly too high, higher than most of the country, Mr. Speaker. It talks about what we might be able to do in order to take on that challenge and try to turn the tide on smoking. I think one of the important initiatives is legislation that will prevent smoking in public buildings and in the workplace. I see the Minister has indicated Ms. Crowe is coming to the North to tell her story and I know it is a compelling story of her lung cancer and it's attribution to second-hand smoke in the workplace.

But, I think there is another important piece here, Mr. Speaker, besides legislation, which will be important, despite the fact already that you could make the case that it is a harmful substance and doesn't have any place in the workplace -- and possibly Worker's Compensation and insurance should take that into account -- but I think programming is the other key piece, Mr. Speaker. This is something, I think, over the years where this government, not unlike many other governments, has really fallen down. Where we have come up short, Mr. Speaker, is in having a comprehensive plan that is linked across departments.

This is not solely the responsibility of the Department of Health, Education has a large role to play and certainly the Ministry of Youth has a large role to play. This is a department, the Ministry of Youth, that we set up and created some three years ago and to this point, in my mind, it has simply paid nothing but lip service to this. There is no budget for the Ministry of Youth and a lot of these initiatives could be tied in under this department. We talk about developing an anti-tobacco component in the NWT school health curriculum. That's a very good idea but we can't do that while at the same time, not promoting physical education in all of our schools and making sure that is a priority.

We have a great opportunity here at this time with the Canada Winter games going on, Mr. Speaker, to use some of the role models and athletes who certainly are heroes to our young people, have them tell their story. I find it amazing to believe that someone can be competitive at that level and smoking at the same time. I'm sure it is not the case, Mr. Speaker. So I urge the department to work with other departments in developing the initiative. Let's not make the same mistakes we've been making for the last 10 years. Thank you.

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my Member's statement today, one of the concerns that is outlined by the draft disability framework is the access to employment assistance for persons with disabilities, which is a federal program. The Government of the Northwest Territories has not been a signatory to the program, which expires March 31, 2003. Can the Minister outline to this House why the GNWT has not participated in this program which would have gotten federal money for persons with disabilities in the Northwest Territories?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have all the details or background of the lack of our participation in this particular program. However, we are looking at revitalizing our discussions with government to see if we can't participate in renewal of this particular program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the Minister cannot tell us why we haven't participated in it, can I ask the Minister to commit to tabling in this House the reasons for the GNWT not having signed onto the existing agreement?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Speaker, I understand that part of the reason for not participating in this particular program is that it is per capita based and again it recovered from our particular transfer payments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, knowing that, can the Minister outline what approach we are taking to make sure we access these funds without them cutting into our

base transfer and not getting them just on a per capita basis? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Further Return To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The concern has been there on the part of all Ministers and MLAs on the per capita funding that we've used. As we are all aware, the Premier had an opportunity with other Premiers to bring this to the attention of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister indicated that he also wants something done about the per capita funding issue because it does impact on our government and our funding here dramatically in terms of low funding for our population base. We are bringing this to the table when we are discussing it with the people who are negotiating this particular agreement. Additionally, we are looking at just the issue Mr. Dent has mentioned and the fact that we don't want it taken out of our capital base.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that the federal government would certainly want to make sure that we were able to get more money into the hands of persons with disabilities. You would think they would be embarrassed to know that it wasn't possible, even if we signed this because of a reduction in our transfer payments. Could the Minister outline what sort of timetable we are looking at for concluding these negotiations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 79-14(6): Persons With Disabilities Program Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the federal program expires within a month and that we are in negotiations now. I can't tell the Member how quickly we can conclude that. However, there is a meeting of Ministers planned in April of labour market Ministers, in which this particular issue can be taken up in discussion with the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Question 80-14(6): GNWT Sport And Recreation Policy

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I spoke about northern games and along those lines, I would like to ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs some questions in the area of sport and recreation. We know that the department has been working with sport organizations throughout the territory. There have been some meetings held. I would like to know what state those discussions are in and when we will be able to see some final products on sport and recreation policies in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Steen.

Return To Question 80-14(6): GNWT Sport And Recreation Policy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the issue right now is related to the ability of all the sports partners to get together in early March or after the Canada Winter Games are over with. At that time, there will be discussions centred around the establishment of an NWT sports board. It would involve all the major sports partners in the Northwest Territories, including Sport North.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 80-14(6): GNWT Sport And Recreation Policy

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been an ongoing matter for quite some time now. Is it the intention that this meeting in March shall be the final meetings and that we will form some concrete policy out of that? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of MACA, Mr. Steen.

Further Return To Question 80-14(6): GNWT Sport And Recreation Policy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that is the intent. I am hoping to have some recommendations from the sports partners. We would then follow up with the establishment of the board through the policy and we are already drafting up some of the policy as to what the abilities of the sports board would be, presuming that everything goes as planned. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 80-14(6): GNWT Sport And Recreation Policy

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister inform us if this will be the last meeting on this and then move forward from there to find the timelines. Will something be in place by the end of this government? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of MACA, Mr. Steen.

Further Return To Question 80-14(6): GNWT Sport And Recreation Policy

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe I've indicated to the standing committee that we are hoping that we are going to have a draft policy ready for review by the standing committee in April or May at the latest. Then we will put the policy in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 81-14(6): Tobacco Use As A Public Safety Issue

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services in response to his Minister's statement today, Taking Action on Tobacco. Mr. Speaker, it would appear the Minister

plans to undertake a fair amount of consultation with the public on this matter. Mr. Speaker, I believe about 45,000 people a year die in Canada as a result of direct or indirect issues around tobacco smoke. It would appear to me that this is a bit of a public safety issue. We implement other legislation around public safety issues, seatbelt legislation, legislation about people riding in the back of pick-up trucks. If someone pulls you over and you have your baby in a vehicle and they are not in a car seat, you are going to get a \$200 fine. Can this Minister consider smoking in public places to be a safety issue? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 81-14(6): Tobacco Use As A Public Safety Issue

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member raises a very pertinent and germane point. It's something WCB is looking at as well. In my mind, it is clear that this is a health issue and a public safety issue, especially when it comes to second-hand smoke. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 81-14(6): Tobacco Use As A Public Safety Issue

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage the Minister in the work he has undertaken in this area and I would like him to take the approach as we would as a government on any other public safety issue. I think we have been too long, too quiet and too lenient on this hazardous situation which does exist for people who are sometimes not in a position to defend themselves against the effects of second-hand smoke. I would like to ask the Minister if he could see any opportunity for perhaps even curtailing some of the public consultation and taking the responsible and appropriate action of going straight into the preparation of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 81-14(6): Tobacco Use As A Public Safety Issue

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I agree that this is a serious health problem that has been too long unaddressed and I am going to try to move as quickly as I can, along with Cabinet, to make sure that the pieces are in place so if we don't have a chance to complete anything in the months remaining of the 14th Assembly, then the 15th Assembly will be ready to go in the very early days to deal with the issue of legislation, should it be moved forward. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. McLeod.

Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a follow-up to my Member's statement, I am hoping the Minister of RWED can hear me. I have a bad cold. I would like to ask, in light of the

fact that we have had a lot of development in the different sectors and mega projects over the horizon, I would like to know what his department is doing to assist our northern entrepreneurs to prepare for this development.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of RWED, Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, we have an existing program in the Business Development Fund. We also have the agency, the Business Credit Corporation. We, as a government, approach the different initiatives project by project. We utilize different programs and have followed these policies. We don't have any new initiatives. We try to deal with this Mackenzie Valley resource development. There is a committee set up to look at that whole initiative. We haven't yet seen any recommendations or directions coming from that. Right now, in answer to the Member, we have existing programs that we are currently using. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if he could expand on the fact that he stated there will be no new programs, so we will have to rely on existing ones. However, the existing programs are severely under funded. Can we count on, at some point, seeing new money being put into existing programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of RWED, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the budget we are going through, the departments don't have very many new initiatives. Early in the planning of the budget, we also identified that it may be necessary for us to have expanded our budget. However, because of the deficit, we kept on the line. I am prepared to work with the honourable Member to see if there is anything specific we can do in the areas of identifying where there is going to be a need for additional resources. I think we all realize that with the impending development that's happening and it's unfolding practically as we speak with regard to a Mackenzie Valley pipeline and all the development that's going to be associated with it in the future. There is probably a need to have a closer look at what is really needed. Until the development of our budget, the pipeline is a proposal, and not definite. As it becomes more definite, we have to look closer at it and see if we can get additional resources once we identify that. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister has indicated, they have to live with the existing programs that they have currently and we will have to live with the money that's also budgeted. We are not looking at any new dollars. Would the Minister look and consider changing and expanding the criteria that these programs operate under? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of RWED, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are looking at combining the NWT Development Corporation with the Business Credit Corporation and looking at the development of new legislation and also it would incorporate the Business Loan Fund and Community Futures, as well as looking at the Bankers' Commission report that has just recently been released. There are recommendations in the Bankers' Commission report that alludes to doing things differently, having more control put into more of a regional decision-making scenario rather than headquarters. So there is opportunity there to reshape and redo the way we give our grants and contributions. So we will be more prepared to look at expanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, my first question was to the Minister regarding new initiatives and in his last answer he has indicated he is going to consolidate all the programs under one roof. I would certainly interpret that to be a new initiative. So when the Minister states he is going to consolidate all the existing programs and pool all the dollars, can he tell us if that would result in new dollars being available to the regions?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of RWED, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 82-14(6): Northern Development Preparedness Funding

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in consolidating the different sources of grants and contributions that we have out there under one entity, that still hasn't happened yet. We are working on it through the development of legislation. In the meantime, we are holding the line on the existing programs and services we currently have. So, yes, there will be some ideas on how to do that coming through the legislative proposal that is going to be coming forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Bell.

Question 83-14(6): Anti-Smoking Programs

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, following up on my colleague for Hay River South's questions about anti-smoking legislation. I guess maybe this would be a question for the Minister responsible for the WCB, but since the Minister of

Health and Social Services has already addressed it, I am wondering why the WCB legislation already in place wouldn't prohibit smoking in the workplace since it seems to be a harmful substance and that, in effect, could do what we are trying to do with anti-smoking legislation already. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 83-14(6): Anti-Smoking Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it pleases the Speaker, that's a question of WCB legislation policy. I know it's being looked at. I don't have the specific background material, but it has been done in BC, for example, where the WCB declared tobacco a hazardous substance. So the potential is there. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary To Question 83-14(6): Anti-Smoking Programs

MR. BELL: Okay. I thank the Minister for that. I guess I will keep the questions to anti-smoking and the programs and save those questions for the WCB Minister. I think this is related, Mr. Speaker. I wonder how the Minister of Health and Social Services is working with the Ministry of Youth to coordinate the delivery of programs aimed at curbing youth smoking. Clearly pamphlets and posters aren't enough, so what is he doing with the Ministry of Youth to coordinate this programming? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 83-14(6): Anti-Smoking Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first, let me just make the point that there are a number of options in terms of legislation. We have to come up with, as a Territory, the best way to proceed to the most comprehensive way possible with legislation to make sure we have safe public spaces and buildings.

With regard to the Minister responsible for Youth, we have had initial meetings and, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, I have indicated an interest and a willingness to flow some money from health promotions into the Ministry of Youth so we can have hands-on active kinds of solutions to working with youth. We are also working with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to try to coordinate the committee resources, so we can, as the Member pointed out, not just do posters and ad campaigns, but do some actual real work with youth and combine that money with the money that's there so we are as effective and as collaborative as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary To Question 83-14(6): Anti-Smoking Programs

