A STUDY OF CONSSENSUS GOVERNMENT IN NUNAVUT AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, CANADA

AND OTHER THINGS

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TWO MEN IN A KAYAK

Two men sitting in a kayak became chilly and decided to light a fire, right there in the craft. No surprise, the kayak sank, proving once again that you can’t have your kayak and heat it too.
A STUDY OF CANADIAN CONSENSUS GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER THINGS

INTRODUCTION

Late in May I headed off to Canada. Some may have thought it was bad timing with all the fuss over Ministerial travel that had been hitting the headlines at that time, but sometimes you have to do things at the right time and not be influenced by what others are doing.

My reasons for going were:

- I wanted to study a form of government called consensus government and this type of government is found in two territories in Canada, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- Both these Legislative Assemblies were sitting at the same time at the end of May and early June.
- It was going to be Spring in Canada which is definitely a better time to go because it is certainly warmer than in winter. So this was the only sensible time to go.
- Many people are presently disillusioned with the political scene in the NT.

So how did I find out about consensus government? A Canadian friend who having heard a speech I had made in the Legislative Assembly about the state of politics in the Assembly thought that it might be a good idea to travel to Canada to look at two Canadian territories, Nunavut and Northwest Territories. He heard that these territories had legislative assemblies where there were only independent members and no political parties. They still run their Parliaments under the Westminster system as we do in the Northern Territory but only with independents. I will go into more detail further on.

DAY 1  Preparation

To go to Canada I firstly needed to get permission from Madam Speaker. I then Googled to see where I was going because I certainly had never heard of place like Iqaluit or Nunavut. I needed , and who I should contact at the various Legislative Assemblies. Then Sandra Lew Fatt Travel worked out the most economical way to get there and back! I found out that the weather over there could still be very cold and the time difference meant that contacting people by phone required getting up at 3am in the morning to ring Canada at a reasonable time. Next thing I had to do was to head off to the Kathmandu Store for the obligatory thermals, warms socks and gloves. I already had the jacket and beanie.

Getting there

To get to Nunavut from Darwin I flew from Darwin at 1.45am on Monday May 25th to Sydney, Sydney to Los Angeles, Los Angeles to Detroit and Detroit to Ottawa, arriving in Ottawa over 24 hours later on Monday May 25th! I lost a day. Interestingly, on the Detroit leg of the flight, I met Mr. Michael Hilton, the Director of Aerospace in Los Angeles who invited me over there to look at the Aerospace facilities in Los Angeles. That would be some visit but will have to wait another day. I stayed overnight at Ottawa in the Adams Airport Inn. Funnily enough my first sight of Ottawa in the morning was the cemetery right across the road. A cheery start but it was a beautiful crisp spring day and everything was so green compared to the brown of the NT I had left behind.
DAY 2

NUNAVUT AND IQALUIT

Ottawa, is the capital city of Canada, and sadly the city where, last year, a deadly terrorist attack took place on Parliament House. At 9am I caught the First Air flight to Iqaluit, a place I had never heard of until a month before. The flight took just over three hours and as the plane climbed above Ottawa I could see the well laid out city and the ploughed fields and green crops below. As we flew further north the landscape changed. It was dotted with hundreds of lakes (a cartographer’s nightmare!) and as we went even further north the lakes were frozen and the ground was covered in ice and snow with some rocky outcrops showing through. On the flight I met Mr Robert Humphries a Correctional Officer returning to Iqaluit after a break, but more on that later. So my first glimpse of Iqaluit was a desolate looking town in amongst a sea of ice and rocky outcrops. There were houses and apartments high on a ridge and the rest of the town down on the flat. I found out later that it is not a town but the capital city of Iqaluit.

Nunavut

So where is Nunavut (Our Land) and where is Iqaluit? (pronounced like Ikalu-it) Iqaluit means ‘place of many fish’. Nunavut is a territory of Canada as distinct from being a province. This is similar to the Northern Territory which also is a territory but not a state. Nunavut was originally part of the Northwest Territories but in 1999 after many years of consultation it became a Territory in its own right. It is a vast area reaching from the southern coast of Hudson Bay right up to the North Pole with over half the area being above the Arctic Circle. It covers 14% of Canada with a total area of 2.09 million sq kms. It has a population over 32,000 of which approximately 84% are Inuit (Aboriginal) people. Compare that to the Northern Territory which covers roughly 20% of Australia covering 1.34 million sq kms with a population of 233,000 of which 32.5% are Aboriginal.

The Economy

The Canadian government is the largest source of finance for Nunavut, and government is the primary employer. Ottawa provides more than 90 percent of the funds required to administer the programs and services delivered by the Government of Nunavut. The federal government also brings money into the region through defence spending and its own social programs, including child benefits, employment insurance, the working income tax benefit, old age security, the guaranteed income supplement and the Canada Pension Plan. It has virtually no manufacturing and a limited services sector. (Caledon Institute of Social Policy). Tourism, especially eco-tourism, is developing and with the planned opening of a new airport terminal in 2017 it is hoped to attract more people to Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park.
Nunavut consists of:
(a) all of Canada north of 60°N and east of the boundary line shown on this map, and which is not within Quebec or Newfoundland and Labrador; and
(b) the Islands in Hudson Bay, James Bay and Ungava Bay that are not within Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec.

Nunavut comprend :
(a) la partie du Canada située au nord du 60°N et à l’est de la limite indiquée sur cette carte, à l’exclusion des régions appartenant au Québec ou à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador; et
(b) les îles de la baie d’Hudson, de la baie James et de la baie d’Ungava, à l’exclusion de celles qui appartiennent au Manitoba, l’Ontario ou au Québec.
the region. According to a fact sheet from the Government of Nunavut there are four national parks and 15 territorial parks in Nunavut. Mining exploration continues to grow throughout the region with companies looking for diamonds, gold and base metals. The Meadowbank open-cut gold mine produces several thousand ounces of gold each year. Fisheries is an important part of the economy with opportunities for expansion. It is a major employer in the Baffin Region where there is an important turbot fishery. Inuit Art is also an important part of the economy contributing over $33m annually. Traditional harvesting includes the hunting of animals for meat; furs and skin for clothing; and bones for tools, games and objects of art. It is estimated that traditional hunting contributes about $40m annually to the economy. Over 40,000 seals are harvested each year in Nunavut for their meat and seal skin products.

Language

The people of Nunavut speak three languages, Inuktitut which includes the Inuinnaqtun dialect, English and French. Inuktitut is written in both the syllabic and Roman alphabet writing systems but more on that later.

Flora

There are no trees. Most of Nunavut is north of the tree line. Because of the permafrost and the short summers, trees don’t grow in Nunavut except in a small area in the south west corner. Instead there is tundra made up of mosses and lichens and small plants that grow and then flower in the very short summers. Unfortunately I didn’t get a chance to see any of the 200 species that grow in the region, as the land was mainly covered in ice and snow when I was there. The floral emblem for Nunavut is the Purple Saxifrage which grows on rocky ground where no other plants grow.

Fauna

As I stayed only in Iqaluit I didn’t see any big furry animals, but then— breaking news: Nunatsiaq News July 16, 2015 - 2:43 pm:

Polar bear takes a stroll through Nunavut’s capital

GN (Government of Nunavut) warns residents to stay away from Iqaluit's causeway, where bear last spotted.

It was obvious I didn’t stay long enough. Nunavut does have some impressive animals like polar bears, caribou, muskoxen, walruses, narwhals, belugas (white whales) and bowhead whales. There are also over 100 species of birds. I’ll have to stay longer next time and travel a bit further if I want to see them. The official animal for Nunavut is not a polar bear, it is the Canadian Arctic Dog or Qimmiq. It is one of the oldest breeds in the world and said to have been around the Arctic for about 4000 years. Inuit used it for generations as a draft animal for long range travel. The official bird of Nunavut is the Rock Ptarmigan or Aqiggiq in Inuktitut. It is unusual as it does not migrate and stays in Nunavut all year round. A truly arctic bird.

The Flag of Nunavut

The gold symbolises the riches of the land while the blue symbolises the riches of the sea and sky. The white, of course, represents the Arctic landscape; in conjunction with the red, also represents Canada's two official colours. The inuksuk, which, in Inuktitut, means 'like a human', is a stone marker and monument, used for centuries to guide the Inuit across the barren Arctic tundra or to mark sacred and special places. The star is the Niqirtsuituq, or North Star, used for centuries as a point of navigation. It also
represents the leadership of the elders.

**Regions**

Nunavut is divided into three administrative regions: Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin), Kivalliq (Keewatin) and Kitikmeot. These areas are also used as census regions.

**Hamlets**

Nunavut has 25 incorporated communities called hamlets except for Iqaluit which is the capital city and it has its own local government council. The smallest in population of the hamlets is Grise Fjord with 140 permanent residents. This is the most northerly community in Nunavut and enjoys 24 hours of sunshine from April to August. It also at times ‘enjoys’ 24 hours of darkness. It is one of the most northerly permanent residential (as distinct from military bases) communities in the world. Like our Northern Territory, Nunavut is made up of a territory government and many local governments.

**Roads**

There are no roads in Nunavut except in Iqaluit or the hamlets. You could say Nunavut is geographically challenged when it comes to road infrastructure.

**The City of Iqaluit**

Iqaluit is located on Baffin Island which is the largest island in Canada and the city sits at the southern end of the island on the shores of Frobisher Bay. Iqaluit has a population of over 7000 and is the administrative, business, political and educational centre of Nunavut. Residents of Iqaluit are called Iqalummiut. Iqaluit is like any other city. It has motels, restaurants, cafes, schools, churches, shops, businesses, two newspapers, a community garden, government offices, the Legislative Assembly building, a prison (in fact three), a power house, a telecommunication centre, apartments and single dwellings, indoor recreation facilities, rubbish tip, sewerage ponds, a reservoir, an airport and even peak hour traffic. It doesn’t have parks, gardens or lawns—at least I didn’t see any. One of the unique things about Iqaluit is that if you want to cross the road, cars just stop. It seems that there is no rule about it; it’s just the polite thing to do. The city has bitumen roads but no kerbing, so the roads are a bit like our rural roads. With the ice slowly melting there was a lot of dust picked up by the wind. I walked mostly around the central part of Iqaluit and the dust certainly played havoc with my eyes. Perhaps I should have caught a
taxi—all fares are a flat $7.

The City of Iqaluit did have a swimming pool—but it is being replaced with a new one. I presume it will be heated. It says on City of Iqaluit webpage:

*The City of Iqaluit is building a new Aquatic Centre which is expected to open by the end of 2016. The new centre will feature a six-lane, 25m pool and a leisure pool, saunas, whirlpool, multi-purpose room, elders room, public fitness centre and fitness studio and food and beverage areas. When the new aquatic centre opens, the Recreation Department looks forward to offering swimming lessons, public and family swims, aqua fit, kayaking lessons, lane swim, leadership courses, water and ice safety courses and once again restarting the Breakers swim team. The City will also be offering various fitness programming and drop in activities for families and people of all ages.*

Iqaluit is certainly a long way ahead of the Darwin rural area. Iqaluit is cold and has a pool. We are hot and have crocodiles and we are still waiting!

**Transport**

There are only two means of transport to get passengers and freight to Iqaluit—by plane or by ship. When I was there Frobisher Bay was solid ice so the only way for passengers or freight to get to Iqaluit was by air. I understand the government does subsidise the freight cost to help keep the price of food reasonable. Ships can reach Iqaluit between July and October and in those four months just about everything the community needs for the rest of the year arrives. Interestingly Canada has some of the largest tidal movements in the world with Frobisher Bay having a tidal movement of up to 11.8 metres! - which is about 3 metres more than the tides in Darwin Harbour.

**Iqaluit Airport**

Iqaluit airport has an interesting history. From *Polar Pilots* web page it says that the airport got its start with the arrival of the American Air Force during WWII. The first strip was built on an island about 44km away from the present site. That island is still known locally as Mialigaqtaliminiq or the ‘place where the Americans lived’. The island proved too small and the resulting airstrip too short. So acting on the advice of local Inuit, the Americans looked for another location further up Frobisher Bay. This was part of a plan to build airstrips for ferrying aircraft from Canada to England during WWII. Although the airport didn’t see active service, a community started to develop around the airport and it was called Frobisher Bay. It sprang back into life during the height of the Cold War as a transportation base but in 1963 it was closed as a military base and started a new life as a civilian airport. The big green accommodation block built by the Americans is still there. In 1987 the people decided to change the name
of Frobisher Bay back to its original name—Iqaluit.

