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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
**(Nahendeh)**

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*Minister of Industry, Tourism and  
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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, June 5, 2024****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Vince McKay, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, Mr. Nerysoo, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Hon. Lesa Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson):** Colleagues, I want to thank Rajan Zed, president of the Universal Society of Hinduism, for delivering our opening guiding words today.

This is the first time in history of our Assembly that we have an opening Hindu prayer. Mr. Zed has encouraged interfaith dialogue worldwide. He's read invocation in US Senate, the US House of Representatives in Washington, DC, and has been bestowed with the World Interfaith Leader Award. He was invited by the President of European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, for a one-on-one meeting to promote interfaith dialogue. He has been a panelist for on faith at inactive conversation on religious produced by the Washington Post and has been producing a weekly multi-faith discussion column faith focused since February 2011.

Colleagues, I had the honour of meeting with him this morning, and I quite enjoyed our conversation. So if you wouldn't mind, give him a big round of applause for being here today. Thank you.

---Applause

Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 44-20(1):  
REGIONAL SOLID WASTE SITE  
IMPROVEMENTS**

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to highlight a successful initiative that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is supporting to remove hazardous waste from solid waste sites in communities across the Northwest Territories.

Over the years, I have witnessed firsthand how quickly solid waste sites can fill up with piles of debris and hazardous materials, including liquid waste that is expensive and complicated to remove. Community governments across the Northwest Territories have quickly run out of room to store this hazardous waste.

To address these historic stockpiles of waste, diversion and improvement projects have been implemented in regions throughout the territory. This work will not only free up valuable space in community solid waste sites, it will also decrease the overall risk of contamination to residents and our environment.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has partnered with 26 communities across all five regions to successfully access funding from the Government of Canada to advance this cleanup work. The work of implementing a cleanup clean-start program will also help us deliver on one of the key actions listed in the NWT Waste Resources Management Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this important work began in 2023 in nine communities:

- Behchoko
- Fort Providence
- Hay River
- Fort McPherson
- Sachs Harbour
- Tsiigehtchic
- Ulukhaktok
- Norman Wells, and
- Tulita.

In total, over 600,000 kilograms of hazardous waste, including nearly 250,000 litres of liquid hazardous waste from eight of these nine communities has been removed, with waste from Sachs Harbour awaiting removal on a

barge this summer. To put this work into perspective, this is enough hazardous waste to fill up more than six NHL-sized hockey rinks. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that this partnership has made a significant difference at solid waste sites throughout the Northwest Territories.

The plan for this summer is to complete clean up in 12 to 14 additional communities throughout all regions of the territory with work remaining communities scheduled for 2025. As this cleanup work is completed, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will follow up with community governments to make operational improvements designed to prevent future stockpiles and reduce waste. These improvements include more frequent compaction to save space, reduce fire risk, and help manage bear attractants, and also decreases the windblown debris. Other management practices, like improved waste segregation or regular removal schedules, will also prevent stockpiles from recurring.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this coordinated project allows community governments to pool their resources and address a problem that is difficult for any one community to manage on their own. By building these partnerships with community governments and the Government of Canada, we can collaboratively address many of the challenges associated with waste management while enhancing public safety and environmental protection. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 45-20(1):  
40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INUVIALUIT  
FINAL AGREEMENT – INUVIALUIT DAY

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to stand before you to commemorate a significant milestone for Inuvialuit and all residents of the Northwest Territories. This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, a landmark event that we celebrate each year on June 5th as Inuvialuit Day.

Forty years ago, the Committee for Original People's Entitlement, signed the Inuvialuit Final Agreement with the Government of Canada. This historic agreement was the first comprehensive land claim north of the 60th Parallel and set a precedent for future negotiations of land, resources, and self-government agreements, not only in the NWT, but across Canada.

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement confirmed the Inuvialuit ownership of over 90,000 square kilometers of land, including nearly 13,000 square kilometers of subsurface rights. This agreement has been instrumental in preserving the cultural identity and values of the Inuvialuit people, enabling them to participate equally and meaningfully in the northern and national economy.

Under the agreement, the Inuvialuit received financial compensation and secured wildlife harvesting rights. The agreement also established the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Inuvialuit Game Council, and ensured Inuvialuit participation on various co-management boards, safeguarding their right to be involved in decisions affecting their land and resources.

Mr. Speaker, the celebration of Inuvialuit Day is a reminder of the strength and resilience of the Inuvialuit. It is a time to honour the hard work and dedication of elders who have preserved and passed down their culture, language, and identity. It is also a time to recognize the importance of our ongoing partnerships with Indigenous governments.

As we commemorate this 40th Inuvialuit Day, we reaffirm our commitment to working collaboratively with the Inuvialuit and all Indigenous governments to build a future that respects and honours their contributions and rights. We look forward to continuing our journey towards reconciliation and shared prosperity. Please join me in congratulating all Inuvialuit on this remarkable 40th Anniversary of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

### Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 236-20(1):  
SUPPORT FOR ARTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during a time of fiscal restraint it's easy to few arts as an extra, a nice to have when times are good but a budget line that should be cut when we're tightening our belts. Mr. Speaker, I think it's time we stopped viewing arts as simply a budget line. It doesn't need to be something that's separate from our real priorities, like education, economy, health care, housing. It can be a way of doing things and a way of approaching problems with more creativity, more humanity, more connection.

Art is more than something that professionals do on stage when they perform for the rest of us. Art is how we express ourselves. As groups, it's how we express our cultures. And as individuals, it's how we express our own unique identities. A healthy person and a healthy community incorporate art forms every single day through written and spoken stories, through songs and drum dances, through the clothing we make with materials from the land, through the murals that brighten up our public spaces. It's how we keep renewing our connection to the land and the world around us.

Now, our priority in this Assembly is to build up a healthy workforce. So I think we need to make sure arts are integrated into every stage of education and training. We all know that to teach young kids the alphabet you have to sing songs and tell stories, but even as we get older, we continue to learn better through the arts. It's more engaging, it sharpens our brains, makes us more creative in our problem solving, and it makes kids want to attend school.

If we want to develop a dynamic and robust economy, we need innovation and entrepreneurship, and that can only come from training our people to be creative. And if we're looking for competitive advantage in the global economy, our niche could be in high value cultural products, cultural tourism, film, art, telling our stories to the world.

In promoting mental health and combatting addictions, the most effective ways to reach people to inspire hope and self-confidence could be through arts and culture programs. In terms of our housing priority, there's a public housing complex in my riding which is full of boarded up units right next to a school. A local resident is spearheading a mural project to involve local children in painting those ugly boards. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent just to conclude my statement. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So as I said, a local resident is spearheading a mural project to involve local children in painting up those ugly boards so the children who live in those units can feel pride in where they live and feel part of a community initiative. Mr. Speaker, we should not underestimate the power of arts in achieving this Assembly's priorities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 237-20(1):  
CRIME REDUCTION IN THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, there's no comparing the recent surge of violent crime and drug activity in the North to any other moment in our modern history. Over the last year, my constituents and I have learned to brace ourselves when we check the local headlines because we've grown to expect a procession of drug busts, assaults, and murders each week. I know my colleagues in this Assembly and their constituents share this anxiety. The addictions crisis is reaching into all of our communities, and as the drugs flow in, the violence is never far behind. Violent crime and the drug trade go hand in hand. Total drug violations have increased steadily over the last ten years, and homicides have risen alongside them. These drug dealers are now bringing in guns, and they are certainly using them. In previous years, the RCMP would confiscate one or two handguns but last year they've seized more than 30.

There have been multiple homicides in Yellowknife this year alone where handguns were confirmed to be the murder weapon. I am pleased to see this Assembly is taking action. The new crime reduction unit has been described by the RCMP as a game changer because once it's up and running, the NWT will no longer have to rely on the federal drug crime unit for help. Instead, this NWT unit will be kept on the road, providing effective surveillance of suspected drug activity and prompt dissemination of information so they may quickly obtain the warrants needed to shut those illegal activities down.

However, there is still much work needed to be done here in this Assembly to support this new unit and the RCMP officers who put their lives to get this difficult job done. We need SCAN legislation so civil courts can pursue owners and occupants of homes who are facilitating criminal activity. We can't let anyone turn a blind eye. And there needs to be consequences, and the RCMP need to be able to quickly seize assets related to criminal activity. Housing NWT needs more tools as well. They can't just be waiting for a noise complaint when the neighbourhood knows there's something going on. We made some progress, Mr. Speaker, but we can't lose our focus. Let's keep working to give law enforcement the tools they need to keep our communities safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 238-20(1):  
AVAILABILITY AND MAINTENANCE OF  
PUBLIC HOUSING

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am joining many of my colleagues and will speak to the theme of housing.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that public housing can be a net good and benefit for our communities, but it must be supported within a framework that allows for collective pride and a cooperative approach. I also believe in providing smart investments into the maintenance of public housing such as retrofits and new builds as needed and where appropriate. But part of the problem here is that the fact that the federal government has continuously cut funding into public housing significantly since the 1980s. So it feels like Housing NWT has limited choices in front of them.

I also want to take the chance to share some insights that Dr. Julia Christensen outlined in a new book *Housing, Homelessness and Social Policy in the Urban North*. In short, the book's research finds that effective housing policies in the North must be contextually and culturally rooted. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Christensen has spoken further in the media clarifying that Indigenous Northerners are disproportionately represented in those experiencing a lack of housing on their own homelands. This means that it is imperative to connect the contemporary issue of homelessness with the ongoing effects of colonialism because this issue is a social justice, human rights, and treaty rights issue all in one.

Mr. Speaker, our model and definitions on homelessness come from southern Canada so it isn't reflecting the realities of homelessness manifestations in the North. Dr. Christensen also states that homelessness does not exist on an island solely in urban centres but is, rather, interconnected to the dynamics of chronic housing needs in smaller communities. That interconnectedness also plays into the fact that NGOs in urban centres, like Yellowknife, do so much with so little to provide emergency housing. Mr. Speaker, we must provide these NGOs with consistent funding.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, not only do we need smarter investments into our public housing system, but we also need to provide consistent and annual public funding to the non-profit sector to assist in filling the gaps that our government is unable to fill on its own. I will have questions for the Minister of housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 239-20(1):  
ADDRESSING PUBLIC HOUSING  
WAITLISTS

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I give my statement today, I would like to join the Premier in congratulating the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation on their celebration of the 40th Anniversary of signing the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. And to my colleagues and friends in Inuvik, have a great day and I wish I was there participating today and flipping hamburgers with them. So have a great day up there.

Mr. Speaker, I too will speak to housing today. Mr. Speaker, long waitlists for NWT residents when assessing public housing is an ongoing issue that has been raised numerous times in this House. Housing affordability and adequacy are the biggest housing challenges facing the residents of Inuvik. When people can't afford homes or the homes are not adequate, they turn to public housing.

Mr. Speaker, we know there are many people who are on public housing waitlists and, in some cases, these people are waiting years to get into public housing, but this is not publicly reported in Housing NWT's annual reports.

The Minister of housing stated in this House in 2021 that Inuvik had 73 people on the waitlist. On March 31st, 2021, the Minister of housing tabled a unit status report. In this document, it notes that there are 239 public housing units in Inuvik and 226 were occupied. At that time, Mr. Speaker, there were 13 units sitting empty - 11 were noted as needing repairs and 73 people were patiently waiting for housing units to come available.

Mr. Speaker, on April 23rd, 2024, Housing NWT signed a collaborative agreement on housing with the Gwich'in Tribal Council. In this agreement, repairs and renovations are identified under possible areas of joint coordination. Mr. Speaker, this is encouraging news. I trust that through this initiative, Housing NWT will be addressing the empty units needing repairs in Inuvik and that there are policies in place that ensure the priority for elders and people living with disabilities to access these units, Mr. Speaker.

On a positive note, it is the trend that more Inuvik clients are accessing homeownership programs and, Mr. Speaker, if we can find a way to provide some economic activity in these regions and our territory, I am sure that that number will climb. But we must, Mr. Speaker, ensure that if we're serious about solving our housing crisis, if it is, indeed, one of our government's top priorities, we must ensure



that the units we own are maintained to an adequate living level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 240-20(1):  
PUBLIC HOUSING CRISIS FOR  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the mid 1960s, the Executive Council was in place to somewhat govern the people of the Northwest Territories. The majority of residents were of Indigenous descent and lived a traditional lifestyle.

This so-called government decided to intervene on our independence and our strength as a nation. It stated that they wanted to make our lives for comfortable and convenient, so they started building public housing units. The Gwich'in people, who did not want their lifestyles changed, but the government officials were persistent in bettering our lives. Now fast forward to the new millennium, we, along with the rest of Canada, are experiencing a housing crisis with no immediate solution in sight.

Mr. Speaker, that was over 50 years ago and most of these units are still being occupied today, including the unit where I moved in as a 4-year-old boy. When we first moved into the housing units, it had no running water or proper washroom facilities that we take for granted today. So we still had our daily chores. The biggest obstacle that we had to adapt to was our heat source. Prior to public housing, everyone heated their homes with firewood, and today we are reliant on fossil fuels and having to deal with global warming.

Mr. Speaker, with the intervention of this so-called governing board, they changed our lives forever. The government owns the land within the municipal boundaries. We pay for the water that once flowed freely for our use, and we even pay for the disposal of our garbage.

Mr. Speaker, the Indigenous people of the past were deceived. They were verbally promised that if they stayed in these public housing units for at least ten years, they would own the units. Today, the descendants of these peoples are homeless, in arrears with Housing NWT, and are lost souls in a land that once was called home to the strongest and most independent people.

Mr. Speaker, now that we are in a housing crisis with the rest of Canada, the government of today has to involve the Indigenous peoples because we are the ones who are impacted the

most. The community membership knows what their communities needs and who are the most vulnerable residents who requires the help. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 241-20(1):  
DELIVERING ON HOUSING NEEDS

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, CMHC funding financial support for Housing NWT is not going to last forever. But when it comes to delivering on housing needs, this government is still stuck on status quo. CMHC funds for base operational maintenance for public housing is declining over year after year, going down to zero by 2038, but as usual this budget proposal just funnels more money into the Housing NWT and makes no attempts to plan for the future. This is the future where Indigenous governments have authority over their own housing needs, and this future is coming whether the territory government likes it or not.

2038 may sound far away but at the pace we are going in, we will reach that date without a plan. Without a plan to shift control of housing over to Indigenous governments means attempting to set up for failure and, in that event this transition only fails. The territory as a whole will suffer. Many are suffering already. However, public housing waitlists are too long, and the policies are not working.

The Indigenous governments in my riding of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh know what works and what needs to be done and are waiting to get to work for their people, but instead they are forced to compete with Housing NWT for funds needed to repair homes and build new homes while CIRNAC funds for Indigenous governments goes straight into the GNWT pockets with little to no accountability. Federal, territorial, Indigenous governments need to start working together in housing for my communities and communities across the North, and the leadership needs to make that cooperation happen rests with the GNWT. In the long term, the government needs to outline how this transition will take shape and short term, and they need to deliver resources efficiently to housing in my communities and see an improvement as soon as possible.

If the government acts soon, I will know my community of Lutselk'e will lose out on ten housing units by the federal government this year because we're not able to secure funds for the territorial government to develop the lots they will be built on. With housing a top priority

for this Assembly and this government, what a shame it will be to see those efforts go to waste. I look forward to questioning the Minister of the Housing NWT today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member from the Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 242-20(1):  
HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the last sitting I moved a motion for the Government of the Northwest Territories to recognize housing as a human right. Mr. Speaker, I believe that housing is a human right because without housing, there's no foundation. Without a place to call home, there's no structure, no stability. How can we expect people to go to school, participate in the workforce, or raise their families, to live freely, if they are inadequately housed?

Mr. Speaker, acknowledging housing as a human right implies that the government has to implement policies and programs to ensure the right to housing for all residents within the shortest possible timeframe. It also recognizes that programs and policies need to address those in greatest need - the homeless.

The mandate of the 20th Assembly has prioritized housing. This government has committed to increase housing availability, to collaborate with partners and Indigenous governments, to reduce homelessness and increase sustainable housing.

I want to acknowledge the Minister of housing is working in collaboration with Indigenous governments to address the housing crisis, and this is very positive. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of housing is moving in the right direction. However, Mr. Speaker, the federal government has recognized in legislation that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person, and I see no reason why the Government of the Northwest Territories cannot do the same.

Mr. Speaker, we should be able to acknowledge that without housing, our people have nothing. Our housing policies and programs should be measured how well we are achieving the right to housing for all residents of the NWT. I will have questions for the Minister of housing later today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 243-20(1):  
FORGIVENESS OF HOUSING DEBT FOR  
ELDERS AND SENIORS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spoke in this House about my concerns for elders, that we have elders in communities who are held into mortgages from the GNWT which they cannot afford. For these elders who are on fixed income, it's not just only mortgages but it's also public housing units that I am talking about too. For these elders who are on fixed income, once their file is transferred into collections, they are trapped with so little money - so little money they won't ever get out of housing debt.

The Financial Administration Act, the manual, provides guidance for consideration when forgiving or writing off debts. The main consideration is that the circumstances justify seeking forgiveness. The information bulletin 64.01, forgiveness and remission, provides further guidance on this. Under the information bulletin, it details that if a debtor is considered indigent, that is acceptable criteria for the government to forgive debt. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this describes the situation of many of our elders. How is the GNWT assessing and determining when a client may not be in the position to financially pay the debt owed to the government?

Under 62 of the Act, a debt can be forgiven if the board considers that collection of the debt unreasonable or unjust or that it is otherwise in the public interest to forgive the debt or obligations. The GNWT can take steps to forgive debt to GNWT and the housing corp for elders and seniors specifically who are no longer in the workforce to alleviate debt when it has become unjust and unreasonable. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later today. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 244-20(1):  
MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LANDS TO  
ADDRESS HOUSING NEEDS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to join my colleagues in speaking to the theme of the day which is housing. I intend to put a bit of a different spin on it.

Mr. Speaker, housing is a priority of this Assembly and also one of the most pressing concerns of our residents, which many of us have been speaking to over the past few

weeks. Some may not realize it, but the GNWT is actually one of the largest landlords in the territory. The government owns the land on which many of our residents' homes sit, especially in our smaller communities, Mr. Speaker. About one in three privately-owned households outside of the five largest communities in the NWT sits on a GNWT land lease. This is in comparison to just .4 percent of homeowner households within the five largest communities.

Mr. Speaker, Chris van Dyke is a resident of Yellowknife, and last month he handed in his thesis for his master of planning that he completed at the University of Guelph. His research explores this uniquely northern situation. The researcher found that more than \$450,000 annually is charged for residential land lease fees throughout the NWT. Communities with a higher percentage of homes sitting on land leases also have a higher number of homes in need of major repairs. The researcher suggests that there is a need for more interdepartmental collaboration to address housing barriers and that land policies have to be a part of this consideration. The researcher advises that policy amendments are needed to facilitate Indigenous organizations' access to land and that the elimination of residential land lease fees in our smaller communities must be considered.

Mr. Speaker, the takeaway here is that since the GNWT owns the land on which resident homes sit, GNWT land policies have a direct impact on our residents' access to and quality of housing. Mr. Speaker, let's keep housing in mind when we consider land management and the policies around it. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 245-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Aurora College transition still is a concern in Yellowknife. It's a live issue. Mr. Speaker, we've heard from the chair, the president, and the incoming president about the unfunded transition, Mr. Speaker. This is serious stuff. Mr. Speaker, they're using their surplus just to keep the doors open on this particular issue and the lights on. Mr. Speaker, we need to ask ourselves the tough questions, why is this issue not being discussed? The Minister will say she talks to the chair all the time. Makes you wonder what do they talk about, then, if this never comes up.

Mr. Speaker, the president talks about incomplete work. She identified 200 projects that need to be done for the transition but that said, she said it's not done yet and they still have work to do but they're not properly funded to do this initiative. The president acknowledges the \$8 million from CIRNAC. Thank you, Minister Vandal. Please send more. At the same time, the GNWT only gave \$1 million, which was earmarked, as the Minister had said and the president had confirmed, for education -- BED, sorry, and social work. But that said, they have to use that for the transition. So they're finding ways to do this but, you know, they're scraping by.

Mr. Speaker, money needs to be dedicated for the transformation process. Why do I say this is so important? We don't have to go so far as looking to the Aurora College corporate plan. I'm not going to table it, but I'm sure it is tabled, Mr. Speaker. But the 2023-2024 plan on page 2 refers to the transformation into a polytech. It further goes on to the implementation plan. Oh, but there's more, Mr. Speaker.

On the 20 to 2023 strengthening and foundation planning for change talks about the, again, transformation. We don't have to look any further than just over a year ago on March 6th, 2023, then Honourable Minister Simpson, who was the education Minister -- and I quote -- committed to transforming Aurora College into a polytech. I could go on.

Mr. Speaker, oh wait a minute, there's more, believe it or not. Aurora College has an Aurora College Act, and section 6.1 refers to the mandate. Yesterday, the Minister talked about the mandate potentially discussed in July. Mr. Speaker, now's the opportunity to sharpen our pencil and write it clear and loud to the college that we are supportive of a transition from the college into a polytech to support Northerners, Mr. Speaker.

But lastly, it needs to be funded. They're just words until we see some actions. I look forward to some clear decisions today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Members' statements. Member from Hay River North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 246-20(1):  
HAY RIVER TRACK AND FIELD

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, can you feel it, Mr. Speaker? Can you feel the excitement in the air? The NWT Track and Field Championships are back after five long years. And, Mr. Speaker, I am excited. I'm excited for the youth who have missed out on this event

five years in a row. I was lucky enough to participate in many track and field events in Hay River, and they're some of the best memories that I have.

I'm also excited for the community. The track and field championships brings over 900 athletes into Hay River as well as hundreds of volunteers, parents, and chaperones. Mr. Speaker, the community swells in size by a third when track and field happens. It is the biggest event of the year in Hay River, and it's back. And I couldn't be happier. And so I want to say thank you to all of the volunteers who make this happen. I don't think people understand how labour intensive it is, and it's a labour of love, because we have some of the same volunteers who have been doing this year after year, decade after decade. And, of course, Mr. Speaker, I want to say good luck to all of the athletes and, of course, have a great time in Hay Riveria. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'd love to see you on the track there, Premier. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 247-20(1):  
INUVALUIT DAY

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation on 40 years since signing this monumental land claim agreement. I want to thank the current chair of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Duane Smith, and the board of directors on the work that they do to lead this organization.

I want to take this time to honour the many people who have worked together to make this agreement a reality 40 years ago today. Many of the signatories to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement have now passed on, but their families live on and thrive. The Inuvialuit people continue to be stewards of these lands passing on their culture and traditions to generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Original People's Entitlement Board, there was the late Peter Green, who was the president and from Paulatuk; the late Charles Hodak, he was the vice-president and from Sachs Harbour; the late Sam Raddi, director from Inuvik; the late Billy Day, a director from Inuvik; the late Eddy Gruben, director from Tuktoyaktuk; the late Bertha Reuben, director from Paulatuk. We still have with us Annie C. Gordon, a director from Aklavik; and Elsie Klengenber, a director from Ulukhaktok.

But we cannot forget those negotiators that negotiated this agreement and who we still

have with us today. Nellie Cournoyea from Tuktoyaktuk; the late Andy Carpenter, Sachs Harbour; the late Robert Kuptana, Ulukhaktok; the late Nelson Green from Paulatuk; the late Mark Noksana from Tuktoyaktuk; Rene Arey of Aklavik, who is still with us today; the late Agnes Semmler of Inuvik; and their chief negotiator, Bob Delorey, who I remember always in that room with his pipe.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that my political career may have been instilled in me at a very young age, but I didn't know it back then. What I now realize is the meetings that I witnessed in this small room two doors down from my house when I was about six years old, with no table in that room, just chairs, where they sat around with federal negotiators like a Sharing Circle. This room included these past leaders where they were ensuring and securing the future of the Inuvialuit people. So once again, I congratulate them on their 40 years. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member from Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 248-20(1):  
INUVALUIT DAY

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we are celebrating 40 years of the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. This agreement is a culmination of many, many years of negotiations by Inuvialuit who sacrificed their lives, time away from their families, time away from the land, from harvesting, from work, to see this agreement through.

This agreement's negotiation was born at a time when industry was knocking on the door in the Arctic, and government was opening it up. To protect our rights, our land, and the ocean, the Inuvialuit developed a negotiating mandate based on evidence which included mapping out our traditional land use and occupancy, Indigenous rights to the land, and co-management of the area.

Mr. Speaker, two elders we lost in May 2024 were very significant to the negotiations and the implementation of the claim. Mr. Robert Kuptana, a generous, kindhearted Inuvialuk, who was part of the negotiating team on behalf of the Inuvialuit, a signatory to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, former IRC chair and CEO, a harvester, a hunter, a husband to Agnes, a father and grandfather, a Inuvialuk language expert who could speak three dialects of Inuvialuktun with ease. I wish to honour Robert today.

Also, I want to recognize Mr. Frank Pokiak, former chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council. Frank was instrumental in implementing the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. As chair of the game council, he was the lead in all co-management efforts and representing us globally. Frank was a harvester, a hunter, a tradesman, a husband, a father and grandfather. I wish to honour Frank today.

Over the last little while, we've lost so many, including Mrs. Margaret Klengenberg, Mr. Barry Jacobson, Ms. Nita Felix, Mr. Angus Himolok, Mrs. Maureen Pokiak, Mrs. Mabel Niyok, and Mr. Adam Wolki. God bless their families and prayers for comfort and strength today and all the days ahead. Their greatest legacy are their children and grandchildren.

I offer congratulations to Duane Ningaqsiq Smith, IRC chair and CEO, and the entire Inuvialuit team in celebrating 40 years of successful implementation of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement and governance of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, a corporation that's diverse, successful, and an example for many other land claim organizations. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Nunakput. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 249-20(1):  
CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF PAT ROWE

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Good afternoon, colleagues. Today is going to be a very difficult time for myself as I say goodbye to a friend, who has been a big part of my family's life. Whether it was a boss to my son, bus driver for my kids, sponsor of numerous events and trips for the youth of the community, key driver of sport programs, businessman, you name it. Pat was that person.

Pat was born September 20, 1959, in Fairview, Alberta to John and Anne Rowe. Early on in his life, the family moved north to Hay River and this is when I first met the family. Finally in 1971, the family moved to Fort Simpson. Pat joined the navy in 1977 and travelled the world. During this time, he met Sandra, and they had two wonderful children, Becky and Michael. In 1983, Pat returned to Fort Simpson, where he started and grew P.R. Contracting into a successful business. As well, Pat was instrumental in helping improve the village of Fort Simpson's fire department. If this was not enough, he would be seen volunteering for the curling club, golf course, and supporting the community events wherever he could. Colleagues, I would like to share a couple of stories here today.

As people said, he had a big heart. I could tell you he hired a ten-year-old boy to work for him. My son was looking for a job but didn't know where to go and how to get one. I gave him a couple ideas and options of who he could ask, and he said that he would have to be there to go there by 8:20 in the morning. My son thought about it and decided to ask P.R. Contracting for a job. He got up early, asked me to drop him off at the shop and he would go from there. About 8:40, my son showed up to my office. I asked him how it went. He looked at me and said Pat doesn't show up until 9 o'clock, why did you get me up so early? After chatting with me, he took off to see Pat and that July morning, he started working for him. I have to say he spent the last at least 10 to 12 years working for that company and we much appreciate this mentorship.

