



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, June 13, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:34 p.m.

MR. MARC CASAWAY: I am honoured to stand before this House, whom I consider a family, to speak to the Creator in my Dene Suline language. I will humble myself as I ask the Creator for special blessings for all the interpreters from across our territory and Nunavut; for my Inuktitut interpreting sisters, for my Inuvialuktun interpreting sisters, for my Gwich'in interpreting sisters, and my Dene Suline interpreting sisters, and my sisters that interpret in the Slavey language, and myself as a Dene Suline interpreter.

I will ask blessings for our Speaker, our Clerk of the House, our sergeant-at-arms, our MLAs, our Ministers, Pages, and all the staff that make this happen. For all the missing children, the murdered and missing children in the world, and those that are missing from our communities. Today and tomorrow we will be making our journey home to our respective communities. I will humbly ask for all a safe journey home. Now I will speak to Creator.

Prayer

---Prayer

MR. MARC CASAWAY: Have a good workday and have a good summer. Merci.

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Please be seated. Colleagues, I'd like to thank Marc Casaway for his opening guiding words.

Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 56-20(1):
WESTERN PREMIER'S CONFERENCE 2024

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I attended the Western Premiers' Conference in Whitehorse, along with the Premiers of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut, and Yukon. The conference is a forum to discuss issues that are of interest or concern to all seven western provinces and territories.

This year, we started our informal discussions with Deputy Chief Darla Jean Lindstrom, of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. She had a very simple message for Premiers: If we work together, we are stronger together. She also spoke of the importance of working together with Indigenous communities to achieve the goal of economic reconciliation. The deputy chief's comments provided an excellent foundation for our meetings, and we kept her words in mind as we tackled some difficult issues facing western jurisdictions. We spoke about the cost of living, disaster preparedness and response, economic prosperity, economic corridors, economic reconciliation, electrification and energy security, Canada-US relations, public safety, and Arctic security.

During our public safety discussions, I highlighted the need for more actions to be taken to address increased crime, particularly drug trafficking, and Premiers agreed that more must be done to strengthen the bail system to keep drug traffickers off the streets. We also recognized that we must continue to find innovative ways to address the root causes of crime and addiction, which are often based in trauma.

We spoke extensively about the economy, including the fact that Western Canada should be a major force in the mining and processing of critical minerals. By collaborating in this area, we can help reduce dependency on those countries seeking to dominate the world market. We discussed how we can work together across our supply chain, with investment from the Government of Canada and other democratic countries, to mobilize this opportunity together.

I made sure to note, that in addition to western provinces and territories, Indigenous governments must be considered key partners in advancing this potential. It was agreed by all that Indigenous engagement and participation is fundamental to unlocking economic opportunities across a wide range of sectors and vital to advancing strategic infrastructure projects in Western Canada.

We also found common ground on Arctic security and agreed the path to strengthening the Arctic requires investment in critical transportation, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure that supports healthy, vibrant communities, and economic growth. Western Premiers welcomed the federal government's announcement of the defence policy update, noting that new defence investments and working towards meeting the NATO target of defence spending equal to 2 percent of GDP are an opportunity to strengthen the military presence in the North, support multi-use infrastructure, and protect Canadian sovereignty across the Arctic and northern regions.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the support the Western Premiers expressed for investment in the North, and their willingness to work with the Northwest Territories on areas of common interest. I look forward to continuing to work with my provincial and territorial counterparts at the Council of Federation, which includes all 13 of Canada's Premiers, when we meet in July. I also look forward to hosting the Western Premiers Conference here in the Northwest Territories in 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 57-20(1):
MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, under the 1997 social housing agreement with the federal government, Housing NWT assumed responsibility for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the territory's public housing units. Many of these units remain in service and need significant renovation or replacement. Housing NWT continues to invest in maintenance and renovation on an annual basis to keep assets in good working condition. I would like to speak today on how Housing NWT manages its assets and the ways we are finding efficiencies and partnerships to improve the state of our units.

Housing NWT plans to invest over \$12 million in major repairs and upgrades on over 245 units this year. Plans also include various minor unit repairs, such as repairs to heating and plumbing systems, across the Northwest Territories. Through partnership agreements with local housing organizations, an additional \$13 million is invested annually in maintenance activities for both general repairs and preventative maintenance.

Housing NWT is committed to the health and safety of our tenants through completing

preventative and on-demand maintenance activities. Preventative maintenance is scheduled and performed to prevent unexpected failure of building systems, such as servicing a heating system. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, it is about fixing things before they break.

On-demand maintenance involves repairing something that has already been broken, such as repairing a leaky tap. Both preventative and on-demand maintenance ensures that housing remains healthy and safe for tenants and plays a key role in extending the life of housing in our harsh climate.

Housing NWT, through its local housing organizations, regularly conducts maintenance on all its housing and facilities. To illustrate the scope of this annual activity, in 2023-2024 our 23 local housing organizations completed approximately 30,000 work orders. Approximately one-third of those involved health and safety preventative maintenance work orders.

Housing NWT regularly completes assessments on housing units with a unit condition rating system, commonly referred to as a UCR. A unit condition rating assesses the condition, repair priority, and planned replacement activity for the building components and systems for each housing unit. These assessments report on the overall condition of the unit and provide the basis for capital investment and maintenance programming. Housing NWT considers a housing unit with a rating of 70 percent, or higher, is in fair condition, and does not typically require major investment. Units under 70 percent are a priority for renovations. 92 percent of public housing units, owned and operated by Housing NWT, have a unit condition rating above 70 percent. Assessment training is provided by Housing NWT to all local housing organization maintenance staff and district staff.

Following the Residential Tenancies Act, Housing NWT is responsible for maintenance and repairs on our buildings. Tenants are responsible for paying for damages that they, or their visitors, cause. Housing NWT encourages public housing tenants to contact their local housing organization if there are any maintenance issues in their public housing unit. The local housing organizations have staff available to respond to maintenance issues and if required, they can hire contractors to assist in repairs.

Housing NWT is in the process of upgrading our asset management program to document and guide the process to improve assessments for

capital planning and maintenance. Repairs are prioritized with a health and safety focus, considering the available budget. A fuel leak or lack of heat are priority work orders that receive a response as quickly as possible, not only for the health and safety of the tenant but also to protect the asset from damage. Housing NWT works with local contractors to deliver services as quickly as possible in emergencies but can sometimes experience delays due to contractor availability.

Typically, contracted repair and renovation work on public housing units is completed by local or northern companies. This renovation and repair work provides opportunities for smaller companies in the North to gain and build experience and capacity in the residential construction sector. This is why Housing NWT is committed to building capacity in communities and continues to support local housing organizations in their role of delivering suitable, affordable housing. Supply-chain disruptions and labour shortages have impacted contractor capacity in the Northwest Territories. Despite this, Housing NWT continues to plan to maximize and build capacity.

Housing NWT also provides support for residents who own their own homes and who meet some of the basic program eligibility requirements. Funding up to \$10,000 is available to support emergency repairs, like freeze-ups and furnace failures, and \$5,000 a year is available for preventative maintenance activities. Last year, Housing NWT supported 441 homeowners across the NWT through the preventative maintenance program with the aim of reducing core housing need indicators. Homeowners can contact their local district office to apply for this program.

Housing NWT will continue to support maintenance and repairs on its units across the NWT to improve the suitability and extend the life of housing units. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 58-20(1):
SCHOOL SUPPORT ASSISTANT PILOT
PROGRAM

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: [Translation]
[Translation Ends]. Mahsi.

Today, I am proud to share our progress in addressing these recommendations. To make the support assistant role more effective and supported, the Department of Education,

Culture and Employment updated both job descriptions and the Inclusive Schooling Handbook. The Government of the Northwest Territories also forged a partnership with Douglas College to pilot an Education Assistance and Inclusion Certificate.

This virtually-delivered program was tailored to the needs of NWT support assistants in several ways. Participants followed a cohort-based model that fostered a collaborative learning environment to share learning and experiences. Program material was customized for our NWT context, ensuring relevant and practical learning. While participants undertook course work, they continued their important work in schools where they could apply what they learned in real-time. The courses and practicums equipped NWT support assistants with specialized skills to promote student well-being, development, and educational success. They also grew as leaders in inclusive education.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that the Government of the Northwest Territories covered the costs of tuition, fees, and materials, helping to remove financial barriers for our support assistants to access this program.

Since launching in January 2022, the program has had admirable results. This month, we celebrate 24 graduates. This achievement is a personal milestone for each participant, and it promises enhanced support to our students.

I want to share the inspiring words of Tena Blake, a support assistant at Chief Julius School in Fort McPherson. She described the program as "life changing" and saying it has "given me the confidence to look at furthering my education and taking more post-secondary courses that will benefit the work that I do with students."