There is now a $300 million Public Private Partnership in place building a modern terminal plus expanded taxiways. The frame of the terminal building looked like it was completed and it is estimated that the rest will be finished by 2017. Tourism is a growing industry here and I would imagine that this new terminal will help bring more visitors to this part of the world.

**Energy**

Iqaluit, like many other communities in Nunavut, relies totally on diesel for its power generation. There is a small solar array at the Arctic College. Fuel is delivered by ship and can only be delivered when the ships are able to break through the ice and that is only for a limited time of the year. Of course not only fuel but all the supplies for Iqaluit, except what comes by air, has to come by ship. Nunavut uses around 49 million litres of diesel a year costing about $50m a year to provide electricity. I wondered why wind turbines could not be used at Iqaluit as it always seemed to be windy but it is not that simple. This is a very cold climate and there can be a number of problems operating in such harsh conditions.

**Climate**

The weather is important because it is so different to Darwin. When I arrived the top temperature was 0 degrees with a low of -6C and when I left it was a top temperature of -1C with a low of -4C. The warm season lasts from 9th June to 16th September with an average daily high temperature of 5°C. The hottest day of the year is 21st July, with an average high of 12°C and low of 5°C.

The cold season lasts from 16th December to 24th March with an average daily high temperature -17°C. The coldest day of the year is 7th February, with an average low of -31°C and high of -24°C. In January this year in Iqaluit there was a recording with the wind chill of -62C. No wonder the schools were closed for the day. Iqaluit has an average of 20 hours of daylight in June decreasing to just 4 hours daylight in December. Because it is more than 50kms below the Arctic Circle is doesn’t get the 24 hour light or 24 hour dark days that occurs in other communities further to the North.

**Arrival**

That gives you a rough idea about Iqaluit and Nunavut. The main reason for my visit was to understand Consensus Government and to see it operating first hand at the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. My first impressions when I stepped off the plane in Iqaluit, as light snow fell, was how cold it was especially compared to where I had left a day and half ago— +32C in Darwin, -2C in Iqaluit. I was well prepared with lots of thermal underwear to keep me warm. I was met at the airport by the Speaker of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly George Qulaut and Cindy Rennie the Public Affairs Officer. They kindly took me to my hotel, the Capital Suites, and then to the Legislative Assembly just in time for sittings which started at 1.30pm.

**Legislative Assembly Building**

The Legislative building was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth in 2002 during her Golden Jubilee Tour of Canada. The building is in the centre of downtown Iqaluit. Arcorp Architecture, a Canadian company, designed the building so that it was both accessible and friendly, as well as being able to withstand the harsh climate of Nunavut. The building was constructed by Nunavut Construction Company over the period 1998-1999. It was not ready for the
Inaugural sitting on April 1, 1999 and that was held (after the swearing in ceremony) in the Inuksuk High School gym. The legislature building was completed in September 1999 and the Fall sitting (start of 3rd Session) was held in the new chamber.

The building houses the offices, the Legislative Assembly and the Assembly Library. The 2nd storey walkways across the lobby linking the two areas are designed like qamautiqs (a traditional Inuit sled) and representative of bridging an open lead in sea ice. The building is decorated with paintings, sculptures, embroidery and many other symbols recognising the Inuit culture of Nunavut. The door handles are walrus tusks. On the floor of the Assembly there is no centre table as in our Legislative Assembly but instead a sled with a carving of an Inuit man. Outside the assembly building the flags of the 25 hamlets hang from flagpoles.

**The Mace**

The mace is made out of Narwhal tusk. Narwhals are sometimes called the unicorn of the sea and are actually a porpoise. The tusk is actually a tooth. The animals on the Mace represent the connection between land, sea and a food source. The common loons (diving birds) carved from Nanisivik silver form a crown with a cross on top. The cross symbolises the respect for the British Monarch. The carved people carrying the mace represent a family working together. The elder helps lead the way to the future. The man and the woman represent gender equality. The big ball is blue lapis lazuli (blue gemstone) from Kimmirut, which is one of the only three deposits of lapis lazuli in the world. The gemstones around the crown were hand-cut by the artists. The clear stones are quartz, the purple stone is amethyst, the red is garnet, black quartz, green citrine, blue lapis, white marble. At the tip of the Mace is a 2 ¼ carat diamond from the Jericho Diamond deposit in Western Nunavut. All the materials on the Mace come from Nunavut, as do the artists who worked on this beautiful symbol.

**Consensus Government in Nunavut**

I’ve mentioned it a number of times, so what is consensus government?

The main difference from the system we have in the Northern Territory is that there are no political parties in the Legislative Assembly of either Nunavut or Northwest Territories. That doesn’t mean that people representing a party can’t stand for election but anyone who has stood for a party has never been elected. All the people elected are independents. The basis for the Legislative Assemblies is still the Westminster
Another difference is at election time. Political parties develop policies that they take to the people in the hope they will get elected by the people based on those policies. If they don’t live up to those promises it is likely that they won’t be voted in at the next election. With independents they are elected, not on what they can promise which they can’t do anyway, but on what they stand for and who they are.

After the general election and usually within 10 days, the Clerk brings in all elected members to Iqaluit for an orientation program. During that time all members will offer comments as to what they, as individuals, see as priorities. Then towards the end of orientation the Speaker, the Premier and the Ministers are elected by secret ballot. The Premier and the Ministers become the "government" and the members who are not elected to the cabinet become the Regular Members. They act like an Opposition, questioning Ministers about their portfolios. There are always more of them than the government, so the government is always a minority government and ministers can get voted out by members if they don’t perform.

The Premier appoints portfolios to the Ministers and can change that around as he or she wishes. The Premier cannot remove a Minister from Cabinet. Presently there are 22 members including the Speaker, seven Ministers and the Premier. There were eight Ministers but one resigned this year.

Once the Premier and the Cabinet are in place they will then do their priority-setting exercise and will present it to all members for their input and recommendations at a special full caucus meeting. For this present Assembly the meeting took place in Kugluktuk in western Nunavut and that lasted three days. At the end of the meeting a press release was issued by the Chair of the Full Caucus advising the public on what priorities were agreed upon.

All of these priorities were then articulated in the Commissioner’s Address (Throne Speech) at the next sitting of the Legislature. The Commissioner is the equivalent of our Administrator.

Consensus governments work together through the caucus system. The full caucus consists of all MLAs including the Speaker. The Regular Members’ caucus does not include Ministers or the Speaker. The Regular Members serve on various standing committees as well as planning activities in the House. These Committees have specific functions and have a much greater role in overseeing the operations of government than happens in the Northern Territory.

One of the great advantages of consensus government is that it can reinstate the three parts of our Westminster system, the Courts, the Executive and the Legislature as they were meant to operate, independently of one another. The trend today in Government and that could be seen in our own Territory government until very recently, is that the Executive normally, because of its majority, controls the Legislative Assembly and therefore controls the Legislature branch of government. This means there is really only two parts—an all powerful Executive and the Courts and the Government can do what it likes, aka the Territory.

In consensus government the Executive in relation to the number of members it has in the House is always in the minority. Some may think this unworkable but in practice what it means is that the Executive and the regular members have to work together for the benefit of their territory and are not stuck with opposing everything or being obstructionist for the sake of their party as happens in our Parliament.

One issue that is raised is whether this system would work in larger populated constituencies as Nunavut and Territories are small. There is no model to say whether this is an issue but the NT is small compared to the rest of Australia with each electorate representing a little over 5000 voters. As well, over 30% of the NT population is Aboriginal the highest percentage in Australia. Nunavut and Northwest Territories have high Aboriginal populations. The other great incentive to seriously consider consensus government is the present disillusionment of many Territorians with the present state of governance in the NT. That in itself should be enough to look at new ways of doing things. Statehood is not the issue we should be turning our attention to at the moment, it should be how we govern ourselves and consensus government, I believe, has many benefits and is well worth considering—hence this report.

That’s a summary of consensus government. A more detailed analysis is available from my office.
Legislative Assembly proceedings

After a quick introduction to the building layout it was time for the Monday sittings of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Visitors sit behind the members so they are very close to the ‘action’. Just as happens in our Assembly occasionally, Hansard couldn’t hear what was being said but in a few minutes it was fixed. The Speaker, Hon George Qulaut opened proceedings. Mr Enook from Tununiq said the prayer in Inuktitut. The Speaker or the clerk can also say the prayer. So there were differences straight away from the Northern Territory way of doing things. To understand what is being said you can collect a transceiver and earpiece and listen to the speeches in Inuktitut or English. French can also be spoken in the Assembly.

Pages

There were some other differences immediately noticed. Young people who are attending school regularly can be chosen to act as pages. They dress in traditional costume and sit at the front and back of the Assembly. Their job is to make sure each member has a glass of cold water. It might be a cold climate but the air is very dry and water is essential especially for those speaking. They also deliver messages and documents to other members or the table officers.

Ministerial Statements

After prayers, the Legislative Assembly begins with Ministerial Statements. Ministers spoke on a range of subjects such things as summer literacy camps, the release of two books called *Inuit Kinship Terminologies and Inuit Parenting* and there was recognition of frontline workers who were involved a training program re methods of investigating child sexual abuse. The total time for Ministerial Statements is 20 minutes.

Members Statements

Members are then allowed to also makes statements but for no longer than two and half minutes per member. Member’s statements covered the Commissioner’s (equivalent to our Administrator) Awards, a Medal of Bravery to Joe Karetak, nursing in Nunavut, recognition of a former Commissioner, a thank you to the Premier and Minister for Education for visiting Arviat and Whale Cove, the successful rescue of Brian Koonoo and recognition that the day was the last day of school for the Netsilik School. Netsilik School in Taloyoak is the most northerly school on the Canadian mainland. (See maps of municipalities).

Tapping

In our Legislative Assembly clapping is not usually permitted but in Nunavut and Northwest Territories, and I understand other Canadian Parliaments, members can tap their desk with their hand as a sign of support for what has been said. This is described in the Hansard as *applause*. I gather the louder the tapping, the more support.

Recognition of Visitors

When member’s statements are concluded the Speaker announces the Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. This is an opportunity for members to formerly recognise visitors in the House. A number of people were recognised when I was there. Members can speak for 30 seconds. Mr George Hickes from Iqaluit-Tasiluk recognized Members of the Parliamentary Intern Program of the Canadian House of Commons. The Speaker George from Qulaut then recognised me. Just to prove I was there, here it is in Hansard. Hansard records the proceedings in English and Inuktitut.

Hansard English version—Speaker: I am very pleased to take this opportunity to welcome a guest from the Visitors’ Gallery who has travelled a very long way to be with us today. Mr. Gerry Wood is an independent Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. On his own initiative, Mr. Wood has travelled from Australia to the Arctic to observe our legislature at work. Later this week, Mr. Wood will be flying to Yellowknife to learn about our sister territory’s legislature. Please join me in welcoming our distinguished guest, Mr. Wood. >>Applause (interpretation) Please feel welcome in the Gallery. Note: where it says
interpretation it is where that part of the speech was said in Inuktitut.

**Hansard Inuktitut version**

The phrase book, *Inuktitut Essentials*, says that the Inuktitut language can be written in both syllabic and Roman alphabet writing systems. This style was originally developed from the Cree syllabics in the late 19th century by early Christian missionaries, John Horden and E. A. Watkins, from England, who needed a way to write the Bible, hymns and other printed texts in Inuktitut. Because different missionary groups were working in different areas there were variations in writing down the language. In 1976, the Inuit Cultural Institute approved a new standardised text both in syllabics and in the Roman style. Both styles mirror one another. The syllabic version is what is used in Hansard as shown below.

![Inuktitut prayer book](https://example.com/prayer-book)

**Question Time**

Question Time was next and once again there are some interesting differences. There is one hour set aside for questions but it can be extended for another half an hour. Firstly there are no 'Dorothy Dixers' (i.e. questions by Government members to itself) because only the Regular Members (Opposition) ask the questions. Members wave a hand to get the attention of the Speaker and only stand when recognised by the Speaker. They are not only allowed to ask a question but can also ask two supplementary questions so a Minister can't escape if the first answer needs more explanation. These were some of the questions that were asked that day. Mr Mpaisalak, the Member of Aivilik asked when would the construction of the sewerage ponds at Repulse Bay commence and because he needed to know more, he asked two more questions. Members didn't focus on just one line of questioning which, in the Northern Territory is a tactic used by an opposition to attack the government. Members asked a whole range of questions on many topics: vacant staff housing, a plebiscite on alienation of municipal lands, status of midwifery in Nunavut, the impact of the federal budget on marine infrastructure in Nunavut and much more. It was good hearing questions that were relevant to each local member.