Pat had a habit of telling stories, and you would think there was no way this happened or it had; it was that bad. A mutual friend told me that he was a storyteller but not the way you would think. As she explained, he would stretch the truth a bit. As I explained to her, that's how a storyteller operates. She said no, he downplays the situation as people wouldn't believe the truth. I laughed about her comment but didn't think about it anymore until I was a trip with him.

I can tell you it was a very interesting trip. However about a month later, he was telling someone about it. After the story was finished, I looked at him and I said man, I wish it was that good. Like most people in your life, we all have some amazing stories and I don't have enough time to tell you more. Therefore, I would like to have the rest of my speech deemed as read. I can tell you his passing left a huge hole in the community and the life of his family and friends. He will be sadly missed.

(Deemed Read)

It's difficult to explain in words the life of Pat Rowe. He can be described as a presence or role model; someone you want to be around and be like. He was liked, loved, respected, and is sorely missed by all that knew him. Whether you loved or disagreed with him you most likely respected him. He was often a source of wisdom and guidance and sometimes pure stubbornness.

Pat can be described in three categories: Family, Friend, and Community. All these areas he was extremely passionate about and defined most of what he was.

Family:

Family was always #1 for Pat, he never missed an opportunity to brag about the accomplishments his children, grandchildren, or nieces. No matter what was happening in his

life he always took the time to call and congratulate when good news reached his ears, and let you know he was proud of you or happy for you. He could also be counted on to share any good news that came his way, sometimes if only to a cab driver in Edmonton because he wasn't allowed to share yet.

Pat never missed a celebration, milestone, or event. Whether it was stopping in for a quick coffee, planning a tow to be in a certain place at a certain time, or flying to another country Pat always showed up when it was within his power to do so. NO matter the personal cost, broken ribs, and all.

Story from his brother Perry:

Not a lot of people know this, but Anne and Connie were the ones who sent Pat out on his first ever roadside assistance back in the 80s.

It was Christmas, and Rick had not made it into Fort Simpson from Hay River at the expected time. So, the girls sent Pat, along with his swamper Perry, out on the Highway to find him. In true Rowe fashion, no road trip is complete without a stop at the store to get some road "pops". Needless to say, Pat and Perry had a most enjoyable trip to Hay River without seeing Rick at all.

When they arrived in Hay, they called back to let the girls know they did not see Rick. To their surprise, Rick answered the phone. He was less than impressed, especially since he had hit the ditch, and had watched them drive straight by him talking and laughing without even checking the ditch line. Rick let them know firmly that he wished he had a 30-30 at the time so he could take out their tires!!

Well, with Rick safe, there was nothing left to do in Hay, except hit the store for more road pops and head back to Simpson. Pat and Perry clocked about 10 hours on their adventure, we're still not sure who paid that bill!

Friends:

Where do you start? Pat had a way of drawing people in. You couldn't help but be pulled to him. A natural storyteller. He held captive anyone who was near to hear, and this enticed them to get to know him better. Once you sat and had a chat with Pat you were hooked. He was always kind to strangers, often joking with whomever he ran into, front desk clerks, waiters or store clerks all fell for his charm and for that he was always remembered and treated as a valued friend when he returned.

He was as loyal to his friend as he was to his family, and in many ways his friends were his family. This is evident by the crowd gathered

here today and the sorrow in which we all share. But Pat wouldn't want us to be sad but to be kind to one another and to support each other. Words that he lived by were "be kind to your people, you are nothing without people." These words were passed to him by his father and have been his motto for most of his life. Many of his friendships were built though a mutual love for hunting. Pats hunting stories were always adventure movie quality. He shared stories from his cabin in the mountains, up high on a plateau, or from in a boat on the river, each one as captivating as the one before. Pat was known as a good shot but the truth was, he was an excellent shot, and if the stories are to be believed he didn't miss.

Community:

Not 2nd or 3rd to family and friends, but equal was his love for his community. Pat never failed to step up and help the community in any way he could. He donated countless hours to the fire department, participated in emergency measures planning and during the recent flood, while battling cancer, on chemotherapy he showed up every day and donated his shop as a base for the fire department. After the flood Pat and his company provided garbage bins and removal to help with the cleanup.

Not only a firefighter also a volunteer and supporter of youth activities throughout the years. You may remember his starring roles in the annual skate carnivals, or seen him on the sidelines cheering his children and nieces on, or as the goofy bus driver taking the kids all over the country so that they could have the opportunities to experience new adventures and grow in their skills.

Pat was very much about youth. The first grade six trip involved him using a school bus. However, after that trip he was able to track down a coach, for the next year trip. Then he got another one, so youth from the community could travel down south for sporting events. As Shane tells, he did not do it for the money, because the first question he would ask was how much you have and then you went from there. This coach service expanded to other communities and lasted over 15 years.

He was often referred to as Uncle Pat and is part of many fond memories, I'm sure.

Pat also helped to grow curling in Fort Simpson, often recruiting new curlers and keeping the sport alive, he was part of the NWT Fire Fighter

Team for years and was part of the 2004 team when they achieved a perfect 8 ender! He was also one of the first sponsors of the 7 Spruce

golf course donating time and equipment to help lay the foundation of the course we see today. He would often golf and curl in out of town events, in 2006 in Fort Smith he also shot a hole in one! Regardless where he was, he could be counted on to bring the good time with him, and of course, making more lifelong friends in the process.

No matter how you met Pat you most likely share in our sorrow at the loss of a great man, a strong fighter, and a loving friend. We can all learn from the life of Pat Rowe. We can learn to be kind, to enjoy and celebrate all of life's moments, to hold our friends and family close and to show up whenever you can. I will leave you with some words by Carrie Hamilton:

“Our legacy is really the lives we touch, the inspiration we give, altering someone's plan - if even for a moment - and getting them to think, cry, laugh, argue. More than anything, we are remembered for our smiles.

The ones we share with our closest and dearest, and the ones we bestow on a total stranger, who needed it right then, and God put you there to deliver.”

Rest easy P.R you will be missed

#### **From Roger Pilling**

Pat Rowe has had a huge impact during his 40 years on the Ft Simpson FD.

Bit of history:

The Dept was established in 1963 and Pat joined in April 1983 when he returned to Ft Simpson after 6 years in the navy.

In his first week he stated the dept had 5 working fires. Pat could exaggerate a little at times but even if it was 3 or 4 that is a lot ):

In those days, equipment was limited. 1 fire truck and old backup truck. There were just 2 bays in the fire hall.

In 1989 when I joined there were still just 2 trucks with 2 bays and for breathing apparatus there were just 2 of them as well. There were still a few long coats and hip boots still around as well. But Pat had his own bunker gear that he “borrowed” from his firefighting days in the navy. You will see in some of the pictures he has very light-coloured gear compared to others as it was from the navy.

In the early 90's the FD had a keen group of firefighters that wanted to do more:

- More training

- Better equipment – more breathing apparatus
- Vehicle Ex

Pat was a big part of that drive

1994 Gerry McCowan retired after about 20 years as chief, and Pat became chief. Under Pat, the department advanced their skills further and moved into more offensive operations. – going inside.

1998 The FD took over ambulance operations. Initially about 120-140 calls per year. Ambulance call load slowly increased until 2021 when 337 ambulance dispatches were recorded. Fortunately, the Last few years calls have declined, but are still significantly higher than the early years.

2004 Pat received the Queens Exemplary Service Medal for outstanding service.

2006 was the year of the FD “misunderstanding”. As the result of a \$75 bill for snow removal Pat had resigned and things snowballed rapidly until the village council was removed and an administrator took over. After that the Village seemed willing to give us anything we asked for.

2010 we received a new Pierce Pumper at the FD. This pumper was Pats pride and joy. To this day that truck is still a great piece of equipment that any dept in the world would be proud to own.

2012 Pat steps down as chief and I was “lucky enough” to take over that role. Pat stayed on as Deputy Chief until his retirement in 2023 after 40 years. The FD is only 62 years old now.

2013 Pat started his battle with brain cancer. Unfortunately, cancer rates among FF is significantly higher than that of the general public. WSCC has put in place presumptive legislation for compensating firefighters who develop cancer.

Pat often talked about how he'd be coughing and spitting up “black stuff” for days after a fire. In those days with limited airway protection is not surprising. Also it was a badge of honour to have the dirtiest darkest bunker gear in the hall. Little die we realize that this badge was a heavy concentration of carcinogenic materials. Fortunately, the fire service has evolved a lot to reduce (not remove) this threat.

#### **Stats and highlights**

Pat was a great leader. He always led by example.

As an ambulance attendant he was an amazing caregiver. He was calm and cool and was fantastic at keeping his patients comfortable and relaxed as well. He had that special gift that not many people have at their disposal.

Pat was part of the GNWT core team that completed 11 or 12 weeks of training over about a year to get their 10.01 professional level fire training. As Pat was a private contractor, he took leave from his business to complete this training. It was a huge financial cost to himself and his company. Pat felt this was important to help move training ahead for himself, the FSVFD and the region as Pat travelled to other communities to help them as well.

When doing research for his WSCC claim we found that from 1999 -2013 Pat did 617 ambulance calls, 300 fire meeting and 114 fire calls. He would have done a few hundred more fire calls and rescues prior to this in his early career.

Pat went to National Firefighter curling 8 times. As a team we scored an 8 ender (like a hole in one in golf) against Quebec in Quebec

In the past we had an air raid siren to signify a fire. The siren would go, we'd respond to the hall and then hopefully figure where we were going. A few weeks before I was married the siren went off, we all jumped in the backup truck where we would dress enroute... scary really and headed out of town. We ended up at Gerry McCowans ranch and had a little party to celebrate my getting married.

When Tyler was doing records for the FD 60th year last year he discovered that there had been over 250 members had passed through the FSVFD during Pats 40 years.

### **Mellissa Woods**

Over my lifetime — and especially the last two decades — I was blessed to have a wingman of sorts. A constant source of encouragement and support. A logical and authentic sounding board and my mentor from firefighting to truck-driving — and oh, do we have stories!

Of course, there has also been a significant amount of cutting sarcasm and pokes at my expense — that duty bestowed upon him by his late father in 1988. In the mix of cruising around Simpson, craft Saturdays, ice road crossings, bus excursions, winter road phone calls, emergency calls, hospital stays, and as many visits as we could coordinate, we did have some serious conversations about life; what ifs and what shoulds, reflections and regrets.

He called me in March, to chat one last time. At the end of our conversation, he said “Well Liss, I'm going to have to ask you to look after the girls again”. I'm not sure what my initial reaction was other than tears. I know I said I didn't want to do it without him... we said our goodbyes, and within 15 minutes he texted me saying he just bid a job for \$6,666.66.

Then I thought, two decades ago the stakes were higher. The girls and I were much younger (and not near as wise as we are today, I'm sure) we were preparing to leave our little Simpson bubble once high school was done. So many changes and adventures were in store for us. And now, I look at them in their mid-thirties, and I remember John, Connie, Anne, and Pat and I think... I wonder who does more of the looking after — me of them, or them of me?

As today unfolds exactly as it should, with a coming together of so many friends and family of Pat's, I'm a little sad to not be there with everyone to celebrate this great man, but I'm blessed to have been woven into the family in all the ways that I have. We will carry on with our memories and make many more together.

Here's to PR.

### **In closing**

I still feel this statement does not do him justice. However, how can you try to cover 65 years of a person life.

Pat passed away peacefully in his home (as he wanted to) on April 26, 2024, after an eleven-year battle with cancer.

Pat is survived by his partner Lee Scobie, children Rebecca (Kevin) and Michael (Melanie) grandchildren Jason and Jaina, brothers Perry (Jacky) and Rick, nieces Keri-Ann and Jessie, brother in law Ernie and countless cousins and close friends. He is pre-deceased by his parents (John and Anne) and sister (Connie).

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 7 of 7. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

## **Replies to the Budget Address**

### **MR. EDJERICON'S REPLY**

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was first elected on February 10th, 2022, in a by-election, and I came to the 19th Assembly midway through the four-year term. Prior to coming to the Assembly and the 19th Assembly, the priorities were already set. The mandate of the Government of the



Northwest Territories was set. The mandate letters were all publicized and so, anyways, so I came in and thinking that I am able to try to help my constituents in the Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding. And I looked at the issues and concerns, I met with local leaders, and listened to what they had to say.

So back in the day, I brought these issues up to the Premier of the day, Caroline Cochrane, and I told her. I told her that our riding is not mentioned anywhere in the 19 priorities -- or 22 priorities and the mandate. And she told me that well, the train left the station, it's going fast, and I'll try my best to throw your luggage onto the train. And so it was tough because, you know, we have a lot of problems in our community. And so at the end of the 19th Assembly, none of my luggage got thrown on the train and whether it be on housing or education or winter road or ice road or anything like that. So there were 22 priorities that were set in the 19th Assembly, and I would say most of them that were worked on were achieved and I had a hand in some of them. But going forward to today, Mr. Speaker, I got to remember when we first got elected back in November, in 2023 as the newly elected MLAs, we brought forward issues from our riding but we all got together with the MLAs with the Circle of Aboriginal Leaders here in the Northwest Territories. And we were able to listen to everybody's concerns and issues and from there, in February of 2024, we met again as MLAs here at the ski club here in Yellowknife and to talk about setting the priorities of this government, for the 20th Assembly. And so we did that, and we came up with four priorities; four from the -- or 22 from the previous Assembly. And I thought that we did a good job in trying to identify, you know, what the needs were from listening to everybody throughout the Northwest Territories and also the leaders. And sustainability, accessibility, and affordability of housing is number 1. A strong economic foundation was number 2. Access to health care and addressing the effects of trauma. And safe residents and communities. Those are the four that came out of our discussions when we got together as MLAs going in to the 20th Assembly.

Now that the mandate letters, I am assuming it's going to be coming pretty soon, it is going to be publicized and now that we are six months into our term. And I look forward to seeing those letters. But, anyway, I just want to briefly talk about that.

But what's going on now, Mr. Speaker, is that I wrote letters to the finance Minister outlining concerns and priorities from my riding during the March 15th, 2024, and I also further put

together another letter addressing what I think needs to happen with housing in my riding.

As you know, the Minister for Housing NWT, they have a policy in place when dealing with communities and homeownership and repairs, etcetera. And I heard it from my community members that those policies really don't work for our people in small communities. Either you owe money, or you have land taxes, or you make too much money, or you don't make enough, you name it. And so that was the problem. So I was able to put together a letter to the finance Minister and hoping that I would be able to try to get some of the priorities from my riding into the 20th Assembly budget. And so anyways I went through the budget carefully. It's a big budget. It's \$2.29 billion. We're \$1.6 billion in the deficit. We are about \$1.6 billion that's coming from grants and contributions from the Government of Canada. My riding, we have 2 percent of the overall population that is for -- just in my riding alone but yet at the same time, the budget overall, we are getting point 4 percent overall that comes to my riding, and that's a little bit concerning. So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point that out because it's -- to me, when I look at this budget and now that we go through the, what they call the business plans for all of the departments, they go in front of AOC, accountability and oversight. And we had a chance to review all the budgets and almost line by line, and what I see here is that this budget is coming from all the departments in government and coming from the deputy ministers defending the budgets of their department. And so when I go through this whole thing in terms of what is needed for my riding, I don't see nothing in this business plan because the deputy minister knows best what's for my community. So, going back to the 19th Assembly, we get 23 priorities. The 20th Assembly, we got four priorities. And I sent letters asking that we get probably -- trying to get into the budget but I don't see it.

So the other issue that I have concerns with too, Mr. Speaker, is that this government also announced that there's going to be a reduction, about \$150 million a year for the next four years. And already I think it is just over \$8 million dollars in housing they are looking a reducing. And it's going to be very hard for me to trying to understand that because yet, you know, we got priority is number 1 for housing but yet we're reducing our budget but then they -- until I see the mandate letters coming from this government, it's going to be very tough for me to understand how are we going to deal with the housing crisis here in the Northwest Territories? We got about 10,000 homes short, and we are nowhere near trying to fix this problem that we have.

And so I have been raising this in the 19th Assembly and also in the 20th Assembly. So I do have questions for the Premier on the plan as to how we are going to deal with this issue, but I am hoping to talk to the Minister about this again.

But, anyway, Mr. Speaker, when I go through the budget, the future for my riding doesn't look good for this fiscal year. I am hoping that maybe over the next two or three -- well, the second and third and fourth year, I am hoping that the Government of the Northwest Territories and Cabinet could really take a look at -- look at the letters I put forward and based on the feedback I got from the leadership in my riding and see what we can do to try to get that onto the next year's budget because, Mr. Speaker, small communities do matter. And to me, when I read this budget, it's geared for, you know, the status quo, nothing's gonna change but, you know, I want to see this change for all the communities in the Northwest Territories, for small communities, because we have issues on alcohol, drugs, housing, homelessness, you name it. We have to figure a way around this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch base on housing just a little bit more. Right now as it is, between the housing budget of what we have right now with the Housing NWT and of \$121 million plus the shared financial directed contribution to Housing NWT of \$76 million, that's \$197 million for this fiscal year. That's just to maintain the status quo that we have. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, you know, for the life of this government, for housing corporation, by 2036 or 2038, that's 14 years from now, at that rate it went to \$197 million times let's say for 14 years, that's \$2.7 billion. And when I look at that, for the next 14 years, that's just to maintain the housing corporation as is, as we know it today. It's not addressing the housing needs of the Northwest Territories.

So, I don't know how we are going to address this problem, but I am hoping that we could continue to work with Cabinet and Indigenous governments to figure this one out, because we're in big trouble.

And what I don't want to see anymore, as well, there was an article in 2022 where the GNWT -- Housing NWT got \$60 million from CIRNAC and that was to deal with the housing crisis here in the Northwest Territories. Instead, they turned that around and fixed up public housing units. And I was concerned because when I go back to Fort Resolution, the leaders, the Metis leaders, the chief will come to me and say Rick, what's going on there? They say well, they're competing with us because we're trying to apply for money too to fix up our housing units. And so I say I don't know. I don't know

why, or. But anyway that's a big concern. So I am hoping that, you know, we got to put that aside and I think that we need to start working together. That's the only way that we could do it. But overall in this business plan that was put forward by the Housing NWT is that they want to put \$50 million for the next four years into fixing up public housing. And just on the operation and maintenance.

So, this budget that was put forward, it was based on the deputy ministers from all of the departments, and this one here stood out to me. And I don't know, like I don't know if -- I have no explanation as to when CMHC is going to be cutting off their funding to Housing NWT for operation and maintenance but at the same time while that is happening, we brought ten homes from CIRNAC into Lutselk'e but we can't even get money for lot development. And then I go to MACA and they tell me oh, you got to take it out of CPI dollars. But Dettah, N'dilo, Lutselk'e, are not tax-based communities. Fort Resolution is a tax-based community but yet we can't even afford to develop lots in our community. But fortunately Housing NWT has been really pushing housing in our communities the best they can. But, also, they are doing lot development. And I don't know if it's in your budget to do that. So, you know, and I compliment the Minister on doing everything they can to try to deal with this issue, but it's a problem. And something that we cannot overlook.

So the big question is that, you know, going forward, how's Housing NWT going to deal with their units over in the next 14 years, what is your plan? How are you going to work with Indigenous governments? And it's important because we need to know. And the people are asking.

And so, overall, Mr. Speaker, I want to try to keep it short, but we have big issues. Like for example this year, we have MTS, the water is so low that we might not even get the ten units back into Lutselk'e this year. And the high cost of living in my riding is high. And I talk about the solutions by saying let's do a feasibility study on the winter road. Let's do a feasibility study on the -- probably extending the airstrip, etcetera. But right now, the high cost of living in Lutselk'e is high. And all we're asking for is to be recognized and be included in your plan so that small communities do matter.

So, anyway, I want to just mention that because it's frustrating for me because I am bringing these issues here. I do letters. I put everything on the table, send it in, and then when I get the budgets back to me, none of my stuff is addressed. Or even looked at. So going forward, I am hoping maybe next year or the

year after, this government will look at the priorities of small communities.

So Mr. Speaker, I will be bringing this budget back to my chiefs and the Metis leaders in my riding, and I want to get some feedback on that. And I just want to let the government know that it's a big budget, \$2.29 billion, and the last Assembly I brought this issue up too, as well, and we had six MLAs stood up and supported me on this motion. Where I stood up and didn't support the motion because small communities weren't included in that budget. And there were a couple MLAs from Yellowknife and all communities. So I am not asking them to stand up and continue to do that. I am just saying that, you know, there is a time and place that in this government we have to start recognizing small communities. And it's important because we feel the impacts in the communities. And you could see it just here in Yellowknife now, in small communities we are dealing with drug issues that is confronting everybody in our small communities.

So I do have a motion that I will be talking about later today. But overall, Mr. Speaker, I will just continue to -- I just want to bring this up from my riding and continue -- I want to work with this government. I want to work with the Minister and the Premier and see what we can do to address some of these issues.

So I will leave it that there, Mr. Speaker, and I will say mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 7 of 7. Member from Frame Lake.

#### MR. MORSE'S REPLY

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, although I have felt a strong sense of responsibility since the day I was first elected, I must say, the weight of what our territory is facing in the near future has felt heavier still as I have been considering the 2024-2025 Budget and the new reality of the Government of the Northwest Territories. At the time when our territory is most in need of investment in housing, education, critical infrastructure, health care, and climate change adaptation, amongst other things, our government is at the cusp of hitting its debt ceiling and has little to spend on any new initiatives. Getting older seems to accelerate with every passing year, Mr. Speaker, but I am still surprised to find myself wistfully looking back on the good old days of four years ago when the government had money to spend. Alas, here we are.

I have shared a fair number of specific comments on the budget and business plans

already and will continue to do so during our deliberations, so I will keep my response to the Budget Address to high-level commentary on how the budget relates to our priorities.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the priorities that we set together as a group and at the proposed budget, I perceive a disconnect. My understanding of why we set focused priorities was so we could direct our energy to what we and the public have clearly communicated are the areas requiring the highest attention and resources. The other side of that council, of course, is that we may have to do less in other areas in order to ensure resources are directed at the priorities. This is the very essence and purpose of priority setting.

I think it's important to explore how we got to where we are with this budget and how this has contributed to the disconnect, I'm speaking to. As the budget was prepared, departments were given high-level direction to implement the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy. This applied to all departments, and I think we've seen all make attempts at following it to a greater or lesser extent. Departments also took the priorities and looked at how their existing programming, or even some proposed programming, would help us work towards them. This is a fair approach for the departments to take individually. But what I don't think got enough attention was the high-level government-wide view across departments to look at the overall list of programs and activities we are engaged in, and whether the priorities necessitate shifts in resources or direction in order to substantively achieve movement on the priorities we set. By not doing this, we have arrived at a budget which has somewhat successfully began to implement the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy, and has also resulted in reductions to funding for housing, which is our stated top priority; education, which I believe is integral to a strong economic foundation; and health.

Looking at it this way, it seems evident to me that the top priority of this government is not any of our stated priorities agreed upon by caucus, rather, the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy is the number 1 priority of our government.

This may simply be the reality we have to face, but I suggest that if we had given more thought or time to better align our resources towards the priorities that we set, we might be able to better move towards fiscal sustainability and the stated priorities of the Assembly.

I want to turn to speaking to the individual priorities, what they mean to me, and what shifting resources to them will look like in my opinion. I'll start with housing.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see NWT Housing looking to do a territory-wide needs assessment for housing, which I understand will inform applications to the federal government and other potential funders for funding towards addressing this key issue. I support this item in the business plans and would like it to lead to long-term planning and costing towards fully addressing identified needs over time as I have discussed previously. Where I think we are lacking, is in addressing the growing O and M deficit for this department and the declining state of our existing housing stock in the territory. This gap is why Members have brought forward the proposal to add \$200 million to NWT Housing's budget over the next four years so that we can address required maintenance and upgrading of existing housing stock. If we do not do this, Mr. Speaker, I fear we run the risk of losing stock over time as quickly as we are replacing it, making it difficult to ever get to the point where we are fully addressing needs.

The next priority item I'd like to speak to is the strong economic foundation. Recently, the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment received a presentation from Mr. Graeme Clinton on his Eyes Wide Open Report, which discusses the upcoming closure of the diamond mines, what this will mean for our economy, and encourages leaders to discuss and develop a vision for what comes next. I consider my thoughts on this priority item the beginning of my response to that report.

Mr. Speaker, mining has for many years formed the backbone of the private sector of the NWT's economy, as is highlighted in the Eyes Wide Open Report. I think it is true that private investment and industry in the territory are an important component of a healthy economy and agree that employment, poverty levels, and economic activity are closely tied to social and health outcomes. I agree with Cabinet's mandate item under this priority to strengthen and improve efficiency in our regulatory system and am happy to make contributions towards that item with the experience I bring from working within the system.

I also want to focus on another aspect of our territory's relationship with industry that is highlighted, perhaps inadvertently, in the Eyes Wide Open Report and that I think requires our attention. As noted in the report, of 3100 jobs associated with this sector, 1500 of them have been staffed by NWT residents. The rest are staffed from the south.

While we did get around to establishing a heritage fund in this territory, it has been noted in the past to lose money some years and has

failed to maximize long-term benefit for our residents from one-time resource extraction. So I would argue that we have failed to fully maximize the potential benefits associated with this sector to residents of the NWT by not investing more in education and workforce development and ensuring that we are adequately capturing royalties and saving them so that future generations can benefit from resources that they won't have access to because they have been mined in the present. What I don't want to see us do is double down on a model that has gotten us into the scenario we are in now, where we are facing significant economic hardship whenever industry ebbs and flows, or that there is significant economic activity happening but, despite this, many people are not in a position to benefit directly from this activity.

This does not mean I don't want to see us develop our resources. What it means is that I want to ensure that we are working to ensure we can do so in a way that maximizes benefits to people. To this point, Mr. Speaker, when I think of a strong economic foundation, I want to focus on the fact that ultimately people are the foundation of a strong economy. I would also turn that phrase around and state that people are also the reason to build a strong economy, and outcomes for the people of the Northwest Territories need to be the focus of our government. For this reason, for a long time, I have been advocating for significant investment in education in the NWT. I believe that we need to take a holistic approach to this and focus on improving outcomes for JK to 12 students and also round out our academic system by building a world-class Polytechnic University to help develop our workforce and diversify our economy.

In response to Mr. Clinton's call for leaders to work to develop a cohesive vision for the future of the Northwest Territories, I want to point to the fact that a number of northern jurisdictions, which have previously largely relied on mining, are successfully diversifying their economies and that development of universities, and the knowledge economy is a key component in that shift. We only need to look next door to the Yukon, which is realizing economic and population growth through a diverse economy, to see an example of how this could work here. While post-secondary education is just one component of the Yukon's success, it is where I want the focus to be because of the status of our own post-secondary development project.

I look at our territory in comparison to the Yukon, and I am incredibly concerned about the troubling news that Aurora College's transition to a polytechnic is struggling to come to fruition. When I think of the Member for Inuvik

BootLake's comments about us becoming a have-not territory, I worry that if we fail to adequately commit to invest in and ensure that this project succeeds, it will be yet another step towards economic and social downturn in comparison to our thriving neighbor.

We also need to consider the opportunities we are missing out on by not moving forward with this initiative.