Mr. Speaker, stories like Tena's fuel our commitment to build on this success. I want to express my pride in each participant of the School Support Assistant Pilot Program. Their hard work and commitment to professional growth are commendable. I offer my sincere congratulations and best wishes for the future. To the NWT's valued support assistants, we are grateful for the work you do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 306-20(1): ACCESSING LAB WORK

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently, all outpatient laboratory services in Yellowknife have been moved to the Stanton Hospital. Along with this change, came a new protocol for accessing lab work. Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine visited the hospital to try this new process and didn't have the most positive experience.

They first tried the method of just showing up at the lab as suggested on the website. They were told that this was not actually an option, and they had to call to book an appointment or come back the next day for a same-day appointment. They called and were told the next available appointment was three and a half weeks from now. They couldn't wait that long, so they asked for the same-day appointment process and heeded that advice. They accordingly showed up at Stanton Hospital at 6:30 a.m. in the morning to ensure they got a spot. At 7:00 a.m., the front reception desk opened up, and they registered. By 7:30 a.m. when the lab opened, there were already 18 people in line for the 20 available same-day appointments. After getting their appointment time, they left to return later on and thankfully did eventually get the blood work done that they needed.

However, Mr. Speaker, I cannot imagine many people having the time or ability to engage in the process I just detailed whenever they have lab work to be done. My constituent had to wait for their partner to come back from work travel to be able to go to the early morning lineup because they can't leave their kids alone for the entire morning in advance of school. I am concerned this new process is going to be a barrier for a single mother, elderly person, someone with ability challenges, or any other person with vulnerabilities or life demands that are going to override their capacity to engage in this process. I suspect there were a number of people who were already struggling to go directly to the labs after the medical appointment. This additional barrier is going to make things more challenging for them.

Mr. Speaker, MLAs often make statements fighting for change in our health care system but in this case, I think we have an example where change has caused new problems rather than solving one. I hope we can quickly work through the growing pains on this one and get to a place where people are receiving medical service in a reasonable and, most importantly, accessible way. That is one of our priorities after all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister later today.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 307-20(1): SUPPORTS FOR TOURISM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the world is coming North. Global interest in experiencing all the Northwest Territories has to offer continues to skyrocket. Year after year, we welcome tourists at a record-breaking pace who come to experience the beauty of this land to the inspiration of its people. Prior to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, annual visitor spending has soared past the \$200 million mark, and since then the industry has little trouble roaring back to life. However, we cannot expect to take advantage of this massive increase in demand if we do not have the capacity.

We've known for some time that hotels across the North often operate at their maximum, especially during peak tourist seasons. We also expect this demand to continue to grow. If the industry does not increase its own infrastructure and welcome new businesses, particularly those operated by Indigenous entrepreneurs that showcase traditional culture and knowledge. The territorial government has a big role to play here to signal to investors that the NWT hospitality industry is open for business.

In recent years, we have also witnessed climate crisis after climate crisis, the effects of which have created new problems for the tourism industry. As water levels dropped to historic lows, this impacts businesses who own remote lodges which rely on access by boats and float planes. Many docks and piers are sitting high and dry, while rivers and streams are too shallow for canoe trips. Worsening wildfire seasons also increase the importance of communication between the government and businesses to ensure tourism is part of the conversation when precautionary actions are taken to protect lives and property. The GNWT is responsible for the well-being of visitors too.

Mr. Speaker, we need a Minister that partners with this industry to ensure its capacity continues to meet demand. This industry is key to both diversifying our economy and promoting traditional knowledge and Indigenous culture. Let's have a government that ensures as many tourists from around the world visit the North, as many of them as possible, and make the NWT the top tourist destination in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 308-20(1):
GRATITUDE

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use my Member's statement time today for gratitude, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, to our staff and their families. We've put some serious hours in here these past few weeks, and I know it's -- you know, the time that requires staff to be in here, it's a stress on their families. I know we all appreciate it but often it goes unsaid.

I'd also like to thank our tireless interpreters who, again, you know, we put some serious hours in. They always have a smile. And I know that, again, thank them and their families for the work they do.

And I would just like to say to everyone I'd like to thank my colleagues at AOC of course, my colleagues across the House in Cabinet for the hard work we've done these past few weeks. I say to everyone have a great summer, take a breath, hug your families, get some rest, and then get cracking on the issues for your constituents because, after all, they are the people who put us here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Members' statements. Member from Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 309-20(1):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie Valley Highway has been in the plans for decades. With today's low water levels and the inability to transport goods using the barge services into the Sahtu, the highway is the only climate change adaptation solution.

Mr. Speaker, October 2023, the Government of the Northwest Territories released the developer's assessment report for the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway. This comprehensive report assesses the potential environmental, socio-economic impacts of constructing an all-season highway. Mr. Speaker, this report triggers the environmental assessment, a 16-month schedule by legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Sahtu Secretariat signed an MOU dated back April 2019 to work in collaboration to address adverse environmental

socioeconomic impacts through the regulatory process. The MOU creates a steering committee with the Minister of Infrastructure, the Sahtu MLA, the SSI chair. Several meetings went by. Progress continues.

Mr. Speaker, the 20th Assembly has developed priorities in its mandate to strengthen Indigenous relations through meaningful alliances and partnerships for economic reconciliation integral to the Sahtu initiative. Mr. Speaker, critical to any project large or small is funding. Mr. Speaker, as we all depart for the summer and invitations to gatherings, assemblies, Sahtu will continue exploring the necessary options on assurances of funding sources. This includes the development of the business case.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, a significant amount of capital investments has already been made on this project, cost of many studies, 2011 PDR publication at a cost of \$8 million, prior in-place materials, bridges, and the 2018 \$140 million announcement.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Sahtu, your time...

MR. McNEELY: Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ensure this government's mandate and the SSI MOU maintains the Mackenzie Valley Highway as a priority for the current and future generations. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 310-20(1):
WELLNESS AND ADDICTIONS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2013 a Ministers' forum on addictions and community wellness conducted four months of consultations in communities across the territory and produced a report with recommendations that I have been reflecting on personally this week.

It's encouraging to see that some of the recommendations from that forum are finally coming to life. The top priority identified then was community-based and operated on the land programming, and now it's a key priority in this government's mandate. The forum recommended that those coming back from residential treatment get proper aftercare, and now we finally see in this budget money for

transitional housing. The forum recommended more cultural awareness and antiracism training for health care providers, and now we see that as part of the way we work.

Now some of the recommendations are ongoing, and we need to continue to return and advocate for these things, such as better recreation and arts programs and on-the-land programs for youth, multi-year core funding for community level programming.

The forum's final recommendation was to turn negative conversations around substance abuse into positive celebrations of individuals who break free from addictions. I want to quote at length from the introductory message by the forum's chair Paul Andrew, who is a wise Shuta Got'ine elder, and I'm very fortunate to have him as a Yellowknife North constituent. Quote: An older man reminded the forum we come from strong people, and we need to return to traditional values that make us strong. Many people, young and old, agreed far too often we in the North keep doing the same things over and over again hoping things will change. More than one community said sending people to jail has not helped the individual, and communities want to be involved in the justice system. Others said trying to sober up a person in isolation is not working, so if a community has addictions issues all should be involved in recovery. People say addictions are everyone's problem, and we must all do our part. They want elders to speak out more often. They want young people to learn about addictions in schools. They are demanding more sober events and want more opportunities to share the beauty of working on healing and wellness. If there's one hope I have, it's that we will never stop talking about healing. We must continue to share, to cry, and to give each other hope. Success belongs to those who dare.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife North, your time is up.

MS. MORGAN: I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to conclude by saying mahsi cho to Paul for his work and his inspiration and thank you to everyone here. Mahsi cho for everyone's work during this session. I hope we will continue to strive and to dare to make the North a better place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 311-20(1):
THANK YOU

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake, I would also like to thank all of the interpreters, pages, and staff who have put up with us very well for the last three and a half weeks, or however long it's been; I'm not quite sure anymore. And I would also like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for coming out to the Taste of Palestine last weekend. Over 200 Yellowknifers took part in a community dinner for over 200 people.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, limited resources are available for the children and families of Gaza, and Yellowknife raised \$11,115 at that dinner and auction on last weekend. And I believe there are plans again for another event in the future and, of course, I will invite yourself and all Members to that next event. It's good that we do not forget the families in the NWT who are affected by this ongoing tragedy. And thank you for participating, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 312-20(1):
IMPROVING INDIGENOUS STUDENT
OUTCOMES IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation] I'd like to -- I'd like to, but still what I'm going to be talking about of how the kids that are in school, the kids that are in school, what is it that we can -- how we can improve the education for the young people at this time. [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has jurisdiction over educating all students in the NWT. The GNWT must provide access to the same quality of education regardless of the location or size of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, we have an excellent student financial assistance program. It is among the best in the country. Yet, Indigenous students are grossly underrepresented in education outcome. Mr. Speaker, there is a privilege in the education system. The results show who is succeeding and who is struggling.

Recent statistics show 6.1 percent of Indigenous students complete a university degree compared to 36.6 percent of non-Indigenous students. The improvement to the SFA program in the last Assembly supported Indigenous students by removing the

semester limit. Now Indigenous students can access SFA for as long as they need to pursue post-secondary education. This is positive.