**Petition**

Then there was a response to a petition requesting a 24 hour elders' facility in Rankin Inlet.
Tabled Documents

A number of documents were tabled including the Auditor General’s *Follow-up Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut*.

Notices

A notice was given for the first reading of Bill 22, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital Act) No2 2015-16*.

Motion

After that, a motion was passed appointing the Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Tom Sammurtok to various standing committees. Mr Sammurtk had resigned from the Cabinet in early May and had now become a regular member.

A motion to waiver the two day notice requirement to allow Bill 22 Supplementary Appropriation Act to be read the first time was passed. It was then read a second time and House was adjourned for the day at 3.25pm.

Full Caucus

The Assembly had adjourned early so there could be a meeting of all members (full caucus) to discuss with three airline companies the future of air services in the area. There were a number of proposals presented which would mean companies would co-share. This proposal was hopefully going to provide a better service for Nunavut and reduce the number of half empty planes flying to the same locations as competitors. There was much discussion and many questions asked in both English and Inuktitut. The meeting went for two hours. I was privileged to be allowed to be at the meeting as a visitor and am interested now to see if the changes proposed by the airlines made any difference as promised.

With the first day finished I enjoyed dinner at the Navigator Hotel, a very unusual building. It seems that because of the permafrost the building has buckled making it interesting walking inside as the floor is not level. Thankfully the hotel didn’t fall down while I was eating. The meal was a bit expensive, $60, but Iqaluit is a long way from anywhere so you have to expect things to be a little dearer. I went home to a level building, the Capital Suites, and enjoyed a good sleep even though it was still daylight –the sun went down about 11pm.

**DAY 3**

Cold. The Capital Suites, where I was staying, didn’t have a dining room so there was no breakfast. I trundled off, all rugged up, down to Tim Hortons, for some hot chocolate and donuts. There were quite a few locals in there, and it was obvious some were just trying to keep warm. I had never heard of Tim Hortons but by the time I left Canada I had. They are a very big chain of coffee shops found all over Canada.

Tour

On Wednesday morning Cindy Rennie from the Legislative Assembly kindly gave me a tour of Iqaluit. Iqaluit is on two levels. There are many houses up on the plateau from which there is a great view. On the top level is also the power house, the recreation centre, the Arctic college, the Middle School and...
the High School. Cindy took me up past the Road to Nowhere which now is the name of a new housing estate— but the road still goes nowhere. Then we drove into Apex which is a small community on the edge of town. It was an Inuit community when the military base was built in the 1940’s. It gets its name from the pyramid shaped hill nearby. Close by were some old Hudson Bay Company buildings situated along the beach of Frobisher Bay.

**Regular Members’ Caucus—Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts**

Later in the morning I attended a meeting of the Regular Members’ Caucus. The regular members are all the MLA’s who are not in the Ministry. This meeting followed on from the end of the previous day’s Assembly sittings. The Minister for Finance, Hon Keith Peterson, had read the Supplementary Appropriations Bill No 22 for the second time and before that Bill could go back to the Legislative Assembly, the Regular Members now had the opportunity to question the Minister about his Bill which dealt with a large number of capital carryovers for 2015/16. These carryovers were broken into two categories— carryovers for projects already approved and were bound to a financial or contractual commitment and the second was seeking approval for projects that had not yet been able to start. Members received a very detailed substantiation sheet from each Department with details about the project, the community where the project was based, how many years the project was planned or had been running for, how much money was to be spent and why was there a need to obtain approval for ongoing or extra funding.

The Minister for Finance (Treasurer) Hon Keith Peterson attended the caucus meeting along with the Deputy Minister (senior public servant) and another departmental officer. The Minister was asked to explain why a project was over budget and why a project took so long. This caucus process allows many questions to be asked that are answered to the satisfaction of the members and when the Bill goes back to Parliament those questions don’t need to be asked again. The meeting was notable for me because it was run professionally by the chair, politeness was the order of the day. When questioning the Minister, members asked the questions mainly in Inuktitut but also English but I understood everything with the help of the translators in the sound proof booths and my clever earpiece. Questions sped up towards lunch but members knew there was a second chance to ask questions when the Assembly resumed in the afternoon.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**Prayer**

The Assembly commenced at 1.30pm with a prayer by Mr Quassa who is the member for Aggu, an electorate
Ministers’ Statements
The Ministers made statements regarding Nursing Accreditation at the Nunavut Arctic College, the Annual Report on Poverty Reduction and a meeting of organisations and governments from across Nunavut, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador looking at the sustainable harvest of polar bears.

Members’ Statements
The Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu, Mr Angnakak thanked the Department of Education for the support of the School Breakfast Programs. Other statements were made about the Sanikiluaq’s 2015 High School Graduates, developing trade skills though the Kivalliq Mine Training Society, a visit to the community elders of Arviat, congratulations to Gjoa Haven Graduates of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program and recognition of a Mr Mike Giles, who rescued three people from a house fire recently.

The Ministers’ and Members’ Statement are similar to our adjournment debate in the NT Legislative Assembly which is done at the end of the day’s proceedings.

Recognition of Visitors
Once again people in the visitor gallery were recognised. This time it was a group of ladies who came from various parts of Nunavut and had been involved in education for many years. They were recognised by a number of members as the ladies had come from various electorates. In the NT only the Speaker recognises visitors. The Japanese Consul General and the Consul for Economic Affairs were also in attendance.

Question Time
Questions asked covered a wide range of topics such as the Long-term Homelessness Strategy Plan, how the Department calculates the number of teacher positions to be allocated to Nunavut schools, Departmental staffing issues, the Manitoba–Kivalliq Power transmission, mental health in Nuavut, the New Canada Building Fund and strategies to address reliance on income assistance. Many of the questions were similar to what you might hear in the Northern Territory.

Tabling of Documents
A report on Poverty Reduction, Public Servant statistics, and a copy of signatures re an online petition.

Committee of the Whole
This is a less formal part of debate where all members can ask questions of the Minister. So at this stage the Supplementary Appropriation Bill that was introduced the previous day and examined by the Standing Committee, was now introduced into the Assembly for debate and questioning by the Committee of the Whole. The Minister for Finance sat at the witness table again with his Deputy Minister and his Assistant Deputy Minister. He made a brief statement outlining the reason for introducing the Bill and some of the major initiatives in the Bill. Members then questioned the Minister. If he at times doesn’t know the answers he can pass the question on to his assistants or to another Minister. All members and Ministers are present during this questioning. It is similar to our estimates. At around 5.30, Mr Savikataaq, Member of Arviat South, closed off debate by moving a motion to report progress. This was passed and the House adjourned for the day.

Integrity Commissioner
That evening I had dinner with the Speaker Hon. George Qulaut, the Clerk, Mr John Quirke and the Integrity Commissioner, the Hon Ted Richards at the Discovery Inn in Iqaluit. Mr Richards is a retired judge and was appointed
Integrity Commissioner of Nunavut on September 10, 2013 for a term of five years, on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. Mr Richards explained to me his role as Integrity Commissioner which is to assist MLAs in making sure that they comply with the requirements of the Integrity Act. Any MLA can ask for advice from the Commissioner re their obligations under the Act. The Commissioner also has an investigative role if there have been allegations of contraventions of the Act.

Attached to this report is a more detailed explanation of the role of the Commissioner and the Integrity Act. Readers might remember the Stella Maris Inquiry established by the Government to look into whether the previous government had misused its power to grant the Stella Maris building to the unions. One of the recommendations from that inquiry was to appoint an Integrity Commissioner. The Government did not support this recommendation. I believe this was a mistake and that we could learn from our colleagues in Nunavut.

By the way the meal was very nice, thanks to my host the clerk John Quirke. It’s not often I have a chance to dine on caribou and Atlantic char; delicious, although I was starting to suffer withdrawal symptoms from not having any Vegemite for nearly three days. By the way that might have been the last of caribou meat on the menu for a while. The Government of Nunavut had earlier this year placed an interim ban on the hunting of caribou on Baffin Island because of dwindling numbers.

On the way back I visited the Anglican Cathedral where I met the Very Rev Jonas Allooloo. The Cathedral is an impressive building which replaced a similar building that was badly damaged by fire in 2005. The Cathedral cost about $10m to rebuild but it is close to being paid off thanks to the many donations received. The new Cathedral was opened and consecrated in 2012. It is a very beautiful building reflecting the Inuit influence not only in its design but also in the furnishings.

**DAY 4**

Up early, well the sun does get up at 3am. Took the usual 15 minutes to get suitably attired before I headed out into the Nunavut spring weather; about – 3C. Headed off to a little café about a kilometre along the main road called the Snack. It has an interesting saying on the menu ‘Managers test every meal. They eat here every day. It has to be perfect, no compromise’. I ordered a good hearty meal of bacon, eggs and toast with a hot chocolate. I couldn’t quite get used to having toast with peanut butter and jam though, so I just had jam. Many of the locals came in and out the Snack, no doubt to get out of the cold, have a coffee and have a chat about things local including an exciting little lover’s tiff. The owners of the Snack were French Canadian so the talk in the kitchen was all in French. They were very friendly and served up a great breakfast.

On the way back I visited the Anglican Cathedral where I met the Very Rev Jonas Allooloo. The Cathedral is an impressive building which replaced a similar building that was badly damaged by fire in 2005. The Cathedral cost about $10m to rebuild but it is close to being paid off thanks to the many donations received. The new Cathedral was opened and consecrated in 2012. It is a very beautiful building reflecting the Inuit influence not only in its design but also in the furnishings.
Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts

The committee met at 9am and I was invited to attend. Committees in Nunavut have many more responsibilities than committees in the Northern Territory. They play a very important role in the operations of the government.

At the meeting, chaired by Mr George Hicks (Iqaluit–Tasiluk) the Auditor General's Report on the Iqaluit Prison was discussed. The audit covered the period between April 2012 and September 2014. The report concluded that the Department of Justice had not met its key responsibilities for inmates within the correctional system. It made many recommendations that needed to be addressed at both the prison at Iqaluit and the Healing Centre at Rankin Inlet. This committee was meeting to discuss their response to the report, a report which had received widespread coverage throughout Canada. The Committee had developed its own recommendations to the Department of Justice so that issues raised by the Auditor General could be addressed.

The Committee also had a long discussion over the difference between Inuit Values and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. This latter term is used in the educational framework for the Nunavut schools curriculum. Committee members spent some time discussing whether the two terms were the same with one of the older members strongly arguing that they were not the same.

There was some discussion about the Rankin Inlet Healing Centre located on the Western side of Hudson Bay. The Healing Centre is part of the Correctional System in Nunavut and houses medium security male prisoners. It is different from healing centres in the Northern Territory that operate more like community-run retreat centres not correctional centres.

The remainder of the meeting discussed planning for the rest of 2015 including hearings with departments to discuss their annual reports.

Roundtable

The rest of the morning was taken up with a round table meeting with the Speaker and Clerk where we discussed how consensus government worked in Nunavut and some of the different ways that the Legislative Assembly operates from ours.

Prison Visit

After lunch I walked to the Baffin Correctional Centre. I probably should have taken a taxi because it was still very cold but nothing like a bit of fresh air and exercise. As I mentioned earlier I had met a Corrections Officer, Mr Robert Humphries on the plane from Ottawa who invited me to visit the centre. Baffin Correctional Centre is the main prison in Nunavut for low, medium and maximum security male prisoners and those on remand. Next to this facility is the Nunavut Women's Correctional Centre, Isumaqsungittuvik Youth Centre and the newly opened Makigiarmivik Facility designed to hold minimum security and those with mental health needs. The correctional facilities are at the far end of town in the industrial area. Mr Humphries showed me through the main prison where I met a number of staff and inmates. It was a lot different to our Holtze Correctional Centre, firstly because it was...
small (it has a capacity of 68 inmates although the average occupancy is 82) and secondly there was only a small outside area presumably because of the climate and available space. The facility and other correctional facilities had just been the subject of a major inquiry by the Canadian Auditor General and it was coincidental that in the morning I had attended the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts which had been meeting to discuss this report.