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to hear that and I would encourage the Minister to continue to work with his colleagues in this government to make sure we get the best

bang for our buck. We know we have limited resources. As well, it would be important for him to consult with his federal and provincial colleagues. I am wondering if the Minister has had any discussions in this area at FPT meetings. We know there are other jurisdictions doing some good things. I use the Quebec example. I think they have made incredible headway in curbing smoking rates. I am wondering if this Minister has had a chance to consult with his colleagues on best practices. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 83-14(6): Anti-Smoking Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, I have, Mr. Speaker. I have taken the opportunity to talk with some of my fellow Ministers. One jurisdiction really caught my eye and the efforts they have undertaken, as well as British Columbia, with the rather elegant solution of using existing legislation. So there is a lot of good work being done out there. This is an issue of growing public concern and it's not going to be one that we can avoid, so we have to be proactive and come up with the best legislation possible. We don't want to reinvent the wheel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, during our last session in October, I questioned the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment about the department's financial contributions to the career and technology centre that Yellowknife Catholic schools is planning. While I applaud the efforts of the Yellowknife Catholic school board in advancing the trades sector in our schools, I am concerned about the level of funding committed by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in other communities. Mr. Speaker, the potential price tag for the trades centre was \$1.45 million and that has since increased to \$1.8 million. Last October, the Minister told me in this House: "To my understanding, there has been no commitment for a level of funding that has been approved as of yet by us. Our position I think will be to look at the program, but normally how we do this is to suggest that the various DEC's and DEAs that are looking to expand programs have to take those out of existing funding." I would like to ask the Minister again, what level in funding, in actual dollars, will the department be providing to the centre for the Yellowknife students? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question and I am glad it's been raised. We have the Yellowknife Catholic school board who is interested in developing this centre. Initially, they asked for the property, Mr. Speaker, and we acceded to providing that property to the board, but with the understanding that they would take the program from there. My initial understanding is they would

develop the program from within their resources. I have the extra area of concern, Mr. Speaker, or extra area of benefit in this community. We also have the Sir John Franklin High School where a lot of trades programs are offered. All of these programs though, Mr. Chairman, are done on the basis of board allocation and school allocation to their funding. There is no extra funding, to the best of my knowledge, for those programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been well publicized that the first \$1 million for this project will be committed by the Yellowknife Catholic schools and the remaining \$800,000 will be garnered through various partnerships, one being Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to ask the Minister to expand a bit. As there are no financial commitments, what kind of partnership is your department going to be supplying? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do have to emphasize that we haven't indicated that we would provide funding support beyond providing the property for this particular project. To the best of my knowledge, we have not made any commitment financially on this project nor indicated that we would support it because we have, as I said, in this community alone, two schools to provide this training and we don't want to duplicate, for one reason. Our position has always been that the cost of this must be taken out of the allocation provided through the DEC. In future, we are looking at -- as I mentioned the other day to the honourable Member -- different pathways, and we want to be fair throughout the Territory if we are ever able to obtain funding to support the industrial arts strategy or program, or whatever you wish to call it, that we wish to pursue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware the Minister keeps committing that there are no finances going into this project, but I read with interest in the January 31st edition of the Yellowknifer that the department officials were to travel to Edmonton and then on to Abbotsford, BC, with a contingent from Yellowknife Catholic schools and Skills Canada to tour career and technology facilities in other locations. I assume this trip took place, Mr. Speaker, recently and that the officials were successful in gathering some useful information. Would the Minister please indicate if his department has ever done or would be willing to do an assessment of Hay River as a potential regional trade centre, given the strong manufacturing and private enterprise sector that exists in Hay River? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware of the department having participated in the trip to Abbotsford. I know there's been some media publicizing on this that we were prepared to participate in YCS program, et cetera, but there is no commitment on that, Mr. Speaker. That is speaking not from our side as a government, but from the Yellowknife Catholic school board side. So to the best of my knowledge, we did not participate in that particular trip. Secondly, I would be prepared to look at what we can do in terms of industrial arts development in the Hay River schools, just the same as we would be in Fort McPherson and other locations. We are very interested in pursuing this whole program, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again the Minister is stating that there is no financial commitment, yet keeping in mind that the GNWT has already donated the old driver training school to the Yellowknife Catholic school board, surely that's worth something. I would like to get a commitment from the Minister that he would be willing to work with his department and with the Hay River entities to identify a suitable location to promote the trades in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 84-14(6): Advancing Trades In NWT Schools

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are extremely interested. We are moving forward rapidly on our program of alternative programs for our students. We need to do that. It's essential and we would be glad to work with the DEA, DEC, Hay River and South Slave to see what we can do in order to move forward. We don't have a budget for this particular program, but in whatever way we can help out, we are interested. If the DEA is interested, naturally we are there to be supportive of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of "Quit and Win" Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services and it's following up on the Minister's statement on taking action on tobacco. Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentions the event that was held in the past. I think it was the Quit and Win Contest. When I first heard about it, I thought it was a great idea to get the promotion going and the media play of the contest and so on. I thought it was a highly successful event, not just for the winners, but for everyone who thought about it and is to take part in it. I am just wondering if the department has done an evaluation of the program and whether or not there is any plan to continue with that program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In evaluation of the program that's being done, I know a decision has been made to run it again this coming year. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Contest

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that event, while the idea might have been simple in some ways, did require lots of organization and necessary resources have to be put into that. I am interested in hearing more positive responses from the Minister than what he just gave, Mr. Speaker. Could he indicate whether or not he supports this initiative at all? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Contest

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I support any initiative that will help even one Northerner to quit smoking. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have a technical glitch here. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Contest

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, further to his statement, I am wondering about the visit by Ms. Crowe. The statement states that she will be visiting Yellowknife during March 13th to 16th. I wonder if the plan is all booked up or would there be schools that she will be visiting or could schools ask for a visit from her. Is that possible? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Contest

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a full detailed agenda, but we would be seeking to work with Ms. Crowe to accommodate other requests if possible and I know that while she promotes public, smoke-free workplaces, she's also very interested in working with youth to get them to not start smoking. I would be happy to work with my colleague if there are specific requests that we could try to accommodate. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Contest

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage the Minister to have his staff be proactive in getting interest shown. My final question, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the same area. In his statement, I don't see any indications of her visiting any place other than Yellowknife. Is that intentional? Is she visiting any other communities in the North?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services.

Further Return To Question 85-14(6): Evaluation Of Quit and Win Contest

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that her visit is slated to Yellowknife. Ms. Crowe is working under very difficult circumstances. We are trying to be as understanding and accommodating as possible to her personal schedule. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is regarding my statement earlier. My question is for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, the Honourable Roger Allen. Mr. Speaker, the reason that a change was needed in the delivery of local housing programs in Rae-Edzo was because of many constituents complaining that work that was promised and projects that were promised to them were not being done. How will the Minister ensure that the work that is done and the money set aside for projects is being used on the stated project now that we are changing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Return To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the record, I had the privilege of attending a committee meeting with the honourable Member for North Slave to set out a procedural guideline that will address several key issues. One was the formation of a new LHO board; secondly, to monitor and help assist the community to further their expertise on the technical reporting procedures, as well as trying to define the new roles and responsibilities and accountability of both the community and the NWT Housing Corporation. So the next step is to get that process ratified by the community, then set out a number of guiding principles that will achieve the targets and improve the level of reporting and the level of technical advice we may provide to that community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as an MLA I tried to help a constituent by tracking the money

given by the Housing Corporation for a housing project with the actual status of the project. I was told during the briefing, that this information was not available to me because of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which ensures the confidentiality of client information. Why is the department not willing to share information where there is public money being spent? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Further Return To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, I think the important point here is to explain that we do annual audits on LHOs. That information is provided to ascertain where those funds were expended. So we are certainly keeping, for our own perspective, a record of those expenditures. From an individual's perspective, we do have program officers that assist the clients, thus we try to ensure that all levels of work are completed when required. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently obtained an application for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation where it states that the information on the forms will be shared with other government departments for the purposes of determining eligibility for programs and developing statistical databases for policy and program development. Mr. Speaker, the work I am doing is for statistical purposes and, in reality, I am part of the government. I will ask the Minister if they are willing to release the information that I request to be accountable for the clients that they have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Further Return To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not clear on the legalities of ATIPP, but I will certainly review that request and respond back to the Member. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for that answer and hopefully most of the complaints that we are hearing from our constituents can be helped. I would like to ask the Minister if they are willing to change some of the policies so that the basic information on the home, the project done and when complete, those are not privacy issues and if they could change their policy to share with all Members of this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Further Return To Question 86-14(6): Local Housing Project Delivery In The North Slave

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my meeting with the residents of Rae, I stated very clearly that all the concerns would be addressed at some point in the next several months and we will set new direction so we will remain accountable. Yes, I am prepared to provide that level of detail to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, in the NWT, there is one piece of development that is happening right now and the challenges that we face as Northerners are to take advantage of those opportunities. In the last little while, we have been concentrating our public statements on the challenges, the unfairness of the flyover staff that are working in these mines and the exploration camps and the oil and gas sector. The Minister has had three years now to deal with the gaps in employment. We have socio-economic agreements with resource companies. What has the department done to close the gap between employment readiness and employment opportunities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we spent a great deal of time developing a program called Maximizing Northern Employment, which addressed the issue of training for the oil and gas industry, the mining industry, as well as providing an Aboriginal private sector partnership and a northern employer support initiative. These were three of about eight programs we looked at to ensure our people have the opportunity to participate in the development that's taking place while we speak. We feel that we've been very successful in many ways. In some of the oil and gas training that's taken place, we've had several hundred people take training; not just in the entry level programs, but in some of the more advanced programs, Mr. Speaker. So we are, in the maximizing northern employment end, making some significant steps. Additionally, we've introduced a literacy program to help individuals to improve their literacy capability and their communication skills and so forth, so that they can partake in opportunities that might be out there. These are two of the thrusts that we have introduced, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the socio-economic agreements. I imagine the department will be negotiating these agreements with oil and

gas companies, and not only the mining companies that are operating in the Northwest Territories. These socio-economic agreements are for the people of the Northwest Territories. We have First Nations that are negotiating impact benefit agreements or participation agreements that are similar to the socio-economic agreements. When the Minister's department puts a program together for training, is it specific to a geographic location? For example, let's say the Dogrib or Akaitcho people in their relationship with the mining companies want a training program for their people, does the department work with such a group and develop a program just for that group or do they invite or welcome anybody from the Northwest Territories, whether it's Tuktoyaktuk or Fort Smith for that matter, to participate in that particular training program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The socio-economic agreements are monitored by both RWED and our own department to ensure that the commitments made by the mining corporations are met, and they have been met by the companies so far. There was a slight dip last year, but it was very slight and we feel they are meeting the commitment overall.

With regard to the employment programs that are in place for people to enter the mine employment areas, we do have a mine training committee. That committee runs a number of programs to ensure that people are given the opportunities to get experience in some of the work that may be available at the mines. I will give you an example. We have a mobile welding unit which was established and developed between the Aurora College Mine Training Committee and industry and that travels from community to community. It's not necessarily dedicated specifically in the impact benefit communities, but that is where the mining companies have traditionally looked towards getting their employees. So that is, of course, an area that we are also concerned with. We are also concerned with the whole of the Territory because we need more and more employees for our work availability in the Territory, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, communities like Fort Resolution don't have impact benefit agreements with the mining companies because the mining companies feel that they are not impacted by the development, although we all know the communities signed framework agreements recognizing that area as their traditional territory. That's another argument on its own. However, communities like Fort Resolution that are not an impacted community, whether it's mining or oil and gas, under the current methods will be left out. What is the department doing to approach these communities that are not seen as impacted by industrial development to help them get employment and training for these developments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, the mining companies initially looked at the impacted communities and they almost had borders there, but they realize now they have to go beyond that. We have traditionally taken an approach of trying to help immediately those communities where the employees were available, but we have gone much beyond that because mostly we've done this through the mine training committee. It's been up and down the valley doing various projects and we know that we've got to, as a government, look to every community in the Territory as potential employees. In order to facilitate that, we did apply and made several proposals and developed a mine training committee that has been in existence for a long time. We have also developed an oil and gas training committee, which has representation from a variety of organizations: the Government of the NWT through RWED and ECE, HRDC, DIAND and the aboriginal groups through the aboriginal human resource development groups. So we have put that together. We've got an oil and gas pipeline committee as well.

We've got the umbrellas in place. We have some units of proposals to the federal government. We don't know whether there's any money for that or not, Mr. Speaker, but certainly we are continuing our effort and we are developing through the college a number of programs like the mobile welding unit. We want to do it with carpentry. We want to do it with a number of other areas, so we can shoot those into communities like Fort Resolution so people can get some hands-on experience for two weeks, see if they want to move into that trade and then move into apprenticeships with mining companies or whoever. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad for those answers the Minister gave me. There are many areas the department is working on in partnership, by the sounds of it. However, Mr. Speaker, sometimes, when we do this job, we isolate ourselves in this big room; in Yellowknife especially, where we don't seem to take the message to the communities. Mr. Speaker, has the Minister ever instructed his department or has his department ever gone to all the communities in the NWT with career fairs for their young adults, adults and high school and junior students so they can see what kinds of possibilities, what kinds of opportunities are available in the NWT, whether it's with the mining companies, whether it's oil and gas exploration, whether it's the Government of the NWT? Has the government ever taken career fairs to the communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 87-14(6): Accessing Development Opportunities Through Employment Readiness

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have had career fairs in the...I can't name off the communities, but I do recollect them. I will give an example of Fort Resolution. I believe it was a summer ago, not this past summer, where the assembly was held in Fort Resolution and our department participated in a career fair and promoted other companies to participate as well. It is a way for us to continue to concentrate and make sure people become aware of the opportunities in the Territory, in all communities in the Territory. As I said, we need employees for these operations that are taking place, for the companies that are operating up here. Our first priority is Northerners, to ensure that they get the jobs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Braden

Question 88-14(6): Federal Transportation Blueprint

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is for the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Handley. This morning in Ottawa Mr. Handley's counterpart, David Collenette, unveiled a transportation blueprint called Straight Ahead. It's a 10-year plan largely in the regulatory framework that addresses all of Canada's major transportation infrastructure. I wanted to ask the Minister if he could advise the Assembly of what benefits or consequences there may be from this major new initiative for the North and the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is for the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 88-14(6): Federal Transportation Blueprint