Mr. Speaker, if we are raising the student loan limit, how many students from small communities will benefit from this? How many Indigenous students in the NWT are even near the \$60,000 loan limit? Mr. Speaker, who will benefit from this increase student loan limit? And how will we pay for this?

The 2023 public accounts show the GNWT is running a \$2.7 million operating deficit from granting more student loans than is available in the revolving loan limit, and now we have a bill to provide larger loans.

The 2020 Auditor General report on education in the NWT highlighted the gap in graduation rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The gap in support for students in small communities and that the department is unable to confirm equitable access to education programs and services in small communities and whether students' outcome were improving. Mr. Speaker, this bill will mostly improve access to --

MR. SPEAKER: -- Member from Monfwi, your time is up. Your time is up.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, can I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will mostly improve access to education for non-Indigenous students. The role of the GNWT is to close the gap in education outcome. We know students in small communities need more support to succeed in post-secondary education. We need focus and attention on improving the education outcomes from students in small communities. They should remain the focus for the student finance assistance program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi.

Before we get on to the next Member's statement, I'd like to recognize Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty back to this Chamber. Mr. Lafferty was a Member of the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th Assembly. He is a former Minister, Member, and Speaker of the House. Welcome back to your House, Mr. Lafferty.

Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 313-20(1):
THANK YOU

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to take this opportunity as my Member's statement to thank the Members, my colleagues around the table here. It's been a busy almost four weeks. I also wanted to thank, Mr. Speaker, your staff. Also the ledge staff as well that work behind the scenes for us. I know there's a lot of work that happens behind the scenes that people don't see. I want to say thank you to my CA, Taylor Pagotto, and also Warren Delorme of Fort Resolution. Also, I want to thank all the translators that are here. I want to say mahsi. If it wasn't for you that we wouldn't be able to get these messages back home to our communities. Also, we got to say thank you to the technical people that provide all the sound equipment and translation, everything else. I just want to say a big mahsi cho to everybody.

Mr. Speaker, while all the MLAs come here, we leave our home communities. You know, we have to come here and do the work to hold this government to account. But while we're here, our families are back home taking care of the family. Like, my wife in my case. And I got a daughter that just got honors at Sir John Franklin High School and I just found out, so I just want to mention that.

But, Mr. Speaker, the reason why we're here is that we represent the people in our small communities and throughout the Northwest Territories, and we bring their issues here. And by working together collectively, we look for solutions. So I just want to say thank you to everybody and enjoy your summer, and let's have a safe summer as well. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 314-20(1):
FEDERAL TOP-UP FUNDING FOR
ENTERPRISE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, for my Member's statement today, I want to speak about the motion that I gave notice on two days ago regarding federal top-up funding for Enterprise. Mr. Speaker, the motion in question will be voted on later today and it's all about getting more support for the people of Enterprise who lost everything during last summer's wildfire. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, the displaced residents of Enterprise need practical and viable solutions right now as soon as possible. We all have known the devastating loss that the community sustained, which was 80 percent of all structures, including many homes. These residents need help. As the MLA

representing this community, I am willing and prepared to take all the help we can to provide further assistance to them during this difficult time.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I brought this motion forward, because right now the federal government is prepared to offer a significant aid package to the community in the form of several temporary housing units for displaced residents. However, for this to occur our territorial government must work with the federal government on the cost sharing aspect of this assistance. Our government must be willing to pay for 10 percent of the cost of these temporary housing units.

Mr. Speaker, I know that temporary housing units may not sound like a perfect solution to this situation, but it's much better than nothing at all. It would be a huge mistake for our government not to accept this offer from the federal government. This solution is better than no solution. The alternative would be to do nothing and provide no temporary housing to the displaced residents of Enterprise. And I cannot stand for that, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm urging all my colleagues on both sides of the House to vote in favour of this motion later today. As a government, let's work together and give some hope to these residents for a brighter tomorrow. Let's do the right thing. Action this immediately and move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member from Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 315-20(1):
WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to congratulate Hay River residents and a couple from my riding. They are newlyweds, after 47 years of living together, two children, four grandchildren, one great grandchild - David Gauthier and Sheryl Maurice decided to tie the knot yesterday, and I would like to wish them all the best as the newlywed married couple. And for their honeymoon, they spent it at the ballpark involved in a slowpitch game.

I'd also like to take the time to wish all the Members here in the House, all the Legislative Assembly staff, all the staff that we don't normally see hiding in the background, including the interpreters, a safe summer and looking forward to seeing everybody back here again in the fall. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River South. Members' statements. Member from Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 316-20(1):
CONGRATULATIONS TO COACHES

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know I don't have to tell you this, but coaches play a vital role in our communities. Good coaching isn't only about enhanced sport performance, it's about something much more important.

Eighty percent of people who received coaching report increased self-confidence. They establish and take action towards achieving goals, become more self-reliant, gain more job and life satisfaction, contribute more effectively to their teams on and off the court, take greater responsibility and accountability for their actions and commitments, and work more easily and productively with others by being team players and communicate more effectively. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, good coaches help build good humans.

Last term, through multiple community engagements, the Standing Committee on Social Development heard repetitively the powerful impact sport and recreation has on community wellness, especially youth and families. Sport and recreation was attributed to keeping families healthy and together and our youth feeling valued, fulfilled, and alive because physical health is a key component of mental health. Efforts like this rely on the selfless dedication of coaches who show up, lead by example, and are consistent bright lights in the lives of so many youths.

This past month, two Kam Lake coaches have been recognized for their incredible coaching contributions to youth sport, changing the lives of NWT children and teens through their endless volunteer hours. Shakita Jensen was named Yellowknife minor hockey coach of the year, and Shakita is a Canadian trailblazer changing the face of Canadian hockey. She gives so much of her time to coaching, including teams in Yellowknife minor hockey, and as the coach for Canada Winter Games as well as Arctic Winter Games.

Erin Wells was named Sport North NWT coach of the year and has coached youth basketball for decades, including Arctic Winter Games, Canada Games, and the NWT's high-performance teams. This past March, Erin coached Team NWT's Arctic Winter Games basketball team to a historic gold medal, first for the NWT female basketball team.

Mr. Speaker, neither of these people are coaches because they have children in the game. They have dedicated themselves to coaching through exemplary leadership for the love of the sport and commitment to the future of NWT youth. A huge thank you to Erin and Shakita for your dedication, time, and leadership, and congratulations on your very well-deserved recognition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Kam Lake; I couldn't agree with you more.

Members' statements. Member from Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 317-20(1):
CONGRATULATIONS TO FORT SMITH
GRADUATES

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to honour the class of 2024 from the Paul William Kaeser High School in Fort Smith. This year, I am proud to announce there were 24 graduates from the regular school program and the Phoenix program. I would like to thank all of the teachers, the staff at PWK, and the South Slave Divisional Education Council, the parents, guardians, and all of those who have supported their success.

To the students, as you navigate through the existing journey ahead, Mr. Speaker, passion will fuel their pursuits, integrity will guide their decisions, and resilience will help them overcome any obstacles they encounter. Their future is brimming with possibilities, and I wish them all the success, growth, and opportunities this holds. Best wishes on your journey. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 318-20(1):
SPECIAL OLYMPICS CONSTITUENT
CONGRATULATIONS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to take this opportunity to bring attention to a very accomplished athlete from Yellowknife South.

Mr. Speaker, last summer Chelsey Makaro travelled to Berlin, Germany, as part of Team Canada at the Special Olympics World Summer Games and came home with not one, but two gold medals - one for the 25-meter backstroke and the other as part of the 4 by 50 meter freestyle team relay. These medals also made Chelsey the first Northwest Territories

female athlete to win gold at the Special Olympics World Games. And with this accomplishment, together with all of her hard work that she puts in to promoting the Special Olympics within the Northwest Territories, Chelsey was awarded the 2024 Mary Beth Miller Memorial Senior Female Athlete of the Year from Sport North on May 25th.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Chelsey on this hard earned honour. I look forward to hearing more about her continued dedication to sport, her hard work, and the inspiration that she brings to all of those around her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife South. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 319-20(1):
HIGHLIGHTS FOR NAHENDEH

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, I would like to close this session with the opportunity to celebrate some amazing things that recently happened in the Nahendeh riding. Usually, I would have Member statements about each of these exciting moments but as this is our last sitting day until October, I would like to celebrate here today.

Leanne Niziol was born and raised in the community of Wrigley, NWT. Growing up in a remote community, with limited access to health care, pushed her to pursue a career in medicine. However, more importantly, her grandfather was her main inspiration to go into medicine. He was a medicine man, but his life and way of being was something that impacted her significantly. She recently graduated from the University of Manitoba's Doctor of Medicine program, a career she says has been a dream of hers since she was little. A large amount of her family travelled to Winnipeg from Ontario, Alberta, Yukon and NWT to watch her graduate. In speaking with her auntie, the family is looking at hosting a huge celebration on June 22nd in Wrigley to celebrate her accomplishment. Congratulations, Dr. Niziol.