The report was quite critical of various aspects of correctional facilities in Nunavut especially overcrowding and the mixing of different prisoner categories in the men’s facility. When I visited, overcrowding was not an issue as some prisoners had been transferred to Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories as upgrades to the prison were in progress. I was shown the mini basketball court where prisoners slept on portable beds when there were no other rooms available. Even as an outsider I could see that this was not an ideal way to manage prisoners. I also visited the Makigiavik Facility, a new modern facility that was designed with a lot more lighting and space included in the design. Inmates were able to make carvings and other arts work for sale. Just like the Northern Territory the high numbers of Aboriginal people going to prison is a concern. How to turn that around is not simple. I mentioned that our Government runs a *Sentence to a Job* program which may be something that could be looked at in Nunavut.

Shopping

I took the offer of a ride back from the prison after learning my lesson the first time and was dropped off at Arctic Ventures Marketplace, one of the stores in Iqaluit that sold everything including souvenirs. As I was leaving the next day I had to make sure I bought back some souvenirs of Iqaluit. The Arctic Ventures Market Place is like a general store and there are other similar stores in Iqaluit. You can buy electrical goods, clothing and the groceries all in the one shop. Ordering stock for these stores must be a big job when there are only 4 months of the year when ships can reach Iqaluit. I bought some fruit at NorthMart and checked out the price of some of the fruit, eggs and ice cream (yes ice cream in a fridge in Iqaluit!) that you might buy in the supermarket at Coolalinga.

Legislative Assembly

The Assembly was now continuing with the debate from yesterday about the Supplementary Appropriation Bill and the Minister was once again in the House with his advisors answering questions about the Bill. I felt that members sometimes seemed reluctant to insist that the question was answered clearly as sometimes the answers seemed to be a bit vague. It reminded me of our question time in the Northern Territory. Some members certainly raised issues strongly but still maintained decorum. There was no abuse or name calling and it highlighted one of the main differences between how this Assembly and ours operate at times. When questions had been exhausted the Minister for Finance summed up the session, thanked
everyone for their questions, noticed that some of the substitution sheets weren't always accurate and needed to be improved and finally he thanked the Minister's staff for their assistance.

The Third Reading

The Bill was moved and passed and everyone knocked off at 5.10pm.

Back to the Snack

Dinner that evening was back at the Snack. While I was there I met a journalist who recognised me from Parliament. The journalist didn't appear to be a great supporter of consensus government as I think they thought the Premier always got what he wanted, so the system was ineffective. I was given the impression that the media outlet may have been interested in an interview if I had been an Aboriginal from Australia so the interview didn't eventuate. I walked back to the hotel wondering about all that. It was freezing as the wind had started to pick up. Very glad to hop into a warm bed and dream of the dry season in the NT.

DAY 5

COLD Friday 29th May

My last Day in Iqaluit. Looked out the window and all the roofs were white from the light snow that had fallen overnight. I decided that double thermals would be the order of the day before I once more headed off to the Snack for a hot breakfast. On the way back to the Legislative Assembly the wind was much stronger so my Tasmanian merino wool scarf was a life saver. Now that the ice was melting there was lots of dust on the edge of the roads swirling into my face and playing havoc with my eyes. I was starting to look like I had been at the pub all night!

Legislative Assembly Library and other things

Yvonne Earle, Parliamentary Librarian, had sourced for me, a map of the ridings (electorates) of Nunavut. This map gave a better understanding of the vast areas local members have to travel to serve their constituents. As well, Yvonne kindly took some time away from the library to show me some places of interest in Iqaluit. These included the Greenhouse and the Visitors Centre.

The Greenhouse

The greenhouse was most surprising. I don’t think I had seen a living plant anywhere until I stepped into the greenhouse. The greenhouse is in the centre of town, across the road from the Legislative Assembly and it is run by the Iqaluit Community Greenhouse Society (ICGC). It is claimed by the ICGC that this is Canada’s most northern society-driven above-the-tree-line greenhouse and who am I to argue with that. The operation of this greenhouse is totally dependent on volunteers and I was fortunate to meet the President of the ICGC, Steve Leyden who in his other life is a senior technologist at the Telesat Iqaluit Ground Station. Steve explained the workings of the greenhouse. Everything is grown on benches. The soil is flown in by plane and people are asked not to bring in soil from elsewhere to reduce the risk of weeds and pests. Watering is done in rosters and everything is recorded in the greenhouse journal. As this was just the very start of the season there were only some young strawberries plants growing in the greenhouse but everything was all ready to
go for the first plantings. Inside the greenhouse it was quite warm. I nearly took my jacket off! Steven has got lots of ideas about expanding the greenhouse in combination with aquaculture and even raising some chickens! He was certainly an interesting bloke to talk to and obviously loves the greenhouse. The greenhouse is the only source of locally grown vegetables and herbs in Iqaluit so members look forward to the harvest of potatoes, lettuce, tomatoes, spinach, kale, radish and much more. Some of the harvest is also distributed to a local soup kitchen and other charitable organisations if needed. You can become a member of the ICGC on line and they are always in need of donations.

Unikkaarvik Visitor Centre

We left Steven in the warmth of his greenhouse and headed down to the Unikkaarvik Visitor Centre which is also the centre for Nunavut Tourism. If you ever get to this part of the world and you want to get a good introduction to the people and places of Nunavut, this is a good place to start. Unfortunately when I was there, the museum next door was closed for renovations but there was still plenty to see in the Visitor Centre. Aaron Watson, the manager was very helpful with information about the centre and the displays. Obviously for those visiting Nunavut in the summer there is a good chance you will see more of Nunavut than I did but at least after visiting the centre I had some understanding of what life was like in days gone by and as it is today in this very northerly part of the world.

Roundtable Discussion

Yvonne brought me back to the Legislative Assembly for my last meeting in Iqaluit. Here I had the opportunity to share my thoughts with my fellow MLAs about my impressions of their Parliament and Iqaluit in the short time I had been there. I explained how our Legislative Assembly operated and compared it with the Nunavut version. I did say that I thought they could have been a little tougher on some of the Ministers to make sure they answered the questions. Joe Enook, Member for Tununiq,
certainly kept them on their toes.

But I will always remember the major difference between us and them was their politeness and decorum in the House even when there was disagreement. Interjections were few and far between. Some may say that is the Inuit way, but I think it applies to all cultures; it’s just that some Legislative Assemblies have forgotten those things. I presented the group with a Northern Territory Flag, a book by David Hancock on the Top End and a crocodile key ring from di Croco. In return I received a copy of the Nunavut Flag and a book from John Quirke, the clerk. I thanked them all for the wonderful hospitality and kindness especially for allowing me to be present during their committee meetings.

**Interview**

When I got back to the hotel to collect my luggage, Thomas, from the *Nunatsiaq News* had arranged an interview with me. That interview was published on-line about a week after I left and I have copies in my office. And that was it, I was picked up from the hotel by Pai-Pa taxis who took me to the airport for the $7 flat-rate fare. Next stop Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

**A couple of other items:**

**Beverage container deposits in Nunavut**

A recent report (Dillon Consulting) showed that a beverage container deposit scheme was not feasible in Nunavut. Nunavut is the only jurisdiction in Canada that does not have the scheme but the Nunavut Liquor Commission places deposits on alcohol containers. The Commission charges $0.29 for bottles and $0.14 for cans. When the containers are returned the consumer receives $0.25 for a bottle and $0.10 for a can.

**Liquor sales**

The Liquor Commission is the sole seller of alcohol throughout the Territory. Residents can buy a permit from the Liquor Commission to buy alcohol from outside of Nunavut to bring into the Territory but they cannot on sell it. Alcohol is not permitted in some communities similar to our dry communities. It gets a little complicated depending where you live. The Government of Nunavut says that to ensure parity

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**Images:**

- Pizza Hut and KFC—Iqaluit
- Houses close to the shoreline
- Leonie Erkidjuk with Betty Brewster. Leonie works at City of Iqaluit—Betty is a translator at the Assembly—having a coffee at the Baffin Deli.
- Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church
- Inside—note the ceiling fan! and Fr Dan
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police Station
- Waiting to thaw out
- Seems all number plates have an *oo
- Ski-Doos
amongst all communities, Iqaluit residents must purchase their alcohol from the Rankin Inlet warehouse or outside the territory, and similarly Rankin Inlet residents must purchase their alcohol from Iqaluit or outside Nunavut. All other eligible residents of Nunavut may place their order at either facility. This measure ensures there are no direct sales of liquor to the public anywhere in Nunavut, except in licensed establishments. In April this year Elections Nunavut held a plebiscite in Iqaluit to see whether the people wanted the establishment of a beer and wine store. The vote for yes 1126. against 366. The final decision will be made by the Government.

THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND YELLOWKNIFE

The flight to Yellowknife from Iqaluit via Rankin Inlet was an indication of how expensive travel is for people in this region. The distance was 2300 kilometres, about the same distance from Katherine to Port Augusta. The cost was just over $2000. Before leaving Iqaluit I was joined by a soccer team that was travelling to Rankin Inlet to play a game there. The students looked excited and obviously were looking forward to the games ahead. Rankin Inlet sits on the shores of Hudson Bay which was completely ice bound even in spring. Rankin Inlet is also known as a Kangiqtinng meaning ‘deep inlet’. It has a population of about 2800 people and is the transportation, health services, and business centre of the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut. It grew up around a nickel mine in the mid 1950’s. The plane stopped for a while to drop off and pick up passengers and it was interesting to see a mother waiting at the airport with her child behind being carried in an amauti, a form of traditional Inuit clothing enabling the child to be carried on the mother’s back. It was not long after we left Rankin Inlet that the landscape started to change.

The icy lakes below changed to clear blue water and the tundra landscape gave way to trees, real trees and they increased in number and size as we neared Yellowknife. The landscape was still rocky— part of the Canadian Shield.

Northwest Territories

Like Nunavut, Northwest Territories is a Territory not a Province (State). Northwest Territories (NWT) is the older of the two territories). I am using NWT as the acronym so it doesn’t get mixed up with our Northern Territory (NT). The first peoples here were Dene and Inuit. According to the History of the NWT Legislature, ‘today the resident population is comprised of Dene, Inuvialuit, Metis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal Northerners. The original Northwest Territories land was purchased by the Dominion of Canada in 1870 from the Hudson Bay Company for 300,000 British pounds. The land purchased included what is now the new Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, most of Manitoba, northern Ontario and northern Quebec’. So today’s NWT is a lot smaller than it used to be, but it is still pretty big covering 1,140,835 sqkm or about 13% of the land mass of Canada. NWT has the second longest river in North America, the McKenzie. The population of NWT is 43,234. About half the population is Aboriginal with most living in the regions. NWT is covered with many lakes including two very big lakes, the Great Bear Lake and the Great Slave Lake where the capital Yellowknife is located.
Climate

NWT Territories is a large place with much of it above the Arctic Circle so naturally there are places that have times when they have 24 hour darkness and 24 hour daylight. When I was writing this the weather forecast for Sachs Harbour said that the sun will not set today.

Yellowknife was warmer than Iqaluit. The daytime temperatures were quite pleasant although at night the temperature was still cold. Yellowknife’s average temperature in January is –26C and in July it is 17C. It also has long days in summer and short days in winter. Even though it has lots of ice and snow it only has an average of 118mm of rain per year. Darwin’s average annual rainfall is 1700mm.

It has been a very dry year in Western Canada and one of the consequences can be wildfires. Already this year there were hundreds of wildfires burning in neighbouring states and a number in NWT.

Communities of NWT

There are 24 communities in NWT made up of Hamlets, Community Government, Villages, Towns, Charter Communities and one City. It seems that each category of municipality has different powers and responsibilities. Sachs Harbour is the most northerly community with a population 135.

Roads

There are not many roads in NWT. Some communities are connected by all-weather roads, some by ice roads which cross frozen lakes and some places cannot be reached by road. Access to the north of NWT is by the Dempster Highway which is mainly through the neighbouring territory of Yukon. Before 2012 access to Yellowknife was via ferry and an ice road across the McKenzie River. Since the construction of the Deh Cho bridge that has all changed. Air travel is still the most important way of getting around NWT.