The federal government has invested millions in infrastructure and program funding to support Yukon College's transition. It is also interesting to note that NWT diamond money has gone towards building and funding universities - in British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, Chuck Fipke, one of the discoverers of diamonds in the NWT, has donated \$17 million to UBC over the years for buildings, equipment, and programming. Stewart Blusson, his partner in business, has donated \$105 million to BC universities. By not having an institution to capture these kinds of investments, we are missing out. I find it incredibly frustrating to say that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a situation where we have to tell residents that if they want to attain a high-quality education, they have to leave the territory. We are heading towards a situation where we will be telling residents that if they want to realize a good career in a range of sectors, they will have to leave the territory. At what point are we simply telling people they need to leave the territory? Let's not get to that point, Mr. Speaker. Let's look to our neighbor's example and invest in our people and develop the foundation for a strong economy so people can look forward to a bright future here.

We need to come together and work towards a collective vision which sets aside regional squabbling and seeks to work together to realize benefits for our territory as a whole. I heard Indigenous leaders making this call at the recent economic forum in April and was excited to hear their unity. Let's ensure the territorial government joins them and helps to coalesce around a vision we can all be excited about and work towards.

Lastly, I will speak to health. Mr. Speaker, as noted a few evenings ago, I am happy to see the health department speaking to evolving and investing in our primary care system to ensure better and more equitable access to care. I campaigned on making this shift and believe that while it may seem like a modest goal, it is integral and the key to ensuring better health outcomes in our territory. As noted previously in statements, the omission I see in health's business plans is addressing head on the

workforce and management issues in the system which have been causing so many issues that we've seen in the news. For those reasons, I support the recommendations for change brought forward by Members in our budget report, which speak for themselves and don't need to be reiterated here. I also continue to advocate that the health Minister consider the recommendation brought forward by the Standing Committee on Social Development to pause changes to the extended health benefits program.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I would like to speak briefly to a part of how we got to the fiscal situation we are in and its implications on our ability to realize our goals for the Northwest Territories.

Over the years, GNWT workforce growth has significantly outpaced that of the population growth of the Northwest Territories. This trend became particularly acute most recently. In the short span of the past four years, the GNWT workforce grew by 25 percent. Coincidentally, and perhaps it is fair to say consequently, we seem to be less able than ever to provide adequate funding to our NGOs, to infrastructures, to programs which support our residents most in need. Mr. Speaker, I think we need to consider a shift away from answering the problems we face by growing the government and take a more holistic look at how the government can best achieve results for our territory by working with and funding partners, particularly our NGOs.

I do not think we need to take a draconian approach to this conversation and certainly do not advocate for one. Rather, I suggest we consider long-term planning which seeks to minimize impacts to individuals but also seeks to ensure our resources are used strategically and effectively and not continuing to grow the workforce exponentially as we have been. I want to see us investing in long-term sustainability in our NGO sector, to realize the benefits they can help bring. Let's invest in the arts, Mr. Speaker. Let's invest in tourism. Let's invest in diversifying our economy so that we are not in a situation of fiscal uncertainty whenever the sole industry that we're relying on ebbs and flows.

In closing Mr. Speaker, if I can share one overarching message in my reply to the Budget Address, it is that I would like to see us to truly seek to put our resources behind the priorities we have set. As I have said before and as stated in the mandate, we need to challenge the status quo and be bold and decisive. We need to make a plan for what we are going to do in the short-term future to address the most immediate risks we are facing, make some decisions about what we're going to set aside

for now, or not do anymore considering these priorities, and take swift action on implementing this plan. We can move quickly when need be, Mr. Speaker.

This government has demonstrated this ability in the face of several crises in the past four years. I think it would be ambitious to expect us to work as quickly as private industry but how about we shoot for significantly quicker than having plans in place two years from now or goals like developing a plan at some point within the term of the Assembly. Let's move quickly and let's be ambitious. Let's invest in our people, Mr. Speaker. They are the foundation of our economy, and they are the reason we are here. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 7 of 7. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

#### MR. NERYSOO'S REPLY

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orin Gwiinzii. Good day, colleagues. Today I would like to give my perspectives on the 2024 -2025 Budget of the Government of the Northwest Territories and how it will affect the residents of our communities. Although the government has to make some very difficult choices for the benefit of our immediate future and the continued lifestyle of all our residents who are dependent on the operation of our day-to-day well-being. We, as a government, and the residents of the Northwest Territories, must play an important role in making this budget work for all involved. Myself, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, has always and will continue to fight for community-based programs where I feel fit. There are situations where I will have to side with regional or territorial decisions mainly for the fact that this is where some of these decisions have to be made. Mr. Chair, I will start with the department responsible for housing.

This, the 20th Assembly, has made housing its top priority. In 1967, the government came into our communities and stated that it would make our lives more comfortable and convenient to live. Although we did not find our lifestyle uncomfortable or inconvenient, we let the government of yesterday disrupt our traditional way of life. We have become too dependent on the government and we have to get away from this dependency.

It is evident that this government, or any government, cannot relieve us of the housing crises that we are encountering. The Government of the Northwest Territories cannot meet the housing needs of our communities now or in the immediate future.

What we can do is work collaboratively with the Indigenous governments of our respective communities to try and come up with realistic solutions to this ongoing crisis. Financial resources should continue to flow to the communities because it is our community leadership who are the ones that are dealing with the housing issues on a day-to-day basis. I would encourage the department to continue to work with the communities on a regular basis.

The renting formula has to be addressed as soon as possible. The current rent scale is not working for the tenants who reside in the public housing units because of the high unemployment rate within the Mackenzie Delta riding.

Most of the employment opportunities are seasonal. With the current rent scale, most of the seasonal workers are getting into arrears with Housing NWT. There are situations where some of these potential employees do not want to work because their rent will increase, or they will not qualify for income assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the health and social services department is also on the minds of all residents of the Northwest Territories and we have to meet the needs of the residents in order to have a healthy and vibrant family, community, and Northwest Territories as a whole.

Addictions is plaguing our residents and our communities throughout the North, and we have to address the crises head on. I have always stated that in order to combat the addictions problem, we must include the whole family in the treatment process because it is just not the addict who requires counselling services. When one person is addicted to a substance, it impacts the whole family and therefore we must help them to cope with the treatment process and be part of the solution.

Mr. Speaker, medical travel and medical escorts is an ongoing issue that needs special attention. We find that there are clients who are elderly, illiterate, or have English as a second language going to southern institutions by themselves. The financial resources surrounding this concern should not restrict the clients from having an escort to assist them in receiving the best care possible.

I know that we are in a nursing shortage throughout the North, and we all have to play our part in adapting to this shortage. In our smaller communities, we must utilize the community health workers so that the clients are given the best care possible and that starts with these local workers who are all well known to these patients. Being able to administer

medicine that has been prescribed is very important to the healing process of our elderly patients.

Mr. Speaker, income support has been one of my more concentrated areas of concern. In no way am I trying to punish the recipients of this program. The aim of my concern is to have our residents become more self-reliant and less accustomed to free handouts. There are people who require the use of this program, mainly the elderly and disabled. This group of people are identified, and I will advocate for their continued benefit from the income assistance program. But there are individuals who are able to work or conduct some sort of productive choice in an effort to get them back into the workforce and be a positive example to their families and to their communities. I have been an advocate in trying to find positive measures where the Indigenous governments can assist the Government of the Northwest Territories in developing programs where we can educate our people in becoming less reliant on the government and help the economy grow.

I am enthusiastic in the approach that this government is taking in regards to education. Education is the fundamental part of our communities in having a sustainable economy, a healthy community, and a healthy Northwest Territories. If we can do away with socially promoting our students, we will have a brighter future and this government seems to be addressing this concern. Building the self-esteem of our younger generation will enable the future generation to be productive leaders in the coming years and that tasks starts today.

I have attended too many graduation ceremonies where the celebration is merely a celebration, not one of completing one's grade 12 where they are eligible to move on to post-secondary education, not where these misled students are stuck in our communities with low self-esteem. It is time for this government to honour our treaties that were signed in an effort to provide the best education to our children, now and in the immediate future.

Having a sustainable economy will benefit everyone in the Northwest Territories for years to come. We have to include the Indigenous governments and the grassroots people at the community level. What works in Inuvik, Hay River, or Yellowknife may not work in the community of Tsiigehtchic because the residents of Tsiigehtchic will have their own vision. What we can do as a government is provide the communities with resources to continue to move forward.

Public safety seems to be a concern to the residents since the inclusion of hard drugs coming into our smaller communities. The RCMP are reluctant to assist where assistance is needed because they may not have the resources or may not have the training to address the issue that comes with the criminal activity related to gangs and drug dealers from southern parts of Canada.

It has been over 40 years since the MLA's of the Mackenzie Delta riding have been advocating for a nurse and the RCMP to be stationed in the community of Tsiigehtchic, and I will continue to advocate on their behalf. This government is initiating a community policing program in a couple of NWT communities, and it is my hope that Tsiigehtchic will be considered for one of these pilot projects in the near future. It is very urgent that we see the presence of these resource people because Tsiigehtchic is right on the highway system and alcohol and drugs are already in the community with no preventative measures to keep the residents safe.

In closing Mr. Chair, I am confident that this government will indeed make these tough choices for the benefit of all Northerners. I have a 7-year-old granddaughter and one day she may ask why I was a part of this process in trying to better shape her future, and I hope it was the right decision that we as a government are making today. We, as a government and MLAs, have to live with the decisions that we make today but it is the residents that we represent who will have to adapt to these tough decisions. I am confident that we can all work together as a government of this 20th Legislative Assembly for the residents of this great land we call home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 7 of 7. Member from Yellowknife North.

#### MS. MORGAN'S REPLY

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the ideas and intentions behind this budget really resonate with me. Practical and realistic - that certainly is my style of doing things. I agree we need to pay down more of our debt and live more within our means.

We heard from the finance Minister that this budget is about value and efficiency, not just reductions. I do appreciate the thought that has been put into streamlining efforts of departments where there was previously overlap such as merging responsibilities for immigration and arts funding that were

previously split between ECE and ITI and merging the technology services centre with information systems shared services. I am also excited about centralized mobile fleet management -- i truly am, yeah, okay. So we can make more efficient use of our large fleet of vehicles. I also agree that it's not sustainable or wise to tackle every problem by adding another GNWT position. We cannot solve our economic problems, including low employment in some communities, by hiring everyone to work for the government. Where I start to get nervous is when I get the feeling that each department is being asked to do more with less.

Now, some people imagine that the government is made up of lazy office workers so of course we should be asking them to do more. They just need to learn how to hustle like their counterparts in the private sector. But in my experience, when we ask everyone in every department to do more with less, the burden usually falls disproportionately on the shoulders of those who are already doing the most; those who are the most dedicated and motivated, who will always take on more because no one else will do it. And most of the burden ends up falling on the frontline service providers that we often take for granted, as well as the non-profits who take on some of the hardest frontline work that, frankly, no one else will do.

We demand more from our nurses and doctors who take on more and more patients in an emergency room that's bursting at the seams, who cover more and more shifts, and on top of this are expected to train a revolving door of locums and agency nurses.

We demand more from our teachers, who we expect to somehow improve attendance rates and graduate more kids even when facing classrooms where 80 to 90 percent could have language or learning disabilities.

We take for granted that the frontline workers at our non-profits, our shelters for example, will just keep taking more and more people into the shelters, well beyond their capacity, because they don't want to leave anyone in the cold. Meanwhile, many of those seeking shelter these days are under the influence of harder drugs than we're used to seeing before, there is more lateral violence, and yet shelter workers are supposed to manage it all with the same resources as before, or bounce people over to the emergency room or the police, which are also overwhelmed.

Now we see in the business plans that this government states it will help non-profits by pointing them towards funding from elsewhere. I suspect that might lead us to hiring another GNWT employee to write funding proposals for

non-profits, which I would note is an example of exactly what we have pledged not to do, trying to solve each problem by hiring another GNWT worker. When the money that would have gone to a salary could just as easily have been given to the NGO to do the work themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that this government is not a money tree. I understand that it is our role to make tough choices as the finance Minister has emphasized. But, Mr. Speaker, our frontline workers in many areas are reaching a breaking point. We talk about the fiscal cliff that we're trying to back away from but what about the cliff that our social services are teetering on the edge of? I am concerned this budget does not lead our health system or our shelter system away from that cliff.

Now, the message from the finance Minister was that this was never intended to be an austerity budget or cuts for the sake of cuts. The problem is that in each department's scramble to find things to cut, we tend to reach for the things that might ruffle the least feathers, the opportunities where we see vacancies or retirements. And that's not necessarily making the tough choices. It gets really tempting to scrap the things that haven't worked out yet, the programs that have turned out to cause frustration and conflict, things that now feel really annoying and we just want to be done with them. The problem is that in some cases we're giving up on important things that we actually need in the long-term even if we haven't yet realized the vision of what they are supposed to be.

A prime example is the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university.

The money seems to have dried up for continuing the transformation process. And this budget is letting the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Innovation fade away even though that was where accredited programs were being developed, and we're reducing general Aurora College funding as well. Now I understand that everyone is frustrated that this project hasn't worked out as hoped. But this territory needs a high-quality post-secondary institution for so many reasons. We cannot let this vision die or get distracted by conflicts and rivalries between different communities. We absolutely need an institution where young people from the North can get recognized degrees in anything from teaching, environmental science, trades, Indigenous governance, film - things that would open up a world of opportunities for our people. We need an institution where we can do world-class research in northern issues like permafrost thaw, mining innovations, climate change adaptation, Indigenous culture and language



revitalization, remediation. We need an institution that can attract students from around the world because we have something unique and valuable to offer.

This kind of institution can be an economic driver for the territory, both as a source of direct revenues in the form of tuition and research dollars, and as a way to produce a high-quality labour force. Mr. Speaker, we are so far from achieving that vision, and it's so tempting to put it on a back burner during a time of fiscal restraint, but it's now more than ever we need to make significant progress towards realizing the vision of a polytechnic university.

Another example of where we are scrapping something with an absence of vision is the proposed elimination of the Office of the Children's Lawyer. I understand there has been frustration with this office and uncomfortable relationships with other government agencies, but I would argue we need to step back and think about why we established this office in the first place. Our system does not always make decisions that are in the best interests of children, especially children in care, and we need to change that about our system. Now, there may be different ways to accomplish this so let's talk about that and get going. But this budget, unfortunately, creates an even bigger vacuum that takes us further from that goal.

We are trying to scrimp and save in health care but without a clear overarching vision of what we're trying to achieve, I believe that if we invest more now in staff retention and in health care workforce planning, we may see an increase to our budgets upfront during these main estimates but we will save vast amounts of money in the long-term because we won't see the huge deficits piling up and the constant requests for supplementary funds. We're failing to properly cost out our needs, failing to determine the right number of positions, the right composition of professionals to make up our primary care teams, but we hang over everyone's head in the system this scolding that they should be saving more money, that our system is too expensive. So managers try to skimp and cut corners, perhaps on staff benefits or not giving people the vacation time they're allotted, or we allow shifts to go unfilled, but then we lose our staff and then we scramble and then we end up paying far more by the end of the year for the agency nurses and locums to fill the gaps.

So this myth that we start out having no money is a dangerous trap, and it can lead us to these costly and short-sighted decisions. So instead our focus needs to be on building up value in the system, and the most valuable thing we have is our human resources.

Now, over the past few months, I had the privilege and chance to tour a number of facilities, the new Liwegoati Building in Yellowknife, the Children's First Child Care Facility in Inuvik, the Gwichin Wellness Camp, and I've been reflecting that we have invested a lot in truly impressive, state-of-the-art infrastructure. But have we remembered to invest enough in our human resources? Because we are struggling to sustain programming and actually staff these state-of-the-art facilities.

Now in terms of energy solutions, we are still all about the mega-projects. And then we encounter debacles like the insanely expensive Inuvik wind turbine system with its ballooning costs. And this might be enough to make us want to give up on renewable energy solutions entirely. Yet the most cost-effective steps are often the incremental ones, the small retrofits, switches to wood stoves and biomass heating. And I would propose a pilot project on renewable diesel, which I'll be speaking about later this session. But these are not the exciting mega-projects, so they're easy to ignore or reduce because few will notice that they're gone. The problem is we have failed so far to articulate a coherent energy vision. It just seems too overwhelming and expensive. And yet we always find money at the end of each year to subsidize our power corporation, to subsidize diesel through supplementary funding when our use skyrockets due to low water or the price of diesel goes up.

The common theme that I'm trying to point out here is that when we lack a clear vision and clear plans, it costs us more in the end. We need a clear vision for economic development, and I believe it needs to be centered around the how, not the what.

I do not think that it is government's role to pick which is the next industry that's going to save us all. The goal is to reduce dependency, to build up our human resources, and to ensure we don't have so many jobs and contracts going south.

Now, we've talked a lot lately about ending the dependency that stems from colonialism. It's important to remember that we need to both avoid dependency on government and avoid dependency on any one industry. We cannot hand over our fate to a handful of multinational corporations when their decisions are ruled by global commodity price fluctuations, boom and bust patterns, not to mention geopolitical games with China. I'm not saying industry is bad; I'm just saying we have to focus on things we have the most control over, and that is our own human resources.

Now, my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake spoke to us passionately about being resource rich and cash poor. So we need to turn some of those resources into cash.

Now diamond mines were likely the best cash cow we could ever wish for, one of the few types of resource extraction that doesn't require shipping out massive amounts of material, which is obviously extremely expensive in the NWT due to our transportation and infrastructure challenges. Diamond mines were our chance to finally lay the foundations for real social and economic progress. But we have fallen short. We largely failed to seize the opportunity to make lasting investments in our children, in our education and health systems and, as a result, in our workforce. We cannot afford to keep making this mistake.

I also don't believe that economic diversification is the magic bullet that will save us, at least not when it means sprinkling seeds in every direction, hoping that something will bear fruit if we keep pumping government funds indefinitely into every sector.

I am encouraged that in this budget and business plans we will be developing a Macroeconomic Policy Framework, that the mantra now is not to pick the winners but to create an environment where northern businesses can flourish and be competitive. That includes ensuring housing availability for workers. It also means changing the way we structure our contracts, using our procurement power to help incubate northern solutions and innovations. The big picture of the economy basically comes down to what can we offer that the world is demanding? What can we offer that has a higher value and lower cost than anyone else?

I can't help but think that our best bet is to invest in our ideas, our cultures, our stories, which can attract investment in the form of a university, film, art, tourism. The areas where we face our biggest challenges in terms of our remoteness, the climate change threats to transportation and infrastructure, these also make us unique and so they present opportunities to come up with northern solutions, northern innovations, in partnership with researchers from around the world, and it's these kinds of ideas and innovations that we can be exporting.

So instead of starting by picking an industry, above all I believe we need to cultivate excellence in everything that we do so that we can develop things to offer and sell that are competitive not just in the North but in a global environment. The only way forward is to move away from dependence, from crutches, from excuses about how we can't expect the NWT to

really thrive because of all the special challenges that we face. I do still have hope, Mr. Speaker, that we can cultivate a culture of excellence in government. That's how we will develop value and efficiency. So when things are going sideways, instead of making the easy cuts we need to go back to the drawing board, figure out why things have gone wrong, refocus our vision and redouble our efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 7 of 7. Acknowledgements. Member from Frame Lake.

### Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 2-20(1):  
MORGAN STABEL, NATIONAL YOUTH  
BOWLING CHAMPION

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm excited and proud to acknowledge Frame Lake resident Morgan Stabel who recently won the national youth bowling championship while representing the NWT in the senior girls division. Morgan is the top Canadian five-pin bowler in her category, and she is the first NWT resident to win gold at a national bowling event in Canada in 22 years.

Mr. Speaker, that is an incredible feat and an inspiration for all NWT athletes. Congratulations, Morgan, on your big achievement.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Acknowledgements. Member from Range Lake.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 3-20(1):  
RETIREMENT OF JEFF SEABROOK

**MR. TESTART:** I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge the incredible career of Range Lake's Jeff Seabrook who is set to retire after nearly three decades of inspiring and guiding northern students through his tireless service with Yellowknife Education District 1. Currently serving as principal of Ecole William McDonald Middle School, Jeff is known for his passionate support for French language education and has developed many outdoor student programs such as winter camps and canoe trips. In 2019, he was named as one of the country's best educators when he won that year's Learning Partnership Canada's Outstanding Principal Award. I know I speak for this entire Assembly when I congratulate him on his achievements, and we wish him all the best as he concludes that final stretch of his career and heads into retirement. Thank you, Jeff, for all your hard

work preparing generation after generation for their lives ahead. You deserve all the best. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Acknowledgements.

Colleagues, recognizing the time, we will have a brief recess. A brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

Colleagues, oral questions. Range Lake.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 238-20(1): CRIME REDUCTION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, violent crime in the Northwest Territories is on the rise as is drug crime. Drug seizures are up a hundred percent, I believe, and homicides are up more so than that. This use -- when I was growing up here, this was a very peaceful place. You know, we didn't see anything like this at the scale that it's happening now. Does the Premier agree that this is a crisis that needs to be resolved? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister responsible for Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't like to use the term crisis but, in this situation, the influx of drugs, the increase in violent crime, the influx of handguns, I think that we are facing a crisis. The reason I kept the Justice portfolio this term is because I've seen what happened in my community of Hay River, and I wanted to make sure that I was able to follow through on some of the initiatives that we began to start addressing this because it is a deadly serious issue. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Premier for his leadership on this. It is something I very much support, and I want to commend him for bringing new resources to bear. Can he just let us know how this new crime reduction unit is going to make a difference. The RCMP say it's a game changer. Can he speak to that? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, you know, we see RCMP around the community. We see them around town out on patrol. They're responding to calls. And that's what they do. They don't necessarily have the time to go out and conduct investigations, to do surveillance, to focus on some of these drug-related issues because they are out doing their day-to-day work. And so the crime reduction unit is able to work in those areas

where the other constables just don't have the time to do it and aren't mandated to do that type of work. So they will be focusing on drugs, bootlegging, which often go hand in hand, and working with the federal unit as well in terms of dealing with organized time. So this is a unit that's being put together to address the issues that we are facing in the Northwest Territories right now. It is being tailored to the issues that we're facing. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are expending the resources in this budget. We are committing to legislation in the future, but I think there are people worried about it now. When will they start seeing a difference in crime rates? When will they start feeling safer communities? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish I had an answer for that. This is a tough situation. Everywhere that I'm aware of, where there's a demand for drugs, there's an influx of drugs. There's a flow of drugs. And so until we address that demand, it's going to be very difficult to stop the increases in crime. But that being said, the Member noted that there have been significant increases in drug busts, in charges, in seizures of handguns, so we are seeing the impact of enhanced enforcement. Unfortunately, there's also enhanced crime. So it's a bit of a -- it feels like a bit of an arms race right now. And we are making an impact. And I appreciate the Member bringing this up and actually all the Members in this House, it's one of the few things that we can all agree on is the need for more enforcement in this area. And that's really a sad comment on the state of things, but I think that it shows how important it is that we do continue this enforcement and these enhanced efforts. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these efforts are largely designed, I think, to combat organized time. What are we doing about community policing to make sure there's, you know, reassuring community safety officers on the streets, providing that support at the local level, connecting with people, especially the unhoused population that make a big difference in Yellowknife. We have a pilot in Fort Liard. Is the Premier willing to bring that pilot into Yellowknife and into other centres, like his community of Hay River, so we have more presence on the streets keeping people safe? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately, I would like to see an expansion of the community safety officer program. I can't

comment on where such a program might be most effective. Right now it is being piloted in Fort Liard. And the program will be evaluated, and that evaluation will inform the types of communities where such a program would be the most effective. So we want to make sure we're getting the best bang for our buck. And so maybe it is a small community type of program, maybe it's for regional centres, it could be for Yellowknife. So that remains to be seen, but we are continuously lobbying the federal government for support for these types of initiatives. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 239-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

**MR. HAWKINS:** All right, mucho gracias, Mr. Speaker. All right, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of education had mentioned in one of her comments yesterday that the most significant tool at her fingertips is the mandate that is issued to the board. And so the board I'm referring to is the Aurora College board. And she said the next letter is coming out approximately July and even the interim letter may or may not -- regardless, we're almost at July -- have the direction of the mandate of which tells the college to work towards switching to a polytech.

My question for the Minister is will the new mandate letter, issued in July or thereabouts, provide direction and instruction for the college to follow through on the transition so Aurora College becomes a polytech? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the interim mandate letter that was issued in the last Assembly by the previous Minister of education expires in July. So that's where the July timeline comes in, is that the existing one expires in July. So that project has been jump started by letter from myself to the board of governors, and that project is currently underway between myself and the board. And it is the intention that, yes, it will continue to outline intentions for the board of governors and Aurora College to continue along with their transformation efforts, but it is really a collaborative process that is done between myself and the board, and so we have to ensure that we are both in alignment on that. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister define the difference between intentions and direction? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I could definitely provide a difference of definitions of the two. But the reason that I am saying that there is an intention rather than a direction is because I am reminded it is a collaborative process. I want to ensure that both of our voices are in it because we are both agreeing to something in it. But from myself, I do have an expectation that transformation is part of that mandate letter and is part of the marching kind of direction of the Aurora College as well. I think that this -- I agree with Members, this is a very important project. It has a tremendous amount of opportunity for the territory, not only to attract new students and new Northerners but also to ensure that we are continuing to build a skilled workforce for Northerners. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** All right, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that answer. According to Global University Systems Canada, it says Canadian universities represent a formidable economic force with far reaching impacts. Mr. Speaker, we can only get to that and achieve those types of things if this mandate for the transition portion is funded. Therefore, if it's going to be part of the marching instructions and directions, will it be supported with some type of financial support specific to transition? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by just first thanking Members for continuing this conversation on the floor of the House and out in public as well because I do think this is a very important project, and having their voices lent to it is very important.

Mr. Speaker, while I am not responsible or accountable to the operations within Aurora College, I am accountable to the dollars that we as an Assembly approve for Aurora College for their running of their programs. When transformation was underway in the previous Assembly, it was agreed by senior management of Aurora College, as well as senior management from Education, Culture and Employment, that the funds for the Bachelor of Education and the diploma of social work would be repurposed for the purposes of transformation to be able to continue to fund that project to go forward. And so if those funds are not enough and are not being used for that purpose, then I would also have -- because of my responsibility to the dollars that are spent through my department, have the responsibility of going back to the college as well to ensure that they have the dollars that they need but

that they are also spending the dollars that they have been provided with a form of accountability and, of course, positive return on investment for Northerners. So that is definitely a conversation that has to happen between myself and board of governors. And less than a week ago, it was the first ask for additional funding that I received from Aurora College. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Member from Yellowknife Centre. Final supplementary.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I heard that correctly, that was the longest yes I've ever heard, or we'll find a way if it's not available. And the Minister's welcome to correct me if yes wasn't in there but that's certainly what it sounded like. It was difficult to follow, but I think I got it.