Yesterday, I spoke about graduation and the importance of that moment. I would like to congratulate Ms. Betty Elizabeth Hardisty on graduating from the bible studies program on June 8th, 2024 and obtaining her Bachelor of Theology. I can tell you she is truly a positive role model and an example for others.

The U19 team, a mixture of young ladies ranging from 13 to 19, from Liidii Kue Regional High School, won gold in the tier 2 division at Super Soccer. I can tell you I had the opportunity to witness this team play, and I can say the athletes were respectful, kind, and

hardworking. They made their coaches, family, community, and school very proud. Some of the athletes played three days of soccer the previous weekend, then spent three days snowboarding in Banff before playing four more days of soccer. Well done, ladies.

The last shout out goes to the basketball program in Fort Liard. This school year, the community decided to offer a new sport to the youth. They attended two tournaments and had a three-game competition with the first responders from the Community. They won the competition 2 to 1. As well, they attended the tryout with NWT Basketball, and one of the athletes was selected first alternate for the national team.

I would like to congratulate them all and have a good summer. Thank you.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Colleagues, we have a group of young people here from Hearst University from northern Ontario. I'm going to apologize now; I am not going to say your names because I'm going to mispronounce them so I'm just going to deem them as read. And thank you very much for being here.

- Diane Gaulin,
- Ndery Dione,
- Jeremy Bouchard,
- Kayla Laurin,
- Chantal Pelletier,
- Else St-Onge,
- Daniella Musangu,
- Ruth Esther Kouame,
- Elothy Ngoie Kisula Kasunka,
- Saouidiatou Ba, and
- Sara Sabti.

As well, now I get to embarrass a young lady of mine. The coach of Arctic Winter Games gold medal in Fort McMurray, a coach of the silver medal in Alaska, my middle child who has moved on to McPherson to be a social worker there. So welcome, my daughter.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are very grateful for our pages, and I am very pleased to say that Yellowknife South is represented this week by Mya Polpufa Baird.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife South. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to also recognize Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty. We had the privilege of serving and working together during the 18th Assembly. And also as we depart for the summer, I'd like to say my sincere thanks and recognition to the support staff that we have in this House here from the cooks, to the pages, to the clerical staff that we have. We wouldn't be as efficient without their support, so they should be recognized also for the many hours. And everybody in this Assembly here on the spirit of collaboration of working together. Have a safe summer. Thank you. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two of my constituents, Ms. Zoe Guille and Ms. Gabby LaMarsh, they're up here. They are both student midwives who some of the Members have met in the past few weeks. They've worked hard in these past weeks to advocate for midwifery. They're student midwives. They're committed to continuing the work in the coming years to plant roots in Yellowknife so we can see midwifery care grow throughout the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a page from Range Lake, Eva Gordon. Thank you so much for your work during this last week of the sitting. And I'd also like to recognize my friend Grand Chief Lafferty. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation]

Yes, for recognition, I'd like to recognize my Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty. He's here in the House. I'm thankful for that. And we also have other Tlicho members, Louis Mackenzie, Julie Mackenzie are here in the audience. And also Jonas Lafferty, Mary Rose Sundberg, interpreters, I'd like to thank them. They've

been interpreting for us throughout the session.

I'd also like to recognize all these people who work for us in the House. I am so thankful for them. They've done a good job for us throughout the session. It is the spring session. And we'll be going into our region. May everyone have a safe summer. Mahsi.

[Translation Ends]

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I too, like my colleagues, would like to welcome Mr. Jackson Lafferty, grand chief, former MLA for Monfwi. And also to my friend Lousia Mackenzie and her family up there, welcome. And I too would also like to say thank you to you, Mr. Speaker, and all the wonderful staff here as well as the translators and everyone here, and I hope everybody has a good summer. Look forward to seeing everybody in the fall. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize my former colleague and current grand chief of the Tlicho, Mr. Jackson Lafferty. It was an honour serving with him as his deputy Speaker, and as the only Lafferty I'm allowed to recognize today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River North. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to join the chorus of MLAs thanking all of our staff here in the Assembly, thanking the interpreters, the clerks, and all the staff supporting us for the long hours that they put in over the past number of weeks. It's definitely been a lot of work, and we really appreciate your contributions. And I wanted to just acknowledge one of our many unsung heroes behind the scenes in the ledge, Mr. John Gon, who operates our microphones and is a constituent of mine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to recognize the grand chief of the Tlicho region, Mr. Jackson Lafferty. Mahsi for being here. I also want to recognize Louise

Mackenzie and June Mackenzie as well. Mahsi for being here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we've missed anybody, we would like to thank you for much for being here and thank you very much for allowing us to be your representative in your House. Thank you very much for everybody being here.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Member from Deh Cho.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 7-20(1): RETIREMENT OF THERESA BONNETROUGE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to acknowledge the incredible career and upcoming retirement of Theresa Bonnetrouge. After an incredible 42-year career as an educator in Fort Providence, I thank her for her dedication and impact on the community. Theresa Bonnetrouge is a remarkable educator who has taught at Deh Gah Elementary and Secondary School for 41 years, 11 months and 19 days. She has had an impact on education in our community, and I'd like to honour her dedication and effort to support our youth. Theresa has been instrumental in teaching Dene Zhatie to our students. Her tireless efforts have contributed to language revitalization, ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of the Dene people is passed down to the next generation. I thank Theresa for her years of hard work and dedication to education in our community, to preserving and promoting our language, and to educating generations of our students. I wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement. Talk.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Acknowledgements. Member from Monfwi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 8-20(1): MONFWI GRADUATES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to congratulate all of the students who are graduating from kindergarten to grade 12 in the Tlicho region. Graduation is a milestone achievement and a stepping-stone to new opportunities. I am proud of all the students for staying in school and putting in the hard work. Thank you to all the parents for supporting their children through school. And thank you to all

the teachers and educators for their guidance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 294-20(1): SUPPORTS FOR TOURISM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I spoke about the challenges the tourism industry is facing in the Northwest Territories. How is the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment going to partner with tourism operators who are struggling to provide access to remote lodges and campsites that are only accessible by boat or float plane now that water levels are historically low and rendering docks and piers useless? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by thanking the Member for raising this. We have a very beautiful tourism industry to match our very beautiful landscape here in the Northwest Territories. We're certainly very aware of the challenges that the low water levels pose on our remote lodges across the territory, and ITI continues to work closely with NWT Chamber of Commerce and NWT Tourism as well to make sure that we're understanding the specific needs of lodges and who is in that situation, and until we know more information about what that looks like for everybody independently, we won't really be able to identify kind of what is needed. But I'm certainly committed to finding creative ways to address this with businesses and seeing how we can support one another. But at this time, I don't have a concrete solution or response for the Member until we know more. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister missed a chance to say Spectacular Northwest Territories, so I will do it for her. We have a spectacular industry, a spectacular, pristine environment, but climate change is definitely impacting it. So what are we doing to ensure that the industry is part of the conversation when it comes to wildfires and making sure that tourists are well-informed of the dangers wildfires present and that operators aren't liable for issues that happen due to evacuations and things like that? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the North is definitely spectacular, so thank you to the Member for that.

Ensuring the safety of tourists and residents during forest fire emergencies is certainly a top priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories. It's important, though, for tourism operators to have robust business continuity plans and also appropriate insurance coverage in place to manage such situations. As far as communication, we do have our public safety page on the GNWT website, we have things like Cabin Radio who has always been very active in making sure they're informing residents. And so it's bit of a partnership that needs to happen there, Mr. Speaker, where we do what we can to get the message out, and we also rely on people to know where to go as well. And so I can definitely loop back in with NWT Tourism to see if we are communicating this information to our tourism operators as well so that they can pass the message on to their guests too. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. Will the Minister -- another issue is hotel capacity. We're often over -- sorry, often overcapacity -- we're nearly always overcapacity with our hotel command, and it's increasing year after year. So what is the Minister doing working with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure there are incentives for hospitality -- for the hospitality industry to grow? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from within the ITI umbrella, we do have a support for product development enhancement through the well established tourism product diversification and marketing program. This is specifically funding to reinvent, improve, and expand tourism products across the Northwest Territories. And we also have funding for business planning for product packages for marketing efforts. Within ECE, we have wage subsidies. And then if you head over to some of our other departments, there are opportunities to build business in the Northwest Territories for sure. I can say as far as the Member's question in regards specifically to tourism offerings, I've recently met with a number of our Indigenous development corporations in the territory here and had the opportunity to also speak about tourism with each of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this is important to my riding. I've got many fine tourism operators, and I'm glad to hear the Minister is talking with them.

Finally, one of the things that's come to my attention is the need for more RV turnaround stations and campsites in the Northwest Territories. Does the Minister have a plan to address that need? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ITI does maintain a number of territorial parks across the Northwest Territories which do have turnarounds for RVs. That being said, we also did just increase our fees within ITI in order to create space for privately-owned campgrounds as well. Historically our rates were quite low, and we needed to raise those to make sure that they were both competitive and doing a better job of keeping up what it actually cost us to operate our parks, which I will say are still subsidized within the territory.