The Economy

NWT has an expanding economy. NWT is the third largest producer of rough cut diamonds in the world. Oil and gas contribute over $552m with a likelihood that will increase with more exploration and development. There is a commercial fishing industry on the great lakes. Wild fur sales are an important industry. Tourism is also a major source of revenue with many people coming north to enjoy the environment and the wildlife, the fishing, the history, the culture and the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis).

Energy

NWT still relies heavily on imported fossil fuels for its energy but it does supply some of that energy from local sources such as natural gas, wood burning pellets and hydro. When that is broken down to electricity generation then diesel still supplies 50% of energy source, with hydro 32% and natural gas 18%. Hydro is produced on the Snare River where there are a number of rapids on the Yellowknife and Talston Rivers. NWT has a three year action plan which proposes expanding solar-diesel generation and increasing hydro generation. One interesting thing to note is that NWT does not intend to sell off its transmission network.

Container Deposits and Plastic Bags

NWT has a similar Cash for Container Scheme to ours in the NT. Their deposits vary from 10 to 25 cents depending on the type and size of the container. Their rate of return for this program is averaging at 84% which is one of the highest in the country! The NT is much lower at 49%. The NWT have also introduced a fee on single-use retail bags (SRB) which I noticed...
on my receipts when I bought groceries in NWT and Nunavut. Customers pay 25 cents. The retail store pays the distributor 25c for each SRB and the distributor pays the Environment Fund 25c for each bag provided to the stores. In the NT the 15c you pay goes back to the retailer. I wonder why we can’t do the same as NWT.

**Flora**

NWT is largely covered in forest with the remaining areas covered by tundra. The forest trees are made up of such species as birches, firs and spruces. One interesting tree is the Trembling Aspen which grows from Mexico to the NWT. It’s called ‘trembling’ as the leaves look like they are trembling in the slightest breeze. Overall the NWT has about 1135 species of flowering plants, trees and ferns. The floral emblem is the creamy-white Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*), which blooms in profusion for a short time each spring.

**Fauna**

I didn’t have the opportunity to see much of the landscape outside of Yellowknife so I didn’t see much of the wildlife except for a red fox. If I had more time I might have seen a bison, a bald eagle, a moose, a caribou, a grizzly bear, a wolf, a polar bear, a skunk, a racoon or a porcupine. The fauna emblem of NWT is a territorial bird called the Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*). It became the official bird of the Northwest Territories in 1990. The gyrfalcon is the largest and most magnificent of the falcons and breeds throughout the tundra, including all the Arctic islands. Gyrfalcons usually winter in the North and during that season can be found anywhere in the Northwest Territories.

**Languages**

In the NWT what languages are officially recognised is dealt with under the NWT Official Languages Act. In June of 1984, the Legislative Assembly of the NWT passed its first *Official Languages Act*. Modelled on the federal Act of the same name, it had two essential purposes: the Act guaranteed equal status for the use of French and English by members of the public using government programs and services; and the Act officially recognized the Aboriginal languages in use in the NWT. The Act was a major step forward in protecting and revitalizing Aboriginal language and culture.

In 1989, a Special Committee on Aboriginal Languages was established as recommended by the NWT Task Force on Aboriginal Languages. The Special Committee Report included draft amendments to the Official Languages Act, and with some modifications, these were passed into law in 1990. Although Aboriginal languages had been identified separately in the Act as official Aboriginal languages, they were now included in the list of official languages along with French and English. The Act now recognised Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib (Tłı̨chǫ), Gwich’in, North Slavey, South Slavey, Inuuktut, Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun as “Official Aboriginal languages” of the NWT. The Aboriginal languages were given equal status within all institutions of the Legislative Assembly and the Government of the Northwest Territories, as defined in the Act and any subsequent regulations. ([NWT Gov website](https://www.nwt.ca/))

**The Flag**

Two blue panels represent the Northwest Territories' many rivers and lakes. The white section, representing ice and snow, is equal in area to the 2 blue panels combined. The Territorial Shield is centred in the white section. The upper portion, white with a serrated base, represents the dangerous Polar ice. The wavy blue line represents the Northwest Passage through which many early explorers attempted to find a shipping route to Cathay (the Orient). The lower portion is divided diagonally into green and red sections. The dividing line, representing the tree line (above which trees no longer grow), separates the trees, represented by green, and the tundra, represented by red. The gold in the green section and the white fox in the red section represent the minerals and furs which have been the basis of the
wealth and prosperity of the Northwest Territories from its early history to the present.

**The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories**

The NWT Act was passed in 1870 and the Act is still the governing legislation that NWT operates under today. The original capital was in Battleford and then Regina. The first fully elected 22 member council was formed in 1888. Responsible Government was achieved in 1897. According to the History of the NWT Legislature ‘Consensus style government which is still used today, began in those early days under the first Premier, the Hon Frederick Haultain. He actively discouraged party politics and administered the affairs of the Territory in a non-partisan way.’ Yellowknife became the capital of NWT in 1967.

'Yellowknife became the capital of NWT in 1967. Members of the 12th Assembly made a significant departure from tradition in November 1991 when they publicly elected by secret ballot, a Speaker, Government Leader and Executive Council. The decision was in response to a public call for a more open and accountable government.' In 1982 a plebiscite was held asking the people of NWT: ‘Do you think the Northwest Territories should be divided?’ It was supported by 56.6% of the population. After 10 years of debate a deal was signed which then lead to the establishment of a new Territory, Nunavut, in 1999. There are presently 19 members in the Legislative Assembly of the NWT.

**Legislative Assembly Building**

After 1951, sessions of the NWT Assembly were held in various locations, including Ottawa, Inuvik, Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) and Yellowknife, meeting in school gymnasiums, halls, and other available facilities. In 1980 the construction of a permanent Legislative building was announced for the NWT. The building was completed and opened in 1993. In 1994 Queen Elizabeth dedicated the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly to the people of the NWT. (History of the NWT Legislature).

The Assembly is a beautiful building overlooking Frame Lake. The building contains the offices of the Speaker, the Premier, the Executive Council, Regular Members and their support staff. In addition, there are meeting rooms and public spaces such as the Great Hall to facilitate contact between MLAs, constituents, organisations and the people of the NWT. Much of the design reflects the people, the culture, the landscape and the environment of the NWT. The Assembly is within walking distance of the Yellowknife CBD and the path to the Assembly is lined with flags representing the 33 communities or municipalities of NWT.
Yellowknife

Yellowknife, the capital, has a population of around 20,000 and is situated next to the Great Slave Lake. Yellowknife was developed around gold which was first found here in 1898. In 1940 Yellowknife had a population of about 1000 and gold continued to be the main industry to a point it was said that ‘it was a city where the gold is paved with streets’. Yellowknife became the capital of NWT in 1967. The last of the big gold mines closed down in 2004. Diamonds have taken over now along with prospects of oil and gas.

Yellowknife is a modern city with wide streets, tall building and facilities you would find in any other capital city. It is an expensive place to live compared to other parts of Canada. One of the big differences between Yellowknife and Iqaluit is the trees. The city is surrounded by a forest which the locals call the sticks. They call the trees ‘sticks’ because compared to the trees in places like Vancouver they are only sticks.

The Name

Yellowknife is named after a local Dené tribe called Yellowknife Indians. According to the Canadian Encyclopaedia a Dené band who lived nearby travelled as far north as the Arctic coast to obtain copper for knives and other implements. They then acquired the name from the copper bladed knives they carried.

DAY 6

Frame Lake

Saturday in Yellowknife gave me a chance to explore. I decided to walk around Frame Lake which is one of many lakes in the area. Frame Lake is surrounded by the CBD on one side, the Legislative Assembly, the Heritage Centre, the Co-op Store, the City Hall and housing estates. You would not know at times that you were in the vicinity of the city as you walk over rocks, through the forest, and across swampy areas. The walk is about 9kms and quite a few people were using it as a fitness course when I was there. The track is clearly marked and well signposted with information about the plants and animals around the lake. One thing I wasn’t prepared for was the mosquitoes which were abundant on sections of the track. There were so many in one spot I caught them on camera. There was even a T-shirt in a local shop branded Moosquito. It seems they come alive in Spring after the ice has melted. Half way around there is a big supermarket called the Co-op which was very convenient as I could get a drink and some fresh fruit. It was interesting to see the prices of fruit in Canadian dollars—Bananas $1.96 Kg Mangoes $2.46 each but meat was dear —$31.94Kg. Interestingly the bananas came from Ecuador and the mangoes from Mexico. You could also buy live lobster at the end of one of the
food isles. A section of the supermarket car park was used for large recycling bins. Many people were using the bins that were clearly marked according to the product to be recycled and the bins were collected by a tray truck. Perhaps when the other supermarket at Coolalinga is finished a section of the car park could be used for something similar! The walk continued past the suburbs and onto the City Hall with its park overlooking the lake.

**Oldtown**

In the afternoon I headed down to the Oldtown which is the original Yellowknife town sitting close to the shores of the Great Slave Lake. It began as a bit of a haphazard collection of tents and logs as people arrived looking for gold. By the 1940s it became a small village with a local government. More gold mines opened up. In 1967 Yellowknife became the official capital of NWT and officially a city in 1970. Walking around the back streets I checked out the Old Town Community Garden and then came across two lovely ladies, Margaret and Alice McKenzie, who were setting up for a lawn sale at the front of their house so I stopped to have a chat with them. It just happened that one of them was a translator for the Legislative Assembly where I was heading to on Monday. I then went on to see the Art Gallery, a local softball match, the sea planes, Bullocks restaurant and the boathouses. It is interesting to see the boathouses on the Great Slave Lake. It seems they are just outside the city limits and so don’t have to pay rates although this issue is something that the local council has been trying to change for some time. I walked back up the hill to my hotel (Yellowknife Inn) for a rest. Then off to the local St Patrick’s Church for Saturday evening Mass which just happened to have two baptisms, so there were lots of people in attendance. Dinner was a pizza from Bruno’s Pizza and watermelon from the Co-op while listening to the footy on my iPad. A good way to finish the day.
DAY 7

Niven Lake and Yellowknife Visitor Centre

Sunday and still plenty to explore so I headed off to another lake, Niven Lake. The lake was named after 'Jock' McNiven the first member of the Legislative Assembly from the Arctic. The walk is about 2km but there is a lot to see. The lake is surrounded by housing but set back far enough not to encroach on the lake. The path around the lake is used by locals for jogging, taking the dog for a walk or bird watching. The lake sits on a plateau of peat built up over many years. Along the trail there were lots of birds, mosquitoes and other animals including a fox which startled me. I wondered why it had not hidden, then I remembered it was not a pest in Canada as it is in Australia, it naturally lives here so it was not frightened by me. After the walk I dropped in at the Yellowknife Visitor Centre which is nearby. It is a good place to get lots of information about not only Yellowknife but also the Northwest Territories. There is a large wire sculpture of a mosquito on the front lawn, so mosquitoes are even cultural in Yellowknife.

Governor General’s Canadian Leadership Conference

The visitor centre is not far from the Legislative Assembly so I headed that way. I had accepted an invitation to the Assembly from the clerk, Tim Mercer to tour the building with the Governor General’s Study Group looking at Consensus Government. This study group is part of the Governor General’s Leadership Conference (GGLC). The group came from all parts of Canada and were very interested in consensus government and how it worked. From the Governor Generals web site it says:

The Governor General’s Canadian Leadership Conference (which runs for two weeks) was created to broaden the perspectives of future leaders in business, unions and public administration so that their decisions are based on a practical understanding of the influence of their organizations on the general welfare of the community.

- The mission of the Governor General’s Canadian Leadership Conference is to improve decision-making abilities among young leaders likely to occupy high level positions in the near future;
- Facilitate a more progressive era of interaction between leaders from business, labour, government and the broader community; and

Perhaps something similar to the GGLC in the Northern Territory may be a way of attracting people with leadership skills into our public service or Parliament.
Consensus Government in the NWT and the Legislative Assembly Building

The Study Group was given an overview by Tim Mercer of how consensus government works and then he explained the history, the design and layout of the building of the Legislative Assembly. Like the Nunavut Assembly there are some notable differences between NWT and other assemblies. Firstly there is no centre table as in our Assembly in the NT. In Nunavut it is replaced by a sled and the statue of an Inuit man. In NWT the table is replaced by a polar bear skin. Next the seating is arranged in a circle whereas in most other Parliaments the seating is parallel. The circular seating resembles the way Aboriginal people traditionally sat to discuss matters. It is a real symbol of consensus government. Another difference is that there are fewer seats on the government side than the regular members (opposition) side which reflects the fact that the Government is always in the minority. Behind the Speaker’s chair there is a wall made of zinc which is shaped to look like the Arctic landscape. The clear glass around the dome of the Assembly depicts the four seasons in the Arctic. Members of the Study Group were met by the Hon Robert McLeod one the Ministers in the government who answered many of the questions put to him. Robert is the Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs, Lands, NWT Housing Corporation and Youth and comes from Inuvik Twin Lakes. He is not to get confused with the Premier, that is the Hon Bob McLeod.