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my department has been working along with other provinces and territories and the federal government on the preparation of this document. It is largely a policy document at this point, so there are no specific strategies or dollars that are deemed in it. There is one section in the report that deals with transportation in remote areas. There are a number of broad statements in it, but again not a specific strategy. At this point, it would be difficult to outline exactly what it has for the North, except the one positive thing in there is certainly recognition of unique problems in remote areas.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 88-14(6): Federal Transportation Blueprint

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These days we are certainly getting a lot of recognition, but it doesn't really seem to be rolling out into a lot of tangible things. So this is a policy document. Perhaps the Minister could then advise us what kind of issues did the NWT communicate to Ottawa that we would like to see addressed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Transportation, Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 88-14(6): Federal Transportation Blueprint

HON. JOE HANDLEY: The main issues that we have continually brought to the federal government's attention is the lack of transportation infrastructure in the North, particularly surface transportation. Second is the cost of building infrastructure in the North, given our climate and our geography, and then the third is the remoteness and the limited small population we have, but the valuable resources we have in the North. So a lot of our arguments have been presented around those three main points. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 88-14(6): Federal Transportation Blueprint

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask if there's going to be any further consultation or negotiation with northern governments and the northern transportation industry to see if some of these policies can be translated into tangible results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Transportation, Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 88-14(6): Federal Transportation Blueprint

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have time, and we want to go through the document very carefully to identify any statements in it that the federal government have now made in the document that would indicate support for northern, remote infrastructure. I guess a general concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of the thrust of the document, a lot of the thrust of the federal government has been towards urban transportation and rapid transportation in densely-populated areas. So having said that, I have to say that I am pleased to have the recognition of transportation infrastructure needs in remote areas. I want to build on that. I think it will be a continuation of a lot of the work we've done on infrastructure up to now with some good success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This set of questions is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. We have heard a lot about the harmonization initiative put forward by this government and we were told that the majority of our constituents would be seeing decreases in their rent and anybody who would be seeing increases, it would be of minimal amounts that wouldn't create hardship for them. Mr. Speaker, one of the changes I believe that's going to occur in assessing income is that single parents who are receiving maintenance or child support payments are now going to have that amount treated as income for purposes of assessing their rent in public housing units. I would like to ask the Minister if they have attempted to quantify how that is going to affect those particular housing clients. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the thrusts of the harmonization program was to ensure that the criteria for accessing government programs is consistent, so we harmonized the program with the income support programs. There will be some consideration taken for income that individuals have at the present time that will be counted in their total income. There will be a level of income judged to dictate how much rent they pay. We did ensure that the amount of rent individuals pay will be a maximum of \$200 a month, Mr. Speaker. They will be so-called grandfathered. New individuals will be based on their particular income assessments. I don't have the figures available though, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the number of people that would be affected by that. They may be able to check that out with the Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister think it's fair that a single mother with four children who has been living in public housing and working for the private sector at fairly minimal wages would now be negatively impacted by this harmonization because she would see her rent go up significantly because of the support payments that she would receive from her former spouse that is intended to help pay for things like education, clothing, incidental costs for children? Does the Minister think that that's fair? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Speaker, when we did the harmonization project, we wanted to ensure that there was a balance between the two income support programs and the Housing Corporation, the way the income is tested. It's income tested, so the individuals are at a certain level of income before an increase is applied, Mr. Speaker. We checked with the standing committees before we introduced the programs and we do feel that we can move forward on this. A lot of people are going to be beneficiaries of this new particular program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1997, there was a fairly significant federal court ruling as a result of a woman who challenged Revenue Canada's position on treating maintenance support as taxable income. How does the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment reconcile this government's treatment of this as taxable income or accountable income in terms of this government's programs, when it was proven that the federal government could not charge taxes on that portion of money

that was received by the custodial parent? How do you reconcile those differences? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to take a look at the reference the honourable Member is making to that particular ruling. I am not familiar with it, Mr. Speaker, but I could see what that ruling said. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the intent of that ruling by the federal courts holds similarity in terms of how income of custodial parents taking care of children is treated, would the Minister consider modifying the harmonization initiative before it's implemented and take into consideration those parents that would be negatively impacted by the way the initiative is proceeding now? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return To Question 89-14(6): Harmonization Of Income Support And Social Housing

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't make a commitment here, Mr. Speaker, without looking at the details of that particular court decision. I am not familiar with it and it wasn't brought to my attention previously, Mr. Speaker. So we would have to look at seeing what the implications of that court decision were and whether it would even apply to us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, I asked the Minister for a complete breakdown of exactly what communities the 10 new general practitioners will be serving. The following was his response: "There are three additional specialists going to Yellowknife. There are two for the Sahtu, two for the Dogrib, one for the Deh Cho and the remainder we are devoting to Yellowknife." I am kind of confused with this answer. I am aware that the 10 new doctors are general practitioners, not specialists, as indicated by the Minister's response yesterday. I am wondering if the Minister could clarify whether the three specialists that he mentioned yesterday are indeed part of the 10 general practitioners that he talked about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Member for any confusion. There are 10 general practitioners. In addition, there are three specialists. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Minister again then if he could supply a list of the 10 general practitioners, excluding the three specialists. What is the complete breakdown by community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are two for the South, two for the Dogrib, one for the Deh Cho and I believe the rest are general practitioners scheduled to go into Yellowknife. If the Member wishes, I can give him a written list so that it's factual and he has it to see. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also yesterday when I asked for more doctors for Hay River, out of the 10 general practitioners, the Minister responded: "As a result of recently concluded negotiations with general practitioners, there is going to be an additional sum, over and above the existing complement, that is going to be allocated across the territory and Hay River will be factored in there." Am I to understand that there are going to be more doctors over and above the three specialists and the 10 general practitioners we talked about? Is the Minister saying there will be more doctors over and above that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that's correct.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit, in the doctors being hired, whether it's in the initial 10 or the ones over and above the 10, to two more physicians for Hay River? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for oral questions is up. We will allow the Minister to respond.

Further Return To Question 90-14(6): Placement Of New Physicians

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware of Hay River's request for seven doctors. I am aware of Hay River's request not only for doctors, but to have the capacity and capability to do surgery and birthing. The commitment I give is we will ensure that Hay River is treated fairly and with the resources they need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. .

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 7, written questions, Item 8, returns to written questions. Mr. Handley.

ITEM 8: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Return To Written Question 1-14(6): GNWT Policy On Employee E-mail And Internet Usage

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Dent on February 12, 2003, regarding the GNWT policy on employee e-mail and Internet usage.

On February 26, 2002, the Government of the Northwest Territories adopted the policy "Use of Electronic Mail and the Internet, Guidelines for Employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories." This policy is currently posted on the GNWT Web site under "Information for Employees" at the FMBS's document library. The policy states: "Computers, networks and computing facilities are provided for the performance of assigned duties. The use of this equipment or technology for any other purpose is not appropriate." The policy goes on to list examples of inappropriate or prohibited uses of government e-mail and the Internet.

When initially implemented, the policy was provided to all employees. The employees were asked to review the policy and sign an acknowledgement that they had read and understood it. These acknowledgements were placed on their personnel files. The process for all new employees is to provide them with the policy as part of the initial documentation process for newly hired employees.

GNWT departments have the ability to monitor employee use of e-mail and the Internet to ensure that these tools are being used appropriately. GNWT departments have the capacity to run regular reports outlining the types of Internet sites employees are accessing. When inappropriate sites are detected, employees are normally advised of this and warned that this contravenes the GNWT policy in this area.

Failure to refrain from this behaviour leads to regular progressive discipline. Depending on the types of sites visited and the nature of an employee's job, fairly severe discipline may be warranted.

The departments were consulted to determine if specific incidents have arisen over the past year. The following were the results:

- the majority reported that there have been no instances where discipline had to be imposed on employees for inappropriate use of the Internet or GNWT e-mail;

- there were several instances where departments had provided verbal and written cautions to employees;
- there were three cases where written reprimands had to be provided to employees concerning use of the Internet;
- there was one instance where an employee was suspended for inappropriate use of the Internet. This suspension has been grieved, but the grievance process has not been completed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to Opening Address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Deputy Premier, Mr. Antoine.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 23-14(6): Letter And Newsletter Of The Native Women's Association Of The NWT

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following letter and winter newsletter from the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motions for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS

Motion 3-14(6): Extension Of The Mandate Of The Special Joint Committee On Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs, Carried

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the mandate of the Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs expires on February 28, 2003, in accordance with Motion 6-14(6);

AND WHEREAS the special joint committee requires the government's comprehensive response to its interim report and recommendations in order to prepare its final report to the House;

AND WHEREAS the government has not tabled its response as of February 19, 2003;

AND WHEREAS the final date for tabling the government's response is February 28, 2003;

AND WHEREAS the special joint committee requires time to consider the government's response and feedback from small communities on the interim report of the committee;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for North Slave, that the special joint committee shall continue as a special committee of the Legislative Assembly until it presents its final report to the House in June 2003;

AND FURTHER, that it shall continue under all other terms and provisions as established by Motion 6-14(5).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 3, Bill 6, Bill 7, Bill 8, Committee Reports 3-14(6), 4-14(6), 5-14(6) and 6-14(6), with Mr. Lafferty in the chair.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): We were on Bill 3 yesterday. What is the wish of the committee today? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to recommend the committee continue consideration of Bill 3 and Committee Reports 3-14(6), 4-14(6) and 5-14(6) concurrently and that we continue with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment budget and then move into the Executive.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

---Agreed

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): I would like to ask the Minister if he has any witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort in the witnesses. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

---Agreed

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): At this time, I call a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

Bill 3: Appropriation Act, 2003-2004

Department Of Education, Culture And Employment

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): I will call the committee back to order. We are now in general comments. Minister Ootes, would you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, with me today are Dr. Loretta Foley, deputy minister of the department, Lesley Allen is the assistant deputy minister for advanced education and careers, and Paul Devitt is the director of management services. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Roland.

General Comments

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, a few general comments in the area of Education, Culture and

Employment. Mr. Chairman, in the committee's response to the Department of Education, there are a couple of areas of concern I'd like to highlight and raise my concern, along with a number of things from my constituency as well. The first one in the committee's report is a couple of allocation concerns in student housing. Mr. Chairman, it's been something I've pursued for quite a number of years. In fact, from the 13th Assembly when talk of Aurora Campus was being looked at as to what option to go with, whether it would be a renovation of Grollier Hall or a new building with a gym, or just a new building without a gym, and Public Works has done a study on that. Out of the three options, I remember meeting with the board of governors as they went through that report and with the recommendations made at that time.

It was recommended that it wouldn't be feasible to renovate Grollier Hall because I believe the amount was over \$9 million, and it would only give a life expectancy to that facility of 20 years. For a couple of million dollars more, I believe it was around \$13 million, one of the options without the gym would give the facility a life expectancy of 40 years. So it was suggested that that would be the route to go. I was happy to see that found its way in under the five-year capital plan. Through a number of avenues, P3s being an initiative the government looked at at that time, that was one of the facilities that would be looked at. Unfortunately, the P3 scenario dropped off the map and the Aurora Campus facility found its way back on the capital plan within the government and is proceeding now with an award of the contract.

The only concern I have, Mr. Chairman, is it's proceeding without a student residence and that's quite a concern to me and the community. The community has come together to try to look at options, and work with the department to come up with a method of building the student residence at the same time we are building the actual facility of classrooms in those spaces. But, unfortunately, to date, we have not come up with a way of doing it.

The department's way of looking at it was to renovate the Blueberry Patch or a number of units within the Blueberry Patch, as we call it in Inuvik. That is a row of housing that belongs to Aurora Campus that was shut down because it wasn't economically viable to continue to operate them. Since then, the department has put some money into it, and a private developer has taken over the facility and leased back some of the units to Aurora Campus and rented out the rest of the units to the public at large. I guess we have to accept that the department is looking at it and our fiscal situation, moving ahead to seeing the best we could make of both worlds.

I have become sort of dissatisfied with what's being presented now, as we go through this process of main estimates and review them. Seeing that the department is actually going ahead with renovations to other student facilities across the Northwest Territories and, in fact, in future years are going to replace some of those facilities that are being renovated, leads me to a great concern, seeing that the renovation of the campus has been worked at from the community level, trying to find ways of doing this and being told we couldn't, and then seeing that the department is putting money into renovating other facilities.

Mr. Chairman, based on the stats provided to Members, it showed the occupancy rates of the different residences across the North that deal with Aurora Campus and Aurora College,

and it just seemed to fit even further that the community of Inuvik should be looked at seriously when it comes to building a residence. I find it very difficult to look at this budget of the department. I know it is doing a lot of good in a lot of areas. But seeing the work of my community and the members in my community, the education bodies in my community, who agreed with this process, having to see we can't move forward in the residence side and then see another residence in the system being renovated and new facilities being put in place in future years, I really have a difficult time with that, Mr. Chairman. I hope that the Minister can come up with something that might be acceptable to my constituents as well as the community of educators. It is, again, very difficult to see that happening.