So, Mr. Speaker, once the mandate letter is drafted and sent, obviously in agreement -- I've listened to how the Minister chooses to proceed on this one -- would she be willing to make that mandate letter public? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, subject to legislation, I'd be more than happy to make anything public to make sure that I am following the rules of the Northwest Territories but certainly I definitely agree in transparency, and I want to encourage and support the Member's desire to continue to stay afoot on the happenings over at Aurora College, the direction they've been provided, and also the timelines that they intend to adhere to.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why yes, was a little bit longer is because I've answered this question numerous times and want to ensure that I'm getting all the information out there because this is, I know, a subject of great interest to Members. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 240-20(1):  
ADDRESSING PUBLIC HOUSING  
WAITLISTS

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I give my question, I do want to have a quick congratulations to Minister Semmler and Minister Kuptana and their Member statements today and congratulate them on this special day as well.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the waiting lists and the issues around housing in my community. My questions are for the Minister of housing.

The first question is how many vacant units are there currently in Inuvik, Mr. Speaker?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Boot Lake. Minister responsible for Housing.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently in the town of Inuvik, there are five units for occupancy that are in the process of being allocated, seven units with repairs in progress, and 14 units requiring repairs that have not yet begun. While officially we have 26 units vacant in Inuvik, five will be shortly occupied. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Minister for that information and hopefully we can get those repairs done sooner rather than later and that we have the funding certainly allocated to do that.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide the current number of clients on the public housing waitlist in Inuvik?

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Inuvik, like many other communities across the North, we have a long waitlist. In Inuvik, we have a total of 80 families on the waitlist, one-bedroom 52 families; two-bedroom, 17; three-bedroom, we have 8 families, and the four-bedrooms, we have 3 families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister Kuptana. Obviously, that speaks to the need, Mr. Speaker, that we need, you know, additional housing not only in Inuvik, and I'm sure that's, as the Minister says, throughout the territory, especially in our regions, smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to prioritizing housing for the elderly and disabled? I'm not sure how many of those families or how many on those lists for the one-bedroom are elderly or have disabilities, but can the Minister commit to prioritizing for disabled residents on the waitlist and elderly residents, please?

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this subject, with elderly and disabled residents, it's become a discussion item, a discussion point, throughout the Northwest Territories and with the Council of Leaders. So as part of the strategic renewal, Housing NWT has committed to ongoing policy and program improvements and will work with NWT Housing Forum to consider additional changes to the point rating system that may be needed. Housing NWT works closely with the Council of Leaders housing working group to update its policies in the 19th Assembly as part of the Housing NWT Strategic Renewal.

The current point rating system, after input from the working group, includes considering suitability, adequacy, and affordability of the individuals' current housing arrangements, as well as considering social factors such as victims of family violence, individuals with disabilities or medical conditions aggravated by their current living conditions, or those individuals who are homeless.

Housing NWT does design and maintain some homes that are designated for seniors or those with mobility/accessibility requirements and is currently delivering five duplexes to five communities across the Northwest Territories designed for specific clientele. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. Again, it's important that we get this information out there and that residents understand, because myself as well, as I'm sure as many other MLAs, do get a considerable amount of phone calls on the issue and to get this information out there, I think is great.

One final, Mr. Speaker. The Minister signed a collaborative agreement on housing with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, which I think is amazing and it's the kind of work we need to be doing. Can the Minister describe how the department is also working with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Inuvik native band? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Housing NWT has shared samples of formal agreements established with other Indigenous governments for consideration by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Housing NWT is committed to work with Indigenous governments through formal or informal arrangements. Housing NWT continues to meet with IRC informally and is working with them, for example on specific partnership project ideas as well as supporting them in securing land required for their own housing investments. This includes reviewing all vacant land buildings owned by housing and determining if those properties could be released to IRC in their communities or for their use. Housing NWT has signed a collaborative agreement with the Gwich'in Tribal Council and will work with them as well as the Inuvik native band and the Nihtat Gwich'in Council on housing priorities in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. I got it finally right. I said NWT Housing. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 241-20(1):  
ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of housing explain what efforts Housing NWT is doing in working with communities to help curb homelessness across the NWT? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Homelessness is a complex issue that requires an interdepartmental approach to provide a range of housing and health related wraparound supports. A Way Home, the GNWT's Homelessness Strategy, acknowledges this truth and has set us on a path towards integrated service delivery. Currently, Housing NWT operates two homeless shelters in Inuvik and funds shelters in Fort Simpson and Hay River as well as funding NGOs such as the YWCA, the Yellowknife Women's Society, and the Salvation Army, who provide services directly to the homeless population. Housing NWT also coordinates frontline training to NGOs and the GNWT Inuvik shelter staff to help build capacity for frontline staff who assist people that are experiencing homelessness. In addition, Housing NWT has also provided funding via the Northern Pathways to Housing for individual cases with wraparound supports. As the GNWT implements integrated service delivery, we anticipate enhanced collaboration and coordination with other government departments and agencies and eventually non-GNWT partners. Implementation of the integrated service delivery will include establishing five integrated co-located teams across the Northwest Territories that will initially be focused on supporting residents experiencing or at the risk of homelessness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that answer.

Mr. Speaker, in the 19th Assembly, there was a commitment to create a hundred units for vulnerable persons in the life of that Assembly, which was noted to be the first expansion of public housing stock in decades. I thank the Minister for clarifying this past February that those units should be completed this summer.

Can the Minister please explain if Housing NWT intends to seek further federal funding to make

similar investments into our public housing stock during the life of this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Housing NWT, as part of the GNWT federal engagement approach, will include housing as one of its top priorities for discussions on funding with Canada. Housing NWT will be focused on finding new sustainable long-term approaches to addressing housing needs. Housing NWT's supported by the other GNWT departments has begun preparations to engage with federal officials and will be doing so shortly now that the mandate has been finalized and released. The federal government, in its recent budget, announced a number of funding programs to address the national need for housing. A key interest of the GNWT and Housing NWT, in particular, is to understand these funding opportunities and how they can be maximized for the Northwest Territories for the benefit of the residents, Indigenous governments, and the GNWT. As has been stated previously, Housing NWT needs partnerships to address the housing crisis and that includes partnerships with both the Government of Canada and Indigenous governments as well as NGOs and other housing stakeholders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to hearing more about that engagement once it gets going.

Mr. Speaker, I know the previous Assembly also worked with Housing NWT to review their policies in an all-encompassing way. Can the Minister explain if Housing NWT is considering the contemporary issue of homelessness through the lens of the ongoing effects of colonialism given that Indigenous people are disproportionately represented in those experiencing a lack of housing? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Housing NWT did review policies related to homelessness and the disproportionate representation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in the 19th Assembly. One example of the changed included a homelessness assistance fund policy which now provides an extension for those requiring assistance more than once in their lifetime.

Approximately a year ago, the scoring criteria for public housing was adjusted to include a higher rate for those that are experiencing homelessness. We are currently reviewing other policies to see what changes are required and welcome any feedback Members may have. Under the Homelessness Strategy, other GNWT policies and processes will be reviewed

with this important lens in mind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I'm hoping maybe she could share some of that so we can give the feedback.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what Housing NWT's relationship is in the day to day with NGOs who provide emergency shelter and transitional supportive housing to residents and whether any permanent funding arrangements or partnerships can be made between such organizations and Housing NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Great Slave, two questions. Minister for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And from our perspective, we have a good working relationship with NGOs that provide emergency shelter and transitional supportive housing to residents. We are always looking for new funding opportunities both within and outside the GNWT and provide pathfinding support to these NGOs to access additional funding resources. Additionally, Housing NWT's staff regularly speak to the NGO staff related to other issues that they may have, including safety concerns and educational opportunities. When speaking to longer term or multi-year funding agreements, that is a question that requires an all of government response, not just Housing NWT. A Way Home recognizes the importance non-governmental partners have in addressing homelessness and specifically including measures to strengthen partnerships with this sector to ensure their sustainability and success.

In the business plan, Executive and Indigenous Affairs is committed to working to improve the relationship between the GNWT and NGOs and to working to better support the non-profit sector as a whole. There is much work to be done but we have reports like the 2023 advisory reports to build upon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

Colleagues, we just went through 25 minutes of question and answer, and we've only gone through four people. Can you please keep your answers a little more succinct moving forward.

Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 242-20(1):  
HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
FUNDING

**MR. EDJERICON:** I got 34 minutes. Thank you. No, I just wanted to maybe just ask the Minister that Housing NWT, the funding from CMHC's going to end in 2038, I just want to know what the housing corporation's planning to do between now and then in terms of their plans to deal with this issue on the decline of budgets.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister from Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, this is an issue that Housing NWT is concerned about. We have declining funding from CMHC. That's concerning. And basically this fund provides preventative maintenance on all houses across the North, Housing NWT units across the North. So in 2019-2022, Housing NWT entered into a multi-year bilateral funding agreement with CMHC that provided an ability to offset the annual decline of CMHC operating funding for the public housing program up to 2027-2028. Housing NWT will continue to work with the GNWT in engaging with the federal government on this important issue with the aim of securing long-term, sustainable funding certainty for the public housing program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we -- the Indigenous governments conclude their claims here in the North -- and there's still two outstanding and one being close to getting an ARP signed -- would the Minister on the interim start working with Indigenous governments to start making application to CIRNAC in partnership to address the housing crisis in our communities. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** So with the information I've been provided, Housing NWT does not receive funding from CIRNAC every year. In the 2022-fiscal year, the federal government announced a two-year funding allocation for Housing NWT to invest in public housing. This budget announcement was separate from the funding announced as distinction-based funding for Indigenous governments for housing. Housing NWT was very pleased to see that the funding going to Indigenous governments to support the housing needs in the Northwest Territories. Moving forward, though, Housing NWT intends to work in partnership with Indigenous governments when talking to Canada about funding for housing needs. Housing NWT will continue to work with each Indigenous

government to make determinations about roles and responsibilities. Not all Indigenous governments are interested in taking on public housing, and they see a continued role for Housing NWT in their regions. Housing NWT recognizes the need to work with Indigenous governments and take their lead in terms of their role with housing in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to working with the federal government to get more money for Indigenous governments to address their own housing needs? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Housing NWT intends to work in partnership with Indigenous governments in advancing our mandate in priorities related to housing in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as mentioned earlier, we got ten homes provided in Lutselk'e, and we're having issues with lot development. I'm wondering if the Minister of Housing NWT could look at that so that we are able to address the housing needs in our small community of Lutselk'e. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lot development is primarily a community government responsibility, and funding is provided to communities through their capital funding that can be used for this purpose. Housing NWT has engaged with Municipal and Community Affairs as well as Environment and Climate Change to work on the issue of land availability for housing in communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 243-20(1):  
FORGIVENESS OF HOUSING DEBT FOR  
ELDERS AND SENIORS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is for Minister of Finance, and I think Minister of housing can answer this as well, but due to FMB, I'll stick with Minister of Finance. The Financial Administration Act allows the financial management board to forgive debt owed to the government or a public agency where it would be just, unreasonable to do so. Can the Minister agree that it is not just or reasonable to



require repayment of debt to the GNWT for elders that cannot afford their housing. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can agree because that is one of the considerations that is within the Financial Administration Manual that if an individual is indigent or in other words is unable to repay, then that is one of the considerations and could be one of the reasons for forgiveness or remission of a debt. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Can the Minister commit to taking special consideration for elders specifically when reviewing GNWT policies that guide forgiveness of debt. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did note before, again, that there are some considerations already listed, including the inability to pay. With respect to elders broadly as an individual category, that is not currently a consideration and would probably be difficult because of the multitude of circumstances that elders may find themselves in and defining who may railroad may not be an elder. I can say, Mr. Speaker, being a whole of government, I know there is the policy review going on over in housing that you've already heard about, and to the extent that there may be an opportunity to build in what appropriate considerations are when an agency as housing brings forward debt for management to the financial management board, then that may be an opportunity to see if we can better define what it is that the Member's hoping to see. That would be an opportunity for that. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, thank you. Can the Minister commit to reviewing the information bulletin 640.01, forgiveness and remission under the Financial Administration Manual to deal with this circumstance. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is the document that guides what happens when first an agency or other department identifies a debt for repayment and then brings it forward for consideration. As I noted, the consideration does already include circumstances where an individual's indigent, so if there's a disconnect happening, if there's someone who's in those circumstances and is not finding their debt forgiven, I am going to commit that myself and my colleague Minister of housing will work

together to make sure that if there's a -- something -- if there's disconnecting, we could speak to the Member about what's -- if there's something that's not achieving the goal here that we can in the course of work that's already happening in housing make sure that we fill that gap. There's been over \$20 million already forgiven with respect to housing debts as well as other debts of this nature. And, again, with the indigent portion already there, I am concerned we're missing something, so I will speak to the Member further and my colleague and fill that gap. If you

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have any more further questions, but I will talk and meet with the Minister of Finance and housing later on. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 244-20(1):  
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PILOT PROJECT

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions today deal with housing, but I'll direct them to the Minister of health and social services as they relate to a program that is split between the two departments. So there are really encouraging plans to develop a transitional housing program for those returning for addictions treatment, and the pilot will involve one in Inuvik and one in Yellowknife. So does the Minister know, first, how many spots are needed in Yellowknife as in how many folks in Yellowknife do we generally have at any given time who are returning from treatment and need somewhere to live to get back on their feet? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yellowknife North. Minister of health and social services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as aftercare and transitional housing is not currently being offered in the Northwest Territories right now and it hasn't been offered in Yellowknife, we don't exactly have -- we don't know how many until we start to be able to track. We do know how many people go out for treatment. We do know that not all those people going out for treatment that are returning back need somewhere to live, but there are those that may. So this is -- will -- we don't have those numbers at this time. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my understanding is that the program in Yellowknife will have the capacity to house five to six people at any one time for 30 to 90 days, but if there are more than six people in Yellowknife that need transitional housing after returning from treatment, how can the department still support those people? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while the five to six spaces may not address the full need of the -- once we start to, you know, monitor who's coming back and whether or not what the type of facility or recovery or aftercare that they're going to need, housing they're going to need, it's -- this specific area is for those that are returning back and being able to support them through transitioning on to living on their own; however, I understand the Member's concern that right now we don't know how many we're going to need this. You know, we may. You know, at this time, I can't -- I couldn't answer that. But there are other programs and other services that we -- you know, we will continue to support residents returning back from any type of treatment. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** (audio) oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my understanding is that this is meant to be a pilot project, which implies that it's time limited, so how long is this pilot project intended to last? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this funding is for two years, and then we will -- as part of the business plan, we'll continue to move forward into the 2026-2027 business planning cycle for -- you know, for future funds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of health and social services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'm going to throw this last question at the Minister, but if she doesn't have the stats on hand, I'd be happy to get a written response later, but does she have any idea of the number of people in a year that go to -- away to addictions treatment and who might be returning to Yellowknife. She said they do keep numbers on those sorts of things. I'm wondering if she can give us a sense or if not get back to me with a sense of, like, what volume of people we're talking about that are returning from addictions treatment to Yellowknife. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will commit to getting the numbers that people that are being sent out from Yellowknife necessarily -- you know, if they come back to Yellowknife doesn't mean that this may be their end location because if somebody goes out and is getting well -- has gotten well, recovered from -- you know, and they may go to -- back to their home communities as they may have supports in those communities, so I -- what I can commit to is knowing the people that have been sent out from Yellowknife to the Member. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of health and social services. Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

QUESTION 245-20(1):  
HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of housing. Can the Minister describe her position on acknowledging housing as a human right in the NWT. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** From the Deh Cho. Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. It raises an important issue worthy of careful consideration by this House. I don't think there's anyone in this Chamber who doesn't agree that we're in a housing crisis and that stable, affordable housing provides a foundation for people's well-being and participation in society. The right to housing is the subject of international treaties, including the universal declaration of human rights and the international covenant on economic, social, and cultural rights. These are international obligations that fall within federal jurisdiction. In section 4, the Canadian National Housing Strategy Act speaks to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, which is the acknowledgement first that the right to housing has not been realized and, second, that it takes significant time and resources to move toward that state. This federal Act already applies throughout Canada. The federal government is the only government in Canada with the fiscal capacity and resources needed to help realize a right to housing. Under the national housing strategy, the federal government has been making significant investments in housing across Canada to aid with the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. Second

question is can the Minister describe discussions that have occurred at the NWT Housing Forum to acknowledge housing as a human right. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the topic has been raised at the Council of Leaders and not specifically the housing forum. I am not aware of any direction from that discussion to pursue a separate and distinct naming of this right in the Northwest Territories as it is already acknowledged federally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have question 3, but I have some things that added underneath there. So can the Minister commit to providing more outcome based measures in NWT -- in the Housing NWT annual report -- commit to measuring and reporting on the number of houses in core need by community and the number of homes brought out of core need annually. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Housing NWT acknowledges it does not have the adequate data and measurement. Due to the lack capacity and resources, Housing NWT has not historically tracked the levels of data that are required in today's world to demonstrate the needs required. Housing NWT is embarking on work that needed to complete a territorial housing needs assessment analysis in collaboration with the housing forum, which we seek to obtain a better baseline understanding of the overall housing statistics in the Northwest Territories and will then look to keep that data up to date on a regular basis. We expect to start this work and complete the work in 2025. The data will be important for the GNWT and communities to know where there are housing needs in the Northwest Territories. The data will help the governments focus their funding on where needs are and help demonstrate the need to federal government where data is currently lacking. We will take the Member's recommendation into account while we look at this analysis, what this analysis will produce, and what can be reported in Housing NWT's annual report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Just more of a comment, Mr. Speaker. I just want to thank the Minister for that, and I look forward to that information. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions. Member from Range Lake

QUESTION 246-20(1):  
SOUTH MACKENZIE CORRECTIONAL  
CENTRE PROGRAMMING

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to turn to the issue about the proposed closure of the Fort Smith Correctional Centre; no one is speaking about that. And I want to talk about the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River. My understanding is the most efficient way to operate our correctional system would be to have one centralized facility, and the largest one is North Slave Correctional Facility. So why wasn't the South Slave facility considered for cuts, if we truly are committed to saving money? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I explained in Committee of the Whole when I got this question about the budget, which is actually before Committee of the Whole right now, I stated that what is going on at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre is an attempt by the government to institute a program that is not just a correctional program. It is a healing program and it is unique -- I hear lots of comments in the House about the need to rehabilitate offenders, to give them the tools so that they don't return to jail, or to a life of crime or to whatever activity landed them in jail. And so we want to see that through, and hopefully build upon the successes that we are seeing in that program. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So why can't that program be based out the North Slave Correctional Centre? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know there's a desire by some to shut down all of the correctional facilities outside of Yellowknife, but the fact is that the program is existing in the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre right now. To be the North Slave centre is not -- it's a higher security facility. It is not designed in a way that would be conducive to running that program. Given the size of the facility, we could shut everything down outside of Yellowknife and centralize it. And attempt to run the program out of there. But that does not -- it has not been determined to be the best approach at this time. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, the only person who wants to shut down correctional centres is the Minister of Justice. It's not this Member. In fact I would rather see all of our correctional officers keep their jobs and continue doing good work for the territory. Is the Minister not looking at SMCC because it's in his riding? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oh, colleagues, that's cutting kind of close. Can we be very specific to what we are trying to achieve here, please. Can you rephrase that question. Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, did the Minister consult with community leadership, including the Chamber of Commerce, town council, the First Nations in Fort Smith before they made this decision? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Premier is aware of how important jobs are in regional centres and small communities. Especially centres that provide a lot of employment. How is the government going to make up for the loss of jobs and employment in Fort Smith as result of the closure of the facility?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Options have been presented in this House. The Member has asked me about this during Committee of the Whole, and I have responded with answers. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of justice. Oral questions. Written questions. Member from -- sorry, Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** No questions.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, close.

QUESTION 247-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the questions raised by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on the Aurora College transition.

In the media, it has been reported, there was a very prominent headline, it is a concern of my constituents that the transition has been paused. There is some confusion whether it is a pause, if it's a delay, if it's still ongoing. Yes, there's a new mandate letter coming, but what is the state right now and why are representatives of the leadership of the college start like saying that this is paused, this transition is paused? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As acknowledged in this House before, there have been delays that are based -- delays based on the timeline that is published online for Aurora College. But as far as what other people are saying who aren't in this room and who have not communicated that to me personally, I would not be able to speak to. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** We don't want to wander in the wildness of opinions, but I am sure that the Minister can read headlines like the rest of us. The question is, does the Minister think that -- how does the Minister respond when the board is making those statements? Does she respond by calling them and saying what's going on; I'd just like to know how she's responding to this information that's out in the public and it's causing confusion. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as acknowledged previously, I did have the opportunity to listen to the same CBC radio interview which I believe is where that headline came from. What I did hear in that radio interview was an acknowledgement by the chair that the transformation has been delayed. And, Mr. Speaker, I continue to have said the same thing now for the entirety of this session on the floor of the House. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 248-20(1):  
SUPPORT FOR ARTS PROJECT

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I just have a quick question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. So I mentioned in my Member's statement today that there is a local resident in my riding who is trying to get together -- or pull together a community art project to paint some murals on public housing units that are boarded up and the department of housing has been super helpful in providing the boards and logistics, and I am wondering if the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment might have any ideas for funding that could help get this project off the ground, just some small amounts of funding, basic in terms of covering paints and materials, things like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are some arts funding programs through the Department of Education, Culture and

Employment. The one that immediately comes to mind for a project like this would be the small arts grant. The small arts grant provides funding up to \$5,000 for art projects across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** That's fine, thank you very much. We will be following up online, thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Let's get to the questions please, folks. I appreciate the commentary afterwards, but.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 249-20(1):  
CLIENTS' MEDICAL RECORDS REQUIRED  
FOR MEDICAL TRAVEL

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I didn't have a question but I always questions, so I am ready to go. So I think that I'll ask the Minister of health here a question here with respect to medical documents when people go to Alberta.

So, I have been -- a constituent approached me, and I am sure I am not the only one, Mr. Speaker, so it is important to get this clear on the record, which is what's happening. When constituents travel to Alberta, their doctors don't seem to have their information and they are told they can't send them. So what the department doing in the context of interim solutions, I believe that they're changing the health program, network, software, whatever, but promised constituents are still traveling south without that information and it's causing frustration and problems. Does the Minister have an update or a solution? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when patients are traveling down to Alberta, depending, I mean, wherever they are coming from, there's different systems that we use and yes, I've mentioned it many times in this House, that the systems that we use don't talk with Alberta systems and that is why our -- it is in the business plan, and that we are updating our EMR, our electronic medical records, in the health system. One of those things is to, hopefully, to make sure that it does have the opportunity to connect with Alberta. What they do currently, there are many different ways that they do send documents and at this point if there, you know, depending on what clinic they are going to, what specialist they are going to, you know, there is many different things so I

can get back to the Member on the ways that we provide information when we do referrals to Alberta Health. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While constituents are showing up at referrals by doctors to doctors in Alberta without the information some there must be some type of standard practice, including package and process that's going on now, because we can't -- or being proposed now, because we can't have people being sent on medical travel. What a waste of money to send them there without the information. So, what is currently being done by the department to help fill this -- or solve this problem? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we send thousands of people to Alberta so if a Member wants to know about a specific instance, is this something that he has multiple constituents that are coming to him and so if he wants to bring this forward to my office, I would gladly look into it. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I am thinking this is a bigger picture which is people can't -- as the Minister has acknowledged, the systems don't talk to each other so there must be a standard of care on how we are packaging this information, whether we are emailing it down to them, or we're sending it with a constituent or we're sending it in a secure bag. Like, what's the practice of the department in these particular cases if files can't be emailed or systems can't talk to each other, they must be able to work this problem out. And it can't be an individual constituent based on the fact that the Minister has acknowledged that the systems don't talk to each other. So I am asking how do they do this or what are they working on as an interim solution? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before we even had electronic medical records, our patients traveled so, like I say again, if this is a specific instance because if it is and if there are many people that are going to appointments, they are not complaining through my office so maybe they're going through the Office of Client Experience and that's where I would tell these clients to also go. I would encourage any MLAs to encourage their constituents to go through the Office of Client Experience. This way we can document what the issues are and then we can rectify them if this is a bigger issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of health and social services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, wouldn't the Minister want to know how documents go from the NWT to Alberta and hence, you know, it would be nice to know from a constituency point of view that it may apply to other Members but the issue is that if the systems don't talk to each other, I would think that the Minister would know how they communicate their medical health information in today's environment of security information and the details, so I would think that there would be a practice and process in place, and that's what I am asking for. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did commit to get the many ways that we do this and I -- there is way to do it and I am not going to sit here and explain from this health centre we do it this way and sometimes if they are coming in from a small community they may go in a secure with a practitioner. The patient may go. There are multiple different ways, and depending on which physicians and, you know, so. This is the coordination of our special clinics when they refer, they have their processes and so if there are individual -- so there doesn't seem to be an issue, because it hasn't come to light, and so if there is an individual issue or if this is an ongoing issue with the Member's constituents, then I suggest that they either reach out to my office or reach out to him and then come through my office or the Office of Client Experience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 250-20(1):  
RCMP USE OF BODY CAMERAS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a different subject -- don't worry, health Minister. I am going to ask the Premier, who is the Minister of Justice, this question. The body camera has come up over the years and there was some people asking recently and is this a consideration in the long term over the territorial government's working with the RCMP to bring body cameras here North given the fact that we live in a modern world and a new world and this helps both parties involved. So generally speaking, I am going to start off with, the first question is, is this a consideration on the front of the Department of Justice to look at this in partnership obviously with the RCMP?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Okay, that's good. Is there any thoughts or knowledge with the Minister -- it's always weird, call him the Minister of Justice and Premier -- the Minister and the department as to what type of timelines or logistical challenges that may delay the timelines? I am looking to get a sense of how soon or what are we talking about. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Body worn cameras have been field tested in Nunavut and so there have been issues identified, the cold weather, with the requirements around uploading significant amounts of data, especially in communities with not the best internet connections, but many of those issues have been worked out and body worn cameras will be rolling out later this year. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you. That kind of took out my last question. I still have time on the clock.

So Mr. Speaker, data -- well no, you know what, no questions, thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Oral questions. Written questions. Member from Monfwi.

### Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 7-20(1):  
HOUSING DEBT AMONG ELDERS AND SENIORS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the Housing Debt Among Elders and Seniors, and it's for housing Minister.

The accumulation of housing debt among elders and seniors in the Northwest Territories can cause serious financial hardship as they age. There are tools available for the Government of the Northwest Territories to provide relief to elders and seniors. Can the Minister of housing provide information to understand the extent of debt owed to the Government of the Northwest Territories from seniors' housing units and actions taken to collect on this debt:

1. Over the last five years, can the Minister provide the total arrears owed to Housing Northwest Territories, by mortgage and rent. Of that list please further specify:
  - a) The number of clients and value of debt transferred to the Rental Office to administer arrears collection;

- b) The number of clients and the value of mortgages that have been forgiven in the last five years;
- c) The number of clients who have re-negotiated lower payments with Housing NWT; and
- d) The number of clients and value of debt from seniors (people 60 years and older).

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committee on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 110-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE  
REPORT 67-19(2): REPORT ON THE  
REVIEW OF THE 2021-2022 PUBLIC  
ACCOUNTS

TABLED DOCUMENT 111-20(1):  
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES  
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),  
NO. 1, 2024-2025

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 67-19(2): Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Public Accounts and Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 32-20(1):  
INCREASING RCMP RESPONSE IN HAY  
RIVER

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, June 7, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, second by the Member from Deh Cho, that the Government of the Northwest Territories reinstate the Royal Canadian Mounted Police K-9 unit in Hay River;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police collaborate and respond specifically to the rise in crime in Hay River;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Monfwi.