Tim Mercer explained that the 19 members of the NWT Assembly are elected using the first past the post system as distinct from the Australian system of preferential voting. As happens in Nunavut the elected members then come together and elect the Speaker, the Premier and the Ministers. The voting method for these elections is different. It is the preferential method where a candidate has to receive 50%+1 of the vote in a secret ballot. NWT also has a variation on who can be elected. The NWT is roughly divided into north, central and south and two cabinet members have to be elected from each section. Tim said that members have to be accountable. With a party system, the parties promise things before the election but that’s not the case with a consensus government. The people vote for their member based on their individual performance and character. I asked how a consensus government sets its agenda for the new term. Tim said although this process is currently under review, all the members work out the priorities within the first two months following their swearing in. This is done by consensus of the full caucus. Broad priorities are normally agreed to in the caucus before the cabinet has been selected. Cabinet typically refines these on its own through the budget and business planning processes which require approval of the legislature. The government is not bound by these priorities, and they often change as the term moves on. They are held to account for them however.

All the standing committees are made up of regular members and each Minster is responsible to a committee. Before a Minister introduces legislation he will take a briefing note to the committee. The
committee may suggest amendments which the government may (or may not) adopt before introducing the draft legislation. That is consensus and members are actively involved in the process. Another different aspect of consensus government is that if a budget bill was to be defeated it doesn’t mean the government resigns; the government has to put forward a new budget. It nearly happened once in NWT. Because the cabinet is elected on a regional basis there is a good balance of urban and non-urban and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal in the cabinet and there is a good interaction with the people in the electorate. The standing committees take legislation out to the communities to hear what the people have to say. There are five Standing Committees—Priorities and Planning, Economic Development and Infrastructure, Government Operations, Social Programs and Rules and Procedures. Each committee has clearly defined areas of Government that they are responsible for.

**The Mace**

Tim Mercer also showed us the Mace which is pretty special. Composed mainly of durable silver and bronze, the mace measures 1.5 metres in length and weighs 12 kilograms. It is very ornate with many artists from the NWT involved in its making. It is decorated with snowflake designs and a golden orb. On top of the mace is a 1.31 carat diamond from Canada’s first diamond mine. At the top of the shaft there is a band of traditional beadwork. The shaft itself is made a bronze stylised narwhal tusk. The extra special feature of the mace is the sound created by the movement of pebbles from the 33 communities in the NWT. The pebbles have been cleverly placed in five compartments inside the mace so that when it is moved it produces a special sound that represents the united voice of the people.

That was the end of day’s briefing from Tim and he left us with a good insight into how consensus government worked in NWT.

**Prince of Wales Heritage Centre**

The rest of the afternoon I spent at the museum or more exactly the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. It is only walking distance from the Legislative Assembly. If you want to know about the Northwest Territories this is a great place to learn. The displays are awesome and cover everything from the first peoples, the pilots, the miners to the animals and fossils. There is a special room where carvings by master sculpture Abraham Anghik Ruben, an Inuit man of the NWT, are displayed. He has been able to bring the voices of two ancient cultures of Inuit and Viking Norse together in his exquisite carvings.
Bullocks

I finished the day off with a walk back to Old town to try out Bullocks Restaurant which is famous for its fish and bison steaks. It was recommended by Alex from the Legislative Assembly staff at Nunavut. Bullocks is famous for its earthy interior similar to the Daly Waters Pub. There are stickers and signs everywhere and there’s now even an ‘Independent Chicken Sticker’ on the fridge. I stayed with the fish and chips and they were delicious. The bison steaks were about 2 inches thick and would have taken about 40 minutes to cook. The staff were kept flat out as they prepared meals for the never ending line of customers. You know where to visit when you get to Yellowknife.

DAY 8

Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning

NWT Legislative Assembly was sitting this week and the day started off cold and wet so I took a taxi instead of walking to the Legislative Assembly. I was permitted to sit in on the workings of the Standing Committee of Priorities and Planning. The committee's role is to look at government-wide issues, budget overview and fiscal framework, devolution matters, coordinate sessional matters, strategic planning, ministerial performance, government performance results, public consultation of fiscal matters and updates on committee matters.

There are the eleven Regular members on this Committee and it was chaired very professionally by Ms Wendy Bisaro. She is the Member for Frame Lake, Yellowknife. She is retiring this year but gave me a very interesting marketing tool as a farewell gift. They were M & Ms with a picture of her face on one side and her name on the other on each of the little chocolates. Edible political advertising!

The Committee discussed among other things the timetable for the weeks sittings, a proposed motion re fracking, discussion over a request by the government for more communication staff and governance of the Heritage Fund.

At the conclusion of the meeting I had a discussion with Deputy Clerk Doug Schaurete about the Legislative process . He spoke about how Legislation is looked at before it goes for debate and the role of public meetings in that process.
My thanks to Ms Gail Bennett, one of the Principal Clerks, who allowed me to use her office space as a staging post for trips between committee meetings, the café and the sittings. When the sittings are on, all the clerks are very busy making sure the Legislative Assembly is running smoothly. I tried to make sure I wasn’t in the way.

Next stop was to meet the Hon Jackie Jacobson, the Speaker, in his office. He is also the member for Nunakput which is the most northern electorate in the NWT. We exchanged gifts; I gave him a NT Flag, a book about the Top End by David Hancock and a crocodile key ring and he gave me some glasses, some cuff links and a leather note pad holder. We discussed general matters relating to our Territories and what we had in common before he had to hurry off to his next appointment.

I had lunch at the Assembly Café watched over by an impressive bison head at the entrance.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS**

The Legislative Assembly met at 1.30. The format is similar to that of the Nunavut assembly which makes sense as Nunavut was once part of the NWT. All the members were wearing a small posy of purple flowers representing Elders Abuse Awareness Day. This is part of raising public awareness and supporting older people experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse from family or friends. In Australia it is remembered on the 15th June.

**Minister’s Statements**

At the beginning of each session Ministers make the first statements and on this day they spoke about the Truth and Reconciliations Commission Report which had just been released by the Canadian Government, an Action Plan to reduce poverty, changes to rent calculation for public housing rent and Tourism Week.

**Member’s Statements**

Members then had their turn speaking about reconstruction of the Dempster Highway, Wrigley Public Housing, the Canol Heritage Trail, an Energy Strategy, Intergenerational Day, addressing poverty challenges for seniors, moose population pressures and a tribute to George Doolittle.

**Recognition of Visitors**

There was the recognition of Visitors in the Gallery and there were many that day including representatives of Teachers’ Federations from across the Territory, Members of the Advisory Committee on Anti-Poverty, the Mayor of Yellowknife Mark Heyck, and a number of seniors. I was welcomed by the Hon Robert Mcleod and Mr Bromely who is the member for Weledah, Yellowknife. Mr Bromely has announced he will be retiring at the next election which will be held on the 23rd November this year.

**Question Time**

Question time is slightly different from question time in Nunavut. In Nunavut a member can ask two supplementary questions but in NWT three supplementary questions are allowed. Supplementary questions must be relevant to the topic. Again the Government doesn’t ask itself questions as happens in the Northern Territory Assembly. So NWT question time is not wasted with ‘Dorothy Dixers’.

Each member gets to ask a question and on this day questions covered many topics some of which had been given a heads-up in the Member’s Statements earlier. Members asked about senior’s housing, the Dempster Highway, the Canol Heritage Trail, the energy strategy, the summer student program, housing for seniors, the moose population, the revitalisation of fishing, and electricity rates.

There was a report on the Review of the Financial Administration Act called Bill 37. It had gone before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and that review was now being presented in the Assembly. The report was read and each member of the Committee read a section of the report starting with the chair of the committee Mr Daryl Dolynny. Again something different from the way things are done in the NT.
New Bills

A number of new Bills were introduced.

Committee of the Whole

The committee as a whole then considered the Supplementary Estimates Bill. This Bill had been discussed by the Committee in the morning and now it was being brought back to the House for formal debate. The Minister sat at the far end of the Assembly at the witness table and read a statement re the Bill. Then with permission from the House, the Sergeant at Arms escorted the Deputy Minister and Deputy Secretary into the House to assist the Minister. The Minister already knew what he would be asked as he attended the Committee meeting in the morning.

So one of the big differences between the processes in the Northern Territory and NWT is that legislation goes before a committee before it comes before Parliament. That is something that I have put before our Legislative Assembly as a motion but it was defeated. Since then a paper has been distributed looking at the possibility of that happening but that is only in its infancy.

The debate over the Supplementary Bill continued with much of the discussion around a request by the Government for a allocation of extra funding to employ 5 extra communications staff at a cost of $516,000 per annum. The debate was carried over to the following day. The House adjourned at 5.48pm.

Standing Committee on Social Programs

The Social Programs Committee convened at 6pm. The Standing Committee on Social Programs considers the following matters—health and social services, education culture and employment, justice, housing corporation, status of women, seniors, youth, persons with disabilities and any other matters referred to it by the Assembly. This Committee has five members with Mr Alfred Moses in the Chair. Alfred is the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake which is an electorate (riding) in the Northwest corner of NWT.

Once again I was grateful to be allowed to attend the meeting. Again the Minister was in attendance and answered questions from the committee. The committee stage is a lot less formal than when a Bill is debated in the House. This helps sort out issues before the Bill comes to Parliament although of course the matters can be still raised again in the Assembly. The two bills that were being discussed were the Hospital Insurance and Health and Services Administration Bills and Amendments to the Child and Family Services Act Bill. Some of the issues related to how the Insurance Bill would align with aspirations by some Aboriginal groups in wanting more autonomy and how it would fit in with their regional councils. In relation to the second Bill some of the discussion was similar to what is heard in the NT. Such matters as kinship care, children being brought up in extended families, people were sceptical as to whether the amendments to the Bill would make any difference and whether there should be more emphasis on mediation rather than sending a child to court. These Bills were taken out into the communities so that people affected by the changes could have a say. It was reported that there was one group so determined to get to a meeting of the Committee they travelled through a blinding snow storm to get there. At the end of the Committee meeting a meal was provided which gave me an opportunity to talk with members.

Day 9

Breakfast meeting

Tuesday June 2nd I had breakfast with David Brock, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary to Cabinet. Breakfast was at the Golden Nugget Bistro next to the Gold Range Hotel, a popular spot for late night ‘revellers’ so it seemed from looking out from my bedroom window at the Yellowknife Inn each night. David explained to me the processes of getting Bills through the Assembly. He also explained how the system of election donations is regulated in the NWT. I was also able to follow this up with the Electoral Commissioner who I was to meet later that day.
Standing Committee

At 9am there was a meeting of the staff from Legislation and House Planning Division. They provide advice to Cabinet, the Government House Leader and Departments on the development of government legislation. They also provide administrative support services to Cabinet, the Government House Leader and Departments during sessions of the Legislative Assembly. They provide a focal point for all papers flowing through the Legislative Assembly (or House) from the Ministers and their Departments. (i.e. Ministers’ Statements, Tabled Documents, Returns to Questions, Opening Remarks to Department Budgets, Bills, etc).

They also provide Ministers with the text for readings of Bills in the Legislative Assembly and track progress of Bills, from proposal stage to assent in the House and advice to Cabinet and Minister's Offices on Legislative Assembly Rules, procedures and requirements.

They monitor the question period, provide daily reports, process all returns and follow-up on all outstanding returns. They do not track commitments made during question period.

They supply the required forms for Legislative Assembly documents (i.e. Return to Oral Questions, Response to Petitions, etc.)

The Committee provides administrative support for the GNWT’s legislative agenda. As well, the Legislative Coordinator is the Chair of the Legislative Initiatives Committee (LIC) which reviews all legislative proposals and bills and prepares assessment reports and recommendations for Cabinet. They co-ordinate activities with sessional support services provided by the Office of the Clerk and collaborate the development of sessional planning documents. The Committee produces, in co-operation with the Clerk’s Office, a daily listing of House Business for the Speaker, Ministers and staff.