On another area, Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of questions on the Teacher Education Program specifically. We made some changes in the past. If someone goes through the Teacher Education Program they would have five years to proceed to the next level to get their degree. That was changed and many teachers have gone on to do that. One thing I'm hearing is the difficulty that those who have gone on to get their degrees are having in finding positions in our communities. I don't know if it is isolated to just my constituency, but I'm hearing that from a few other Members. We say we need to train Northerners to take those positions. We've increased the requirements. After five years, if they need a degree, they go out and get a degree. Then when they go and apply for a position in the North, they're being told that they can't and we continue to see new teachers coming up from the South. The more teachers the better, but it is an area of concern.

Another area I would like to highlight at this time, Mr. Chairman, is within the different district education councils and district education authorities. I'd like to get some information from the Minister or his staff on who is unionized in the facilities that we have in the Northwest Territories. Where are they unionized? Do all DEAs fall under the same category or are there differences? I will leave my general comments at this time, Mr. Chairman, and hope to hear some responses. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will deal with each of the issues. Mr. Roland had three issues. First were his comments with regard to the student housing in Inuvik for the college. He is correct that this dates back a long way. What we have done in Inuvik, Mr. Chairman, was first of all concentrate on ensuring that we had the ability to put up a new college building, which is proceeding and will be started this particular summer, fall, et cetera, and that was of great concern to us to ensure that got built. The student housing did become a concern, but what we did was turn to what is referred to as the Blueberry Patch. We presently have 30 units in that particular housing complex, and 18 units were turned over to the developer and we are getting 10 of those units back. Mr. Chairman, that will accommodate the number of students that are attending and the housing that is needed for the Inuvik campus. We additionally have access to eight more units if we do need them, Mr. Chairman. These are not new units, we recognize that, but it will solve the problem for us for the immediate future for the next number of years; three, four or five years.

What the honourable Member mentioned was reference to the money that is being put into the projects in Fort Smith. We have approximately \$1.3 million for the Green House, \$1.3 million for the Brown House and then some \$2 million for the replacement of 15 units. This is necessary, Mr. Chairman, because first of all, we have an order from the fire marshal that we must address the units -- the Green House and the Brown House -- or they will be shut down and he or she wants a commitment. I'm not sure if it was the fire marshal, but we've got a report from the assistant fire marshal, I believe it is. Anyway, she said the units would be shut down if we didn't address the issue. Additionally, the units that are due for replacement, we are in dire need of those units, Mr. Speaker, for similar reasons. The current housing is extremely old, 40 to 50 years old there and if we don't protect our assets in the community, then we could face a critical problem in Fort Smith.

Now, I think what may be throwing the situation somewhat was some information that was passed to the standing committee that indicated there were vacancies of 50 some beds, I think is what it was. I am going to try to explain what happened here. We have a place called Breynat Hall, which was a residence for high school students and at one time two students were accommodated per room. The college doesn't find that acceptable, and it is not fair to the individual adults going to the college in Fort Smith. In some cases, in emergency cases, people are doubled up in those units, but I think that is where the figure may have come from, that there was extra space there. That, in our opinion, is not correct because the college is very adamant that they don't want to double up people except in emergency cases, because they are not suitable for that. As well, Breynat Hall is very old and there are some problems with that particular unit.

So there has been a need to identify, Mr. Chairman, the protection of our assets and ensuring that the 40- to 50-year-old buildings are addressed and we've done that, Mr. Chairman. As well, I can't avoid the Brown House and the Green House. There was a comment, well, why couldn't we switch the money? I still don't have enough money, Mr. Chairman, to address the issue in Inuvik because that particular need is approximately \$4 million. I can tell the Member, that I've not given up on Inuvik. I'm talking with the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, I don't know whether there is any resolution there. I did speak previously about the possibility of approaching it on a private sector basis. That didn't work for us. It didn't work for us because the price became too much for us. So if I may move on, hopefully that clarifies the situation. I can provide further answers if there is a need to do that on the housing situation.

On the Teacher Education Program, yes, we are encouraging our students to get their degrees. We're providing support for five students per year to go back to school. Plus we offered, also, for them to do it by distant education because some teachers may find that in a community, with a family, it is too onerous and difficult to move from the community to get their degree, so we offer it part time. The question, of course, that has been asked is why can't those particular graduates from the programs that we have get jobs? In all cases, we have identified this as a maximizing northern employment issue and we have indicated that we would guarantee employment, but it doesn't mean employment in the particular home community or the community that they may wish to live in. But they do receive priority hiring from our department side, and we are in touch on

a constant basis with our DECs to address this issue. So hopefully that answers that particular question.

As for the DECs and DEAs, who are unionized, all teachers, administrators and classroom assistants are unionized. However, the DEAs may hire individuals outside of the union to be classroom assistants, but there is a proviso there to ensure that the benefits and the hiring process is the same as for a unionized individual. So there can't be any discrimination in terms of employment conditions and so forth, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (MR. LAFFERTY): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first point I want to address is the one that Mr. Roland has already started us off with, and this is the capital allocation process. When the department is looking at its highest priority needs and deciding where it is going to spend its capital dollars, I would assume that if we take the college, for instance, that a campus with a wait list for student housing and a campus that isn't allowing any of its local students into student housing because of the shortage of space, would rise to the top ahead of a college where there is excess capacity. I believe that we are getting accurate information on the facilities in Smith and that they are very old and they do need to be renovated or repaired. It sounds like even Breynat Hall, which isn't on the list, is very old and needs some work. But I would question whether or not a lot of this renovation needs to be done when we have a massive waiting list in Yellowknife at Aurora College. There are fire code issues; those certainly need to be addressed immediately. I would like to ask the Minister to give us information, again, because when the committee asked for this the first time, it looked like there were huge vacancies in Fort Smith in college housing. This was even after Fort Smith students were allowed to enter into the college housing and they are allowed to do that as a last resort when there is nobody else in queue for that housing. Fort Smith students are allowed to take those units and they were certainly the community most represented in those housing units, more than any others. You would see in Inuvik and you would see in Yellowknife, no Yellowknifers, no Inuvik students in those respective campuses. So let's just take Breynat Hall. If we accepted that we are not going to have any doubling up of students, how many vacant rooms do we have in Breynat Hall right now, even after Fort Smith students are admitted, in this current year? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (MR. LAFFERTY): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The occupancy of the housing units in Fort Smith, we've checked into them and the picture that was provided at the time for the committee was a point in time that I haven't been able to specifically point to. Today we have had some recent reports on the amount of occupancy and it is nearing 92 percent. The difficulty we have is if we do not do replacement of units and renovation of units, then if one or two of those units gets shut down, then we would have an overcrowding problem in Fort Smith. As I mentioned, Breynat Hall may have been the reason why some figures came forward that we had empty beds, but that is not the college policy.

I would like to also state that with respect to the Fort Smith students utilizing the facility, it is naturally not the policy of the

college to encourage that, but it is allowed in Fort Smith. If the committee is not in agreement for allowing that, that is fair enough. I can certainly bring that to the attention of the board. The board, itself, did point out to me that there is a residence need in Yellowknife that is a high priority for the college. There is a real challenge with that, Mr. Chairman, as you know because we do not have the availability of housing in Yellowknife. As well, the college board has asked that we look at a campus location for the college in the future. If we are going to get into any kind of planning for the college, then we don't want to get into a haphazard approach to addressing the issue of accommodation. I know the accommodation needs are here, but we need to look at it as a larger type of project and I'm not sure whether we can find the funding to address just the residence problems here in Yellowknife. We have renovated three floors already at Northern United Place, Mr. Chairman. Hopefully that helps to answer some of the queries the Member has.

CHAIRMAN (MR. LAFFERTY): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Well, I guess it is difficult for me to accept that the information that the department provided to the standing committee was taken at an unknown point of time. I mean, somebody tabulated that information, then somebody has to know where and when that information was tabulated. Ninety-plus percent vacancy -- by the way, I will back up -- I don't think committee has any objections to Fort Smith students staying in those housing units. If they are vacant and there are students from other communities staying in there, why the heck wouldn't we want Fort Smith students to be able to take up that vacant housing, it only makes sense. I think what we are saying is, fine, Fort Smith students are taking up vacant housing, but even after that, there are still vacancies in Fort Smith for college housing. We are going to sit down and identify top priorities and compare that to Yellowknife where there is a waiting list. There is not a single student residence vacant and there are no Yellowknife students staying in that housing. It doesn't seem to me that when the priorities shake out in the capital planning process, that we've got our priorities in line here. I accept that the fire code regulations have to be dealt with immediately or else we have to move students out of those units, and I guess my questions still are around Breynat Hall. The information we had -- and the Minister hasn't given me anything contrary to what I received the first time -- was that there was a huge vacancy in that building. I accept that it's old, I accept that it probably needs work, but is there vacancy in that building? The information that we had was that almost half the units were vacant.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The information that we have for the following enrolment at Thebacha was 153 units were occupied and 91 percent occupancy rate in Fort Smith for the fall.

As I explained earlier, as a residence, Breynat Hall is designed as a high school residence to accommodate two students per room and then they have areas for kitchen units and so forth. It may be that it was counted as beds. There are 104 beds in that particular unit, but the college does not promote the occupancy of two adults per unit in that particular building. They find it very unfair to the adults. It's not designed for that. That may have been where the idea of vacancy came from.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Fine, I guess. We've got 104 beds in that facility. I can accept that then there are 52 rooms in the facility, if that's the number that the Minister is giving us. I also accept that we're not going to double up adult students. I think what we want is we want people to be as successful as possible, and privacy probably helps that. So if we have 52 rooms, how many of those rooms are occupied, and how many of those rooms are occupied by students who are not from Fort Smith? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today I understand the units are full, with 55 students in Breynat Hall. In some cases, individuals have been doubled up. There are approximately 14 units that are allocated for females and the rest are allocated for males, and they want to ensure that they don't mingle the two dorms. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. Of those 55 students, how many are from Fort Smith?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you. When we reported in the fall, the information I got was that 12 individuals were from Fort Smith. However, in the end it turned out to be eight individuals, Mr. Chair, and there are eight from Fort Smith in those units now.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Seeing as we're on the topic of Aurora College, I'd like to pursue some questions in that area. I had alluded to the future of this college and so on in my reply to the Budget Address last Friday. I'm just wondering, because as I mentioned there, I'm hearing some information about the fact that the campus in Yellowknife or the college is somewhat taxed, and that they're being asked to do more than what they were funded for. I'm wondering if the department could provide a profile of the three campuses in terms of the students being served there for the last three years, the positions funded for the last three years, and students, staff and the dollars that go with that. I'll start there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we can provide that. It will take us a day or so to get that information together, but we can certainly provide that back to the Member within a couple of days. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The other thing that I was talking about was the desire on the part of lots of people in the community to have a campus for Yellowknife. I'm sorry, I should correct that. We do have a campus there, it's just not an independent, self-contained college campus. The voices that I hear are not from Yellowknife residents only, but the students who go to school there. It has been a long-running

issue for the students, because of the lack of housing that Mr. Bell has mentioned, as well as parking. You know, just having enough space to do what's required. I just checked the budget to see what's in store for capital planning, and I don't see anything allocated for the capital plan for Yellowknife Campus in the budget for a long time; not within the 10-year span that we're looking in. The Minister has mentioned that the college board of governors has mentioned this as well, so I'm interested in knowing where the discussions are at this point about the possibility of a self-contained, independent campus for the college in Yellowknife. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there are some real challenges cropping up with regard to the present facility: more housing, parking is a problem, classroom space in some cases and accessibility for daycare. The college board has informed me that they would like to see the development of a stand-alone campus down the road. That certainly would be desirable, no doubt. We have not allocated any funding to identify that now, because we don't know what we're dealing with in terms of location, we don't know in terms of size and future need. All of that would have to be worked out with the college board, Mr. Chair. There are a lot of unanswered questions as to where location would be, the size and the kind of money that would be required for this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: I would be interested in some information from the department in terms of the costing of that. I appreciate the Minister just indicated that this is at a very preliminary stage, maybe it's not even that far. But I would like to see this being discussed and considered by the policy section or whoever does the long-term planning in the department. I would think that the profiles of the students, enrolment rates and money already being spent, the age of the building that it's in now; Northern United Place is not one of the newest buildings in town. I'm sure that it has its own lifespan that you have to consider, as well as the leases that the college will be expected to pay in future. I will be interested in getting some information from the Minister in the not-too-distant future about what the potential and feasibility is. I guess as we continue to have a shortage of space in the campus to provide the programs that the students are looking for, and if it continues to be the case that students cannot afford to go to school in Yellowknife because everything is just too expensive, then we may see students choosing to go south for schooling or to other communities in the North. But I do believe that there are students who want to pursue education here, and that they're not in a position to move anywhere else, or they don't want to; they want to do it in Yellowknife. I'd like to see some information along with the profile that I've asked for from the Minister in that area.

One other thing I want to see is I would like to have Aurora College becoming a university level sometime in the near future. I don't know how a college becomes a university, but I guess it's by practice and by offering more university programs as the time goes on. I realize that the Teacher Education Program is offering university level programs, although it's not until 2004, so the students that are finishing the three-year program this year will have to go south if they want to continue and finish the four-year program.