For turnaround stations that are outside of our territorial parks, that would need to be done in collaboration with the Department of Infrastructure as it would be a highway asset. And if this is deemed to be a priority of the Assembly, I would certainly be more than happy to follow up with the Minister of Infrastructure. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 295-20(1):
LANDS STAFF IN SAHTU

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today is to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The Sahtu regional office plays a major role in assisting cabin owners, title owners on lands within that region. How many vacancies are there in that regional office? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Sahtu. Minister of ECC.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there have been a high rate of turnover in staff in the Sahtu over the last year post merger. Currently, there are six vacancies within the department, and one that will be filled shortly with a casual in the short term. And there's active recruiting going on to fill the other positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that information here. What are the department plans for recruitment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, there's been high turnover and the department is actively recruiting staff for these positions. Part of that has been advertising the positions multiple times in some instances and working to ensure that we are trying to engage with people within the area, the local area, to attempt to fill those positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister looking at temporary transfers from other jurisdictions or other regional office, say at the Inuvik office, to bring personnel down to help with the services required by various residents of the Sahtu? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we pursue filling these vacant positions, we have been using the staff from -- the regional staff from the -- my apologies, sorry. There are ECC staff in the region that have the capacity to assist with the work on the lands files. As well as the staff are getting support from regional staff in other locations to assist with that work. Some of the work is also being supported by staff from headquarters in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ECC. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 296-20(1):
ACCESS TO LAB WORK

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, earlier I shared my constituent's experience getting lab work. Seconds after delivering that statement, the text messages started rolling in. Mr. Speaker, it's clear the new process is not working well for people. Can the Minister commit to reviewing this new process and bringing forward solutions which will improve access to this essential service? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with any new process that rolls out, I think in any department, there are always some difficulties. The process right now currently and the concern is that there are slots available for booked appointments. There's a number of people that they can do as same-day appointments, and then what happens is is that if you arrive earlier enough on time they'll let you know that they've only got enough space for walk-ins and they don't want you to -- like, they'll tell you that. And so it's not

that there isn't walk-ins. And so we're not going to review the program. We are implementing the program. Yes, there are some struggles along the way so there will be some public communique going out on this later on this week or early next week. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that there's going to be some communication. I was hoping for a commitment to maybe review this. Mr. Speaker, why was this change made? I haven't been receiving any complaints about this service in the past and now all of a sudden, we're receiving a lot of complaints. We seem to have broken something by trying to fix it, Mr. Speaker. What was it that brought about this change? How have we gotten to the point where we've reduced access to a service when our priority is to improve it?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, you know, this is a new program, so we've gone out publicly saying this is a new program. What this program has done is over the past month that it's been rolled out, we have seen 200 more patients this last month than we normally do in the lab in Yellowknife and so because there's changes, because, you know, there's certain things -- before we were getting a lot more complaints that there wasn't some structure, there wasn't time to book appointments, there wasn't same-day appointments in the lab, so right now what they're working on is ensuring that there's going to be some changes and so that there's more options and ways to book online and things like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems like there's been an attempt to increase access to service, as I said before, and it seems like it has created a backlog or something's going on here. Mr. Speaker, is there a reason we can't simply return to the process we were already using and appear to be working for people? Is there, maybe, an explanation as to why there's suddenly been this surge in people requiring the service? If the Minister can give any information to the public to help us understand what's going on here, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process is going to continue the way it is. I hear the Member. I know constituents when things are changing and when they're not able to access something immediately that there might be -- but we have heard lots of other positives as well. And so not very many reach out to their MLAs when things are positive. So, you know, so that's the issue

here. And so we are monitoring it. We are increasing -- the numbers have been increasing in Yellowknife for access. So like I said, there are 200 more in the last month than there is normally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say I don't think that it's simply requiring people to wait in line, clammer for availability for a few available spots, it just doesn't seem to be working. Mr. Speaker, I would like to -- I haven't gotten a commitment from the Minister. I would like the Minister to commit to at least have a look at this. Is there anything that we can do differently as opposed to doubling down on something that clearly isn't working right now. Maybe it's growing pains. But can we have a look at this, make sure that we're doing everything we can to ensure that access to health care, which is our priority, is actually taking place in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, the program is ongoing. There are small changes that are being implemented as we move along. You know, we'll continue to hear from the Members and the constituents but from the other side too is that people are grateful that they're able to have appointments, they can preschedule them, they're triaging those that are going in early in the morning that are fasting. You know, there's different things that are going on. They're working with their -- you know, within the authority to make sure that prioritizing blood work gets booked in. So there are a lot of things that are changing as they're hearing from the residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 297-20(1):
WELLNESS AND ADDICTIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spoke today about the recommendations from the Ministers' forum on addictions and wellness and community wellness from 2013. And there were certain ideas in there that I wondered if the Minister of health could provide us insights whether the government has looked at them and addressed them.

So one was recommendation number 11, review and revise existing processes within the

health and social services system for referring youth to treatment in order to ensure that addictions treatment is accessible for all youth.

I should also say that these weren't sort of official actions that were taken up by the government, but they were recommendations that were made. So I'm wondering if this has been looked at by the government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I don't have the level of that detail here as per each recommendation. You know, that is going to take some time to compile any of that data. And so I will take the question on notice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of health and social services. The Minister has taken your set of questions on notice. Oral questions. Member from Deh Cho.

QUESTION 296-20(1):
FEDERAL FUNDING FOR ENTERPRISE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of MACA. Can the Minister explain why the GNWT does not want to accept assistance from the federal government under the disaster assistance administration to support housing units in Enterprise? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the thing to remember here is the disaster assistance program is a federal program. And just to be clear, it clearly states in the policy, for the disaster assistance policy, that it is not an insurance program. Residents who have no insurance that have been affected by the wildfire are being taken care of. They are being housed by the program. So they are being housed until -- I believe right now until the end of August pending some more communication with the DFAA.

I will add, though, Mr. Speaker, that we have to remember that the wildfire -- fire insurance is readily available and overland flood insurance is not readily available. And that sometimes confuses people on why some assistance might be coming or not. So to the question, I guess, for the most part, that DFAA does not supply housing for rebuild homes for uninsured properties. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain the considerations and discussions that have occurred with the federal Minister for Public Safety regarding support for Enterprise? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had lots of discussion with the department. MACA had lots of communications with the department and the public safety staff. I've personally spoke to the public safety Minister. And I think we've exhausted all avenues in regards to assisting uninsured properties in Enterprise. Just keep in mind that they are being housed through disaster assistance support. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. Has the Minister discussed the long-term options for temporary housing units constructed in Enterprise with the federal Minister? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have. And currently, as I stated, they are being housed through the disaster assistance program. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Final supplementary. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi. Can the Minister explain the role of the pathfinder assigned to assist displaced residents. What does the pathfinder do to help displaced residents? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The pathfinders are the GNWT resources people on the ground to assist residents who may be involved in an emergency like flooding and fires. Their goal is to help the residents navigate the GNWT system and assist them in finding resources to help them during the time in need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Mr. Premier.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 127-20(1):
MANDATE LETTERS FOR THE EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL OF THE 20TH LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY

TABLED DOCUMENT 128-20(1):
GNWT SEARCH AND RESCUE SYSTEM
REVIEW FINAL REPORT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Mandate Letters for the Executive Council of the 20th Legislative Assembly; and, GNWT Search and Rescue System Review Final Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Tabling of documents. Minister for ECC.

TABLED DOCUMENT 129-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT #62-19(2) ON THE REVIEW OF
BILL 74: FOREST ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 130-20(1):
NWT SURFACE RIGHTS BOARD
OPERATING BUDGET

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee report 62-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill 74: Forest Act; and, NWT Surface Rights Board 2024-2025 Operating Budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ECC. Tabling of documents. Minister of ITI.

TABLED DOCUMENT 131-20(1):
PROSPER NWT 2024-2025 CORPORATE
PLAN

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Prosper NWT 2024-2025 Corporate Plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Tabling of documents. Minister for Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 132-20(1):
TOBACCO AND VAPOUR PRODUCTS
CONTROL ACT AND SMOKING CONTROL
AND REDUCTION ACT THREE-YEAR
REPORT 2020-2023

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act and Smoking Control and Reduction Act Three-Year Annual Report 2020-2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

TABLED DOCUMENT 133-20(1):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 186-20(1): ADDRESSING
EROSION IN AKLAVIK

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 186-20(1): Addressing Erosion in Aklavik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

TABLED DOCUMENT 134-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 1-20(1), REPORT ON THE 2024-
2025 MAIN ESTIMATES

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee report 1-20(1): Report on the 2024-2025 Main Estimates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Member from Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 135-20(1):
GREENLAND COUNCIL ECONOMIC
REPORT 1. HALF YEAR 2024

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a Translated Copy of the Greenland Economic Council Report 1. Half Year 2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 136-20(1):
SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' ABSENCES FOR
THE PERIOD FEBRUARY 6, 2024, TO MAY
22, 2024

Pursuant to section 5 of the indemnity allowance and expense regulations of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the summary of Members'

absences for the period February 6th, 2024, to May 22nd, 2024.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Colleagues, at this time we will take a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Member from the Sahtu.