Elections NWT and the Chief Electoral Office

At 10am I met with the Chief Electoral Officer, Nicole Latour. Ms Latour was previously the Mayor of Fort Laird and also the first female Sergeant of Arms in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) is an officer of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. The CEO is appointed by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for a four-year term, and reports to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker. The CEO administers Territorial elections, by-elections, and plebiscites to ensure they are fair and free of political influence, in accordance with the Elections and Plebiscites Act. The CEO is the head of Elections NWT, a public agency comprised of public servants, contract staff, and election officers.

We had a good discussion about voting, electoral redistribution and political donations especially how it compared with our system in the NT. Voting is not compulsory in NWT so you have to register. To register you must be a citizen of Canada, be at least 18 years old on polling day and you must have lived in the NWT for at least 12 months. Another interesting difference with voting in the Northern Territory is the NWT voters must, as the website says, provide proof of identity and address in order to receive a ballot at a polling place. That is something of course not done in Australia.

Four options are available to meet the voter identification requirements:

**Option 1:** Show one piece of photo ID containing residential address— NWT Driver’s Licence or NWT General Identification Card (GIC)

**Option 2:** Show two pieces of ID from a list provided e.g. passport, bank statement

**Option 3:** Vouching. If an elector has no proof of identification, another eligible elector may vouch for them. In order to do so, both electors must take an oath. The person vouching for another elector must be on the
voters list for the same polling division, and have sufficient identification.

**Option 4: Voting by Acquaintance** If you cannot meet the identification requirements, but know your returning officer by personal acquaintance, you can vote in the Office of the Returning Officer without showing ID.

If you nominate for the election you must have an official agent. The role of the official agent is manage campaign finances on behalf of the candidate; receive, raise, or spend money on behalf of the candidate; manage a bank account and issue tax receipts. They have to keep records of contributions and expenses and report these matters back to the Electoral Commission Officer within 60 days. Official agents are volunteers, not paid employees. The agent is legally responsible for the accuracy of any reports.

Political contributions or donations were an item of interest in light of the heated debate in our Legislative Assembly around Foundation 51 and the closing down of an inquiry into political donations by the Government.

The Election NWT website says two interesting things about financing elections. Firstly that campaign contributions help to encourage electoral participation and secondly limiting campaign contribution and expenses and requiring financial reporting helps to ensure fairness. Of course the other major difference is that there are no political parties so each candidate is responsible for their own campaign contributions not a political party.

In the NWT when it comes to contributions, they cannot be received by the official agent until the candidate's nomination has been accepted by Elections NWT. Individual contributions cannot exceed $1500 and can come from residents or businesses that reside or operate in NWT. Anonymous contributions are only allowed up to $100. Total expenses cannot exceed $30,000. The pre-election period which begins 3 months before an election, is the first day expenses can be incurred. Before that period, candidates can only spend their own money.

When it comes to polling day in the NWT, there can be no polling or canvassing within 25 metres of a polling station. We are presently debating a similar move in our Assembly that I raised as a general business day motion but it still has to be voted on. If successful it would be similar to the rules of NWT except it would have a 100 metre restriction not 25 metres.

I thanked Nicole for the opportunity to meet with her.

One question I hadn’t followed up on when I spoke to Nicole was the status of political parties in Nunavut. I wrote to her about this matter and she forwarded the following response.

*We do not have legislation that supports party politics. However that doesn't prevent individuals from collectively adopting a common platform and running as candidates in one, some or all of the districts. However, in accordance with our legislation, they would be responsible to adhere to the law in its present form and, for example, would not be permitted to pool their campaign fund or anything that would model being a collective political party. They will be filing their Candidates Financial Report as individuals. There is no prohibition stated in the Act, nor is there a mechanism or expectation for them to register as a party.*

**Protest**

Meanwhile a protest group had gathered outside the Legislative Assembly wanting a ban on fracking. There had been posters around town during the week advertising when the protest would take place. It was clear the protest was to coincide with the day a petition signed by objectors to fracking was to be read out and presented in the Legislative Assembly by Mr Bob Bromley member for Weledeh.
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Minister’s Statements

The session opened as usual with Ministers making statements on a review of the Canada Transportation Act, a partnership with the Canadian Tire (Tyre) Corporation to fund school activity programs, the expansion of a Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court at Hay River a full review of the licensing of day care centres, and the results of a citizen satisfaction survey re residents views of government service delivery.

Member’s Statements

Many of the members made their statements (as was expected) on hydraulic fracturing, covering various aspects such as the regulatory regime, a balanced approach, responsible energy exploration, public engagement, other energy alternatives, a government perspective, protection of water systems and an energy plan. Mr Bouchard from Hay River North mentioned the Hawke Inquiry that had been released in the Northern Territory. I had raised it at the committee meeting last night as a good reference document for members wanting to find out about horizontal fracturing.

Recognition of Visitors

Visitors in the gallery were then recognised from the Canadian Tyre Corporation, school children from St Joseph’s Yellowknife, a number of the pages working on the floor of the Assembly, Tony Whitford—a past MLA and honorary table officer, and protesters who were outside the Assembly earlier.

Question Time

Question time was predictable with many questions being asked of the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Hon David Ramsay about fracking. There were a few other questions asked about an increase in the borrowing limit and what that will mean for NWT, enforcement of rules in Territorial Parks and a question on climate change.

Petition

The Speaker called for petitions and Mr Bromely presented the petition asking for a moratorium on fracking pending a comprehensive regional review.

Standing Committee Reports

There were then reports of Standing Committees including a Review of the 2013/14 Public Accounts. That report was read into Hansard.

A report on the Hospital Insurance and Health Services Administration Act, which had been discussed in detail by the Standing Committee the previous evening, was presented. Mr Moses, the committee chair, read out the report which had 11 recommended actions and a single recommendation ‘that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days’.

Tabled documents

A number of documents were tabled including one document titled ‘Hydraulic Fracturing Public Information’. Another document tabled was a copy of two resolutions, one from the Liidlii Kue First Nation and the second from the Dehcho First Nation on their traditional territories.

Motions

Several of Notices of Motions were introduced including two about fracturing. Mr Bromley moved that there be a comprehensive review of Horizontal Hydraulic Fracturing and Mr Hawkins from Yellowknife Centre, moved that there be a plebiscite on hydraulic fracturing on November 23rd.

Resumption of Debate

A rewrite of the Mental Health Act received second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Programs for committee consideration. The Committee will report back to the Assembly when they meet again in September. The Assembly then resumed debate on the that was finished Supplementary Estimates Bill and the Health Insurance Bill both of which were adjourned from the previous day. I was
slowly getting the hang of it.

**Committee of the Whole**

Some members had raised concerns the day before about the extra expenditure for five communications positions the Government wanted. So a motion was put by Ms Bisaro to disallow this request. During the debate it looked like the government would be defeated but when the vote was taken, a number of regular members backed the government and the motion was defeated. The Bill passed through the third reading stage.

The sittings were extended to complete the debate on the Hospital Insurance and Health Services Administration Act and the House adjorned at 6.03pm. Normally the Assembly sits from 1.30pm to 5.45pm.

**Translators**

Translators are used by the Government of NWT to fulfil its role under the Official Languages Act. This service has been privatised and a list of translators is available through the GWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Mary Mackenzie who I met earlier in the week in Oldtown is an interpreter/translator for the Tlicho language. Below are the requirements that the Legislative Assembly must adhere to in relation to the Act.

The *Official Languages Act* recognizes eleven Official Languages in the Northwest Territories, and provides that the public has certain rights with respect to using those languages. Dealing with the Legislative Assembly

- Any Official Language can be used in the Legislative Assembly.
- Acts and records of the Legislative Assembly must be published in English and French, and the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories can order translations in other languages.
- Any sound recordings of the public debates of the Legislative Assembly shall be made available upon reasonable request.

All official legal notices must be in English and French, and regulations may state that they be made available in other Official Languages.

One notable difference between the Nunavut Legislative Assembly and the NWT Assembly was that the only language that I heard in my time in the NWT Assembly was English.

In our NT Legislative Assembly the only language used is English although there have been occasions where an Aboriginal language has been used but this is very rare. I know Alison Anderson has spoken in her language and then English on a number of occasions.

**Bills and Legislation**

Bills and Legislation are written in both English and French as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BILL 67</th>
<th>PROJET DE LOI 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2015-2016</td>
<td>LOI N° 1 DE 2015-2016 SUR LES CRÉDITS SUPPLÉMENTAIRES (DÉPENSES DE FONCTIONNEMENT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas it appears by message from the Commissioner and from the estimates accompanying the message, that the amounts set out in the Schedule to this Act are required to defray the expenses of the Government of the Northwest Territories and for other purposes connected with the Government for the 2015-2016 fiscal year;

Attendu qu’il appert du message du commissaire et du budget des dépenses qui l’accompagne, que les montants indiqués à l’annexe de la présente loi sont nécessaires pour faire face aux dépenses du gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest et à d’autres fins s’y rattachant, afférentes à l’exercice 2015-2016,
Elders Parliament

NWT also has an Elders Parliament which last sat in 2012. The Honourable Speaker of the Legislative Assembly introduced Elders Parliament to the legislature in May 2010. This program was designed to allow elders to voice concerns on issues that affect them, and also showcases the unique form of consensus government in the Northwest Territories.

One elder aged over 50 is chosen from each of the 19 constituencies in the NWT through an application process. Once all applications have been received, a selection committee from the Office of the Clerk will carefully go through each application and choose the person that will represent each constituency and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). This program is an opportunity for elders in the NWT to gain hands-on knowledge about what an MLA does and a better understanding of what happens behind the scenes at the Legislative Assembly. It also gives MLAs a chance to hear the views of elders in the NWT. The Parliament is held over two days.

I wonder whether having an Elders Parliament in the NT would be something worth considering. This would give Aboriginal people an opportunity to have a direct say into Parliament and highlight some of the issues that concern them.

Ministers Travel Expenses

Something we could learn from NWT is the availability of information about Ministers' travel expenses. These are available on the NWT Government web page. If this was replicated in our NT perhaps we wouldn’t be having all the controversy that is happening at the moment. Below is a copy of what you see if you are looking for Ministerial travel in NWT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip No.</th>
<th>Purpose of Travel</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Date of Travel</th>
<th>Mode of Travel</th>
<th>Cost of Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sathu Tour</td>
<td>Norman Wells, NT</td>
<td>January 6-8</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,530.56</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>January 28-31</td>
<td></td>
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<td>SCEDI Tour of ITH</td>
<td>Inuvik-Tuk, NT</td>
<td>March 16-17</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,505.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Travel costs for my trip which included airfares, accommodation and expenses totalled $9752.

My second last day in Yellowknife finished with a nice meal at the Explorer Hotel courtesy of the Speaker Jackie Jacobson and Tim Mercer, the clerk.

### DAY 10—LAST DAY IN NWT

The day was cold but the forecast was for 18°C which was something to look forward to. Breakfast was once again at the Golden Nugget Bistro and Mary the new owner served up an endless supply of coffee while I downed Premier Bob McLeod addressing the awards ceremony.
some bacon and eggs. As this was the last day I packed my things, replied to all my emails and walked to the Legislative Assembly where the Premier was officiating at a ceremony in the great hall presenting awards for excellence, collaboration and leadership in the public sector.

**France’s garden—Madeline Lake**

But I didn’t stay for the awards as Dylan Short, the Public Affairs and Communications Intern at the Assembly had been ‘seconded’ to drive me about 25 kilometres out of Yellowknife to France Benoit’s home on Madeline Lake. Just that short trip gave me an idea how difficult it is to build roads in this part of the world. There is a lot of rock to get through. Also I saw a number of abandoned gold mines that once were the life blood of Yellowknife, once the life blood of NWT.