This may be just a hypothetical question, but I really feel that there is so much happening in the North in terms of political development and cultural development historically, I think that there is a place in the North for scientific research and economic research. The aurora phenomenon could be something that could be studied in the North. We have lots of mineral development going on with diamonds and everything else that I'm sure is of interest. I remember watching on CBC these scientists from all over the world -- Japan and everywhere from Inuvik -- in Inuvik studying. They were digging...I'm sounding really unscientific, but apparently there's frozen gas deep, deep underneath that is of academic interest to everybody. Politically, whether it's studying of the consensus government or all of the aboriginal self-governments that are being settled, I just think that the more that I am involved in political life I am beginning to appreciate more and more critical academic thinking about what people are doing. You know, the decisions we are making as political actors and business leaders and science and so on. I'd love to see a university level academic institution in this part of the world. I don't know, maybe I should ask the Minister. How does a little college become a university? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just on the campus question first, on which Ms. Lee is very interested in being kept informed and we certainly can do that, our first step would be to do a program plan, which eventually becomes part of the capital planning process. But we need to, first of all, work with the board and develop a program plan. As I say, that's the first step.

We are offering more and more university degree programs. For instance, with our Teacher Education Program the degree is now granted out of the University of Saskatchewan or elsewhere. We are going to be introducing that as a degree program, and it will be located in Fort Smith. I believe that's at the start of 2004 that we'll start that particular program. We already provide a nursing program in conjunction with the University of Victoria, and a social work program with the University of Regina for degree granting. More and more I think the college is leaning toward providing those particular degrees here in the North. It takes some time to ensure that we're appropriately accredited for granting degrees, and that our degrees are recognized by other universities. It's important for us to pursue it on that basis.

The college, it must be remembered, offers more than just a degree style of programs. They offer certificates and diplomas. So the steps probably would be a university/college type of set-up, which is similar to what's available in British Columbia, where degrees and diplomas and certificates are provided, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the Minister's opening comments he talked about how we've improved funding over the years for our schools. In particular, we're now running at 15 percent of school funding for student support. I would agree with the Minister that over the life of this Assembly we have managed to increase the amount that goes into school supports significantly. I know that the educators that I've talked to told me that this is a very key investment for us to make. In

fact, some have told me that they think it's more important than reducing the pupil-teacher ratio. That's because by providing adequate supports in the class, we enable teachers to do more with the class sizes that they may have. So I think right now we can say that we've done a good job for the increases that we've provided in this area to date.

But having said that, we know that we have a lot of kids with challenges in the Northwest Territories. While we haven't got any clinical work that we can point to so you can't prove what the level is, I think that there's a general feeling that the level of challenge faced in the classroom is certainly higher than what is the average found in Canada south of 60. So if we have a higher number of students in need of special support, we need to be able to put a higher proportion in.

I know we get into the issue of comparing apples to apples or comparing apples to oranges perhaps, but when we look at student support rates across Canada, some jurisdictions say that they are putting as much as 24 or 25 percent total funding into student supports. I know that every jurisdiction classifies student support differently, so we can't say that that's the sort of number that we should be aiming for. But obviously, given the level of challenge that our teachers are facing in the classrooms, we need to try to find a way to provide better supports.

All the educators I've talked to agree that inclusive schooling is the right policy. It's the right policy for us to implement but, for it to work, there has to be adequate support for the teachers to make it work in the classroom. So I'm hoping that while we can take a moment here and pat ourselves on the back for increasing student supports to 15 percent, I hope that the Minister will take it as a personal challenge to continue the fight to increase the amount of funding that we can find to put into schools for student support.

Having just given the Minister kudos, I'll launch off on the other side. I have to say that as a member of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, I've been quite dismayed with the information that we received when it came to the capital this year. It seems like every time we talked about usage of student housing in Fort Smith the numbers changed. We don't seem to be able to get consistent answers. It has never been explained to the committee, or to me personally, what we have to change in the accommodations in Fort Smith to make them pass the fire marshal's concerns, which is to get past those concerns. So saying that because we have the fire marshal's report that says we're going to have to shut it down if we don't do something, for all I know that means that there's a fire door that has the hinges on the wrong side. I would really appreciate having a better understanding of what the requirements are, so that I can have a clear understanding of why we have to spend the money there. It certainly seemed to make a lot of sense to the Members to take a look at...clearly a preponderance of our college student housing is in Fort Smith. We do have three campuses, and the committee thought that it was time, perhaps, that we looked at broadening that out. Knowing that we're doing a construction project in Inuvik, it seemed that we could probably save some money for mobilization if we could get that project underway more quickly in Inuvik to see more student housing up there. As has been noted by other Members, we certainly need to address student housing in Yellowknife as well.

We have not had the information that leads us to accept what the Minister and the department have told us about the needs in Fort Smith. I'm looking forward to receiving that. I hope the Minister will provide the details of that information, so we can all agree on where the money should be spent and how it should be spent. I would challenge him to say if you have the information, let's lay it on the table. Let's see it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the student funding, there is no doubt that if we can provide more funding for student needs within the classroom, I think that is the way for the future for us to ensure that we continue our investments in that area. There are a lot of challenges in the classroom for teachers, diverse problems. Sometimes it's not the number of students in the class, but the kinds of different situations in the class, the different number of students with challenges. So I agree with the Member, that it's important for us to continue if we have the opportunity to identify additional funding to concentrate on ensuring that we can put money into the students needs support. It is a critical area.

On the capital projects in Fort Smith, we can provide the Member with a technical support document that we have both on the Brown House and the Green House. We can provide whatever information there we can, Mr. Chair, to the Member, in all likelihood within a day or so. I could give him my copy here now if he wishes, but it may be more appropriate for us to give all committee members some copies on this so that they can address it. It's not a report that indicates small changes in these particular buildings. They point out that the facilities are structurally sound, but they must have a lot of rebuilding and replacement of plumbing, electrical and so forth. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I look forward, along with other members of the committee, to receiving the information the Minister has offered on the proposed renovations in Fort Smith.

Just one other quick comment I'd like to make, Mr. Chairman, at this point and that is to encourage the Minister to move forward with the plan for a new campus in Yellowknife. We're already at the point, I understand, where we're leasing a significant amount of space outside the current campus. I have to believe it probably makes economic sense to take a look at developing one that would better fit the use that we see there today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we will be going into discussions with the college representatives to see how we can address the issue of a future campus in Yellowknife. It is a challenge for the college right now. They are renting space outside of the building. There's, naturally, a requirement for substantial capital investment, and that becomes, of course, the challenge, and we're identifying that. But it does not stop us from proceeding to ensure that we can look at how to proceed with designing a facility, identifying land and so forth for a campus location. We will work closely with the board. The board itself has identified this as one of their

criteria and needs, and they'd like for us to work hand in hand with them to pursue this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. Talking about the need for a purpose built facility in Yellowknife, the Minister has indicated that it may not make sense to just look at housing exclusive of a comprehensive look at the entire facility. If we are talking about when it makes sense to look at a purpose built facility in Yellowknife, I'm wondering if the Minister can indicate when the lease for the current space we have, the main lease, for the classroom space expires.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe we have three or four years remaining on the lease.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Okay. I thank the Minister for that information. I'd like to move to another area.

I know that we're doing some standardized testing in primary school, and I think we currently, in most of the districts, do testing at grades 3, 6 and 9. I'm wondering if the Minister could indicate if that's correct, if that's being done across districts and whether or not it's the department that pays for that. Or are districts who decide to do the testing expected to take the funding and the money to pay for testing out of their program delivery dollars? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The testing choice is left to the particular district. More and more of the education councils are going with the Alberta achievement tests, which test for grades 3, 6 and 9. That gives us a good comparison to the Alberta achievements. The Deh Cho uses a different process as does the Beaufort-Delta. With regard to the costing, I believe each of the districts pays for its costing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: So if a district deems that this testing is less important than delivering another program, they can certainly choose to not have the testing and then just spend that money on program delivery in other areas. Is that the case?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you. I'll ask Dr. Foley to address that, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Dr. Foley.

DR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As Minister Ootes mentioned, all of the eight school districts are doing some type of testing now. There's not one district that's not doing it. But in light of our latest initiative on school improvement, we are going to put testing and evaluation as a part of our school improvement projects next year. In other words, they'll be linked together. But at the moment, all are doing something and the majority are doing the Alberta achievement, which is based on classroom results for the grade. The department is

currently working on a directive for assessment, and working with representatives in each of the eight school districts. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I'm wondering if the Minister can tell me if next we have this new initiative and this new thrust toward testing, if we're going to be trying to encourage all of the districts to do the same, whether it be Alberta achievement or some other testing, but all conduct the same tests so that we're able to compare accurately across districts. Is that something we're trying to push? Consistency? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's important that we are able to compare amongst the various communities, amongst the various districts, how our students are performing. Yes, it is our desire to have the testing be consistent amongst the DECs, Mr. Chair, and the DEAs, and it's highly recommended that we do that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I just want to be clear. I agree that it's highly recommended that we do that and have some consistency, but I'm wondering if the department is going to direct districts to implement a certain type of testing so that there is consistency. I think this is one of the key roles for a department to take, and that would be in standards, in this area certainly. Otherwise we might as well devolve the entire issue of education and all education programs to the various districts and not have any central control at all. I'm wondering if this is something that will be a certainty next year. Can we expect to see standardization? Is that a given?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, Mr. Chair, it is our intent to have consistency of testing. As Dr. Foley mentioned, the department is currently preparing a directive on assessment. I'm not sure if we're going to have it completely in by this fall, but our intent is to move towards that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. Okay, I look forward to seeing that. I certainly think that that's a worthwhile initiative. I think we have to be able to accurately compare our jurisdictions, our districts, and also compare ourselves to other jurisdictions, and this is certainly a good start. So I'm glad to see that.

Let me ask again about another area of testing, and that's departmental exam results for the Northwest Territories. Is this something that how our students are doing on departmental exams -- whether it's Math 30, Biology 30, English 30 and 33, these kinds of departmentals -- something we publish on a yearly basis, so that residents in the Territories can see how we are doing on departmental exams and possibly compare us to other jurisdictions? I know the department collects this information. I have asked for it at my office for the last couple of years and the department has been able to provide very detailed information on how we are doing by community, by board, on these exams. I am wondering if this is something we consider public information and is something that we publicize. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We participate in student achievement, a national program, Mr. Chairman, that compares jurisdictions across the country. We do provide that information back to the school districts, but it's not broken out, if I understand correctly, by schools.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: I guess it's my feeling, but my sense is even if we are providing this information, which we know we are collecting internally, to the school boards and to the school districts for their use, that is hardly any indication that the public would become aware of how we are doing. I think sometimes we may be improving; we may not. The results may not be what we would like to see, but I think it's important that we talk about them because if communities are going to take ownership of this problem, they have to sense that there is a problem. If we are falling behind other jurisdictions in the number of students who are graduating or in our performance on these departmental exam results, which is something we can easily compare to Alberta, this is something we have to start talking about. I think it's just dialogue that has to start at the community level because that's where ownership of problems, if there are problems, can be taken. I think it takes the entire community pulling together to make sure students are successful. It can't be left up to teachers, it can't be left up to individual families. The community leadership can play a large role in trying to encourage students to do better and improve their efforts on these exams. So what I am looking for is some indication from the Minister that the department believes it's important for communities to see these results and take ownership of problems, if there are problems. I think that the transparency that is required here, in my mind, mandates the department to take up these issues with the communities and to play a lead role in trying to have communities come to grips with the shortcomings, if there any, in our exam results. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: It is important that we go to consistency of testing, that we are able to compare ourselves with ourselves; in other words, different school districts within the Territory and that is one of the attractions of the Alberta testing process, which is important. That will help us tremendously. There is no doubt that ownership is important. We do have sometimes a difficulty of ensuring -- and there is an issue with this -- the confidentiality in some ways of these small schools. The information is provided back to the districts to see how districts are performing. We need to work this out in conjunction with the district education boards and the chairs, the school boards, to discuss the issue of more ownership of results and what needs to be done about results if there are difficulties and to celebrate the achievements. There is certainly no doubt that some schools are performing extremely well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few comments and a few questions in different areas of the Minister's portfolio. First of all, I want to say it's really interesting to listen to some of the larger centres jockeying and lobbying for some of the dollars out there for some infrastructure expenditures that they want to see in their