Motions

MOTION 37-20(1):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY BUSINESS
CASE RENEWAL,
CARRIED

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Mackenzie River Basin has been experiencing drought and low water levels since 2022, which has disrupted the re-supply of communities by barge;

AND WHEREAS the disruption of barging routes has created extraordinary logistical challenges and costs to deliver goods and supplies to impacted communities;

AND WHEREAS communities in the Sahtu region estimate over a collective \$14 million in lost or delayed business opportunity, including logistical and shipping expenses as a result of the 2024 cancelled barge;

AND WHEREAS the Mackenzie Valley Highway has been a project under development for decades; it is a 321 kilometre highway of which 14 kilometers have been built to date;

AND WHEREAS the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway will not only unlock the economic potential of the Sahtu, it will also lower the cost of living for residents, connecting the Mackenzie Valley region, and improving transportation to the Arctic Ocean, increasing the Northwest Territories' and Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories is mandated underneath the 20th Legislative Assembly to strengthen government-to-government relationships with Indigenous governments and work in partnership to jointly engage the federal government to advance issues of shared interest;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, that the Government of the Northwest Territories

update the business case to complete the Mackenzie Valley Highway immediately;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories use the updated business case to formalize Indigenous partnerships in the project and to lobby the federal government in partnership to secure the funding required in the upcoming federal budget to build this critical infrastructure for the territories and Canada;

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

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I put this motion forward with the encouragement of the whole Assembly's support for the reasons being that you can only visualize the impacts of last year's barging season and this year's total barging season and the many negative impacts not only to project delays but postponements, additional costs and, most importantly, the layoffs for the people that are affected by the delaying of the project or the cancellation of the whole project totally. That has a stressful impact on the family income, the mortgage commitments, additional costs of living, and the whole logistic of bringing goods from southern points to the community. So I emphasize and I encourage our government to stand behind and finish this into a view that we have a vested interest in capital commitments already to this project. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I second this motion because I support this motion. It's one that is really needed. And I always keep thinking about the late Cece McCauley who always said build a highway. And, you know, I think it's time now that we take a look at that. You know, as my colleague who brought forward this motion talks about the need of putting a highway there that helps with the high cost of living in that region, no different than I'm trying to push the same thing for my riding as well. But, Mr. Speaker, roads like this is good for communities. It's good for the North. Good for the jobs in the small communities. We all benefit from this. So, Mr. Speaker, you know, I'd like to see this road go ahead. And I always remember Cece McCauley at the Dene Nation meetings I used to attend, and she was a big advocate behind this whole thing so I think that maybe when we build this highway, we may

have to call it the Cece McCauley Highway. Anyways, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to support this motion. And, in the words of the late and legendary Cece McCauley, build the damn road.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one can support a motion without voting in favour of it and that is the situation I'm likely to find myself in, and my colleagues here in Cabinet will be abstaining on this. But I did want to speak to the motion.

The Member from the Sahtu has been voracious in terms of promoting the need for this highway. Mr. Speaker, myself, my office, we hear from him regularly. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. It helps keep us on our toes, and it helps push something, and it helps push something when there's so many other things going on. There is absolutely no doubt of the importance of this project to the Sahtu region, to Nahendeh, to the communities along the way, and I am pleased to say there's a lot of work happening in this space right now. I am very hopeful that a renewed MOU with the SSI will be signed quite imminently. That was referenced by the Member. That does help on structure, the organization between the SSI and GNWT in terms of advancing this project. We have renewed work now happening with the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation and supporting their interest in how they want to see themselves reflected in the future of this project.

Mr. Speaker, the Member from Range Lake took this away from me. I was going to note that I also happen to know that Cece McCauley said something slightly different about how to build that highway. And, Mr. Speaker, I have a little picture of her with that quote sitting on my desk. So, Mr. Speaker, and I have one more thing on this; I'm, in fact, meeting with the Department of Infrastructure tomorrow to talk about what we might do to advance the construction schedule on this highway and see what we could do to move this forward. It's, again, as we do, Cabinet will abstain but, again, that doesn't mean that there's any lack of support or any less drive. Happy to have the motion to help keep that momentum going. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife South. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Sahtu can conclude the debate.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for the opportunity to close the debate on this motion here. I additionally wanted to mention here if we look on the spirit of this Assembly's mandate to economic reconciliation with the Indigenous governments, here is one example how to do that and unlocking the Sahtu would mean that this region is 283,000 square kilometers, twice the size of the Maritime provinces, so you can see the potential within this area. And I would request a recorded vote there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Member from the Sahtu has asked for a recorded vote. For all those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Sahtu. 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 Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho.

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha. 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: Colleagues, all in favour, 9. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, 7. The motion has carried.

---Carried

Motions. Member from the Deh Cho.

MOTION 38-20(1):
CONSIDERATION FOR THE HAMLET OF
ENTERPRISE TO RECEIVE TOP-UP
FUNDING,
CARRIED

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the hamlet of Enterprise has suffered catastrophic damage in the loss of 80

percent of all structures, including 35 residential homes;

AND WHEREAS the federal minister of Emergency Preparedness has identified the federal program Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements of which the Government of the Northwest Territories can access 90 percent of the cost of the installation of temporary housing within Enterprise;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories has the key to unlock funding offered by the Government of Canada;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs has the power to authorize the spending of 10 percent of the cost of providing temporary housing within Enterprise;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, second by the Member for Range Lake, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide the 10 percent funding needed for the installation of temporary housing in Enterprise;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories align the territorial Disaster Financial Assistance Program to leverage the 90 percent contribution provided under Canada's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangement;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories immediately communicate with the hamlet of Enterprise its intention to fully participate in the installation of temporary housing in Enterprise;

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 the Deh Cho. To the motion. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I move this motion today because the Government of the Northwest Territories has an opportunity to support the community of Enterprise. The federal government has identified to the GNWT the support available through the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangement, through the DFAA, and the GNWT can access 90 percent of the cost to construct temporary housing units, modular housing units. Mr. Speaker, I see the community, I talk to the leaders, I listen to the residents. I can tell you Enterprise is in a time of need.

The way forward to rebuilding Enterprise is not clear. The community does not have the resources or the solution.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT can help this community in their time of need, yet for some reason the GNWT is not doing this. This funding opportunity from the federal government may not be the most ideal solution because it only provides temporary housing, Mr. Speaker. It's better than nothing. There has to be a creative way that temporary housing can transform into long-term housing options. Why would the GNWT pass up an opportunity to build temporary housing when we are in a housing crisis that has been made worse from the devastation of wildfires?

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has an opportunity on the table to secure federal money at the cost of 10 percent to the GNWT. The federal Minister has offered to support the GNWT and has committed to coordinate federal departments to identify any other funding sources. Why is the GNWT standing in the way of Enterprise? The community of Enterprise wants to ensure that all displaced residents have a home to return to this fall, and the GNWT should support them to make this happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Sorry, I ask for a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for the Deh Cho. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to support this motion. It's important that we look at all communities when we're making decisions as a government. And I think this is -- well, I know this is something the Member's very passionate about, it's her riding, and it's the community that was hardest hit by the wildfire disasters of previous years. And I can't imagine what that must be like to lose your home, to lose your community, and to still be in this place where you're not sure where the help is going to help from and what it's going to look like. The people of Enterprise shouldn't be in a place where they don't know what their future holds. They should be very clear about how things will move forward.

I know our friend, the Minister, has been looking into this as well. I know he's got a big heart, and he does want to help. But often we hear this, that the federal government's the one standing in the way, they don't understand the application. The Member's done the leg work. The motion's very clear. The money, the support's there. So I don't know understand why we can't move forward with this, provide those matching dollars, and get this project

moving forward. So I look forward to hearing more perhaps from the Minister proper but, even more so, I hope to see Members support this motion so we can get Enterprise the help that they need. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, forest fire 2023 was a disaster for a lot of us, and it was a nightmare for many who lived through the ordeal. People from Behchoko and Edzo, even Hay River North and South, they experienced that as well. So, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you it could happen worse for Behchoko. By the grace of God, Behchoko was safe. You know, so we lost four housing and we lost 15 cabins on Highway 3. But Enterprise did not have the same experience. Forest fire almost wiped out the whole community. As a result, until this day, the residents are still suffering. They're affected by the whole process, and many of them are still homeless. They want to rebuild but they can't because they don't have the means. And many of them don't have the -- they don't have no houses, and they don't have a home. So many of these people made Enterprise their home community so we have to respect that. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. The community is still struggling, and people are displaced, and GNWT has the authority to rebuild the town of Enterprise. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise in support of the motion here. I can only imagine the devastation and the stressful environment. As we've always said, our home is our kingdom. And to lose that, I'm just totally lost for words on how the individuals having lost all that life's earnings gone up in smoke, and I really feel for the victims of last year's season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't say much about this; I've spoken extensively about the wildfires, and the Member for Hay River South has spoken about the accommodations being provided as well as other supports. So what the government will do is take this motion, use the 120 days to consider it, and provide a response. And we will be abstaining. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River North. To the motion. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my colleagues for supporting me with this motion. I do this in the spirit of helping the people in my riding at Enterprise. With that, I would like to, again, thanks everybody that's supporting it and also ask for a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Member from the Deh Cho has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTED

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. 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 Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha. 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: Colleagues, all in favour, 9. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, 7. Motion has passed.