### Motions

MOTION 28-20(1):  
CONSIDERATION FOR ELDERS AND  
SENIORS IN DEBT ELIMINATION,  
CARRIED

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Consideration for Elders and Seniors in Debt Elimination.

WHEREAS elders and seniors who are no longer working and only receive a fixed income have little ability to get out of debt once it has accumulated;

AND WHEREAS some elders and seniors in communities, who have accumulated housing debt, face extreme financial hardship to get out of arrears;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories should be supporting our elders and seniors to age in place and to age with dignity;

AND WHEREAS section 62 of the Financial Administration Act allows the forgiveness of debt to the Government of the Northwest Territories, or a public agency, where it is just and reasonable to do so;

AND WHEREAS the policy that guides the consideration on the forgiveness of debt does not clearly identify how the Government of the Northwest Territories determines a debtor to be indigent, or how a debt is determined to be unjust or unreasonable.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh, that the Government of the Northwest Territories revise the Financial Administration Manual and related policies on the elimination of debt to provide specific provisions for forgiveness of debt owed to the Government of the Northwest Territories, or a public agency, for elders and seniors who are 60 years of age and older;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the Financial Administration Manual and policies to define how it will measure and assess unreasonable or unjust financial hardship on elders and seniors.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the Financial Administration Manual and policies to ensure that elders and seniors who are on fixed incomes are not forced into undue financial hardship to pay debt to the Government of the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion's in order. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have talked a lot in this House about the needs for elders and seniors to age with dignity, and my motion that I put forward, it's actions behind these words. There are many elders in my ridings and other regions as well. There are many elders out there who are struggling to make ends meet. We know that the NWT is faced with high cost of living, the fuel price, the groceries. It's very difficult for people in the small communities, especially the elders, especially with children too as well because many of the elders are caring for their grandchildren. So it's difficult for them to make ends meet. And I met many elders in my ridings who, over the years, have accumulated many bills and debts, and there are many reasons why people go into debt with the government. Some elders, some people have bills piled up during the time when housing was limited in small communities and adult children were living with parents, and they were working and that's how a lot of these bills were accumulated. So as a result, I know that over the years housing made some changes to the policy that people who are living in the unit, they were on the lease, they were added to the lease that were, like, an adult. So that was okay. But before then, many of these bills were accumulated. So in other cases, people were desperate. And it's not just this. It was also for the mortgage as well. In other cases, where people were desperate to acquire housing back in the '90s that I know. And my colleague -- one of my colleague knows about this as well, you know, some people were given free houses. Other people were provided mortgages. And in many of these business dealings, language was a real issue because the mortgage term was new to many of my constituents or to many

of the residents in the NWT, especially in small communities. So many of the elders -- they are elders now. So many of them signed on to mortgages not fully understanding what they were signing up for. So as a result, many of them fell behind with payments and some of them refinanced some of their housing and some of them was sent to the collections or they did a mortgage with the financial institutions and some of them lost their houses. And some of them went through foreclosure. So in either cases, I know that several people are still to this day try to pay off mortgages they signed over 30 years ago.

And my concern, Mr. Speaker, is that elders and seniors, once they age, once they have aged out of labour force, they have very limited financial resources. Many elders in communities live in great financial needs across the NWT. And when we went to Aklavik, we also met some people that were in that same situation. So the cost of living with their debt to the GNWT is beyond their means.

Mr. Speaker, this debt is a debt they will never get out of for the remainder of their years. So we need to do something about it. And this is why, Mr. Speaker, I am moving this motion, to ask the government to make consideration for elders and seniors over 60 years and older who owe housing debt to the GNWT. We need to be able to help and support our elders and seniors to age in place. We need to ease the financial burden for elders and seniors to allow them the dignity to live the remainder of their life in their homes, the place where they raised their families and built all their memories. And some of these elders have medical conditions that as I am currently speaking. Some of the elders have medical issues. They're on dialysis. Some of them are cancer survivors. Some of them have cognitive issues. There's all kinds. And, you know, and other illnesses that's relate to aging.

And I also talked to some of my constituents due to debt accumulated over the years. And what they did is that some of these elders -- an elder that I know, they consolidated all their bills with the bank. This is what they did with the bank and used their house as collateral. And these elders -- some of these elders, they don't understand the term. So it's added stress for some of these elders that are already living on fixed income. So for me, how I see this is that it is an abuse by the financial institution as well.

And I also met some people here, some elders living in Yellowknife who are living on the Gitzel Street in a townhouse. They must be Northern Properties tenants. They are paying over \$3,000 for rent, plus utilities. And it is a disgrace because there's no cap, rent cap, on many of



these residences. And there's no way anybody will get out of debt if you're paying over \$3,000 for rent. And if this elder's going through that, it's more difficult for families with children. So with that in mind, so, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking this government to review the financial procedures for debt collections, and I am asking the government to think about elders and seniors, specifically the financial burden they carry as they age, and whether this financial burden is unjust or unreasonable.

We have responsibility to take care of our elders and seniors. We must be able to find a way to ease their financial stress so they can live the remainder of their days in peace, not forgive the debt when they're gone. Do it while they're still here so they can enjoy life, so they can do things that they want to do with their grandkids, spend more time with their children and grandkids. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. To the motion. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the Member for bringing this motion forward today and acknowledge the importance of this topic. I understand it is a critical issue for many elders across the Northwest Territories.

Housing NWT will continue to work closely with the Department of Finance and other GNWT departments to consider the issues presented in this motion. We look forward to working with the Member and her colleagues on the issues identified in this motion.

Some of this work is already underway. Housing NWT has been reviewing all relevant government policies and considering the possible introduction of a new policy approach to further assist Housing NWT tenants and clients in addressing their arrears, including elders. I expect to be able to share this work with the Members this fall.

Cabinet will abstain from the vote on this motion and will provide a comprehensive response to the House within 120 days as requested by this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to vote in favour. I just want to say that was one of the best answers that replies to a motion I've ever heard from a Minister. As a matter of fact, I'm overwhelmed. I don't know, I'm looking for the Kleenex box to cry.

That said, obviously I'll be voting in favour to support my colleague and my community members who face this challenge day to day. And that's all I wanted to say. Good job, Minister, on that response.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Monfwi, you get the final say.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just like my colleague said about the Minister of housing, that was a good response to our motion, and I'm looking forward to working with them. And then I'm looking forward to working with her, or all of us looking forward to working with her and then with Department of Finance to fix this. And can we have a recorded vote for this. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Member from Monfwi has asked for a recorded vote. Sorry, actually to the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The Member from Monfwi has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

#### RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those in favour, ten. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, six. The motion has passed.

---Carried

Motions. Member from Range Lake.

MOTION 29-20(1):  
MUNICIPAL BLOCK LAND TRANSFER,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories holds significant authority over lands within community and municipal boundaries;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories could support the economic development of communities by enabling community control of community land via block land transfer;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories initiated a block land transfer with the City of Yellowknife in 2021, as a pilot project to guide the rest of the Northwest Territories community land transfers, and this block land transfer remains outstanding;

AND WHEREAS the delay of block land transfer to communities is delaying the development of communities and the implementation of urgent housing solutions desperately needed across the Northwest Territories.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by Member for Frame Lake, that the Government of the Northwest Territories complete the block transfer of land to communities within municipal and community boundaries without delay;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories remove requirements from communities that are impeding this transfer, such as the requirement for surveying, community zoning and by-law development for land that is under Government of the Northwest Territories authority.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories remove internal impediments that are delaying the efficient transfer of lands within municipal and community boundaries;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide public updates on the status of block land transfer to communities;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, land is so crucial to the Northwest Territories. Land is life for the First Peoples who have called the NWT home since time immemorial. And for a modern economy or any

economy really, access to land is at its core. We have a unique land management system in the Northwest Territories that stands alone. The Member for -- the seconder of the motion, the Member for Frame Lake, brought that up only recently, and it stands to reason why. You know, what is this achieving other than unreasonable delays in accessing land that's crucial for development. This motion speaks to the need for land for affordable housing. This motion speaks to the land -- to access to land for community development. Communities cannot master their own economic futures and pilot their communities forward without access to land within their boundaries. It's impossible. And it's been this way for far too long. This is not the first time a motion like this has come before this Assembly. There were similar motions in the previous Assembly, the Assembly that I served in. I believe our longest serving Member as well has seen more than a few of these motions. So that goes back a long ways. And I know that this is a frustratingly persistent problem.

I know this Cabinet has signalled that they are taking this seriously and does want to move forward, and this motion is designed to give that some push. The pilot project that has been initiated, we would like to see it move forward, and this motion contemplates that. But it's not just a Yellowknife motion. It's a motion for all communities.

I've spoken to colleagues from other regional centres and other places where this motion would benefit, and it would be very much a benefit. I want to point out that this call to action in no way impedes upon the sovereign rights of Indigenous nations to control their own land or to negotiate their own land rights agreements, as is in the case of the Akaitcho and Deh Cho First Nations which are still unresolved. We're very sensitive to that, Mr. Speaker, and we don't want to presuppose the outcomes of those land dispositions. This is specifically speaking to public land that is not subject to interim land withdrawal that's currently within these boundaries.

Excuses in the past have been well, the GNWT might need this land for a future purpose or, you know, there might be a coming claim or something like that. We need to work in the present and set people up for the future. And we can't do that if we don't give them the land in their own backyards. So if we're going to bring, in particular, the cost of housing down and make more housing affordable, which is the number 1 priority of this Assembly, we need to pass this motion. We need to make land available to communities, and it needs to start as soon as possible.

This is also something the standing committee on Accountability and Oversight has put in their report on the main estimates, that this is something they want to -- something the committee all supports. So this motion is re-enforcing that message, that if we don't modernize our system of land management, ensure that communities have access to land so they can plan, then we will not move forward as a territory. We will not solve our housing crisis, and we will not unlock the potential economic growth in our communities, from our largest community here in Yellowknife to our smallest communities that could benefit from this, from access to their own lands. So I strongly encourage the House to support this motion, and I look forward to the coming debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just briefly, I support this motion. I've heard from Mayor Clarence Wood several times since I've come down, since I was elected, that it's been an issue for the town of Inuvik, whether it's for the expansion of the Inuvik satellite station facility or just accessed land for more R2 and R1 residential property which, as you know, is being scooped up right now by our Indigenous governments, which is great. So just wanted to reiterate my colleagues' -- echo my colleagues' sentiments that, yes, it is an issue and we realize that it is being looked at by the government right now, and I think that it is in AOC's response to the address, but I do support this motion.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Inuvik Boot Lake. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mover of the motion, I want to thank him for doing that, and certainly the seconder. This is an important issue for all communities, not just Yellowknife. This affects all public governments, whether they're municipal or Indigenous governments. You know, it affects everyone to move forward on their plans, their growth of their communities, as well as the sustainability of their economies. I mean, if you cannot have land to plan with, you can't predict -- you can't plan for the future, whether it's housing or business interests. So there's no sense in repeating everything my colleague from Range Lake had said because I basically took the best of things to say about this motion, and I acknowledge that because he's absolutely right. This is critical. And it makes it very challenging. And if a city or a town or whatever community has to apply for land each and every time when they're wanting to do big

and difficult initiatives that take time, the last thing you need is the municipal and community affairs to stand in their way, and that discourages growth of the community. So I'll be supporting the motion, and I think it's -- I think this is so critical for the government to respond on and finally show leadership on this initiative. Why hold land in this form when it's not needed? It's so unusual. I can't think of a single reason why we are so unique on this particular file. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly won't need 20 minutes to speak on this one.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also rising to speak in favour of the motion. Mr. Speaker, when I served on Yellowknife city council, the issue of access to lands was an ongoing frustration. When I asked staff at one point, you know, in a particular moment of frustration, whether any other jurisdictions in Canada have systems like this where lands within municipal boundaries have multiple layers of jurisdictional management? The answer that staff gave me at the time was no, that the NWT is unique.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that we have outstanding land claims and certainly support excluding lands under interim withdrawal from consideration for transfer, as spoken to by the Member from Range Lake. However, I don't otherwise see why municipalities shouldn't be managing lands within their boundaries as most municipalities do anywhere else in Canada.

If the departments implicated in this motion are concerned about certain implications of granting communities this responsibility, I ask could those be addressed in ways which don't impede access to lands for municipal development which aren't of concern?

I spoke to priorities in my Budget Address earlier today, Mr. Speaker. Duplication of land management in municipal boundaries, where municipalities have been devolved responsibility by the territorial government, is not something which strikes me as being a high priority. I don't think the territorial government would or does appreciate when their federal counterpart overly involves itself in governance of the territory. The reason authority is devolved is to ensure local oversight and appropriate levels of governance, whether that be from the federal government to the territory or from the territory to municipalities. Where possible, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to unnecessarily impede communities from developing their lands to

increase access to housing, which I see as being the primary reason for this motion coming forward. Let's find a way to move forward on this which works for municipalities and do what we can to ensure that whatever concerns exist on increasing municipal autonomy are addressed with reasonableness, fairness, and consideration of the top priority of this Assembly, which is development of housing. Sorry, I don't have the -- off the top of my head. But that wraps up my written comments on the motion, Mr. Speaker. I just think that we should be prioritizing where we can, not getting in the way of municipalities developing their lands. I think my colleagues have spoken to this already; I won't repeat what's been said. So that stand as my list of reasons for supporting this motion. And I'm certainly interested to hear the government's response. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the motion calls for block land transfers. I believe what was intended was bulk land transfers. The block land transfers were the historical process of the transfer of administration of lands from the Government of Canada to the Government of the Northwest Territories. And so perhaps the Member would like to amend the seven instances in the motion that say "block" and change them to "bulk" so that it's accurate for they're going for, if that's what they are going for. But regardless, the government will be abstaining from this vote and will be providing a response within 120 days if it passes. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion. To the Member from Range Lake, final say.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Yeah, I think the Honourable Premier is -- however it works out, I think the intention is clear. We'll allow the government to respond to this motion, but the intention is, of course, land held by the GNWT to move towards municipalities, one government to another.

And in cases where there's designated authorities, there would be a conversation with bands that manage their communities as with municipal powers.

So I'm sure the Minister of Environment and Climate Change probably has more -- a technical response that will be forthcoming if this motion carries, and it sounds like we have good support, and we'll be able to have a conversation -- or be able to consider the full information. But a lot of this motion -- what this motion contemplates is work behind the scenes, work with municipalities. I'm sure we

will bring this back to the communities we represent and make sure that their aspirations for access to their own land is brought forward to them. So with that I will ask, again, that the House support this motion and we move forward into a future where municipalities have control over their own economic destinies through adequate access to their own lands. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Thank you, Member. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The Member has asked for a recorded vote. Please stand. All those in favour?

#### RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please stand. Those abstaining, please stand.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion. Those in favour, nine. Opposed, zero. Seven abstentions. The motion has carried.

---Carried

Motions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MOTION 30-20(1):  
MAINTAINING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES'  
HOUSING STOCK,  
CARRIED

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maintaining Northwest Territories' Housing Stock.

WHEREAS in 1993, the Government of Canada cancelled social housing programs in the Northwest Territories, which built significant local economy and created multiple housing units;

AND WHEREAS the Homeownership Assistant Program resulted in the construction of many

new homes across the Northwest Territories, but these homes were built without the required operation and maintenance funding to maintain these homes;

AND WHEREAS the state of the Homeownership Assistant Program units in the Northwest Territories are reaching the end of lifecycle and need complete emergency retrofit;

AND WHEREAS Housing Northwest Territories acknowledges nearly one in four households in the Northwest Territories are in core housing need, and the cost of addressing core housing is estimated at \$300 million in capital and \$18 million in ongoing operational funding;

AND WHEREAS home inspections are urgently needed to determine the actual costs to address housing repairs and to plan for bringing homes across the Northwest Territories up to National Building Code standards;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by Member for Yellowknife North, that the Government of the Northwest Territories immediately provide funding grants to Indigenous governments that wish to complete home inspections in their region.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide financial support to Indigenous governments to assist in data collection to support opportunities to leverage federal government funding;

AND FURTHERMORE, the Government of the Northwest Territories provide funding to Indigenous governments in alignment with the Mandate of the 20th Legislative Assembly to ensure sustainable financial resources for housing programs and projects;

AND FURTHERMORE, to facilitate this financial support, the Government of the Northwest Territories enter into a memorandum of understanding with all interested Indigenous governments and bring forward necessary appropriations by the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is in order. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I brought this motion forward as a result of when I was first elected in the 19th Assembly and one of the things that came out of my riding is that housing was a problem. To qualify for a housing

corporation program, you pretty well had to shoot an arrow from Yellowknife to hit a board in Lutselk'e and if you hit the middle of the bull's eye, then you could qualify for a program. Well, Mr. Speaker, the policy of the Government of the Northwest Territories just doesn't work for our people in small communities. And as a result of the demand from -- and hearing back from my constituents in small communities, they've asked me to put together a letter to the housing Minister in the 19th Assembly, and which I did. I put in a letter of about over 120 homes that needed urgent repairs, and I never got a reply back for about three or four months.

And at the end of the day, the letter that I got back was that they're saying that this issue is going to be addressed by the Circle of Aboriginal Leaders. And so that was a response to me. So when I go back to my constituents in Fort Resolution who are -- the elders are asking for help, I had to tell them that, sorry, the response -- this is my response back from the Minister, and this is what I had to tell them, what the results were.

But regardless, Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories, prior to 1993 the housing corporation did a really good job in getting money from CMHC and the federal Government of Canada, and they built anywhere from four to 500 homes a year and throughout the Northwest Territories, and that included Nunavut prior to 1999. And so what's happening now, the average life cycle of a house is about 50 years, and before it needs work. But right now, in small communities, we have a lot of houses that are 30 plus years old and in dire need of complete retrofit.

If we don't address this issue now, then the problem is going to come is when these homes is going to be condemned. And they could be condemned by the fire marshal. And if that happens, then it only adds to the overall housing crisis we have here in the Northwest Territories.

So I took it upon myself to recognize that the housing corporation doesn't have the money today to address these homeownership repairs in small communities throughout the Northwest Territories. And so what I did was I put together an idea, thinking outside the box and trying to figure out a way how I could work with Housing NWT and the Minister, trying to figure out a way to resolve this issue. And the only way I could think of it is because I know that they don't have the money to deal with this issue, I thought maybe okay, well let's try something different. I got about 540 homes in my riding, and there's about 200 public housing units. And so the rest is -- we could call them private homes. Those are the ones that I want to look at. And if I'm

able to get some SEED money from the housing corporation to undertake the inspections of these units and determine the actual cost to bring up these units to National Building Code standards and then put it all together. And if I'm able to work with the Minister of housing corporation with the Akaitcho Territory government and the NWT Metis Nation in Fort Resolution, we could do this collectively.

And I got support letters from them already. My letters are sitting in the Minister's office right now for support to undertake a project like this. But this motion that I have in front of us now is going to be identical for other regions in the Northwest Territories to step up and maybe work with the Housing NWT because this problem in my riding of Tu Nedhe is no different than all of other five regions in the Northwest Territories. It's the same issue. So the housing issue's not going to go away.

So speaking to the motion, this is something that is needed. When I put my letter together on March 15th, 2024, outlining my priorities for my riding, again housing is still the number one issue. And it turns out now that the priority of this government is housing is the number one issue. So I'm being proactive, trying to think outside the box and put together if we work with the Housing NWT in partnership with Indigenous governments, then we all can hit the bull's eye together. So that's something I'm thinking outside the box. So, Mr. Speaker, to the motion, that's why I brought this forward. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. To the motion. Minister of Housing NWT. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just briefly here, I want to thank the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh for bringing this forward. I think it really aligns with the Assembly's priorities and some of the intentions stated in the business plan, and I just wanted to bring up those.

So something that was pointed out by one of my colleagues, as we discussed this, that I think is a good thing to consider as we move forward with trying to get more, you know, home inspections, really understand the need for housing repair and maintenance and take that to the federal government, but was she was saying that the danger of providing home inspections or audits, if there is not an intention to actually make sure that those repairs get fixed, then you might be raising people's expectations or sort of giving them false hope and, you know, they're opening up their homes and their privacy to have someone go in and go

through and decide what all the repairs are needed and then might get very disappointed if those repairs don't happen. So I want to make sure that we put the control in the hands of community governments, Indigenous governments, and ensure that people are aware of what we're trying to understand better the need and take those funding requests to the federal government, or wherever funding might be available, and just make sure that people are fully on board and understanding what we're trying to do. And I do hope that we can make significant progress in addressing the repairs, the maintenance that does need to be done. There's a huge need, as my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Willideh was talking about, so I do hope that we can really make significant progress on that but that we also don't give sort of unrealistic expectations to people everywhere that they're immediately going to get everything fixed. I want us to chart out a plan and make sure that we are doing it thoughtfully and diligently in setting out the pathways or the funding that will help us get there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to thank the Member for bringing this motion forward today and acknowledge the importance of this topic. Meaningful partnerships with Indigenous governments are critically important in addressing the housing needs of NWT residents. Housing NWT will continue to work closely with other government departments as well as having a conversation with Indigenous governments about what is needed in their communities to ensure good data about the investments required for various housing needs.

In the Housing NWT business plan, Housing NWT intends to work with a nationally-accepted housing needs assessment template to complete an assessment of all housing needs throughout the NWT and do so in partnership with Indigenous governments, community governments, and in addition working with the Member and his colleagues. Noted in the meetings in the MLA's riding, Housing NWT will commit to working with Indigenous governments to assist them in securing funding to address housing priorities in their regions.

I look forward to providing an update on all these efforts as part of our written response to this motion. Cabinet will abstain from the vote on this motion and will provide a comprehensive response to the House within 120 days as requested by the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour -- oh sorry, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh, you have the right to conclude the motion, sorry.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank my colleagues and also the Minister for your response, and I think this is a good opportunity to understand that working outside the policy of government and coming together on a common issue, especially if it's a priority of this government, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to look for solutions, and I thank you for giving me your support on this motion. Mahsi. And I'd like to ask for a recorded vote too as well. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh is asking for a recorded vote. Those all in favour, please stand.

#### RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion, ten yeases. Zero nos. Six abstention. The motion has passed.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1),

Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Minister's Statement 24-20(1), Tabled Document 93-20(1).

Colleagues, by the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House, with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? I would like to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Committee of the Whole wishes to consider Tabled Document 93-20(1), 2024-2025 Main Estimates, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. We will proceed with the first item.

Members, we have agreed to review Tabled Document 93-20(1), Department of Education, Culture and Employment. We will resume with key activity corporate management on page 37. Does the Minister of ECE wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Yes, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Thank you.

Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to my left I have Mr. Jamie Fulford, who is the deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment. And to my right, I have Shannon Barnett-Aikman, who is the assistant deputy minister of education and early learning.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, before the motion last night

Members concluded questions. Therefore, we will proceed with a vote on this key activity.

Education, Culture and Employment, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$12,456,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back and ask the question again, and I'd like to have a show of hands.

Education, Culture and Employment, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$12,456,000. Does the committee agree, by show of hands.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** The motion's carried. Thank you.

---Carried

Okay, thank you. Moving on to early learning beginning on page 39 with information items on page 41 to 43. Are there any questions? Okay, I have the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, can the Minister please tell me how far along the department is into developing regulations for daycare workers under the \$10-a-day program, please. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, can the Member clarify if they're speaking in regards to the wage grid regulations?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Sorry, I'll go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, and requirements for -- yes, and -- yes, and the requirements for workers' education, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, those regulations are still in development. And so they go through a process where they are -- we work closely with the Department of Justice to do that. And then before they can go public for consultation -- sorry, engagement, they must be translated. And so that's the part of the process that we are in right now. And so as

soon as the translation is complete, then those will be available for public engagement. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's a nice shout back to Minister of Justice for more French translating drafters.

I'm curious around specifically, you know, what we're going to be asking of our workforce in the early childhood operator piece, especially around some of the asks for their education. And so does the Minister know when that piece will be out for public engagement in hopefully this year, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will definitely put in a plug for, you know, if anybody has any French translating drafters out there, who are both lawyers and very skilled in the language of French and translations, please come live in the Northwest Territories and make this your home. We have some work for you. But, yes, as soon as we can get that done, that is something that I very much look forward to getting out for engagement and making sure that we can put that new regulation in play. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll let other Members dive into this one. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Is there any further questions from Members? I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So for this -- this budget proposes to create, I think, 75 child care -- new child care spaces, which is a good thing. But what is the total need based on what we know of waitlists across the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, unfortunately, we don't have a master waitlist or a database capable of ensuring that people are only on a waitlist once in the territory. We have anecdotal information from day homes and daycares but unfortunately we know that it's not accurate because having been in the situation myself, I can attest to the fact that as parents, we put our names on multiple lists to ensure that we make



it to the top, hopefully, of one of them when we need child care. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Yeah, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And as a parent with young children in care, and I lost care and needed to find new arrangements, I can tell you it's not easy. And anyone who is still on those lists and does not have care, I have so much sympathy for. You know, it feels like smuggling narcotics, you know, like, flying under the radar to try to get access somewhere because there's so few spaces. So my concern is we can say 75 new spaces across -- you know, and that's great we're creating new spaces, but if the total need is 7500, then this is nothing, right, in the grand scheme of things. So how are we measuring the need in a useful way that we can actually point resources at it? Because if -- again, if the need is exponentially greater than 75, we have a lot more work to do in this area. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd love to see a day where, you know, people can put themselves on a list, and we have a centralized database that is shared among licensed child care providers. But we simply do not have that type of digital technology within ECE, let alone most of the government at this point in time. I would, for sure, love to see significant investments in digital technology and innovation in that area within the GNWT, but it would take significant investment, and it's one that I simply don't have the dollars for at this time within the department. That being said, I would love to be able to speak a little bit to infrastructure and the fact that we do need physical infrastructure to be able to create those spaces, so work is being done in that realm as well.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MR. TESTART:** Range Lake. Thank you. So how many spaces does the department currently fund? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're just pulling up that information right now. Potentially maybe we could come back to the Member on the exact number of total spaces in the territory that we are funding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Yeah, if that comes up during this thing, just feel free to shout it out and I'll write it down. But I think that could potentially give us a sense of where we're at.

So another concern I've heard is from day home providers is that the ratios could be tweaked to allow for more spaces, especially in the transition between infants to, like, child where there's a different ratio at play. And if we created a different space -- or a different child to caregiver ratio, we could expand that a little bit and create less headaches for parents and improve the overall spaces without overburdening providers.

Ratios, as I understand it, are not a scientific formula. They are just decided by a province or territory based on -- I'm not sure what they're based on and neither are the providers, but they vary from province to province. And, you know, some are more generous, some are less. So is the Minister open to -- well, yeah, this is a good question. So where are our -- where do we get our ratio data from; what's the basis for our ratios? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to start off I'd like to answer the Member's previous question. So we currently fund 1,956 spaces in the Northwest Territories.