ridings. I have a concern, as a representative from a small community, sometimes the approach has a different attitude when it comes to the small communities. I wanted to ask the Minister, when it comes to repairs or upgrades or expansions or new capital expenditures, is he using the standard system of corporate capital planning? Is it per capita? Could he give me a response on that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the area of schools, we do have a small capital budget in which we allocate for repairs and upgrades for schools in small communities. I believe that's the area, if the Member is speaking about the capital program, that we are in. As well, we are introducing and we already have introduced a school improvement initiative whereby we have identified for each DEC, DEA, approximately \$20,000 to work on a program to take one school and improve their particular literacy or numeracy or language usage or science. We have eight schools at the moment that are all small schools and we want to have them run these particular pilot programs. If they can improve their literacy, their reading capability and their numeracy and so forth, if that works, it's about a half a year program, so it will last until the spring. We want to take and analyze the successes of that, the failures of that and expand that to other small schools. It's very important for us to concentrate on the small schools outside of the big centres.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, he must have missed my question. My question is how he prioritizes which schools are going to get repairs or upgrades or any capital investment, not program dollars. My question was not at all about program dollars.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's done in conjunction with Public Works and Services. We identify schools that are looking to have improvements made. We meet with the respective staff and then we bring in Public Works and Services to do that. For example, we have Lutselk'e and we are working with the Hay River Reserve on their particular school. We did Lutselk'e this year with a substantial improvement, and then we are working on the Hay River Reserve school, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Minister for his answer. In the smaller communities, the non-tax-based communities, in those cases, the school is the only educational facility in the community. It has to be able to accommodate the elementary students, the grade extensions, a lot of time the college students, Aboriginal Head Start, any other educational learning program there is, the library, distance learning. A lot of times, you can look at these facilities and anybody that walked off the street would be able to see these facilities are full. They are overcrowded, they are beyond capacity for what they are designed for. But when it comes to analysis by this government, they say the school is underutilized. When I

looked at the school on the reserve, I was quite concerned, and the Minister is aware because we looked at it together. There were students being taught in the hallways. The Aboriginal language instructor is walking around with a shopping cart that he carries his material from class to class with. There are six or seven staff people sharing one office. We still couldn't find any money for that. I am really shocked that we have facilities, communities that have multi facilities and some are sitting half empty. Yet, in certain communities where there is only one facility we can't find any dollars. That really concerns me. In this case, the community had to pay. The community, the band council, had to come up and pay for a facility. Is that the new trend of this government? Is that what we are going to expect communities to do from now on, digging in their core funding or whatever and start paying for facilities in their communities?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a process that is used and it is part of the way to identify the needs in the communities. I can appreciate the Member's concern because sometimes the school is the only building in the community that is available for utilization for educational type programs. One type of program that is available, for example, is Aboriginal Head Start. That's a federal program that is funded federally. Sometimes these are combined with the school. We don't have any objection to that, Mr. Chair, but then it becomes a problem possibly down the road of saying we need to add onto the facility, but the federal government hasn't contributed capital-wise to the Aboriginal Head Start program. It's our view that they should participate in that. We are caught in a problem from time to time.

I don't disagree that we should look at utilization of our educational facilities for a variety of programs like adult education, like Aboriginal Head Start, like early childhood development. The primary purpose of the school is a K to 12 program and that is what it's funded for and that is what is designed. It was very much appreciated that the community itself contributed in the case of the Hay River Reserve, but sometimes we can't identify enough capital to do this. Is that desirable? No. We would prefer that we would be able to finance a lot of these projects ourselves. But then we get into the whole question of other programs being run in the schools other than the K to 12 programs. We are not against that, that's just what starts to happen and there is pressure upon us to ensure that additional facilities are built. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I would remind the Minister to look where he is getting the money from for programs he is running. It is all federal money. When it comes to Aboriginal Head Start programs, is there any other facility housed in a government building in the NWT at this point?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: If the question, Mr. Chair, is do we have Aboriginal Head Start in other schools, the one I am familiar with is in Ndilo, but the federal government paid for that facility, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that the federal government paid for the school?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding is that the federal government paid in addition to, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, rather than chase this around, I would like to ask the Minister if he would take a look at a program that would be able to accommodate this. If there is federal funding and it's being accessed for other facilities in GNWT facilities, why don't we build it in? Why are we going after the communities to pay for territorial facilities? I can't understand why the government would allow, in some cases, a community to dip into their coffers of their own core funding to do that.

Also, I wanted to raise the issue that Mr. Bell raised. I have the same concerns regarding the testing in the smaller communities versus what is being offered by optional courses and core courses. For example, in Yellowknife versus what's in the smaller communities. I can't be convinced that they are equal programs. Could that be something that we look at? I understand there are different modes of testing. I think it should be consistent across the board. We have, in a lot of cases, students who are trying to get into some of the trades and are not able to pass some of the trades exams. I think that is something we really have to be concerned about.

I have a couple of questions -- I know my time is running out -- about apprenticeship positions. I am not seeing them within the government. I am not sure if this department is concerned, or is that something they want to deal with? Is it something they walked away from? Some other departments are trying to incorporate them in as part of their programs to see some apprenticeship positions. It was a good program for many years. We got a lot of trained employees out of this program and I think that's something we should bring back. I am also concerned that we are not seeing a lot of people working in the oil industry. I know the government has made some attempts to train some people. As far as I understand, I only see courses that are offered in the south. It was an issue we raised in this House on many occasions, that we should be developing our own programming and courses through Aurora College right here in the NWT. I will stop there, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the consistency of testing, yes, we are moving towards that. We want consistency so that we can ensure that all of our students can be assured that they are taking the same test as other students in the Territories, and we are working with the boards to achieve that. Many boards already use the Alberta achievement tests. There are several that don't, and we want to work towards changing that and we look to doing that within the next year. We are starting that, Mr. Chair.

With regard to apprenticeship, the apprenticeship requires the input of other departments and the identification of positions. We are there to provide the funding support for training of that particular portion, Mr. Chair, but the departments themselves have to identify positions and fill those particular positions. Once that's there, we are there to support that particular program. Perhaps I can ask Ms. Allen to add to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Ms. Allen.

MS. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just point out that we are looking at reintroducing apprenticeship support through the departments. We are looking at it in terms of Transportation, for example. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you. The Chair recognizes Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will echo some of my colleagues. We are talking about putting money into old buildings to protect the assets. Well, we really have to look at these buildings. They are 50 years old. Are we really protecting our assets or are we just putting them through torture? They aren't going to last long. What is the life expectancy once you have put all this money into it? Wouldn't it be a lot cheaper to build a brand-new unit and then look at another 50 or 60 years? I see Blueberry Patch was an old army unit and we are throwing good money after bad at it. These buildings are old, are no longer used, nobody wants to use them anymore. Now we are using them and trying to justify throwing money into fixing those. Then on the other hand, we are trying to say that Fort Smith needs the Brown and the Green dormitories renovated; they are also 50 years old. So this government is leaning away from building new and longer life expectancy units, and going to old buildings and throwing a lot of money into old buildings, which are not going to be around too long, even with more upgrades. So we are going in the wrong direction. I would like to say that.

As for the occupancy in Fort Smith, I think the Minister -- I have to watch how I say these things now -- may be wrong in saying it that it was for high school students. It was at one time, in the '70s, '80s and in the late '90s, renovated for Aurora College students and it was renovated to accommodate four students per room. They all had their own units, cooking units and all that. I'm sure there was a lot of money spent in the late '90s for renovation for Breynat Hall. So they can't say they are doing the double up because that was the reason those buildings were renovated, it was to allow multiple occupancy. All the cooking facilities, the living room, was all set up so they could at least share. When they are away from home they could share units and they wouldn't be alone. So this information here is a little bit different from what I saw in the past. I used to be on the Aurora College board and I know that we did approve that, at that time.

As for Inuvik, like the Member for Inuvik said, at one time there was a multiple use building we were going to put up. We were going to put the residence up with the school at the same time. The whole community agreed to that. At that time, the moneys were only at \$9 million and then they started going up \$10 million and then \$13 million and somehow, somewhere, someone made the decision that we are going to start throwing money into old buildings. I don't think that is the right way to go. I think this government has to make a change in how they do things and using DPW to give you direction is the worst

thing you can do. You've seen all the cost overrides they've done in just the two and a half, three years we've been here. I wouldn't use them for any decision. If I'm going to have credibility to go on at all, they don't have any. As for now, they are talking about a new campus in Yellowknife. It is a great idea and I went to Fort Smith and I talked to all my students that were there last year and they said that if you can deliver the programs and they had the housing in Yellowknife, they would go there. But why does it have to be in Yellowknife?

Why can't we put the campus in Rae-Edzo? We've got a beautiful facility there we can turn over to adult education and then build them a high school that they want in Rae, so the students don't have to be bussed across the lake all the time. We should be looking at that. You are saying the land is too costly in Yellowknife, there is no land available. Well, Rae-Edzo is open waiting for expansion over there, so maybe that is a thought that maybe this department can look at. I know that they don't really work through me, they deal directly with the Minister. I know some of their plans are to do those things.

One other thing I want to talk about was the ABE. My community is asking for ABE and it is not being delivered there because of a board decision and the Minister. I think they are looking at going back into it, but now we find out that even if they do go back into it there aren't enough teachers to put ABE in there and to accommodate all the students that are enrolling there.

Going back to Mr. McLeod and what he said about criteria or what are priorities, how they decide who gets what, which school gets renovations. If you go to Mildred Hall and look at the school, you don't see any deficiencies when you walk around in there. Where are the deficiencies? It is hard to see and then you try to justify that we need to renovate that one, or we need to build a new school in Yellowknife because Sir John is full or William McDonald is full. But then you've got some schools where their capacity is only 56 percent. Why can't you move the students around to go to those schools so you don't have to spend so much money in one area? Why don't you send those students to Edzo? We've got space over there. We've got a residence over there. We've been sending all our kids to Yellowknife and Fort Smith for over 40 years, maybe it is time to start sending the students over there and deliver the full grant over there.

So there are so many things that could be done here to change and use our money wisely. I think we can educate our people for a long time in good buildings instead of just patching up old buildings which, you never know, could be condemned in three or four years because a beam breaks under the building. The structure could be sound today; it might not be sound in a week. We've got all these tremors happening in the western Arctic, and almost every year you hear one. In Inuvik the foundation is pretty old there for the Blueberry Patch, maybe it is time to build new brand new. I think it is time to make a decision here and quit making excuses that we don't agree with you guys anyway. We know they are just excuses. We just want good results and spend the money wisely. We've been throwing money out the window for so long that we just got used to it. These are all my comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. I didn't hear a lot of questions in there but, Mr. Ootes, would you like to respond?

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is raising questions with regard to new versus renovation, and certainly that is a valid question which naturally we all want to address as well, because we don't want to do renovation and then find out that within two to three years we are facing other problems. With regard to the project, in the case of the two projects in Fort Smith slated for renovation, the Brown House, and the Green House, they've been termed as structurally sound but the building needs stripping and it needs refurbishing throughout. The estimates are that it is substantially cheaper than rebuilding these two particular units, which can be quite expensive to put two new units on the market, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to Breynat Hall, my understanding is they may have done some work in Breynat Hall to provide a common kitchen living area but the rooms themselves, I understand, may not have been totally refurbished. But in any event, they are not identified as units that carry and contain four people. They were originally identified for two high school students. As I said, the college is not in agreement that people should share and I think that is appropriate for the type of courses, the adults that are in there. With ABE, I understand the courses are to be delivered in February and March, as we speak, and I will have to check to see if there are enough instructors available, Mr. Chairman. But I am of the opinion that if we are running the courses there, that instructors have been found for those particular courses. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. The Chair recognizes Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of issues that I want to cover with the Minister on this general comments area, but this Aurora College capital planning hiccup keeps coming back here and I feel that I need to jump into that just to state my position on this as well. As I listen to debates going back and forth, I think that the information that we have so far, whether it be through the community's work or what we know from talking to each other and so on, there has not been enough concrete, objective, rational information as to how these capital projects have jumped the queue, so to speak. Some of them were not there last year, or some were in later years, and now we are looking at expenditure requests in many future years for millions of dollars for the renovation of very old buildings. So there is a question about old and new, but there are also questions about how we determine the need and what hoops does it have to get through to have this capital project get on the books. We don't want to see a situation like this where capital projects just jump in out of nowhere.

The demands that we have been hearing about have mostly been in Inuvik and Yellowknife. So we have a question between where the capital need is for Aurora College between the three campuses. Then we have a question about should we be spending the scarce...well, not whether or not to spend it, but how do we make the priority decision about what Mr. McLeod mentioned, for example, in schools versus housing for adults? How do we prioritize that? If we have problems like that on reserves for low grade schools, the Mildred Hall renovation project has been in need for decades. Regardless of what my colleague from North Slave says, that school was built in 1965. It's almost as old as me. It's in need of renovation and that project had to struggle for years to get on the books. As it is already, the money that has been provided is not enough to meet the emergency occupational standards I would think -- and I don't mean any ill to any college or anything --

that if you have to prioritize and you have to look at the basic level of support you have to give, I would think that facilities for primary grades come before housing for adults. I don't know what programs there are for adults or kids out of high school or people who go to Aurora College, whatever age they might be. I don't know what sort of financial help they get to go to school here and provide for their housing. The students who go to Fort Smith, perhaps this is an opportunity. If we don't spend this money to renovate and if we don't build another one right away, this could be an opportunity to create a private market in Smith if government subsidizes housing while they go to school there. It could be an opportunity for the private sector to jump in and build apartments.