---Carried

Motions. Member from Yellowknife North.

MOTION 39-20(1): EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO OCTOBER 17, 2024, CARRIED

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that notwithstanding Rule 2.1, when the House adjourns on Thursday, June 13th, 2024, it shall be adjourned until Thursday, October 17th, 2024;

AND FURTHER, that any time prior to October 17th, 2024, if the Speaker is satisfied after

consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 9:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO.
1, 2024-2025

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 9 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 10:

APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 10, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2024-2025, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Pursuant to rule 8.2(3), Bill 10 is deemed to have first reading as ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 9:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 9 has been read for a second time.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 10:

APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 10, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2024-2025, be read for the second time.

This bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make appropriations for operations expenditures for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. It also sets out limits on amounts that may be borrowed by the Commissioner on behalf of the government, includes information in respect of all existing borrowing and all projected borrowing for the fiscal year, and authorizes the making of disbursements to pay the principal of the amounts borrowed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the principal of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 10 has second reading.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Reports of the Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 9:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, be read for a third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

RECORDED VOTE

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. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. 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 Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, folks. All those in favour, 16. Zero opposed. Zero abstentions. Motion has passed.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 10:
APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member

for Nunakput, that Bill 10, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2024-2025, be read for the third time. And thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to say it's been a bit of a grind these last couple of weeks I think is a bit of an understatement. Certainly, I know we've -- for those of us who it's our first time going through the budget process, certainly a learning experience and, yeah, and a long experience. Again, a big thanks to the staff that beared with us through this process.

I was going to say something cheeky about the Minister of Finance, but she works way too hard for me to do that. And I'm not going to lie, I'm a little bit scared of her as well so -- after the past three weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be supporting this budget today and, listen, it's a balance. I know, you know, it's a balance when we come as Members from our constituents, we all have things we'd like to see in the budget, things that maybe we aren't so interested in the budget and, you know, we have to get through as a group. We understand that there's -- you know, we have some fiscal restraint that we need to look at for this government based on what's happened in previous governments, and I think we're heading in that right direction and I guess I commend everybody on that.

Having said that, of course, I'll continue as I have in this House, and I'm sure other Members will as well, to advocate for things that are in the budget, certainly partially, some things are in the budget wholeheartedly, but things that we'll continue to work towards. And, Mr. Speaker, I'll speak to a couple of those.

Certainly on our housing, housing is one of our major -- you know, one of our main priorities in this House. I know how passionate and certainly how hard working the Minister of housing is, and I know I'm going to see that transferred to her department as well. But what I will say is please spend the money, spend the money. We have units that need to be built. We have units that need to be repaired. We have people sitting and waiting for these units that have been promised these units, Mr. Speaker, and they're still waiting to get in them. So let's ensure to do whatever we have to do to get that money spent.

On addictions, Mr. Speaker, you've heard a lot of us speak on addictions here and what it's doing to our territory, what's happening in our

communities with the drug trade, with the hard drugs that are in our communities. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's going to take not only an investment in programs or an investment in infrastructure there when the time comes, we need places for people to go so when they come back into this territory after getting the significant treatment they need that they have a place to continue that treatment and not fall back into those situations that got them there in the first place, Mr. Speaker. So, again, and I know it's not only important to me, it's important to everybody on both sides of this House.

I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, with education and early learning and child care. I know, again, the Minister's very passionate on that issue, and I'm happy to see that we do have some additional funding in there to ensure that we're paying the people that look after the people that allow us to go to work every day and to make sure that we're able to attract professional people to work in our early learning centres and to give them the compensation that they deserve, they require, and to continue to do what they do. So that certainly makes me very happy. And I know speaking from members in my riding and the Children's First Society in my riding, it will be very welcomed news.

Economic growth, Mr. Speaker, you've heard me say in this House before, and I'll continue to speak about it, about, you know, thinking outside the box, I'm going to continue to advocate for our natural resources, I'm going to continue to advocate for natural gas in my region, and I'll continue to advocate for working with our Indigenous governments who are, again, leading the way on a lot of these -- certainly in my riding, leading the way on this initiative there. And I trust that we will continue to work with them and ensure that we are taking advantage of that as well.

It was spoken about passionately here today, with the Member certainly from the Sahtu -- he knows my opinion on this issue -- the Mackenzie Valley Highway is a must, Mr. Speaker. In my riding or in the Beaufort Delta, our trade route is through the Yukon. There's no doubt millions of dollars pour in through Yukon to Edmonton to Whitehorse. That is our trade route, Mr. Speaker, because that is our route to get there, and we need that highway. And I hear it regularly throughout my riding, our constituents, get that highway built. So I'm glad to hear the inspiring words that our Minister said today, as well as my colleagues, that, you know, we are going to get there, and we'll continue to push for that.

There's many other issues, Mr. Speaker, I could speak to. I got to tell you I'm a little low on gas, pardon the pun, after these last couple of weeks

but I would like to say a huge thank you, obviously, to my colleagues, to our deputy chair of AOC, our Member from Deh Cho, and the work that AOC has done on this, to our amazing staff that have guided us through this work and stuck with us through thick and thin and, of course, to our Cabinet colleagues and specifically the Minister of Finance who's been nothing but professional and forthcoming and the Premier for stepping in when he had to and kicking some things across the goal line, which I certainly appreciated. And also the Minister of health, I know we had a little back and forth. But all of Cabinet, seriously, it's been a process. It's never easy. But I think we finally got there, something that I think we can be proud of. And I'll have some suggestions for the Minister of Finance on how we can maybe do this process a little differently next year, but we can talk about that at a later date. But, again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the honourable Members of this House and those in the public service and the Legislative Assembly who work to support us. This has been a demanding sitting. And without the attention of its Members and the diligence of our staff, we could not have accomplished our task of concluding the 2024 Budget. And I do want to give them a shout out as many members have today.

Mr. Speaker, compared to the last Speaker, my friend from Boot Lake, this will be a glass half empty speech to his glass half full, but I think it's important to contrast different expectations we may have in this House and also speak to our process of how we budget. I do want to thank the Minister of Finance for agreeing to partially fund the financial requests of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight to the tune of \$13,349,000. This includes reinstatements of the \$2.58 million towards the community access program and the small community employment support funding; \$3.5 million for early learning and child care funding; \$500,000 for the Aurora College transformation project; and a commitment towards revenue neutral carbon pricing.

I want to, well, thank her in her speech yesterday for acknowledging that the standing committee, nor its membership, must align itself with the government's fiscal strategy; however, referencing this strategy in the same vein as committee's requests seems to imply that we are opposed to that strategy or more broadly we are promoting undisciplined spending during

fiscal restraint. This is not the case. Many members on this side of the House have spoken for the need for restraint, including the last Speaker, especially around the growth of government jobs and unsustainable public sector growth. What Members have called for, rather, is an investment in priorities and a cohesive plan to develop spending to the areas as it's most needed, not to spending more money -- then not to spending more money when we don't have it. To be clear, the standing committee did not prescribe where the Minister needs to find the money, only that she spends it and perhaps alter other expenditures as a result. This government does not have a revenue problem. It has a spending problem. Revenue continues to grow year after year. That is not the Northwest Territories' problem. Our problem is how we spend those dollars.

Mr. Speaker, \$13,349,000 in a \$2.2 billion budget is not a modest sum of money. It is, at best, a rounding error worth less than a percentage point. For the countless hours that the standing committee and the House poured into Budget 2024, it's incredible to me that there's so much handwringing and negotiation that was required to get it. It's almost as if our system functions to corral our Members into fighting for table scraps as the machinery of government chugs along, undaunted by the supposed minority position of Cabinet. We have all been ground down by this process, long days and nights eroding any sense of priority other than get us out of here. We should be fighting for our constituents, not against our own exhaustion. After 23 hours and 26 minutes, we can do far better than this outcome and far, far better than this process.

Mr. Speaker, \$13 million and change has not saved the midwifery program. It has not rolled back the changes to extended health benefits that will drive up costs for many of my constituents. And it has resulted in a little more than a stay of execution for the Fort Smith correctional centre. We heard loud and clear that these things are important to everyday Northerners, working hard to stay ahead of a world that is getting more expensive, less predictable, and far more dangerous. Likewise, we missed an opportunity to phase out private agency nursing by 2027, to stop the slow moving privatization of our health care system, a move that would have cost nothing and done so much to improve staff morale and send a clear message that we value our health care professionals and will do anything to make our system work better for them instead of rely on an expensive band-aid solution.