As far as the background on where those spaces come from, I would like to, please, pass to assistant deputy minister Barnett-Aikman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MS. SHANNON BARNETT-AIKMAN:** So at present, we have a breakdown of 308 spaces in the Beaufort Delta; 138 spaces in the Deh Cho; 1,186 spaces in North Slave, 44 spaces in the Sahtu; and 280 spaces in the South Slave.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you for that response. Now to the ratios, the caregiver to child ratio, what's the basis for our formulas? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't have the historical information on where those numbers

originate from. That said, however, I am familiar with the regulations that the Member is speaking of and the concern, especially around school-aged children and after school care, and can commit to following up with the Member in further detail on that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. So is there any impediment to change those ratios from the department's perspective? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the perspective of the system would be in order to ensure the safety of children in care. One of the things I know, just having spoken to people about this especially in the last term, was in regards to, you know, why can we have a certain number of kids in a classroom and then it shifts to after school care, and we have less kids that are allowed to be less in the adult to child ratio that we're allowed -- that we are allowing in after school care programs. And one of the things that is communicated to me is because during the day when you have school ongoing, you've got a lot more adults in the school. You've got a lot more presence and a lot more supervision, and so once you shift to after school, a lot of people end up leaving the school, not the same amount of people in the hallways, and ensuring especially, for example, bathroom safety, and so I'm definitely more than happy to follow up on that, but safety is the number one. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So of course, the safety of children is always paramount and should be the key consideration to any policy around their care. Will the Minister commit to reviewing the ratios with the daycare association and other daycare providers this fiscal year? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the NWT Early Childhood Association has a very good working relationship with the department. I've had the opportunity to chat with them during multiple occasions and can definitely ensure that this is added to the conversation in an upcoming meeting for sure to make sure that we have kind of the full context of asks and then go from there. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Well -- thank you, and thank you for that commitment. And I think the -- I'm pleased Minister's perspective is that that's where the relationship's at because when we started the term, that's not where it was at. I think there was still a lot of confusion in the daycare space with respect to the communications from the department. So I hope that good communication continues moving forward.

Does the Minister believe the funding is adequate to support our current system of subsidized daycare? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, definitely in our February sitting, we spoke a lot about wage grids and about funding to the sector. It was repeated quite a bit that in order to be able to increase the wage grid to be more on par, for example, with education assistants in our education system, that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment would need additional funding to be able to do that. That I have not been shy about repeating and, to be honest, I was surprised not to see an ask for additional ELCC funding come out of the report that was tabled by Regular Members earlier this week. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to follow up a little on my colleague from Range Lake's comments around the funding.

First of all, I mean, you know, we've moved the needle a little on this for sure in the past few months. I keep in regular contact with the Children's First Society in Inuvik, and I know the Minister's been working hard with the territorial society as well and we have moved the needle a little up there, and it looks like they're not in the dire situation they were in and that it seems like their operation is now moving forward, which is great. And the \$10 million is great. But, we are still in trouble. And I know the Minister knows that as well. I appreciate that the number of vacancy -- the number of spaces required is not tracked or waiting lists or whatever. But anecdotally, we know that we're in trouble in that we know, for example, Children's First Society has told me that if they had another building the same size they have now, they would fill it. You know, granted they could find

professionals to work in there, but. So we know there's certainly a huge need in my community. We've gotten emails, and I know the Minister's gotten them as well, from medical professionals in my community saying, we're going to have to leave because we just can't find child care. And it's unfortunate because they enjoy working there and enjoy living there but the bottom line is, unless they get some help with, you know, with daycare, they're not going to be able to stay which is very, very troubling.

So I guess, you know, my question is, yes, we've got it here but what I'd like to ask the Minister -- and I know MLA Testart had said basically the same thing, what do you need? Because we know we have a problem. If it's a question of we need to put more funding into this, what do you need? And I'm sure the department has done some work on that, you know, in order. Because if we don't provide suitable daycare, we are going to lose, again, as I spoke about in many Member statements, we're going to lose talent, or we've lost talent. People are leaving. Doctors, teachers. And if they can't get suitable child care, they can't come here. And it's unfortunate. So I guess, yeah, my first question is what do you need? What would be your ask? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the goal is for our child care providers to be paid on par with education assistants across the territory, then the ask would need to be \$3.5 million for wages and \$3.5 million for compensation and benefits.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, excellent. So my obvious question is, then, why is that not in here? Because I think it should be if we need it. So if we need that, let's get it in the budget.

Would that then -- so are we talking, then, about being able to provide more spaces based on that or just that's what we need to maintain our current levels of 1,956?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that would be to support recruitment and retention. So it would be for both of those. And just in regards to why is it not in here, you know, there are a lot of difficult decisions to make. I am sure that every single one of the Ministers you will see come sit

in this chair would say that, you know, if \$20 million fell into their pockets tomorrow, they could have it spent in a minute and so this is why we have these difficult jobs is we have to decide where we're going to put that money and what the priorities are going to be right now given our fiscal situation. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** I find this very frustrating. I do. Because this is such an important issue, and we look at -- you know, we regularly have -- we approve supplementals for infrastructure projects that are tens of millions of dollars over budget that we either mismanaged or got out of control. We can blame COVID and so on and so forth. And something like this, something like this that's just so important, to keep professional people in our territory, not only providing the services of -- whether it be doctors or nurses or teachers or lawyers or child care workers, but also coaching our kids in hockey and buying the groceries at our grocery stores and things like that that I've railed on about in this legislature about keeping people here, keeping those tax dollars here, to me, again, if we require \$7 million, that \$7 million should be there, full stop, and we find that money. And I get it. We've got tough decisions to make but this shouldn't be one of them. We should make sure that we have adequate child care for anybody who wants to live in this North, in the territories. And then does the department have a plan for looking at the additional spaces that we need over and above that as well? I mean, you said we had 1,956, 308 in the Beaufort Delta. Again, and I know it's anecdotal, I know we don't track that, but we do know we need it. I hear it from other Members, and I hear it from members in the community. What would be a long-term plan to ensure that we're, again, looking at investing in more facilities and increasing those spaces? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I absolutely agree with the Member that child care is very important. You know, having been a self-employed individual when I had my three children at home, if I did not go to work there was -- there was no sick days. There's no sick days when you're self-employed so I absolutely understand that.

As far as what is going on in the territory right now in order to create spaces, when we talk about policy change and policy evolution, one of the things that happened in the territory for

the first time ever is if you live in public housing and you want to open a day home tomorrow, that will not be an impediment. So right now, we have 14 communities in the Northwest Territories that do not have any child care facilities, any licensed child care facilities. People in public housing can open a day home, and ECE will work with them to do that. We have early learning and child care coordinators who do that fine work and work very hard to try to make sure that people are supported to open day homes. And so that is something that can happen right now in the territory. Just last month, we had a visit from a federal minister to help make an announcement of \$10.6 million over the next few years in order to inject infrastructure funding in our early learning and child care facilities in the Northwest Territories. So whether that is renovating a space to make it conducive to support daycare spaces in a community or in a town, that funding is there. It is also available for new builds. And so what we're doing right now is working with child care providers, working with Indigenous governments, working with education bodies, in order to determine how those dollars are going to start flowing out of the GNWT and into communities so that we can start working on these 75 spaces as quickly as possible. And anecdotally, you know, I know that, for example the community of Fort Smith, very, very open and honest, very beautiful facility they have and that they're operating out of right now. They could fill another facility tomorrow. Inuvik, you've spoken about, same situation. Yellowknife, same situation. Norman Wells, ready to go with a child care facility. So the need absolutely is there. The department is, you know, working as hard as it can to make sure that we are advocating at a federal level for additional funding and making sure that the feds also understand where we are at financially. And I know that we're not the only jurisdiction having that conversation. These agreements were put in place before record inflation, and that message is definitely being shared with the federal government as well. But we are working as hard as we can with what we have and ensuring that we are being as supportive as possible to Northerners who want to set up day homes because we absolutely value them, and we rely on the good work that they do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, like, I appreciate the work that your department's done on this. Again, you know, from all indications from the Children's First Society in Inuvik, you know, they're very

appreciative of the work that's been done by you and your department. And that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying I want to give you more money. I think you need more money. We need to continue this. We need to make sure that we got it looked after. That's great, that people in public housing can open day homes. I encourage people all the time, hey, if you're at home, open a day home. Hey, it's good income, and you're providing for the community. So you may have answered this question -- I wasn't sure -- not that you went on a little long or anything.

Is there startup program funding available for people still -- and I know this, I was at a trade show in Inuvik when it was brought up. I think ITI or someone had -- they had a trade show, and they talked about is there funding available for those who are interested in starting a day home? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The short answer to that is yes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** That's it on this section. But more money. I want that \$7 million in here.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Of the 1,956 child care spaces that you just mentioned, so can you tell me how many of those are in Tlicho region? Or is this number part of Tlicho region, or are they excluded?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chair, the spaces in Tlicho region would be licensed spaces so any space that is licensed would be included in that 1,956.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Because the Minister mentioned North Slave, and I've been saying for quite some time that, you know, Tlicho regions. I want to know about the Tlicho region because we're not part of the North Slave. So North Slave consists of, as I've said before, Tu Nedhe-Willideh's riding as well, you know, so -- but if you have the number, it would

be nice, you know. I would like to hear that number.

And I know that in small communities, due to the populations, I know many of the communities are not going to have child care centre, daycare centre. So how many licensed day home is there in small communities?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would need to come back to the Member with that type of specific information about numbers for Tlicho communities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** (audio) talk about it too that we need more child care spaces. And I know that in Tlicho region, we do have a waitlist for child care services or child care space within the licensed daycare centres. And at this time, we don't have new daycare centres. We have daycare centres that are from houses that were retrofitted, you know, fixed up to the standard, but there's Gameti, there's Behchoko, Whati. I know there was one in Wekweeti too. But this all depends on the population. So in Gameti alone, they're using Tlicho government office building, and I know they've been asking for new daycare centre in that community, and Whati as well and Behchoko as well. So I'm just wondering if the Minister is working with the Tlicho government to build more daycare centres, you know, and improve daycare centres and rather than what we have right now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, in the \$10.6 million that was mentioned, that federal funding announcement, how those dollars are going to roll out, that plan is being worked on in conjunction with sector stakeholders as well as Indigenous governments and education bodies to make sure that we're all working together. I know that a lot of this comes down to us making sure that we're stacking funding together, that we're working together with additional funding mechanisms to bring it all together and make sure that we are doing what we can with the dollars we have to create more spaces. I'd also just like to take this opportunity to say that if the Member knows anybody in any of those communities that would like to open a -- you know, a family-run day home, that the department would absolutely be more than happy to speak with any of those people and let

them know of the funding that is available to see that happen. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I will let some people know, especially in the small communities. So hopefully from this \$10.6 million, we'll get three new daycare centre in Tlicho region. I'm just, so -- or at least to one of the communities, you know, that really needs the child care services. But and you said -- so you don't know how this funding will be allocated. How is the department or -- allocating this one, is it based on need or -- for child care services?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think what we've established today, by going all around the room, is that the need exists everywhere. This is not a channel that is shared only with Northwest Territories communities; it's also a challenge that's shared clear across the country. And so that's what this group is coming together to do -- with engagement, is to figure out, okay, how are we going to do this -- how are we going to see these dollars flow out the door. And the reality is as well not everybody is going to have shovel-ready projects available right away. So there is going to have to be for some entities some planning phases as part of this and definitely some stacking of funding. But the opportunity to work with Indigenous governments is really a beautiful opportunity. And this, I know, that even in the Member's region in the community of Behchoko, the Tlicho government put together a daycare facility that I know that the Member raves about and I've had the opportunity to speak with her about that offers complimentary child care services to community members. And so those kinds of relationships are really important. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, thank you. Yesterday we talked about the theme day was for income support and, you know, I know there are some parents, young parents, due to child care space available, you know, and the long waitlists, so one of the excuses that there's no child care, no reliable child care. So if this was -- you know, if we had more space, I think there would be more young people or young parents that can take advantage of this child care services provided and, you know, and go to work. But I know some of the excuses that no

child care services available, dependable child care services. So it's good that, you know, the department is working with Indigenous governments and try to, you know, create more space and do something about it. So that's all. It's more of a comment. So thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the interest of time, I'm not going to repeat the compelling arguments made by the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake but did just want to reiterate my support for what he was saying, and I just state for the record I would wholeheartedly support supplementary appropriation coming forward from the department to better fund this area because it's important to my riding also. And, yeah, just want the Minister to be aware that the support is there for it if she's able to bring something forward. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll take that as a comment. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to get clarification. So you're talking about a need of \$3.5 million for wages and \$3.5 million for compensation benefits. Are we talking about top-ups for existing staff, or that money would be needed to hire new staff? Can you just explain what we're -- how you reached that number and -- yeah, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that would be the difference between what is currently being provided and what would need to be provided to make it on par. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So if I understand that correctly, that would mean, though, that we would need new infrastructure built along with that \$7 million for new operating funding if we were to realize -- if we were to meet the need that you're talking about? So I understand the feds have just announced, you know, this funding for infrastructure but obviously that would need to be figured out and built, or can you clarify whether we have existing infrastructure that if we had the \$7 million we could, you know, hire people and put those programs in place sooner? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's definitely a twofold one where if we want to be able to pay people on par with education assistants, then we definitely need the additional funding. Part of the additional funding hope as well is that you would incentivize more people to enter into that sector and then, of course, we also do need the infrastructure funding as well to be able to pay for more spaces to be built.

And, Mr. Chair, through yourself, can I please pass as well to the deputy minister who would like to add something.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. JAMIE FULFORD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just wanted to add that the early learning child care infrastructure strategy that the Minister was referring to, and upon which we're currently engaging, contemplates a number of different options for building infrastructure, from building from scratch to utilizing an existing building to even contemplating a modular configuration. So we're trying to look at all possible options in expanding the amount of child care infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That at least helps clarify the situation a bit more in terms of starting to lay out a path in concrete terms of, you know, what's needed and how might we get there. I think it's probably more than just adding \$7 million into this budget and saying, go, create all the spaces. There's some different steps required here that we need to order properly. But I am encouraged that we're at least talking numbers to be able to fill this gap and see a path forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I took that as a comment. I didn't hear a question from the Member.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. What I'll do now is that I think the food is ready. We'll take a 30-minute break, and we'll come back. And so we're continuing on in 43 -- on pages 41 to 43. If there's any further Members -- questions from the Members that haven't spoken yet, I'll give you that opportunity to speak then. Okay, we'll take a 30-minute break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

Thank you. We just concluded our supper break. Before we move on, yesterday I reminded Members that we're going to do ten minutes per item on per page activity, and I want to continue to do that. And so Members that haven't spoken, I have the list here. So right now on page 41 to 43, for Members that haven't spoken, is there any question? I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question or my concern is in regards to everybody knows that there's a big shortage of early childhood care in the smaller communities and even in the regional centres and even in Yellowknife. So we have a lot of young mothers or parents that want to go to school or go to work, but due to the lack of early childhood facilities they are reluctant to go and leave their families with -- leave their kids with babysitters or other caretakers.

My question is in -- just one question here is in regards to is there funding available for renovating homes or upgrading homes to fit the criteria of having your home as a facility to house children? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it would depend on the extent of renovations and what was required, but there are funding arrangements that the department does have to help people set up their family-run day home out of their houses, and so it would be on a case-by-case basis as to what exactly a resident might be looking for to help with that. And so if there is somebody within the Member's communities that would be interested in that, I know that the ELCC coordinator would love the opportunity to be able to hear from that person and work directly with them. That way they could understand where the person is living and what they're looking for and educate them about the different funding programs that are available and how we can work together.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Mr. Chair, I just had that one question. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to continue on now. If no further questions, please turn to page 40.

Education, Culture and Employment, early learning, operations expenditure summary,

2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$25,396,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Questions? I got Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 11-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025  
MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF EARLY  
LEARNING – EDUCATION, CULTURE AND  
EMPLOYMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of activity early learning in the main estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Thank you to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to education beginning on page 44 with information items on page 46 to 48. Are there any questions? Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to refer to business plan, page 11, just give the Minister and her staff a second to find that. In particular, the item that speaks to continuing implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. So I note that that Call to Action, particularly action number 7, speaks to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous education outcomes in the country. And that one is directed at the federal government. But, of course, there was an audit done by the auditor general recently of this system, came forward with a bunch of recommendations and resulting in the Improving Student Outcomes Action Plan. There's a couple of items in that action plan that are listed in the tracker on the department's website. JK to 4 literacy and numeracy strategy and developing greater integration of services for children and youth in the education system through expanding regional capacity.

I'm just wondering if the Minister can speak to those items first, and then I have a question about the goal in the business plan itself. So just first the two items that are on hold.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like the opportunity to pass to the assistant deputy minister Shannon Barnett-Aikman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the assistant deputy minister.

**MS. SHANNON BARNETT-AIKMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the first action on hold is the JK to 4 literacy and numeracy strategy, and that action was placed on hold in acknowledgement that we are in the process of moving to the BC adapted curriculum for the NWT, which, along with that, comes not just a change to the curriculum through grades JK to 9, but in each of those subject areas, a different way of approaching teaching and learning for the way that numeracy and literacy are accounted for within all of the curriculum content areas. So recognizing that when this action plan was developed, we did not have a line off sight on the new curriculum partner and how that would change at the time there was this action addressed. The decision to move that on hold was to better implement the switch from the Alberta curriculum to the BC curriculum and then reassess where we're at in terms of needing to support literacy and numeracy, whether it be through a formal strategy or through an increased focus on the way we promote teaching and learning in those areas in the schools.

The second action on hold is around moving to integrated service delivery. When that action was put into place through the improving student outcomes, we had a direct connection through the JK to 12 student support and wellness aspect of inclusive schooling. Since then, the integrated services delivery model has pivoted somewhat government-wide and now lives within -- more directly connected to the anti-poverty work. And so the focus in that area has shifted. However, we do still continue to support an integrated approach to accessing things like rehab services and other types of inclusive schooling supports in the JK to 12 system. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I appreciate those answers. And now kind of to the business plan itself, looking at that business plan -- it was just the continuing implementation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, it just highlighted for me to kind of have a look at those calls, and that number 7 stood out to me particularly considering the auditor general's report that the department is responding to. So I guess my question is on the

business plan, I don't see any commitments or targets being sought to reduce the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. I'm not seeing targets related to kind of increasing education outcomes for youth. There's certainly some targets related to early childhood education, but they're kind of about early childhood educators. So I'm just wondering if the department can speak a bit more to why we don't see targets in the business plan related to the outcomes that we're trying to seek for junior K to 12 students?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think it's important to note that not everything that the government does lands in the business plans. There's still action plans that are still day-to-day efforts that are done by public servants and by Northerners day in and day out that don't land themselves in the business plans per se. But educating children and making sure that we are preparing them for the rest of their lives is something that is constantly top of mind for northern educators, for parents, for community members, and something that we need to continue to do. So while these outcomes are not specifically in the business plan, it absolutely does not mean that it is something that falls off or is something that does not exist. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I think that I -- I'll just make the comment that I think it would be nice to see the department speaking to outcomes they're looking to reach in the business plan just because this one, I believe, is quite an important item, and I think it's something that has been, you know, recently audited in the department. There was definitely some gaps found and so I think it's something that should be top of mind for the department in terms of the plans that they're making and the outcomes that they're trying to achieve. So I'll leave that as a comment for future updates to the business plan. I would encourage the department to kind of just have a second look at that.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to just pivot to post-secondary education a little bit. And, you know, I have made lots of comments, a number of Members have made comments on the Aurora College transition. I just note that when we're speaking to the budget line item, there is a reduction here. I'm wondering if the Minister or her staff can speak to that reduction, what specifically is being taken away, what service is



being reduced there, and how does that reduction impact our implementation and achievement of transition of Aurora College to a polytechnic?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, this section actually goes between two different assistant deputy ministers in the way that it is in the main estimates, just so that everybody knows. The assistant deputy minister that is responsible for post-secondary is hiding in the little room. So just so that I -- I just wanted to be transparent and that I might have to phone a friend who is in a back room.

But for this one here for the reduction to Aurora College, what was done in our restoring balance exercise is the GNWT was we were instructed to go back and work with our departments, as well as our agencies and arm's length organizations. And so for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment that, of course, included Aurora College. And so what was done there was we went back to Aurora College, we went back to education bodies as well, and asked them what they were prepared to let go of as far as funding. And so that dollar amount that came from Aurora College was a hundred percent driven by them and them alone and so -- and I didn't tweak it any way, shape, or form. I respected their operational independence in that respect. So what Aurora College did was they were able to review position vacancies, retirements, and positions that won't impact programs and that largely was what drove their reductions from their budget. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I do -- yeah, I do note that -- I actually have notes for myself on Aurora College on the next page. It can be -- where we're going night after night here, it can be hard to keep track of all our notes. But, you know, the line item is here also so it seems like a fair place to also ask the question.

Just to be clear here, the Minister suggested that Aurora College had almost \$2 million in reductions simply with vacant positions that weren't filled, is that correct? Or is there maybe a bit more to that story?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that's not a hundred percent of the story. That is definitely the primary driver for their reductions, but it is not a hundred percent. But I can definitely say that their selection of what dollars that they were not going to use and suggest for this exercise were intentionally not tied to transformation. But for additional detail, I would like the opportunity to invite another assistant deputy minister to join me at the table.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Yes, proceed. Thank you. I'm going to go to the assistant ADM.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to my right I have Mr. Mike Saturnino, who is assistant deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment as well.

**MR. MIKE SATURNINO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So as the Minister mentioned, when we sent this to Aurora College, they intentionally looked at what it was that they could look at that wouldn't impact programs, wouldn't impact the core services that they offer. And so they did look at vacancies. They looked at upcoming retirements. They looked at term positions and also positions that were within the organization that were perhaps more corporate in function and less around academics, and that's where these reductions were primarily driven from. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to continue on now to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have a couple of questions. The first one I'll talk about the northern distance learning, and I note it's \$850,000 decrease to that. That is a program that I know was piloted out of Inuvik for students in remote communities to be able to access the academic programs they needed through online services. Can the Minister speak as to what that reduction of \$850,000 is a reflection of? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in reflection of the fact that a lot of students use northern distance learning and its importance to their education, it was ensured that any reductions to this program would not prevent students from accessing the program. And so the cuts are primarily to use more virtual meetings, so instructors and such that at one point would travel or students who would travel, that has been turned into more virtual settings. And then

there's also some changes to technology uses on the back end. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister Cleveland. So just then to confirm, the reduction of \$850,000 is not a reduction to the program itself or the services that it offers? It's still going to maintain at the same levels it was maintaining when we spent \$850,000 more last year?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. To the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** That is correct, Mr. Chair. Students who currently access northern distance learning will still be able to access northern distance learning. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My other question -- since you have Mr. Saturnino with you is on the college, was the -- so I've spoken previously about the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Innovation and how important that is for the college to get their accreditation to be able to develop the programming they need to become a polytechnic. I guess my first question is was the Minister and your department aware that this program was actually running and that the funding from CanNor was sunseting after three years? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, yes, the department was aware that this program was operating and was also aware that the program was a funded program through CanNor and that it did have a sunseting time period. Any desire to have ECE support renegotiating that was not reached out to the department for. But I'd like to also pass to Mr. Saturnino as I think that the Member is eager to hear from him as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the assistant ADM.

**MR. MIKE SATURNINO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so the department was aware this was an initiative that was introduced when the president role was being shared with the associate deputy minister of post-secondary education renewal. And so, of course, there was a higher level of -- a good level of communication happening across the

department. We were aware of this initiative and what it was for, which was to build capacity within the college to support staff. And so that was the -- what it was intended for when it was introduced initially in 2020. And so we were given notice that the program was ending, and, of course, you know, were in discussions with the college as it was closing but as the Minister noted, there was no request to continue with it. I'm aware that they did approach CanNor and sought to get additional funds, but their request was not supported. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** It's surprising, because when the president of Aurora College sat in front of committee, it certainly was made very clear to us that if there's one thing that they could get to continue would be that \$500,000 funding to ensure that program continued on. So I'm a little surprised that it wasn't brought forward to the department as well. The department obviously is aware that they do require that funding for that training, that particular program, to ensure that they can qualify -- the programs would qualify the insurance requirements to become a polytechnic. So has the department had any conversations with Aurora College around that, around -- again, as part of the polytechnic transformation process, the importance of having that program continue?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I received a letter from Aurora College chair on Thursday indicating that they are requesting funding to reinstate that entity. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's nice to know that the chair of the board has been listening to session the last couple of weeks. Obviously, he feels there might be an opportunity. Yeah, no, that's it for me on that, I think, Mr. Chair. I certainly appreciate it. And, yeah, we look -- I mean, again, that funding, I think, is crucial, and I hope the department's considering looking at that program and maintaining that program so, again, we can continue down the path of getting to a polytechnic, where we need to be. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any more questions for information

item on pages 46 to 48? Yes, I got a Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I appreciate the questions and comments from my colleagues on post-secondary education, so I will pick up the baton here and focus on JK to 12 education.

So we see some significant reductions in JK to 12 education system services and student services. System services is reduced by about 25 percent -- actually both are, and student services. And then we see reductions in contributions to education authorities.

So my question is how will this affect students on the ground at the end of the day? And just to back up for a sec, I just want to point out, so earlier there was comments that because -- there was a focus on just reducing positions that were vacant or retirements, that that wouldn't impact programs. And so I don't think we can make an assumption that because someone's retiring and we're not replacing them, that doesn't impact the program. It doesn't affect a staff person in that we don't have to fire someone, for lack of a better term, but it will impact the program in that if we're letting someone retire and no one's replacing them, that, by definition, impacts something. So I just want us to be clear that just because we're not creating affected employees, that's not the same as not impacting programs. Anyway, but the question at hand here is about impacts to JK to 12 education in terms of those significant reductions. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to start off by just pointing out that the two or kind of apples and oranges because one is talking about JK to 12 education; the other's talking about Aurora College, and they're very separate. In regards to the Member's question about the reduction for our territorial schools and administration, that number is enrolment driven. And so while I did, as Minister, use that number to bring to my colleagues within this fiscal sustainability exercise, that is a number that goes up and down year after year because it is based entirely on enrolment. And so that is where that number came from. It was not anything different or outside of the traditional school funding formula. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And just to clarify, so my comment on the issue of

whether retirements would impact programs, that was just sort of globally in general whenever we talk about retirements and vacancies.