It's really hard for us to say this jumped in, appearing out of nowhere it seems, when we have heard for years about the lack of housing for students in Yellowknife for Aurora Campus. It really speaks to the question about how we determine the needs of different campuses within the college, but also as it compares to basic school facilities for grade schools. So far, it seems to me, that we haven't gotten conclusive evidence or even reasonable evidence or background information to argue for this capital expenditure. I think the Minister has a challenge on his hands to explain himself and convince us of that. Maybe the Minister might want to comment on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a challenge trying to explain this. The capital planning process is very specific about a primary rating criteria, and protection of assets is one of the key ones on there. In Fort Smith, we've got some assets there that the fire marshal has stated that the two units, the Brown House and Green House, have to be renovated or they are going to shut it down. If they shut those units down, we have a housing problem in Fort Smith for our students at the college. That is not a question.

We also addressed the issue in Inuvik. It's not first class accommodation, presumably, but it's accommodation that is there for the next couple of years to be able to address student need in Inuvik. We've worked on that. We have rehabilitated some units there. We can get access to more units if need be. The Yellowknife Campus, Mr. Chair, is a large capital investment that we would have to look at and we could not address that with the kind of money we are using for the renovation projects and the 15 units in Fort Smith. It just won't answer the question in either location, either Inuvik or Yellowknife.

With regard to grade school, we have to look at it in terms of the government-wide infrastructure planning process and the primary rating criteria that's in place and the protection of assets is there. We know that schools are very, very important to us and we also address those as we can. We have a small budget for small school renovations and larger schools and large school additions that all go through the capital planning process. So I think we do have a good system in place. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Under this analysis then, if you have a building like the ones that are in Smith for student housing for college students, then additional money will be spent to maintain that and upkeep that and make it last as long as you can. But if you don't have student housing at all, then you will never get it

because there's no question about fire standards or health standards that you have to meet to pump money in there. So there is that inequity that everyone is talking about. I am talking about the situations in Yellowknife, but I think this is something that is being repeated from Members from other communities as well. I have a question about what sort of assistance is out there that is being provided to students who come to school in Yellowknife. Do they get a housing allowance to get into private housing given that they don't have student housing?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Ms. Allen to address that question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Allen.

MS. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The students get student financial assistance, which includes a housing allowance. There is college housing here in Yellowknife. So if the students are fortunate enough to get that housing, then there is a college rate for that housing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: So is the student financial assistance then different for those students who go to school in Yellowknife and those who are in private housing versus student housing, compared to those students who go to Smith and Inuvik who are able to get into student housing?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Allen.

MS. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, the allowance is the same.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: I think that goes to the inequities we are talking about here. I don't think anybody would argue that Yellowknife is one of the most expensive places to live in the Territories. To come to school here, you get the same amount of student financial assistance as elsewhere. I am going to end the topic of Aurora College and come back around for other issues. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: I don't have any further comments, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I would like to get back to the issue of standardized testing and, indeed, transparency with the results and the discussion of the results that we see or do not see in some cases in education. I guess I will start by indicating my frustration in the last three years in sitting through numerous presentations by the department through the business planning cycle in the Standing Committee on Social Programs. We know that standardized testing is being done more or less standard across various districts, but at the grade 3, grade 6 and grade 9 levels. We know there are departmental Alberta exams being taught at the high school level and kids are taking them and passing them, and we know what our results on

those exams are because I have been able to get the information when my office has asked for it. We know that we have a huge number of students who have special needs in the Northwest Territories, but it does not seem to be something that we document very well.

I could not tell you, in sitting through these business planning cycles in the last three years, if we are getting better or worse. I have no idea. I mean, I do not know if we are doing better in departmental exams this year than we did two years ago or worse. I do not know if we have more students presenting with special needs at kindergarten are fewer. I do not know if our results are getting better at grades 3, 6 and 9. It is not something that certainly the department presents, in my opinion, to standing committee in a manner where we can actually see trends and talk about results.

I hate to give the Department of Health and Social Services a pat on the back, but when Health and Social Services comes in they present information like the number of people smoking in the Northwest Territories. It is horrible. We talk about the incidents of STDs and it is terrible, as are communicable diseases. Our rates are right off the charts compared to other jurisdictions, but we talk about them. We can sit down with the Minister and we can say here is where the bar is. Now, let us talk about achievable goals in the next five years. Let us talk about where we might make some headway. The benefit of that is at the end of a term you can sit down with the Minister, you can assess the progress that has been made, you can talk about why progress has been made or has not been made, and you have something to measure yourself by. I find myself without an ability to discuss our goals and to actually track them and to monitor our progress.

It feels like we are just sort of stuck in quicksand here in education and we are sitting here treading water, because I do not know if we are getting better or worse. It might be the case, Mr. Chairman, that we are doing better than Alberta students are doing. Anecdotally I do not think we are, but even if we are not it could be the case that we are making great strides and getting closer to closing that gap. I guess the bottom line is, Mr. Chairman, I have no idea because that is not something that we discuss in the business planning cycle in committee. That is not something that we talk about. I do not know why we do not talk about it, because I know we are able to glean this information when I ask for it privately. I get very comprehensive information from the department. They do a very good job in compiling a lot of these statistics.

I do not think this is about blame. I am not indicating that if somehow our marks are going the wrong way on exams that it is the department that is at fault, just as I do not think that somehow if communicable disease rates are up that it is somehow the Department of Health and Social Services' fault and there is something they are doing that is causing these rates to climb. But I do think it is something that we need to talk about because we have to be honest. Starting with ourselves we have to be honest, but we have to be honest with the public because unless we are going to talk about these things we are never going to get a handle on them.

I guess I would just like to state my frustration with the lack of analysis of trends, the lack of goal setting as I see it. Maybe, to be quite honest, Mr. Chairman, maybe it is being done and it is just not being communicated very well to committee. That may indeed be the case. I think we certainly have a role to play in

talking with our constituents and talking to people at the grass-roots level about the kinds of results we are seeing or not seeing and so, therefore, I think the department has a key role to play in involving us in much of this work.

Again, as I say, it is not about trying to blame somebody, but it is about accountability. I would like to see this department improve in its presentation of information to committee, especially in those areas of standardized testing at grades 3, 6 and 9 and departmental exams. For goodness sake, we have to know how many kids are presenting with special needs. It is not enough to say we presume we have higher levels than the South and we cannot quite compare funding across jurisdictions. We know it is bad. I mean, we do not even know if it is getting any better. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is no doubt that that would be valuable for us to be able to present more information publicly. One of the challenges we have consistently faced on this is standardized tests. It is hard to put information out there when the tests are not standardized. It is hard to compare. Even on a national basis, Mr. Chairman, we have had numerous discussions amongst the Ministers of Education across Canada about the consistency of tests. We do the national tests, the SAIP tests. They started about eight to 10 years ago. We are getting consistency in the Alberta achievement tests.

I certainly take to heart what the Member is saying and would simply follow through with what he is suggesting, that we do need to get out there and provide more information to show our accountability. That is the question, is the accountability and we require a lot of feedback from each of the jurisdictions in order to do that because each jurisdiction gives us an accountability report, but in some cases over the past decade those reports have been wildly inconsistent in terms of the types of tests that are taken. It is always hard to compare apples and apples, so it has had its challenges.

I do not disagree with the Member that the Members should be involved in this. We do not want to hide information. We do not want to obscure information to the public deliberately to try and say we have the information, but we do not want to put it out there. That is not the point. We want to put the information out there that we know ourselves makes some sense to put together whereby we can say this is a problem, that is a problem. You know, there are some reports that are of value. We did the Towards Excellence report and our post-secondary indicators report. So our reporting in some areas is really good. We provide a lot of data. I think the testing area is evolving and one that we need more consistency and more accountability and we will certainly work towards that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I am really hopeful that this will become a major focus of the department. I know that internally within the department -- and I can just tell from the information that I have in front of me -- there are some folks doing some really good work and spending what must be a huge amount of time to compile a lot of this very valuable information. I can go through this information and tell you by district, I can look at my own community, I can tell you how we have been doing on Biology 30 exams since 1998. The level of detail is amazing

here and I do not believe it is about trying to hide information because in some cases I can see that we are drastically improving.

But this is not something that we talk about. We do not talk enough about the successes. We do not talk enough about the failures. I acknowledge and recognize that statistics and tests are not perfect, are not always accurate and consistent. There may be anomalies. But I am just saying that I think we have to start somewhere. I think we have to start making this information publicly available. When I go on the Alberta education web site the level of statistics and trends analysis is quite detailed, but it is not anything that this department is not already doing internally and I can tell that by the level of information they are able to provide me when I ask for it.

I just think we have to do a better job of taking that message to the public and making them aware of the same information that we are aware of. This has been an ongoing frustration for me over the number of years, the three years that I have been here. I have not seen the publicizing of this information. I have not seen the tracking of the trends and it is a problem. It is something that we need to improve on. I think we have to start somewhere and we have to pick something and start every year consistently publicizing it. We have information here going back years. We can talk about how students in the Territories have been doing on Social Studies 30 for the last four years. Specifically, we spent a lot of effort and money raising the special needs funding to 15 percent, because we recognized that we think we have a high proportion of students with special needs. I think all of the teachers would tell you that that is the case. But I can't tell you, as a legislator, whether it makes sense now to re-evaluate our targets from 15 percent and talk about 20 percent, because I don't know what our percentage of special needs are in the classrooms, and I certainly don't know if we're getting better or worse than when we were first elected. I don't know how many kids we suspect might have fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effect. I know it's difficult to adequately assess that, but I think we have to take a try at some of these things. If we're going to do our job and make sure the money gets where it's most needed, we have to know what the needs are. In an area like special needs, we know it's bad; we just don't know how bad and we don't know if it's getting worse or better and that's a problem.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly I don't disagree with the Member that we don't talk enough about our successes and our failures. I think that that is a good point that the Member is making. It does require us to take our data and to put it into a better format, because it needs to be in an understandable format as well for the public. I don't disagree with the Member on that. We can certainly do our best in order to concentrate on getting the type of information that the Member is pointing out, because it is important for the Members to have details to make decisions. I need those details in order to make decisions. There's always a challenge, Mr. Chair, because as the Member has referenced, when we do FAS/FAE, that is not a simple diagnosis. That's an expensive diagnosis. A medical doctor has to do that. These are the kinds of hurdles we seem to face on an ongoing basis when we compile data. We have to be accurate with the data, too, Mr. Chair. We can't just estimate, as we've done some time ago where we had a large percentage of FAS/FAE students in our schools. That percentage couldn't be

substantiated because testing hadn't been done. In order to achieve the testing, which we're doing now, Health and Social Services is working on that for early childhood areas. These are all things we need to take into account when we do accountability reports. But I don't disagree with the Member that in order for him, as well as the other Members, to make decisions, to have input, they need data. They need information that they can count on. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'm glad to hear the Minister refer to information that we have and meeting that detail, because our decisions we make as Members of the Assembly are only as good as the information that we're given. Just on that portion, Mr. Chairman, in different responses throughout this afternoon around the facilities that were in question, the residences, we've heard about the fire marshal being involved and an order being made that would impact projects going ahead. Then later on the Minister talked about stripping and refurbishing, which to me isn't much more than sprucing up of a facility.

Again, Mr. Chairman, we as legislators need to base our decisions on good information. The information that we received a number of months ago on capital plans as a government and where facilities and projects fit into that, we've talked at great length about the corporate capital planning process and the importance that plays into how decisions are made now. We're still given the information, and I have to admit, this information is about a year-and-a-half old. But that's what we're given as Members to substantiate how projects are going ahead, and to show how government is doing its expenditures, based on good, critical information.

Just from that, Mr. Chairman, the information I'm given shows the Inuvik student residence replacement in 2005-06, and the two other facilities in Fort Smith starting in 2007-08. Even on top of that, Mr. Chairman, since the committees have wrapped up their draft reviews and made reports, we've seen information change two and three times about that. Even this afternoon when the Minister responded to questions about vacancy rates and so on, again we were given another version of those numbers, slightly changing from what was provided to committee members. So I think that's probably one of the reasons Members would be concerned about the decisions being made, and that at this time we seem to be justifying what's on the books because we have to justify them. It flies in the face of other things that happen.

I say this, Mr. Chairman, from past experience. For example, before I got into this line of work, working in the community of Inuvik and knowing that the Aurora Campus was put into a Canadian Forces service building, I remember years ago being told that the studies showed that the fire marshal could walk into that campus facility and shut it down on a day's notice. That was many years ago. Finally we're at the point where we're going to build a new facility, and we're very thankful for that. I have to make sure that I get that on record. We're thankful for the work that has been done by the department and community of educators we have in Inuvik and in the region.

But when it comes to the decision process here, I have to go home and tell people why things are changing and how they've

changed, and substantiate that with the information we're given. But when information seems to change closer to the project and there is not a whole lot of substantiation, I have difficulty going back home and telling my constituents that we failed in this area and we'll hope that they're going to come forward with something. I'm encouraged that the Minister said he'll work with the Housing Corporation to try to deal with that issue. If that's the solution out there, then that's where we need to go. But again, on the information we have at hand, there are some big pieces that have not come to surface yet. The fire marshal's order; well, maybe the Minister can put that on the table. The Minister of Health and Social Services, when it came to his budget and talking about a couple of facilities, put a couple of pretty big documents on the table for Members to review. A lot of numbers and so on, and even those would draw some question as to where things were going. But the budget got approved. He put the information on the table.