France has an interesting house built on a steep slope overlooking the lake. She is definitely into growing things and wherever she can find a place to grow herbs and vegetables she does so in glasshouses, on the verandah and on raised garden beds. France had just picked her first harvest on Tuesday for sale at the Farmers Market. She is one of a number of growers supplying fresh local produce. While she was showing us around, workers were putting new asphalt shingles on the roof—not something you are likely to see in the Northern Territory. France was not connected to the power grid so had her own power supply. There were many signs around the garden with lots of sayings with one of my favourites ‘Trespassers will be composted’. One of the things France was concerned about was forest fires at this time of year. She had a cleared area around the edge of her property (firebreak) and used the space for a few more garden beds which the authorities weren’t too happy about but she wasn’t too worried. It was nice to get out and see a little of NWT outside the city and see where rural folk live. There obviously was a little bit of that rural independence around Madeline Lake that many people in the Darwin rural area would understand—something that I think is
not respected or understood by our government. We didn’t stay much longer as France had to head back to town. On the way back we stopped at the clear blue waters of Madeline Lake which is a popular recreation and fishing spot for locals and visitors.

By the way you can’t fish in the NWT without a fishing licence which is a bit expensive for a non-Canadian—$30 for 3 days. NWT residents can get a licence for $10 for the whole season or if you are 65 years and over and a NWT resident it’s free! It’s free for everyone in our NT.

Tim Mercer and Gail Bennett

Dylan drove me back to the Legislative Assembly in time to sit down with Tim Mercer and Gail Bennett to go over some of the things I had observed while watching the Legislative Assembly in operation. Tim gave me a copy of a paper on consensus government he had written some time ago and a copy of that is available from my office along with a number of other papers on the same issue.

Robert Hawkins

Not everyone is a great supporter of consensus government at least the way it operates presently. I spoke to Robert Hawkins, the member for Yellowknife Centre, after the vote on the Supplementary Estimates Bill. He was concerned that the cabinet acts like a party which can put the independents at a disadvantage. He felt the Ministers were not made accountable for their performance as some members were too weak to make them accountable. He said one of the problems is that a Minister is not accountable for his/her performance after the next election as they might get a new portfolio and then say they were not responsible for whatever happened previously. I didn’t quite understand that but obviously that was one of his concerns. He thought processes were too slow and that parties would be better and there is no doubt that it can take a while for the passage of some Bills. He also didn't support the Priorities and Planning Standing Committee which was made up of all eleven regular members as I don’t think he believed it achieved very much. Mr Hawkins was one member who voted with the government to defeat a motion during the Supplementary Estimates Bill which would have disallowed the government spending money on five new communication officer positions.

Tony Whitford

My next stop was a meeting with Hon Capt (N) Tony Whitford. Tony had held the position of Speaker, the Sergeant of Arms and the Commissioner (Administrator) in the NWT. We had lunch together at the Heritage Centre and he was eager to tell me about consensus government as he was a great supporter of that type of government. He said that most criticism comes from outsiders who don’t understand, consensus government doesn’t mean you all have to agree, it is a fluid process. Tony said it was the system that was closest to the native people’s way of doing things sitting around in a circle. Members represented their constituents. He did not like governments where you had an official opposition. He said consensus government will only work if members want it to work. Tony was certainly passionate about the positives of consensus government.

Farewell

My last stop was back at the Legislative Assembly for some photos and farewells. The Legislative Assembly was in progress with lots of debate about fracking and the Bills that had been adjourned the day before. I left with a much better understanding of how consensus government works in
practice and noted the great difference between our NT Legislative Assembly and those of NWT and Nunavut. Orderly, respectful, but still able to debate difficult issues seriously and maturely.

A short taxi ride to the airport and I was soon on a plane to Vancouver via Calgary. It is not until you get into the air that you realise how big the Great Slave Lake is. It is about 200kms across. There were the last ice floes on the lake but it looked like they were melting fast. As the plane got closer to Calgary the forest gave way to agricultural land. Calgary, famous for its ‘Stampede’ and the Winter Olympics, from the air was a large spread out city. That’s all I saw of Calgary as it was only a stopping off point before heading to Vancouver arriving there about 10pm.

A little bit of Yellowknife
DAY 11

VANCLEER BRITISH COLUMBIA

Capilano Suspension Bridge and Grouse Mountain

This part of the trip was an opportunity to see Vancouver and Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and was not part of official Legislative Assembly business or paid for by the Legislative Assembly. This is an edited version of this part of the trip.

The first thing you notice is what a beautiful city Vancouver is and how big the trees are that cover the mountains nearby. Now I understand why Yellowknifers call their trees ‘sticks’. I intended to make the most of my stay and see as much as I could that also would be of interest to people back home. I took a punt on two nearby attractions, the Capilano Suspension Bridge Park and the Grouse Mountain.

The Capilano Suspension Bridge stretches across the Capilano River. The bridge is 137m long and 70m above the river. It was first built in 1889 as a rope bridge but now it is built of solid steel cables. It is part of a 12 hectare forest park. After passing through a display about the history of the park, visitors are welcomed by Kia’palano First Nations people’s totem poles. As visitors walk across the bridge in both directions and try and take photographs, the bridge sways a bit making those walking look a little drunk as they bump into one another. It is a long way down. The park is also famous for its huge trees. One of the main species is the Douglas fir which is not actually a fir but is its own genus—*Pseudotsuga*. Some of these trees are over 1000 years old and can get to 85m high so they are big. The park owners have selected a number of these trees to attach a platform to and then join the platforms with walkways so the public can then walk amongst the canopy. It’s a terrific experience. Another amazing is experience is the cliff walk which is built out from the side of a cliff—like the bridge, it’s a long way down.

The park has a great gift shop and the Loggers Grill has some nice food you can enjoy while listening to some country and bluegrass music. The park is privately owned and extremely popular as seen by the busloads of tourists pouring into the park continually. Of course there is an entry fee which would explain the free bus service. The park is well managed and maintained with trained and friendly guides and staff in attendance. Entry fee for seniors (that’s me) was $34.95. Well worth it.

From Capilano you can hop on the public bus to Grouse Mountain just up the road. Grouse is pronounced *Groose* and the mountain was named after the Blue Grouse bird—although the mountain was still grouse!! Again lots of visitors including quite a few Australians. The mountain is 1400 m high and overlooks the city of Vancouver. It has a number of chairlifts, the first one (Skyride) takes you up to the chalet and the next one takes you to the peak. There is a climb called the Grouse Grind. It is starts at the base of the mountain and finishes at the chalet. It is 2.9km long and rises 853 metres over that distance. It’s a tough course and runners and walkers can swipe a Grind Timer Card as they leave and swipe it when they get to the chalet. Their time is recorded and displayed on the big screen. As I watched some of the runners arrive I could see it was not for the out-of-condition types. That’s why I took the chair lift. There are a number of things to do when you reach the chalet. One is to check out the lumberjacks display which is very skilful show but also quite humorous. The lumberjacks do wood chopping, sawing, log riding, axe throwing and pole climbing besides ‘blowing’ themselves up. They are great entertainment. I spoke to them after their show and they told me they were the same Canadian Lumberjacks who came out for the Darwin
Show a couple of years ago. They remember it because it was hot and certainly a lot different from the temperature on the mountain that day. I then took the second chairlift to the top. You get some spectacular views of Vancouver on the way up. But you get even better views when you catch the lift to the top a wind turbine which has been constructed at the top of the mountain. The wind turbine has a special viewing platform which allows you to walk around the turbine and look straight down through the glass floor. Not good if you are scared of heights but it's worth the trip up.

So back down the chair lift, then onto the Skyride which takes you down to the buses at the bottom of the mountain. The Skyride was being operated by a young lady from the Barossa Valley; just one of many Australians I met in this part of the world. Caught the bus part of the way home and walked the rest looking at the beautiful suburbs of north Vancouver.

Day 12 Victoria and Vancouver Island

I had booked a trip over to Vancouver Island the day before and was lucky to get a ride as there was only one spare seat. Vancouver Island is reached by ferry from the small town of Tsawwassen (meaning ‘facing the ocean’) which is south of Vancouver, then across the Straits of Georgia, sailing in and around the Gulf Islands until you reach Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island.

From Swartz Bay our bus headed for the beautiful Butchart Gardens. Early last century the Butchart family developed a limestone quarry which supplied their own nearby cement plant. Now there is a sunken garden which was once the quarry, a rose garden with hundreds of varieties, a Japanese garden, the Italian garden, the Piazza, the Mediterranean garden and the visitor centre. I was so rapped in the gardens I forgot the time and only just had enough time to pick up a t-shirt from the gift shop and run for the bus; there was too much to see.

Next stop Victoria. Victoria is the capital of British Columbia. It has a population of around 350,000. It was founded by the Hudson Bay Company in 1843. It has a mild climate. The city is situated at the southernmost point of Vancouver Island. Two of the finest historical building are the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and the Empress Hotel both designed by the same architect Francis Rattenbury. If you want to read an interesting story you should Google Mr Rattenbury. The bus dropped us off in the city and all the passengers were able to make their way to
where ever they wanted to go checking out the shops in the centre of the city. Victoria is a very beautiful city. It wasn’t long before we were back on the bus to catch the ferry. The ferry trip home was special because as the sun was setting, you could clearly see the beautiful snow covered Mt Baker over the border in the United States. It had been a long day but well worth it.

**Last Day**

My last day gave me a chance to see a little of Vancouver before I caught the plane home. One thing I was looking for was a map of Nunavut and as there was only one serious mapping shop in Vancouver I decided to try out my public transport skills and headed out to find it. When I got there the shop hadn’t opened so it I had a chance to look at the suburban streets. When you compare some of our streets say in Palmerston with those in Vancouver you wonder how much influence developers have on councils that allow narrow roads with little shade or proper parking except on nature strips. The map shop was open and I was lucky as they only had one map of Nunavut in stock so it was worth the trip.

Another thing of interest was that the public buses, some of them electric, can carry bicycles on the front, something I reckon we could do in Darwin. They also have poetry on the inside advertising spaces for those not lost in their iPhones.

But that was all I had time for so, I headed back to my motel at Capilano, collected my luggage and headed for the airport. This is where we could again learn something from Vancouver. You can catch public transport to the airport. When I arrived in Vancouver it cost me $50 for a taxi to get to my motel. The trip back to the CBD on a Saturday morning cost me $1.75 (concession) on the bus. The driverless SkyTrain from the CBD to the airport cost $1.75. I found out later that my bus ticket could have been used on the SkyTrain and the total cost should have been $1.75! Why can’t we have public transport to Darwin Airport if a big city like Vancouver can?

Then it was on to a plane to Los Angeles to catch another plane for the long haul to Brisbane. After that trip, the trip to Darwin felt very short. NWT and Nunavut are beautiful places and so are the people that live there. There is so much that is similar to the NT, small population, large area, remoteness, social issues such as education, health, and unemployment but what stands out is the he friendliness of the people. Even though I loved being there, I was glad to be back in the NT—at least it was warm.
Summary

Consensus Government has many advantages

- It is not hindered by party politics
- Members are elected on who they are and what they stand for
- All members work together through the caucus process to set the agenda for government for the next term
- More time is spent on working through legislation and motions rather than on point scoring
- Question time does not have ‘Dorothy Dixers’ meaning proper questions are asked by the regular members and not filled up with spin questions from the Government
- Legislation is thoroughly scrutinised by Standing Committees before it goes to the Legislative Assembly for it to be voted on
- There is much more respect for the Parliament and Members act with decorum in the House even during debates
- The Speaker, Premier (Chief Minister) and Ministers are elected by all the members meaning that every member has a chance to be a member of the cabinet. This means there is a better chance to elect the best person for the job
- The Executive branch of Government is not all powerful

Obviously like any Parliament things aren’t always perfect but I believe the positives of consensus government far outweigh the negatives.

With the poor state of governance in the Territory, now may be an opportune time for the model of consensus government to be put to the electors. All we need is 13 good independents to win at the next election and political parties will be on the outer and a truly democratic Government could start to change things for the better.

There are a number of papers that I have referred to in this article which have not been included because of the limitations of space. These documents are written by a range of authors about Consensus Government and give a lot more detail than I have mentioned in my comments. If you would like a copy of these papers please contact me at my office and they can be sent or emailed to you. My contacts are 89996713, gerry.wood@nt.gov.au or Box 120 Howard Springs NT 0835.

Thank you to all the elected Members and staff from both the Nunavut and Northwest Territories Legislative Assemblies for their assistance and generosity in making this study trip such a worthwhile experience. Thank you for the views expressed by a number of people on their experiences and understanding of how consensus government works in practice. Thank you also to the people of Iqaluit and Yellowknife for their friendliness towards an Aussie outsider.

Tavvauvusi (goodbye)                    Gerry (Qijuk) Wood