Anyway, so is the Minister suggesting that enrolment has gone down by 25 percent from last year to this year? I mean, and it's also significantly lower than the previous year. Is that what we're talking about that student enrolment has gone down 25 percent in the past year?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, no. I'm looking at the actuals from 2022-2023 of \$139 million to the main estimates of 2024-2025 which are \$136 million -- \$136.6 million. So not a 25 percent reduction in attendance. I'm talking about that particular line item. If the Member would like me to give her information on additional line items, I'd be happy.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thanks for clarifying that. The line items that I wanted to focus on at the moment are under junior kindergarten to grade 12 education system services, the first one, which goes from \$8.1 million to just over \$6 million from last year to this year's main estimates. And maybe you can explain the difference to me. But further down in the list, there's JK to grade 12 student services, which goes from \$6.1 million to \$4.6 million this year. Can the Minister (audio) will impact services or whether that's primarily due to a drastic decrease in student enrolment?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. To the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, in that top line item there, the \$8.2 million to the \$6 million, that line item reduction is due to some fiscal sustainability reductions. So for starters, there is a sunset of education renewal and innovation funding but from our fiscal sustainability plan, there's also a switch to virtual meetings related to committee meetings and a reduction of the number of training sessions as well by our student support and wellness programs. There's also a true-up of mentorship allowances and substitute wages to support the budgets under the school funding framework as well. And there is a discontinuation of an education operations coordinator, which is a headquarters position, a discontinuation of an Indigenous language and culture coordinator

position as well as a discontinuation of a junior kindergarten to grade 6 curriculum coordinator. We were also able, in this line item here, to reduce the number and frequency of training for northern teachers. So previously principals did an annual inservice, and so what we have looked at doing is actually combining that with a summit at a conference in order to save some dollars there and bring that together with some other PD that happens. We've also reduced the number and frequency of training for -- oh sorry, I'm repeating myself. And we've also discontinued, for example, our -- or sorry, switched to virtual meetings with education authorities in order to save some additional funding. And then that, of course, is offset by some federal dollars we received for the national action plan to end gender-based violence as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so were these reductions done in consultation with education authorities or based on recommendations from those education authorities or -- I understand some of these are with -- you know, solely within ECE, but there may be impacts on education authorities and the work that they do. So can the Minister speak to any consultation that was done there or recommendations from the authorities?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department did put out a call to education bodies as a whole to ask them, you know, what would work, do you foresee a possibility to offer up some dollars from your budgets. And without any surprise, of course, the answer was no, which we a hundred percent respected because, like many members have said, you know, our foundation to -- our economic foundation begins with educating our youth. And so we absolutely respected that. But what the education bodies did offer up were some suggestions of where to create some savings within the department. And so those recommendations were absolutely listened to, and some of those recommendations as well included switching to virtual training sessions or meetings because sometimes when we're taking teachers out of, especially small communities, it can be incredibly disruptive to the learning of students. And so some of those suggestions were definitely incorporated within this budget here. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. All right, well that is somewhat reassuring to hear. The question -- so on page 46, we look at the budgets for building Skills 4 Success in the NWT, and that has gone from \$3.368 million last year to it looks like nothing this year. And so can the Minister explain whether that funding appears somewhere else in the budget? Is it a shifting around of where funds are coming from or going, or what programs are we losing if that program disappears?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that was a sunset of a federal program that was not reinstated, and there was a significant impact to labour market programs across Canada and one that we have heard a lot about from provincial and territorial labour Ministers across the country for sure. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so my understanding is that we have an action plan, the Skills 4 Success Action Plan, that is supposed to go from 2021 to 2025. So are we able to continue on with that action plan and accomplishing the goals that we've set for ourselves without any funding in that line item this year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to just say for the record that we called our program Skills 4 Success first before the feds and, unfortunately, the two are not related; they just share a name. So when the federal government came out with their funding program, it had the same name as our existing strategy. So the two are not related. Our strategy still exists, but that federal funding has sunset. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I have Member from Monfwi for pages 46 to 48. Questions.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. My question was regarding what MLA Morgan was referring to, education authority contributions. It says that, you know, money is allocated based on previous school year. So it is based on enrolment formula. So I just wanted

to ask the Minister if there's a breakdown of regions, you know, which region is most impacted that, you know, there is a decrease in this budget. So, yeah, just which region is most impacted?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. To the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just to be clear, we did not decrease our contributions or change the funding formula. The funding formula is enrolment-based, so it would be based on the number of students attending a school based on the numbers provided by that particular education body and particular school. And as far as -- you know, if the Member is asking how enrolment numbers changed year after year for schools in her region, I'd be happy to access that information but it's not information that I have at my fingertips right now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Well, it's not huge, but it's just that it would be nice to know the numbers because -- and you did state that before that due to enrolment and, you know, like, the contribution went down. So I just want -- that's why I ask is that which region, you know, is most impacted. And also it's not -- we're not part of North Slave so, you know, with Tlicho regions, I would like to know for that very reason. And I know that last year -- and this is regarding the post-secondary. I know last -- you know, because of the Aurora College transformation, so teacher education program and social work program, you know, they don't offer that program anymore. But I believe previous Minister did say before that it was going to be up and running maybe this school year or next school year, because I thought he said 2024-2025 that they're going to start accepting students. So I just wanted to know if and when the Aurora College is going to start accepting students for teacher education program and social work. Because those two are very important. And I know that we do have problems with retaining and those were a success for many of the small communities, students coming from small communities and they were using that program more, and we did have a lot of graduates and a lot of them went on to obtain their master's and PhD. So I just wanted to know when the Aurora College is going to start accepting students, you know, for teacher education and social work program. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** To the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just to go back really quickly, I do have the number for the Member in terms of the change in enrolment for Tlicho region, and it's 4 percent. So a decline of 4 percent for Tlicho region schools.

And then in regards to the degree programs from Aurora College, Aurora College has spoken about having their first degree program be general studies, and they pushed that back by a year. Originally, they had intended that that would start this fall, and so that would mean that it would start next fall. Beyond that, I do not have that information as of yet from the board of governors of Aurora College.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** It's good, thank you. Thank you for the information, which I'm sure there's people listening and our leaders are listening too as well. So it's good to know that number.

And, yeah, so minority language education a second language, well, that's for French. But I know it was in the budget that Aurora College was going to be -- or it was part of their budget where they were going to deliver a diploma program for language. Why that program never went further or, like, it was never -- the department never did anything about it knowing the importance of the Indigenous language and, you know -- and now that department is creating ADM for language and culture. So I want to know why the department never proceeded to offer that program? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the department did have money set aside in the budget anticipating that that program would be developed and come forward and had hoped it would come forward sooner. And so it has been part of ECE's budget for a number of years and money that they have received/approved by this Legislative Assembly for that purpose. Given that the program is not yet in existence, that was identified as a potential cost savings to the department and dollars that could be directed elsewhere so that we're ensuring that we're directing it to where it can best be used. And then once a program does come forward, then I would be able to go to FMB again with a submission, a costed submission and timeline for that delivery. So it's not the department of education that would develop that program and that curriculum for Aurora College; it's Aurora College that is doing that work.

I think it is worth also mentioning programs that are within the department of education, like the mentorship apprenticeship program and the scholarship programs as well, that have really taken off over the last number of years and have seen record enrolment, and so just a huge thank you to your MAP coordinators and also our mentors who are doing that good work. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you for the information. Treaty simulations, it's a one-time funding for treaty simulation project. Can you elaborate more on that, please. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would have to phone a friend for that one, but I believe it is worked into federal and GNWT agreements with Indigenous governments. But may I please pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the deputy minister.

**MR. JAMIE FULFORD:** And apologies, I think I will also have to access assistant deputy minister Shannon Barnett-Aikman with the will of the committee.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Yes, you can bring her in, the ADM.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, if possible, can I commit to getting that back to the committee. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Yes. Okay, we'll continue on. I'm going to go back to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I'm done with this part.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list, I got the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I too would like to raise the minority language education and secondary language instruction, in particular -- or the French -- sorry, the French funding, which is decreasing by -- I believe my calculations around one point -- just shy of \$1.5 million. And I understand that's a sunset from the French language cooperative agreement. The Northwest Territories is -- has a great reputation and success rate for producing bilingual students

through its JK to 12 system. Sorry, I'm getting all my numbers lined -- or my letters and numbers lined up. So -- and this is great. I worked with Canadian Parents for French. I still do. Minority language education, in particular French language education, is an important part of the Canadian identity, and it's great to see our government supporting this. But there's a huge need for bilingual teachers in Canada, and if we're going to be successful in attracting and retaining them, we need to ensure that we have robust financial resources supporting our school divisions to ensure they can attract and retain the talent we need to continue these very successful rates of graduation of bilingual diplomas. So what are we doing to offset the loss in funding from the sunset agreement? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I absolutely agree with the Member. I know that we are both products of being able to be in French language schools in this territory and are able now to pass that on to our own children, which is definitely a privilege and one that I would like for Northerners to be able to continue.

So within that funding, the Member is right. There's a sunset of funding related to the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement on minority language education and second official language instruction, and the Member was totally in tune with his math as well. \$1.453 million is that sunset, and that was sunset of funding to College Nordique. We're in the process in the department of renegotiating our federal funding agreements for all of our language agreements, and that minority language education is included in that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So is that anticipated to be restored to the level of support it previously enjoyed? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to pass to the deputy minister to be able to speak to this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. JAMIE FULFORD:** Mr. Chair, of course that is our fervent desire, but in negotiations one can never be certain of the outcome. We're hoping for a positive outcome and anticipating that that could occur by as early as summer of this year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Awesome, Mr. Chair. That's great news. I wish you the best of luck. And if you need any letters written, I can certainly help out.

I just want to point out with this as well, often when there is an announcement around minority language funding for French languages, for French language education in the Northwest Territories or other programming, there seems to be a tug-of-war between Indigenous language funding and in a sense that Indigenous languages are being left out of that, but these are completely separate programs and separate funding streams. And I think it's really important we support all of our official languages to the best of our ability. And if there's cash out there, we should be trying to get it and invest in all of our languages. It just happens to be a lot of federal support for French language funding, and I think what all minority language groups have in common is that they are minority language groups and we can -- they can find ways to support each other, especially if they're properly funded. So I really do support minority language education, and I hope this -- we continue to see success in this area of education.

I have other -- Members have already spoken about other concerns I have around education. The one thing I will add is can the Minister just update this House on how the STIP day -- or the STIP program is working. I know as a parent with children in various grades that the increasing number of days off on the calendar often will create a lot of strain on just the availability of time for parents to, like, manage their schedule. So it seems like these calendar days continue to increase. I know that this was a way to offset costs and continue to support teachers so there's fewer burnouts and we continue to make the North a good place for teachers to work. And and I know we continue to pay them, I think, the highest in Canada, which is all very good. But I know parents I talk to and, you know, one of those parents is my wife, can often be frustrated when there's another day, another week, where oh, you know, we missed it, something wasn't communicated, and now we have to make arrangements that we didn't anticipate. So how is that program going? Are instructional -- do we

have enough instructional hours? What's the feedback been like so far? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, absolutely I hear the Member that, you know, understanding where your children are when you're at work and that they're cared for and managing that is incredibly important. You know, we just talked about child care for sure, and so I hear the Member on that one.

Mr. Chair, right now -- well sorry, in the previous Assembly, it was expected that there would be a statutory review of the STIP days. That evaluation was deferred indefinitely at that time. It was originally deferred because of COVID. There just wasn't the amount of hours required in order to review that. And then beyond that, there just hadn't really been what was considered kind of a normal school year. I would say as far as how it's going, it really depends on who you talk to. So if you talk to the teachers, they definitely appreciate the added time in order to serve the purpose of providing them with day-to-day time in order to do things like report cards. If you talk to parents, of course, it is definitely more of a challenge.

How education bodies have decided to manage that time has definitely been up to each of them. For example, there's an education body here in Yellowknife who has chosen to attach that to Thursday afternoons in order for parents to have that consistency of time. It has also meant that that particular education body has stepped away from PD days and being able to use those Thursday afternoons for that purpose. And I know that there are other school boards who have done the same. And so it really depends on who you talk to. And as we know, with limited options for child care it does become a challenge for parents for sure. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that response. Are we going to undertake that review? Like, I understand it's been deferred indefinitely, but now that we're not in emergency circumstances and we do have time, is this an area the Minister thinks is worthwhile to reevaluate? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, STIP feedback

still comes forward ad hoc through different evaluation parameters from education bodies and from open communication with education bodies, and then beyond that calendars are still developed to meet legislative requirements, for example for instructional hours, and then, of course, we have the collective agreement parameters for a number of teacher workdays and stuff like that. And if -- but, yes -- sorry, I've been passed a note. Yes, we can consider doing that as well. But I'd be curious to know -- I feel like the Member has another ask and so I'll pass back to him. Because I'm curious as to where he will go with that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** I was passing back to the Member, sorry.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** To the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Yeah, thank you. Well, just do it. So in the -- I mean, I was part of the -- I was one of the MLAs who passed the statutory review, so I think it's important to do it. I think one thing we learned from COVID is when kids are out of class, education results suffer. All the evidence, all the science is showing us that, that -- if I could have, like, ten more seconds just to conclude my thought -- but, like, that is where the science is showing us that when you pull kids out of the classroom, academics suffer. And they still have not recovered from all that time that was lost during the pandemic. So I am extremely skeptic that more time out of the classroom is going to be useful, so I would strongly encourage the statutory review to be put -- to come back and for it to be implemented within the life of this government. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Any further questions on items pages 46 to 48? Any Members? Okay, I don't see no further questions, please turn to page 45.

Education, Culture and Employment, education, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$236,524,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 12-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025  
MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF  
EDUCATION – EDUCATION, CULTURE AND  
EMPLOYMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity education in the main estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour, show of hands. Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditure, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, education, is deferred.

---Carried

We will now move on to the next key activity. Thank you, moving on to income security beginning on page 49 with information items on page 51 and 52. Are there any questions?

No further questions. We're moving on to security beginning on page 49 with information items on page 51 and 52. Are there any questions? Okay, thank you, I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So as my colleague from Monfwi has spoken to, very passionately in this House on many a time, there is a concern, I think, around the lack of funding for the senior home heating subsidy. So especially for elders who are on limited incomes. And I can see that in the main estimates from 2023-2024 and the revised estimates, there is a difference of approximately 500 and change thousand dollars, and now the main estimates for 2024-2025 have gone back down. Does the Minister wish to speak to whether she thinks that's adequate? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, for the last two years -- well, probably longer than that, the department has watched this closely to make sure that they are doing anything that they can within their wheelhouse to ensure that seniors are receiving up to 80 percent of their fuel covered, seniors who qualify and who need that support. It is definitely a well-used subsidy within the Northwest Territories and one that a lot of seniors and elders are reliant on. So for the last two years, because of the increasing cost of fuel, the department has been able to



issue one-time top-ups to seniors for this fund. And so continuing to watch fuel costs and uptake of the program is something that the department will continue to do and then reevaluate as and when needed. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And similarly to the income assistance line and the program detail, it has been historically lower, not that long ago, by -- gosh, I'm going to say -- math on the fly is not my forte, Mr. Speaker. But the difference between the main estimates of this fiscal is 43 -- almost \$44 million, and in 2022-2023, the actuals were close to \$36 million. So I guess -- obviously that's just a tiny snapshot, but if the Minister could speak to where she sees income assistance trending over time as well, that would be helpful. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, one of the things that is important to know in these two main estimates for 2023-2024, as well as 2024-2025, is they both have the funding for the new income assistance program included in them, but because we weren't able to launch that program, the actuals were far less because we weren't able to get those dollars out the door with the new program. I think it's also worth knowing as well that we still have not returned to our pre-pandemic levels for income assistance uptake as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to clarify, then, can the Minister explain if she expects to need more than what is currently funded? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The department has asked for, in this budget, what they feel they will need. And also I hope that with the increased ability for residents to keep some of their earned income and work with client navigators as well as career development officers that hopefully we will be able to support residents to create pathways to employment, entrepreneurship, as well as education by combining our business

plans with the dollars that we do have available. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, so thank you for that. I wonder if the Minister of ECE could have a conversation with the Minister of ITI around employment opportunities in our smaller communities and what we're going to be really pushing on in these three and a half years we have left to make sure there are good options for people across our territory. I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll take that as a comment. Thank you, I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I see here senior home, in this activities -- okay, no, it's not that. It's income support assistance program. Okay, there's minuses, is \$187,000. But I see increase of that \$187,000 in senior citizens supplementary benefit. Is that a transfer from that program to senior citizens supplementary benefit?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's not a trade from one to the other. What is happening under the senior citizens supplementary benefit is we have more seniors in the territory, so we needed to increase that budget in order to account for the expected growth of that program that matches our population growth in that age bracket. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, senior citizens supplementary benefits, it's not huge, but can the Minister explain more what that program does.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is a supplement for people. Once you reach a certain age, you get a small amount of money that is provided to you. And for further detail than that, I'd like to pass to Mr. Saturnino. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the ADM.

**MR. MIKE SATURNINO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Minister mentioned, this is an additional benefit provided to seniors. It is based on

eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement. And so it is actually a benefit that is legislated, and it is administered by the federal government. So these benefits are paid out on the same cheque as old age security and guaranteed income supplement. So it basically works out to an extra \$196 per month. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you for that information. Okay, senior home heating subsidy, okay, 2024-2025 was \$2.7 million, and it went down for this current fiscal year to \$2.1 million. And I -- okay, I just want to make sure I'm on the -- okay, on the right line here.

I know this is a very important program, especially for our elders living in small communities because I think you go by tier one, tier two, tier three. Okay, there are some -- some of my -- well, a couple of my communities are on tier three, and they have said that the amount that's allocated, it's not enough to make ends meet. It's not enough for them to heat their house. So if my constituents are saying that, that lives in the tundra, so what about the other communities that are living further with the high price of fuel? You know, like, I mean -- so it must be -- this must have a great impact on them as well, especially the elders who, you know, needs these subsidies. Why did the department -- I just want to ask the department why a decrease in that -- with that program when it's greatly needed to accommodate our senior citizens who -- there's quite a few of them, and we keep talking about elders aging in home or seniors aging in home with dignity, and this is not enough, you know, to help our seniors. And there are lots I know that -- that do not want to go to regional centres because a lot of them are still independent, they can do things, but they don't want to go to a senior home because they're still capable, they can still -- they're mobile. Because for us -- for a lot of them, that's a last stop and that's -- they don't want to go there, not now, not yet. So why there is a big decrease in budget for that? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm very happy that Members have been so vocal in the House about the use of this program and how successful, or how reliant I should say, seniors and elders are. I think it's really important that everybody have the opportunity to hear what is working for residents and what is not. And so I'm very thankful to Members that they've

shared that this is definitely something that is needed.

The reason that you see the difference of just over \$500,000 between the revised estimates for 2023-2024 and the main estimates for 2024-2025 is that due to the increase cost of fuel, and in recognition of that, the department was able to go and do its best to find that additional funding and work it into that budget in order to ensure that they were doing what they can to make sure that roughly around 80 percent of the fuel costs of seniors and elders in the territory were covered. The reason that the actuals for 2022-2023 are also higher than the annual budget of \$2.192 million is because that same type of work was done in the previous year. So education has really worked hard to make sure that additional dollars are found because they acknowledge how important that program is for seniors in the territory. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. This heating fuel subsidy, you know, if you go to small communities, especially in December and January, the coldest month of the year, a lot of these elders, they have wood stove, so they are eligible for either wood or heating fuel. And a lot of them are going for the fuel because it is expensive to maintain or, you know, it -- they are expensive to get especially in the small communities. There's also for woods, too, as well, but a lot of them they said they would rather go get the fuel. But, and I know some of them were asking why not -- why have -- you know, like, they like the options but they would like it if they could be accommodated especially in small communities with elders that would like to use the wood, but they don't have anybody there to help and provide. So why not have two -- you know, like, the senior home heating subsidy, there be one for wood as well so they'll be eligible for both in small communities. Not just only that but here in Yellowknife as well -- and I'm sure there are some elders, some senior citizens, who use wood for heating purpose. So it would be nice if there could be for burning -- for wood to heat your house instead of, you know, because it's not enough. It's not enough in most of the program because sometimes in the small communities it's hard to get wood, you know, like for others to do it. And it's based on contract too. So it's not reliable. So a lot of them, you know, they go for the heating fuel but it's not enough. It doesn't fill the fuel tank. So that's what they were saying, why not have wood too, you know, to be eligible for wood as well instead of just, you know, having an option of choosing one over the other. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, so I'll take that as just a comment. Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Sorry, I just wanted to make sure that residents know that they can either choose one or the other or both and that they can work with their client navigator on that one. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you for that clarification, Minister. Any more questions on page 51 to page 52 information item? If not, I want to continue on. I want to continue on to -- no further questions. Please turn to page 50.

Education, Culture and Employment, income security, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$66,360,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to the labour development and standards on page 53 with information items on page 55 to 57. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So -- excuse me for one quick second here as I find the pages on the business plan I'd like to refer to quickly.

In the business plan on page 15, the department speaks to supporting pathways to employment for NWT youth through SNAP and specifically talks about measures of number of high school students participating in SNAP program as students.

I don't have any particular issue with that but what I would like the Minister to speak to is if her department has thought about other pathways to career education within the JK to 8 segment. I heard a lot from folks on the campaign trail that that's what they would like to see, specifically the construction industry, so I wonder what the Minister is contemplating on that front. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in addition to, you know, students who want to go through like the SNAP program, there is also the career education advisors. But can I just confirm the Member was talking about what's being done for JK to grade 8? Thank you. Oh, yes, I'm getting a thumbs up. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, the new curriculum that is being implemented in the Northwest Territories would have more practical courses that could relate to employment readiness. And the other thing that I think is really valuable within the new curriculum is that it's a lot more project-based. And so there's a lot more onus on the student and excitement on the part of the student to be able to do a lot more hands on learning and a lot more creative learning, whether or not they're learning math, science, social studies, or the rest of it. And so I think that the new curriculum really speaks well to empower our youth to roll their sleeves up. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I would really encourage her staff to reach out to various trade associations and see how the connections could be made through the new curriculum.

Moving on to the NTNP, I notice that you have some actions and measures under the business plan on page 17, namely, approving accessibility to the program streams, continuing to promote immigration to the NWT through the program, and on the following page -- on page 19, pardon me -- increasing the number of health and social services positions supported by the NTNP. And I know the Minister knows where I'm going with this because I'm constantly talking to her about it. I seem to be the MLA for foreign nationals who have health backgrounds.

So could the Minister tell me more about how she plans to promote or explain the program and access points that best serve folks who are already in the NWT? I know she knows I'm coming to her pretty much weekly with this, so I would love to hear if there's anything else that I don't know already, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the Member's excitement and ensuring that we're continuing to work on this. I think that it'll be an exciting term for creating systems for people wanting to come to Canada and make the Northwest Territories home.

We have a staff member within Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Moving forward, we will be transitioning a second staff member from ITI over to Education, Culture and Employment. And so being able to really double that team, I think, will do a lot of good for ECE in being able to support people within this space. And from our allotment from the federal

government for people within the nominee program is currently set to 300 people. We have not yet within the territory met that number, but we have big plans within Education, Culture and Employment to ensure that we are doing our part to continue to support Northerners to build a skilled workforce, and that means we need more people. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, really, just one more question. Can the Minister speak to the engagement and promotion and discussions in a general way. I don't want her, you know, speaking to anything confidential, really. It's just, as she noted, I am super keen to see where ECE can go with this, and I'm interested to see where ECE can go with our federal partners on this and looking at those new pathways. So is there anything she can speak to on timelines or big dreams she might have, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, at this point, you know, these are early days, but do I have dreams? I most definitely do. And I've had the opportunity to travel to our immigration FTP meetings in Montreal just recently with deputy minister Fulford, and in those meetings had the opportunity to speak to things like settlement services and credentialing here in the territory, which are things that we hear quite a bit about, and especially credentialing just recently in the House here. So in addition to working with federal counterparts, working with -- or provincial counterparts outside of the NWT, I've had the opportunity to create some relationships with some of my own counterparts in other parts of the country and how we might be able to support the needs of the territory within their provinces, but I've also had the opportunity to connect with some of my Cabinet colleagues as well on some of the needs because this will definitely pull in a lot of different departments to be able to ensure that we're creating systems that support people to come and make the NWT home as part of the nominee program. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions from the Member for Great Slave? Don't see none. Is there any further Members that want to question information item on page 55 to 57?

I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In Inuvik at the Aurora College facility, they have these trailers, trades trailers I think they're called. They've been sitting there for a number of years without moving to any of the communities, outlying communities. I know in my community of Fort McPherson, they've been expressing interest in seeing if they can bring these trailers to the communities and get some of our local people trained in some trade or another. Is it covered in here on page 55 or 56 somewhere? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the trades trailers are owned by Aurora College and so would fall under their operations. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Well, that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Any more questions from Members on information item on pages 55 to 57? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So can the Minister explain why under apprenticeship and occupational certification, there is a decrease from last year's amounts? Is that that last year's amounts weren't fully expended? Or what's the rationale there? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that reduction is a decrease due to reductions in the trades and occupation wage subsidy program. And so that would be dollars that are historically unspent that we have removed from the budget. In addition to that, there's also some savings in there from the apprenticeship trade and occupational certification committee pivoting to virtual meetings as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the trades and occupations wage subsidy I'm reading here, that provides financial assistance to employers to hire Northerners with little or no work experience and support that individual to progress through apprenticeship. If we're not getting this program fully subscribed, it seems like there should be a big need for this kind of

thing. Does the Minister believe that there is more we can do to, you know, try to recruit employers, try to promote this program more, or are we going about it the wrong way? It seems like this is one of the key goals to achieve our priorities. So does the Minister have any insights on if not this program what we could do instead to get more people, you know, training as apprentices to move forward with trades and other occupations? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to start, and then I'd like to pass it to the assistant deputy minister, Mr. Saturnino. But, for starters, absolutely there's more that can be done as far as employers learning about the wage subsidies. And I think that especially when it comes to achieving our goal of increasing SNAP apprentices across the territory especially outside of Yellowknife, the more work that can be done in order to find those employers and make sure that they know that they are eligible for wage subsidies, I am a firm believer that us as MLAs have a role to play in communication as well and in making sure that we are pointing people in the right direction. But through yourself, Mr. Chair, I would like to pass to Mr. Saturnino.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'd like to go to the ADM.