Mr. Chairman, when I look at these processes and the information that we're asking as Members to help make decisions, that information is pretty fluid. It really concerns me that we have all the information. It's natural that as a government we sit and substantiate things. We sit down with departments and committees. There are times -- and many other Members can speak to this -- that we're presented with the picture. But many times we have to dig a little bit more to get a bigger part of the picture. Because what's presented is a snapshot, and that picture doesn't give all the detail. It gives a fair bit of it but not all the detail, and there are some critical pictures. I have concerns with that, because the information I have here -- unless the department or the government overall can give me another 20-year capital plan that's hopefully a month or at least a few months from where we are now -- goes against what we've been given. Now I understand that as we get close to those project dates, that there are other studies and work done to ensure we're still on track and there will be some movement. I take that as being a necessary process.

But I've also learned that I have to ask some detailed questions to get the information, especially when it affects our facilities in the Northwest Territories. I agree, we have to protect those investments. We've been far short on capital dollars for too many years and, unfortunately, that doesn't look like it's going to change in the near future. We've managed to spend over \$100 million, almost \$200 million extra since we've started just on O and M. We've maybe added \$20 million to the capital program, and that's going to drop off for the next government, unfortunately, unless we find bags of money in another location.

So, Mr. Chairman, just raising my concerns with the information that we've been provided and trying to make decisions, I would hope that as we go through that, as we get into detail when the capital program comes up, maybe the Minister can substantiate some of this further. Again, the information I have as a Member to base my decisions on shows there's been quite a bit of jumping and changing around here. I mean it's hard for me as a Member who tries to look at things on an even playing field, to see these kinds of changes coming up the last year of our mandate, and still going home to say we're working on something. But my constituents come back and say well, what happened over here that a program jumped a couple of years in advance compared to what was in the books? The information I have to date, I only can agree with them that that's what happened.

Mr. Chairman, I guess just in closing about the campus facility, I was a Member many years ago and I took an apprenticeship through this government and I attended AVTC as it was called then -- Aurora College -- and I stayed in the Breynat Hall as a young man and was bunked up with two other individuals in Breynat Hall because that's the way it was built. It was built for that purpose. Because we want to build things to make it a little more comfortable for individuals, we're going to great expense for comfort. I think we have to look at more than comfort. That plays a bit in the quality of education, but we have to look to the long term for what we can really handle. Is it comfort, or is it necessary to get a program out? I thought that's what libraries were created for, so students could go to a library to study, to have quiet time. But now we're saying that they need it in their little domicile, the place they would call home while they're at school.

There are many questions we can ask about that, but I guess I go back to the fact that our decisions made are only as good as the information we're provided. Hopefully through this process the Minister can come forward with more detail as to why things have changed. Otherwise, as a Member, I have difficulties supporting some of the plans they have in place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dent had earlier asked if we could supply some of the documentation, and we'll certainly do that and we'll get that as quickly as possible for the Members so that we can address the issues that may be of concern. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Ms. Lee, general comments.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the things that I had on my list was the standardization question, and Mr. Bell has covered a lot of them already. But this is something that has been on my mind, as well, and it has to do with standardization or just knowing where our children are at qualitatively. Not just quantitatively, not just is our child in grades 3, 6 and 9, and where are they in grade 6. If they're in high school, maybe the marks that they're getting in Biology 30 or 33, or Math 30 might tell us something. But there is a question about kids who are being pushed through or put through, because that's the trend.

Before I go on, I just want to qualify by saying that I want to acknowledge a lot of good work is being done by the department. We're sitting here and you're listening to two hours of people talking about what's wrong, and that's not to say that there aren't a lot of good things going on. I think that Minister Ootes has been overseeing this department at a very good time, because he's been getting lots of money to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio. I know that he's working hard and the department is working hard, and it is generally a good news department, as far as education in the public's eyes goes. So I felt compelled to add that.

But there is always the question of whether we are doing the best we can with the money. I get people coming in and parents coming in and saying my kid is in grade 12 or grade 10, and you may just get 50 percent of everything and get through, but then maybe you only need 50 percent to pass. But when you're seeing cases where kids are graduating grade

12 or whatever, but they're really reading at grades 5 or 6 levels, there's our anecdotal evidence. I don't know if that's the prevalent trend, I have no idea.

But we also know that we have a private company providing the most money on literacy programs. We know that looking at what's going on, that we have students graduating without adequate literacy and numeracy levels. I don't think it's unique to the North. I remember being in university where kids getting accepted into university did not have the levels of writing or reading that you would expect in university. So it's a trend that I think is detected everywhere in Canada about the quality of education that we're providing, and what sort of education they're receiving in general. But in the North specifically, we don't have a whole lot of students. We are a very small population, too. I guess we have fewer people working to keep tabs on that, too.

I remember asking the Minister lots of questions about our labour force, because we need to know how many people are there, who's workable, who's employable, who's not, who's in the hospital, who's in jail, who's in school. You know, what is the employable population so that the government can make a decision about how we get ready for what is the target of the population that we're working on and so on. Eventually the Minister came up with lots of information on that. So this is the kind of information we need to know. This parent in this anecdotal evidence had to pursue for a long time to get her child tested, and then she discovered her child was reading at a very, very low level. This child had no problem passing all the way to grade 12. People don't want to hear about that, but we need to know that.

Another evidence I know is that if you talk to any principal in any school, he or she could give you a pretty good idea about where their students lie. I think every teacher knows when they get their students, 20 or 25 kids at the beginning of the year, they watch them for a while, they study them and they know which kids have behavioural problems, which kids may have FAS/FAE, which kids may have a reading problem. I'm sure the information is out there. I don't know if we need more scientific evidence to show that. But definitely that's an area of concern to me, and it goes in particular to those with special needs. I can't believe when we always talk about the need for additional funding, we don't even have a standardized program on how we fund our special needs funding. We know that we budgeted 15 percent and we give it to the boards, and then it's really frustrating for us to say we have increased special needs funding. Then the parents will come up and say nothing has changed. Every parent has to fight every year at the beginning of the year to get programs for their children with special needs, especially when their kids are going to the same school and they know about it, but still they have to fight all over again to make sure that they get the assistance they need, or they have the right special assistance education and so on. So there is a lack of even a special needs funding policy throughout the territory.

I remember I asked the Minister a while back about how you fund the school board. When you give them 15 percent of the total budget for special needs, what do you ask them to do? Is there a standard that the department provides? The document I got was a policy statement on inclusionary schooling. That's the policy, and it was a photocopy of something from years back. I was really quite surprised. I see that there is no policy statement from the government. I think in departments like

Health or Education, where you're working through the boards, the essential role of the government and the department as an essential body is to establish policy or standards to make sure that the money is being spent the way you want it to, and also that you're able to report back to the House about where it went.

Also I think if it is the case that 50 percent of our children are going to need special needs funding or special needs assistance or something, we have to get ready for that. We may have to create a program to train more special needs assistants at Aurora College. The need is at the other extreme, too. I talked to parents in Range Lake North School, for example, where students need special needs assistants to read, or they may have a clinical diagnosis that needs special needs, or some kids just might need help with reading or numeracy or something, then you have kids who are gifted. There are other kids at the other end of special needs who need other attention as well.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I should ask the Minister and the department about whether there is someone or a section in the department that administers and sets standards on how the special needs funding, that 15 percent of the total budget, goes to school boards, and how do you check to see what happens to that 15 percent special needs funding?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you. The Member has covered a lot of areas here with regard to the special needs funding, Mr. Chair. Certainly I would agree that accountability is an important element of any funding that we do. We've been working on a framework for accountability, or concentrated on one. We do get annual reports from the school boards back to us, and in some cases it has a lot of detail in it, in other cases it doesn't have as much detail. We need to continue to work on that, Mr. Chair, to ensure that we do get the kinds of answers, for example, that the Member is bringing up, that we do get an appropriate accounting in detail on all of the expenditures. However, I should point out that the school boards have been very good, very consistent with providing us some detailed business plans and reporting back to us. It is certainly an area that we appreciate the boards on. I think they can go somewhat further. We can demand more, and certainly we'll do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One question about Aurora College housing and the obvious need in Yellowknife. The Minister has indicated that it makes more sense to talk about a purpose built facility at some point that would encompass housing as well. But in the meantime, we have a real shortage of housing. We know in Inuvik the college has been able to cooperate with the private sector and enter into some leases to get the Blueberry Patch. In Yellowknife, that's private sector housing at Northern United Place that was leased, I guess, in a block for the college. Students who are fortunate enough to get into those units pay a special college rate for those housing units in Northern United Place, but presumably they use their student financial assistance to do that and there's some subsidization over and above. Now if you have to get your own private housing in a community, you also use your student financial assistance to do that but there's

no subsidization. If that is indeed the case, then really you are fortunate to get into college housing because you're in a much different situation than someone who didn't make it onto the list.

I guess I would ask in dealing with the short-term need, why wouldn't we look at landlords in the city who might be willing to enter into an arrangement with us to lease us blocks of housing somewhere in the downtown core for five years, 10 years, something like this so that we can provide college housing on a temporary basis in this form and not have to have students rely on going and finding their own private accommodations and use their student financial assistance for that. Maybe the Minister can indicate why we haven't looked at some sort of an arrangement with other landlords, or if indeed he'd be amendable to pursuing options that would allow us to meet this housing demand on a short-term basis until we had some more comprehensive, broader, larger plan in place in future years whenever we find the capital dollars for something like this.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We'd certainly look at that possibility. We would have to do it as part of our business planning process because it would entail extra funding to support the college, unless the college has surplus funding. Of that I don't know. Certainly the idea of looking at that would be a possibility for us to investigate.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I certainly think it is something that should be well within our mandate to pursue. The Minister indicated that we had a certain number of the Blueberry Patch units reserved for leasing. If the need should arise, we can go and get another 10 units for students who might need them at the Blueberry Patch. Presumably we're not currently paying for those units. So we're saying, if the need arises and the demand is there, we'll go out and lease those extra 10 units from the private sector. But why not in Yellowknife? If we can document the demand, then let's go out there and cut a deal to lease some space from the private sector in order to provide adequate housing for students.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said, we can certainly look at that. We'd have to look at college funding and the kinds of requirements that they would need in order to support such a move. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Okay, I'm saying let's look at it because we know the demand is there, we know that there's a waiting list. The Minister has indicated that, should the demand arise in Inuvik, we would certainly go out and cut that deal and make that arrangement. Presumably that would require going for extra funds, and I'd fully support that. I think it makes a lot of sense. But then let's talk about the demand in Yellowknife right now, and talk about going out and pursuing deals with other landlords so that we can meet the need. It seems to make sense, and I'm sure the college would agree that this would help them better deal with student housing if we gave them the latitude to go out there and do that. Otherwise we really have this two-tier system in Yellowknife: those fortunate enough to

get into subsidized college housing, great, use your student financial assistance, it goes a lot further; those who aren't, too bad so sad, as my colleague Ms. Lee said a few days ago. You're sort of stuck and your student financial assistance isn't going to go very far, but we know you don't get different amounts. Some are better off than others and it doesn't seem right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said, we'll have a look at this with regard to the availability, with regard to the possibilities and with regard to the financial implications. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): General comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Before we run out of time, I was wondering...just before I finished talking to the Minister, he mentioned this accountability framework that the department requires from the boards in funding special needs. He mentioned that he's working on it, but this has been in the works for quite a few years now. As I recall, it's more of the accounting for dollars spent, not necessarily a qualitative evaluation of what differences the special needs funding is making.

Having said that, I wonder if the Minister could provide, prior to tomorrow's discussion of the department, documentation on what the department asks the boards to provide when they're funding special needs. What are the requirements? What are the formal letters they get, and even examples of what they've been getting from the department in terms of their accountability of the money they've spent for special needs funding? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Minister Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We'll do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): The Chair recognizes the clock and reports progress. Thank you, Minister, and your staff. See you tomorrow.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 20, report of Committee of the Whole. Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 3, Appropriation Act, 2003-2004, and would like to report progress and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do I have a seconder for that? The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour? All those against? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 21, third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 20: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meetings tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight and at 12:00 noon of the Standing Committee on Social Programs and the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development.

Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 26, 2003:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognitions of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
 - Motion 5-14(6) Family Violence Protection Act
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 3 Appropriation Act, 2003-2004
 - Bill 6 Electoral Boundaries Commission Act
 - Bill 7 An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
 - Bill 8 - An Act to Amend the Elections Act
 - Committee Report 3-14(6) - Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the Draft 2003-2004 Main Estimates

- Committee Report 4-14(6) - Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the Review of the Draft 2003-2004 Main Estimates
- Committee Report 5-14(6) - Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Draft 2003-2004 Main Estimates
- Committee Report 6-14(6) - Report on the Review of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Commissioner's 2001-2002 Annual Report

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 26, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