**MR. MIKE SATURNINO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I suppose what I would point to is the apprenticeship trade and occupation certification program has had a strategy in place for five years, from 2017 to 2022. The purpose of that strategy was very much to try and grow the program, improve the supports, improve the communications in marketing for the program as well. We've seen some successes from the original strategy and are currently working on an extension for that strategy. And we anticipate that we will have a new action plan that hopefully will be released in the fall. We recently went out for engagement. We work very closely -- apprenticeship is an industry driven system. Partners -- employers are the critical partner, ensuring that they have journeypersons. And so if there's an employer out there that is at all interested and willing to take on apprentices, we are working with them and we're trying to grow the program. And one thing I would note here is this is where a program like the Schools North Apprenticeship Program becomes very critical in trying to get more young people into the trades. And we've seen amazing growth in that program from, you know, one student in 2017 to 40 plus students

to the present day. So some significant growth in that program, which gives us positive signs for program growth over time. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to seeing the new strategy or the extension and the new action plan and making sure -- well, from our side, trying to hold the government to account that we make real progress on this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister explain why we are reducing the small community employment support funding? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, 3 million of those dollars were focused on small communities, and 1 million of those dollars were focused on regional centres. And so the change in that reduction would signal a desire to kind of change the policy work behind that funding to ensure that funding is directed at communities with the highest unemployment rates. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister not think that putting the full amount, the \$4 million, into small communities and into those places with the lowest employment rates, would be more beneficial than just cutting it out altogether? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, like I've said before, in my time here today, there would definitely be -- I could find many ways to spend money, and my husband always says I'm definitely very skilled at it. But I would need to evaluate that to make sure that at the end of the day we, as a department, are getting the biggest return on our investment and ensuring that we are spending money as responsibly as possible in tune with the priorities of this Assembly. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that this is -- this program's exactly that. It's a great return on investment if we get it working correctly. And I know regional centres were added in the past because they were -- there were issues getting the money out the door, but I think that that's not a reason to cut it. That's a reason to retool the program so we can get the cash flowing to where it needs to go. So I mean, since the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has issued its report where they're calling for this funding to be restored, I have received messages from local administrators and community members in small communities who have supported this move and have said that this is really important funding. I've spoken to previous and former Ministers, former Members, who remember how when this program came about and how important it was and want to see it reinstated. So, I mean, is there a way to change the Minister's thinking on this and to reprioritize employment in small communities and maximize these dollars rather than cutting them away? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, like the rest of my colleagues, I am definitely always willing to have conversations. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Well, I mean, I guess we'll continue to have that conversation but, you know, I think it's important that we find -- that we develop a policy that works for the entire Northwest Territories. And this is a good policy. It's good for -- it's one of those areas that, you know, we -- the Yellowknife Members don't have to do much to ensure that there's investment in Yellowknife, right. So we have to look -- we as an Assembly have to make sure we're looking at ways to invest outside and make sure we're maximizing economic activity because the default is headquarters, right, and we -- that was the debate yesterday. And I'm not going to -- I'm not going to reflect on that. But Members were here. So, you know, it's just when you -- when you have a debate like that and then you see a cut to this, you start to wonder, like, when we're doing reduction exercises, are we looking at taking money where it's most needed in those small communities outside of the centres rather than looking at ways we can reduce our comfort levels in headquarters or other regional centres

where they're buttressed by more funding, more resources, and more staff. So I don't support this reduction. I want to see it restored. I don't know if I can support this budget if these cuts to small community support programs continue. There's another fund we'll get to another department. It's just disappointing to see this when so much work in previous Assemblies has gone -- have gone to developing these programs and delivering these programs. You know, there's been working groups, small community working groups that were kind of given ownership of these funds to make sure they could be directed into their communities. That was in the 18th Assembly, which I was a part of. But I know that wasn't the only one that made these things happen. Mr. Chair, you have spoken about the need for this as well when it comes to your riding. So this is a bit of a speech, but I think it's an important one to hear, you know, and we can all support this regardless of where we represent. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll take that more as a comment. And I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, you know, these are -- a lot of these programs and services, it's very important for many of the small communities. And I know when I -- a lot of our young people always -- when they're talking -- you know, in high school, they always -- a lot of them have said, I want to work at the mine, you know, because we know that post-secondary is not for everybody so a lot of them said, I want to work at the mine, you know, make money and maybe from there, I'll -- you know, like, they'll get their trades, you know, into trades program or, you know, get an apprenticeship through mining for trades. So a lot of them have said that. And here I see trades and occupations wage subsidy went down. I think my colleague said that it went down to 922, so it's a -- well, it's not a huge but it's a decrease, you know, to \$922,000. Can the Minister explain why there's a reduction in that budget for this upcoming fiscal year? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister to the question.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the department was able to look at the last five years of that spending line item and able to identify that over the last five years, typically \$150,000 of that subsidy was not spent. And so I would absolutely love the opportunity to go over budget on that line item this year and would challenge my colleagues to help me find employers willing to help us do that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I'm sure if you approach Tlicho Investment, they will be happy to fill the positions, you know, because we know that trades, we really do need trades and we emphasize that with our young people that, you know -- because many of the trades people that we have right now, they're passed retirement age but there's nobody to come after them. So it's, like, they're still working, you know, like -- and a lot of them are saying that, you know, like, they want to retire but there's nobody to take their job. So, and I'm very grateful, thankful for the housing for having the -- you know, the scholarship programs for trades. So I'm just wondering, so \$150,000, why not turn that into a trades -- a scholarship program to -- so that our young people can enter, you know, a trades program. I think that's maybe -- maybe that's the right way, I don't know. But if you don't know what to do with that, you know, like -- a scholarship program, we need scholarship program for trades program. And housing, you know, has that already but I think we need to open it up for the Northwest Territories to attract more young people to enter that -- to trade -- trades program. So I'm just wondering will the Minister, you know, do something about that to maybe create more scholarship program. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member might be happy to know I just did meet yesterday with the CEO of Tlicho Investment Corporation. So we have a very close working relationship and are able to work in partnership with one another to find out ways that we can support one another's goals, and we definitely have some shared ones.

In addition to comments around scholarships and such, ECE definitely does support the education funding requirements for students that are entering into trades. Just like we -- through a different funding pot but similar to how we support students who are wanting to go to post-secondary institutions in a Bachelor of Arts or science program as well, and so that is definitely something that we value and we see as important. With this funding pot here, it is definitely one that is prescribed to wage subsidies, which is a very important requirement of people going through their education programs as well. So, for example, while a student is doing an apprenticeship might be in school 12 weeks or -- during -- 12 to 16 weeks out of their years, they do have a

requirement to then go back to their employer and complete a certain number of hours after that, or leading up to that as well, depending on, and so this is another way that we can continue to support as they -- support them as they move through the required hours and years of their apprenticeship. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I know there are some people -- some young people that I know that went to work at the mine and got their journeyman in millwrights and electricians and welding. You know, those are really greatly needed, and it would be nice to see more, like, in mechanics as well and plumbing, which we're lacking in a lot of small communities. So that is good. It's good that they're meeting with Indigenous government or Indigenous government or organizations.

The career development training, and I know it's not that much, but I just want to know what happened to this department. Did this funding went somewhere or, like -- or just this program is no longer needed?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, can I please pass to the assistant deputy minister Mr. Saturnino. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the ADM.

**MR. MIKE SATURNINO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The \$30,000 for development and training line was essentially a pot of funding that we used for different labour market training projects. But it's not actually tied to any specific organization or project. So we have used it at different times when we've had projects that, you know, needed some support and, as a result, it is proposed for reduction simply because it's not actually tied to a specific project or function within this activity. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you for the informations. And Skills Canada, I know that is one of the -- you know, like, few years ago but I know due to COVID and the other emergency that, you know, happened in the Northwest Territories. So I know that there -- I don't know how -- I know there was not too many participants in that within the last few years. So Skills Canada, can

the Minister explain -- or is this program still being used? Because we haven't heard too much about it for the competition. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Skills NWT and Skills Canada are still very much a thing in the Northwest Territories. Just this past week, students from the Northwest Territories just returned from the national competition. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, thank you. That's about it. So I'll just stop there. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Any more questions for information items on page 55 to 57? Seeing none. I'm going to continue on. No further questions, please turn to page 54.

Education, Culture and Employment, labour development and standards, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$16,857,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Now I would like to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 13-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025  
MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF LABOUR  
DEVELOPMENT AND STANDARDS –  
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND  
EMPLOYMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer consideration of the activity labour development standards in the main estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour, show of hands. Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

Consideration of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations

expenditure, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, labour development and standards, is deferred.

---Carried

We will now move to the next key activity. Moving on to the language and culture on page 58 with information items on page 60 to 63. Is there any questions? Okay, I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake -- oh sorry, I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'd like the opportunity to trade out my witnesses, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Absolutely.

Okay, thank you. What I'll do, is because the translators need a break, we'll take a ten-minute break, and I'll go back to the Member from Range Lake. Ten minutes, starting now.

---SHORT RECESS

Thank you. I think we're going to continue on. But before we do, I just want to say thank you to the interpreters. Have a good rest. We'll see you tomorrow. For the rest of yous, continue on.

Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake for pages 60 to 63, information item.

**MR. TESTART:** Arts funding to ITI, I believe is the plan to streamline things, immigration, all immigration's going to be parked here in ECE, and all arts funding, but this -- these estimates show plenty of arts funding continuing on here. So when is that happening and how is it happening? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is absolutely true that Members would have heard, as well as the public, that there is an intent to streamline arts spending within ITI and immigration within ECE. It was important to me that that announcement be made as soon as possible so that the work could then follow in a much more transparent and public way around making sure that we were transitioning stuff so that the staff that are involved in those programs so intimately could be involved in that planning process, and so you will definitely still see budgets reflected in their traditional home departments because that work is still required to be done and then once we kind of are able to have a plan forward and official dates and what



that will look like, then we will go forward with tidying everything up. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** So to be clear, there are -- is there an implementation plan, or is this just new policy direction? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I'll go back to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as far as the implementation plan of what this will look like and how it will be done is something that is currently in the works within each of the departments, and so it's not something that I was able to, you know, quickly go and do in a rush over the last six months in order to make sure that it was separated out before we got to this part in our term together but I wanted to ensure that this is something that can be done in this fiscal year. So I guess my best response to the Member is stay tuned, and I will make sure that I am doing my best to make sure that Members are well informed of what is happening and when.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And I don't want to run into hot water with you, Mr. Chair, around what's been discussed with our committee review of this, but suffice it to say, like, this -- the announcement that was made publicly, I think it was the first time everyone became aware of it. And it is a little surprising because typically we don't see that. Typically we see things pretty static and changes come slow and usually there's either a supplementary estimate that comes up or some other instrument to move things along. So I will say this:

I like this. I think it's good initiative on the Minister's part. I think this is a sensible thing. I'd like to -- but, I mean, I would like to see this reflected in more areas of the budget -- or more areas -- sorry, of the GNWT where Ministers are making clear decisions around how things ought to work, and once we make that decision we work out from there. My only lament is that I would like -- it would be nice to see that in this budget, though, because when you have an announcement on, you know, budget day that all this cool stuff's happening and then you look at the document and it's not in there, then it leads us to ask these kind of questions and try to figure -- and try to piece together the plan. So at this point, it's a great idea and I look forward to seeing the plan. And, again, I hope

we see more initiatives like this, but it would have been nice to see it reflected in this budget.

It also would be nice to see some increases to arts funding as well. We're chronically underfunded in arts, I'd say, compared to other -- some other jurisdictions, notably Yukon, which is a smaller budget than ours, smaller population, smaller territory size, all those things, but is often our closest comparison as a northern neighbour. And they have done remarkable things with their arts sector that by investing a significant amount of resource in it, and you see the dividends pay off. And it's complemented their tourism product. It's complemented their -- the -- you know, the cultural richness of Whitehorse and Dawson and the Indigenous communities as well. Like, there's lots -- there's lots you can look to. And I'm not going to -- I'm not going to look too favourably on them because I think far too often, we gush over the Yukon, and their problems are different than our problems, and we have lots going on here too. But one thing we could be doing more is spending -- is investing more in the arts, and I hope this shift sees that. I think ITI is perhaps more ambitious about how it chases people to invest, but I don't know because I haven't dealt with the department directly.

So maybe the Minister can speak to that because we've got a lot of people with expertise in this area. So, you know, how are we going to see these limited resources used more effectively by this change in policy direction? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll move to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the Member's comments for sure. I can reflect on some recent decisions that were made that came out that were not -- well, that were fully baked, we will call them. And so it's -- you know, it's definitely one where finding that sweet spot of how people want to see ideas come out of the oven is definitely one that depends who you're chatting with. And so I appreciate the Member's support on this and look forward to being able to update him on what those timelines look like once we've had the opportunity to make sure that we're going about this in the right way to ensure that there is as little disruption to residents of the territory as possible. That's very important for both streams that we are combining together. I know that there's also been a lot of talk about this on the floor of the House, not only in this Assembly but also in previous Assemblies as well. And I guess this is one of the nice things, is this is one

that I asked for last term and now we get -- now I get to do it. So here we are.

In regards to arts funding, Mr. Chair, we are currently second in Canada. And so while it's not first place, you know, we're a strong second as far as per capita spending in that regard. And so I, too, share the Member's excitement about where arts will go within ITI. I think one of the things that's really neat is there's kind of now going to be this suite of funding that kind of leads people through a journey from potentially being an art for art site type subscriber to developing it into a starting business and then potentially going from there. There is also that very natural and beautiful connection with art tourism as well, which the Member brought up, and which I can also say that in the opportunity I've had to travel to different communities in the South Slave, especially recently, art tourism came up multiple times, and the excitement around the potential of art tourism and the economic driver that that is was quite exciting and quite nice. And so the ability not only to connect people with resources to build business but also to connect people with other sources of funding, not only within the GNWT but also through those federal and third party partnerships that I know, that ITI definitely is in tune to and very excited to use in order to support the growth of arts in the territory. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And --

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Sorry, I'll go back -- I'm sorry, going back to Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So support to northern performers, I note that this funding, I'm assuming, is sunseting. I think having a touring grant or something along those lines that let's northern artists reside in the north but it gives them support to travel elsewhere is an important aspect of arts funding that is often overlooked. Is that something that we can -- and I note that the line here says that it's going to be redirected towards new programs that will better support the creative sector. So is that in line? Are we going to find a way to support touring artists? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're just looking for it because it -- it didn't disappear. It was simply reprofiled under the art strategy funding and so it is still in here. We're just determining for the Member where specifically it did move

to. But I can confirm for the Member that it's not sunset. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Okay. Finally, an area that we really -- everyone needs to get better at, especially in the North, is creative industry around digital property and trademarking and copyrighting and all this kind of stuff. If we can get our artists to preserve their IP and then get it into the international supply chains that can produce stuff elsewhere, have global reach -- but we got to teach people those skills so they are empowered to take part in the digital economy, especially our Indigenous artisans. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you for your comments. Now I'm going to go to Great Slave. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and sorry to the Member from Range Lake. I didn't mean to steal his thunder.

Culture and Heritage, very near and dear to my heart. It's where I started out as a public servant. Could the Minister explain the reduction of about \$200,000? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. So this line item -- or the difference, sorry, in this line item here is a decrease mainly due to reductions of \$460,000. And this is partly offset by funding from the Canada Council of the Arts to support artists across the Northwest Territories. And if the Member just gives me two seconds -- sorry, guys.

So this reduction here is largely due to a reduction in heritage centres across the territory. And so originally, there was a budget there of half a million dollars in the previous Assembly. That budget line item was moved up to a million dollars. But what we found was that heritage centres in the territory were not accessing that line item and so in recognition of the fact that that -- those dollars were not being used and might be better used in the government elsewhere, that line item was, again, reduced. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I notice that, just skimming quickly through the business

plan, the really -- and I know the Minister has spoken to the fact that, you know, you don't have to be in the business plan to be doing important work, and I think the Minister of Finance has already reiterated that to me as well. But heritage resources being included in emergency planning is one of the pieces under ECE. Can the Minister elaborate on that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, under the climate change action plan, one of the deliverables that ECE has is to ensure that as the North changes due to climate change, whether that's coastal erosion or the melting of permafrost, that we are doing our part to ensure that we're preserving the artifacts that come out of that. It's important for me to note that these heritage centre funding were specific to infrastructure development dollars. They weren't for O and M or other types of project funding. They were specific to renovations on existing infrastructure buildings. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Minister, for that. I guess I'll talk to her when I get to capital.

Shifting gears, looking at what we have been discussing yesterday a little bit about the ADM position, I don't really want to revisit that discussion per se. I do kind of want to just talk in general about the secretariats, both of them. They are both -- well, I mean, the French language secretariat is seeing a slight increase but is down since 2022-2023, and the Indigenous language secretariat is also down not insignificantly.

Insofar as that dollar amount is lower and we're looking at possibly creating a new ADM, can the Minister speak a little bit to what her vision is of an organization that seeks to possibly restructure what these language secretariats look like under an ADM? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, what I can say is that I would like to ensure that we have a department that is doing its part to support the revitalization of Indigenous languages across the territory. I think that there is work to be done both external and internal to the government, and part of that is the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework that is put in play by

the Minister of Finance as well and services to the public that is coming out of the GNWT. There's also work that is being done right now in regards to, that I've spoken to already today, like the MAP program that functions from the department. There's also immersion education in some of our schools and the desire to see immersion education grow and be offered in more schools across the territory. I know that when we travelled on the Education Act in the 19th Assembly, that was a huge focus and desire for communities right across the territory as well as Indigenous governments, that in our JK to 12 system we're seeing support of immersion education.

In addition to that, we also spoke today about the diploma program through Aurora College. And it is not lost on me that the incoming president of Aurora College used to also work within the Indigenous languages secretariat for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. So I'm very excited to see what direction the college takes as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thanks. And I guess I wasn't really clear. So I'm thinking more along -- not necessarily along the programs and services of Indigenous and French languages supported by ECE but, rather, what does that support system look like going into the future with these two secretariats and possibly a new ADM? I know the new president of Aurora College was the ED, I believe, of the Indigenous language secretariat. I'm not sure if ECE has found a replacement for that position, if that is being contemplated or if we're going along with the secretariat structure. Just wanted some more clarity around that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my role would be to provide political direction. So for the operational detail, I'd like to pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. JAMIE FULFORD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that what the department envisions is an ability to really elevate the prominence and focus of all the official languages of the Northwest Territories. And, you know, right now the -- those cultural and language reports through an assistant deputy minister also responsible for K to 12 education which, as everyone knows, is by far the largest activity of the department and it doesn't, frankly, get the

time and attention that it deserves. So by having a separate ADM reporting through and having the management of both of those areas, it will help in terms of addressing bottlenecks in approvals, the ability to attend FPTs, a host of areas. And it'd also provide a career path for someone who, I think our vision would be, ideally -- the ideal candidate would be someone who speaks an Indigenous language. So it plays a host of roles. It's important, we've given it a lot of thought, and it's something that we believe is needed to give all of the official languages the time and attention that they deserve. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to be even more clear. Do you anticipate that the secretariats will remain as they are under a theoretical ADM, or do you want them to be divisions? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister or to the deputy minister.

**MR. JAMIE FULFORD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the time being, they will remain secretariats but there could be change over time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Okay. I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Next on my list I have is the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, just following up on a previous set of questions, so I'm looking at kind of the arts as a whole on these pages and note that we've got \$1.271 million in cuts. We got \$1.271 million in adds. So it's not -- nothing's technically being cut, it seems, but there's a whole redistribution and reorganizing. Program funding, I quote from this page here, is redirected towards a set of new programs that better supports the creative sector.

So can we -- can we just get a description as to how we are better supporting the creative sector? Has the creative sector been consulted on this? Do they agree that we are better supporting them? That's my first question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, before I was even

elected in the 19th Assembly, I had the opportunity to sit in on some of the engagements that were done for the NWT Art Strategy. It was pretty nostalgic because I can remember sitting in on them in the '80s with my mother. And so, yes, the changes were informed by the sector. There was extensive engagement done prior to the 19th Assembly. During the 19th Assembly, then Minister Simpson had the opportunity to release an art strategy in junction with ITI and Minister Wawzonek at that time. And so these changes were driven by that engagement. And one of the things that I can note when the changes were made was that I did hear from artists across the sector who found that the programs were more responsive to what they needed. So I hope to continue to hear from artists about funding from the GNWT and continue to hear from them as we work towards transitioning arts funding over to ITI as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, the one that kind of caught my eye here was that, you know, the arts organization operating funding. I know that operating funding -- funding for just kind of keeping the lights on, keeping the doors open, is what NGOs and arts organizations alike continue to tell us they need. And so it looks to me like operating funding for arts organizations has been reduced a bit. It was previously \$470,000. It seems to be reinstated as \$321,000.

Can the Minister just explain, are there any organizations who are losing operating funding through this change? Are there any organizations whose operating funding is being reduced? Or are we potentially even increasing operating funding to some of these orgs? If the Minister could please explain a bit further on that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when I went through these numbers, because I did have similar questions to that, the funding that I did note went from about \$1.17 million within all of those pots that it has now been distributed to to about \$1.426 million. So it did have a slight increase in the funding within those arts programs from one year to the next. And, yeah, I'll leave it there, and I'll wait for the next question. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just for clarity, I believe the Minister is saying that some organizations are actually seeing an increase in operating funding as a result of these changes. Is that correct? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, all of these pots of funding for these grants are application-based, and so it would entirely depend on if there were more people trying to access the same amount of money or less people for any given year. So it would depend on many different factors.

The other thing too to note, because I know there has been some questions lately about having deadlines for applications, and one of the things that's really important is that you don't see all of the money funneled into one region in the territory and that there is some equity in how funding is disbursed the throughout the territory. And so that's what these deadlines enable us to do. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Continuing on the arts theme, you know, as was raised, the switch to ITI has been announced as part of the Budget Address, and so I think that there's -- you know, there's reason for a little bit of concern from the arts community that, you know, the optics of putting the arts under ITI as opposed to, you know, a cultural department is that it kind of indicates that what we're moving toward is trying to kind of treat the arts as sort of a monetized or economic development initiative. And I would say that I think that, you know, investments in the arts is a big piece of economic development. But in terms of the amount of money that the arts are able to leverage, there's a lot about the arts that are culturally-based, and it's not all about just simply monetizing art. There's money that organizations can leverage from the federal government and private investment that they can leverage through kind of growing organizations, through operating funding, through kind of growing a community around the arts. So I just -- I want to emphasize that and just emphasize to the department that there are aspects to the arts that they can use to leverage more funding and bring more funding into the territory that are not necessarily related directly simply to monetizing their work. And I'm not suggesting that the Minister is suggesting that that's what's happening, but it's just the perception that could be had through the switch to ITI. So if the Member has any -- or sorry, if the Minister has any comment on that

kind of perception and how the department is managing that, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And I'm very happy to have gotten this question on the floor because I think it's an important conversation.

I absolutely do not subscribe to the notion that artists must be starving artists. I never have subscribed to that and believe wholeheartedly that regardless of whether or not it is an elder participating in a cultural day at a school or it is somebody delivering a community performance or it is somebody who is, you know, sewing mitts, all form of arts and crafts and performances and film and writing all have value. Whether or not somebody is actually monetizing them or not, that skill still has value to it. And I think that as artists, we need to ensure that that value is upheld and that respect for the industry is upheld. And so whether or not that is in ECE or ITI, it would still have that same mentality that if you are a painter and you are doing something on the side of a building to increase the vibrancy of your community, your work and your skill has value. And so I just want to start off by saying that.

The other thing, though, that I think the Member is actually after here is reassurance that the MOU with the Canada Council for the Arts will absolutely continue regardless of what department this funding is found in. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll move to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the short little period of time I have left, I just want to say that, you know, I appreciate the answers from the Minister.

Does the Minister or the department have -- or I guess the new department that's taking it on, have any plans, you know, over the next four years to increase funding to arts organizations to help them kind of increase that multiplier effect that can come from leveraging funding into the territory knowing that this is just a piece that I feel helps to contribute to our priorities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, part of the work under the Canada Council for the Arts grant is to do work through a coordinator whose role is funded through that MOU in order to ensure

that we're doing what we can as a territory with the funding that we do have in order to multiple that by accessing additional federal funding as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake, information items on page 60 to 63. Is there any further questions from Members? I got to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've always stated that our Indigenous languages are in great -- are in need of revitalization, especially the Gwich'in language. It's dying at a fast rate. And a lot of our elders, who don't get to go out as often as they'd like, because and we're losing a lot of elders too. So the Indigenous language broadcasting, I see is cut by \$52,000. Can the Minister give me some insight on why the cut has been made? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the \$52,000 that the Member referred to reduced a line item from \$150,000 to \$98,000, and that is a return of traditionally unsubscribed funding under the Indigenous languages broadcasting grant. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Okay. The Indigenous language revitalization, was that sunsetted, or can you bring some clarity to that? Because revitalization is very important in our Indigenous languages and seeing something, a drastic cut in that measure needs some clarity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. Just for clarity, is the Member still speaking about the Indigenous languages broadcasting grant of \$52,000? I'm just looking for clarity from the Member. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Mackenzie Delta, the Member, for clarity.

**MR. NERYSOO:** I was referring to the Indigenous language revitalization. It was revised in 2023 at 200, and main estimates for 2024-2025, it's cut to zero. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for that clarification. So that portion there is a portion of the funding for the Indigenous languages diploma program that I spoke of earlier. That was money that was put in our budget so that we would have it for Aurora College when they came forward with their diploma program. But, unfortunately, that has not happened as of yet. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So is the money still there? Can it be used in the future when Arctic College decides to use it for the language program? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, my commitment to my colleagues was that when Aurora College does come forward with a suitable and ready proposal, that I would then bring that forward to my Cabinet colleagues. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you very much. Mahsi. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, this Indigenous language revitalizations, so I know that there's a lot of our community members they go south once a year to the University of Alberta, you know, enrolling to program for the language. So this is part of the project. And why -- I just wanted to know why there is a cut or did they -- like, she talked quite a few times about the redistribution so is this program -- you know, are we cancelling this program, or is there -- did it go somewhere? Because I'm sure our Indigenous students are going to be asking about that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So Mr. Chair, this line item does not speak to the program that the Member

is referring to. This line item, it speaks to the diploma program through Aurora College. So ECE has been funded for that program for multiple years but, unfortunately, that program does not exist yet. And so to ensure that we're using the dollars as committed to by the Legislative Assembly, those dollars have been removed until such time that I can come forward to FMB with a proposal from Aurora College in order to accurately request dollars for that program. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, I see here Indigenous scholarship. I guess that must be part of -- that's part of the revitalization education program. So I think maybe if the Minister can explain a bit about this Indigenous scholarship.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I was able to confirm with the assistant deputy minister that the Indigenous languages line item that's found under contributions just a few line items above, for \$5.36 million, is the line item where that funding is found. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, thank you. Yesterday we heard that most of these money are allocated to Indigenous government. So I just wanted to ask the Minister -- I know there is a decrease within the Indigenous language secretariat just as my colleague has mentioned. It's \$1.4 million that's decreased in that budget. So I just wanted to ask so of this, how much is allocated to the Indigenous government of this fund?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, ECE receives \$5.9 million from the federal government that is immediately distributed to Indigenous governments for the purposes of Indigenous languages. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Yeah, no, I know many of these programs that I know that our constituents use these funds for culture and language. So it is important for them. That's how we maintain and try to keep our culture and language, you know, going.

Because just like my colleague from Mackenzie Delta said, you know, it's -- it does have an impact, you know, now that younger generation are not speaking the language more. So it is important that it -- it would have been nice if there was -- if the budget was a little bit more than as it is here, especially for Indigenous language, knowing that there's more Indigenous people in the Northwest Territories. Half of the population -- over half of the population is Indigenous so it's just that in the future, I would like to see more money allocated towards Indigenous language and culture. So it's more of a comment. So thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Information item on page 60 to 63, is there any further questions? No further questions. Please turn to page 59. Education, culture -- you had your hand up? Continuing on. No further questions, please turn to page 59.

Education, Culture and Employment, language and culture, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$17,396,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. There are additional information items on page 64 to page 70. Are there any questions? Do not see no further questions. Thank you, Members, please return now to the department summary found on page 29 and revenue summary information on page 31. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditure, total department, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$374,989,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 14-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025  
MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF  
DEPARTMENT – EDUCATION, CULTURE  
AND EMPLOYMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the main estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour, by show of hands. Thank you. All those opposed, show of hands. The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditure, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, total department, is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us.

Committee, we will now move to the next department. Sorry, would the sergeant-at-arms escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Committee, we'll now move on to the next department. What is the wish of committee? Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, would the chair please rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Before I rise to give progress, I just want to say thank you to the technical staff that are working right now, Andrew Jossa and Vince McLeod and John Goth. Mahsi for your time.

There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 93-20(1) and would like to report progress with four motions carried. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder, please? Member from Kam Lake.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There you go. To the motion. There you go. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. Thank you. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Government Operations will meet at the rise of the House.

Thursday, June 6th, 2024, orders of the day, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
  - Motion 31-20(1): Cross-Border Crime Reduction Forum
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills



19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- ”
- Bill 2: Missing Persons Act
  - Committee Report 2-20(1): Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 2: Missing Persons Act
  - Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season
  - Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation
  - Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a Day Child Care in the NWT
  - Minister's Statement 24-20(1): Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention
  - Tabled Document 93-20(1): 2024-2025 Main Estimates

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Colleagues, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, June 6th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. Have a good night.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