Mr. Speaker, there is much I continue to support in this budget. Expanded and enhanced policing, economic initiatives around

film, fisheries, and mining, health care investments, and more planning towards transformative infrastructure projects like Taltson Hydro, the Slave Geological Province Road, and Mackenzie Valley Highway. These initiatives are more -- these initiatives and more are contained in this budget and are critical to the future of the Northwest Territories and to Range Lake as they align with the promises I made to my voters; promises I intend to keep.

So I will be voting to support this budget, but I will also continue to hold accountable the government for the commitments they've made to address the concerns we brought forward both at committee and in this House, particularly the promises made to midwives, health care professionals, correctional officers, and to the community of Fort Smith. I look forward to moving forward and this government to start making progress towards achieving its mandate and realizing the promises of all of our political priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have a fancy speech; I have bullet points so bear with me. I think overall, generally speaking, it's a sign of a good negotiation when both sides come away somewhat unsatisfied. I also want to thank the AOC chair and AOC deputy chair. These two folks have done a fantastic job for the folks that are here on this side of the House. Much gratitude to you both.

The conversations that I will continue to have with this Cabinet focus on four main areas. The first, after listening to my colleague from Yellowknife North, is the Office of the Children's Lawyer. When we have folks in legal aid pleading with us not to cut that office, I think we should listen to them. The second is midwifery. The conversations that folks on this side of the House, and I think most of the Members on this side of the House and some on Cabinet have had with the folks in midwifery in the NWT, have pointed to the lack of a system that truly supports making midwifery a strong reality in our territory. I think the benefit and path forward from these conversations that I see as a positive, and up to those conversations that I was having as late as today, Mr. Speaker, was that there is a door open for those conversations to continue, and I think the relationship is one that can continue to build, and I look forward to working helping to build that wherever I can. When it comes to extended health benefits, I want to thank Cabinet for increasing the threshold as I campaigned on the absolute dire straits that many people in my riding find themselves in with the cost of living.

Any time we're asking people who are ill or disabled to have even more hardship is something we need to take a closer look at. I am confident the Minister of health is going to look at that very carefully in the rollout of this program.

And, finally, when it comes to the fact that we are in fiscal restraint, Mr. Speaker, and that very much means that the writing might be on the wall for the -- how do I put this -- one of the options available in the tool kit of this government is reductions in the public service, Mr. Speaker. And while I recognize that might be an attractive tool to save money, I would really encourage specifically the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for the public service, to heed the mandate letter that she just received today from the Premier. And that reads: The GNWT has an amazing workforce, one which continuously strives to provide services and programs to the best of their ability to residents. As Ministers, we must provide public servants with the guidance and tools necessary for them to work with us in our commitment to serving the people of the NWT.

So some of those tools should be how -- if their jobs are no longer necessary, how they can be trained up for other jobs in the public service, Mr. Speaker, and how we can support them to transition and give them lots of time to contemplate how that might look. So I will continue to press on that, Mr. Speaker.

One of my colleagues here in the House used the word in this session that I really, really like, and that word is heartfelt. Being heartfelt and vulnerable are assets in a consensus government, not liabilities. It's been very apparent to me that the more that you spend time speaking from your heart in this building, the more people will hear you and the more concessions on both sides can happen. Listening in a heart forward way I think is the way that the majority of us do our work here every day since November, and I hope that that can continue and that we can continue to have hard discussions and good conversations and make good choices for the residents of the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the budget here. We've started off the initiative towards the fiscal sustainability strategy back in February, and now we're at the end, and it never turns out in the interest of what we all expect, but I think we can all realize that there is passion in this Chamber. I feel confident in this leadership in moving on. Yes, we got to give today for tomorrow. And that

compromise is what I'm going to be telling the community of Deline and in collaboration and working together and moving forward is exactly what I expect to receive. I've got to attend a graduation in Colville Lake here next week. It's the same day as the Deline school. Deline is larger than Coville, but in the spirit of collaboration, I know I will get support for not attending Deline by the elders there saying thank you for going where the priority is. Colville Lake, they're far behind in their school infrastructure and given the need, I do expect and I know I will get respect on collaboration by the community of Deline in saying thank you for going to Coville rather than we would like you to be here but in standing and supporting our Sahtu communities, I agree with you why you picked Coville over my community. So on that note, I see that philosophy here with this budget. And I see the passion in leadership on moving ahead. People are waiting for this budget. Some people are phoning me from back home and saying when are we going to go to work because we got to depend on the municipal carve out for our communities. Okay, just wait. Now we can all go back to work on summer projects, and I'm glad to hear that the smaller community funds are reinstated. I think we put a lot of smiles on people's faces in the smaller communities, in particular the ones that I represent that are facing hardships. And I look forward to joining them in discussing some of the solutions that the Ministers of Finance, Infrastructure, and ITI has shown their support for designing a relief package for the impacted members due to the cancellation of the barge. So I look forward to working with what we got. And I hope everybody has an enjoyable summer. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, I realize that the GNWT is more than \$1 billion in debt, and we are at 96 percent of the debt limit. Yes, we are in fiscal restraint, and I commend the Cabinet for its effort to meet the needs of the people. The Cabinet has done its best to work with the people and especially our colleagues on this side too. I know not everyone is going to agree, but the Cabinet Ministers listen and work with us. That is a good thing. Not only that, but some of us Regular MLAs make budget requests and feel that our requests and proposals were listened to by the government. We are glad to see the government working with Indigenous governments as well in creating bilateral agreements.

I am thankful under Premier Simpson's leadership there is a good working relationship with Indigenous governments such as Tlicho

government. And as noted before and as an example, we see their working relationship, you know, working with the Tlicho government trying to create the Tlicho administrative region, and Housing NWT is working with Tlicho government to possibly transfer 14 market rental units as noted, transitional addiction recovery program, and other programs that will help community members suffering with addictions and mental health.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time we will have a midwife position in Behchoko. Hopefully that will make a difference for young parents. Although, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge and recognize our ancestors who were -- many of them were midwife and delivered a lot of babies with no pay. I would like to recognize them as I am speaking here.

Mr. Speaker, I know we cannot close the municipal funding gap with this budget though. Although I am confident that in the future we can identify areas of saving which can then be redirected to close the municipal funding gap more effectively. One of MACA's goal is to help create and maintain healthy communities. Healthy communities lead to healthy people. It is an exercise in prevention.

Mr. Speaker, if we cut funds for communities, we are creating pressure to displace people from the communities and have them migrate to Yellowknife or to other larger regional centre. When you talk to certain people in Yellowknife on the street, many times you will find they are from the communities -- from a community. Their needs were not met in the communities, in their small communities, and now the cost for their care in Yellowknife is dramatically increasing.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, the funds allocated to small communities for capital operation and maintenance is not enough, and small communities are suffering and struggling. In the future, the government will have to take more time to work with us on this. I will support this budget but look forward to working with the Cabinet Minister to make appropriate changes reflecting the needs of the small community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone here, our colleagues, and staff for helping and working with us as these past two weeks have been hard on all of us. It was a stressful time for us. And when we return in fall, there's going to be one research staff that is not going to be here, so and she is moving on to something better. And I wish her well, and I know we will miss her. And I want to wish everybody to have a good, safe summer. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recall in 2023, when I was first elected to the Assembly here and I came in midway through an election, and I was not around when the whole budgeting planning process was starting to happen. Even though I came in, I brought in the wishes of what I heard from my riding and I put it all in the suitcase, and I went to the Premier of the day trying to get that luggage thrown on the train. And the train's halfway through its destination, and the Premier of the day had mentioned that she will do her best to try to get it onto the train. And needless to say that none of my issues never did get on that train. But having said that, in 2024 now, once we got back into this position as the MLA, I brought forward letters to Minister Wawzonek and dated back to March 15th of this year, and I highlighted everything that I could think of that I heard from my riding. It's a wish list, but it's a luggage as well. And also on April 29th, 2024, I also sent another letter to the Premier -- sorry, to the Honourable Caroline Wawzonek in regards to the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh funding needed for the homeownership, etcetera. So I put that luggage together. Now the train's leaving the train station now on a four-year journey.

Even though we got to -- you know, we're dealing with a \$50 million deficit this year, we still got hard times yet to come for the next three years. We still got another 150 next year and for the next three years. It's going to be a very tough time. But having said that, though, Mr. Speaker, I know I'm trying to address the issues in my riding in regards to housing and homeownership repairs and etcetera. That's what I've been hearing a lot. And so when I put this letter together and sent it in, it's my hope to work with the Minister and the Premier and the Cabinet and to look for ways to try to make this a reality, even the situation we're in right now. I always said that I know that the policies are very difficult to -- trying to get help for our people in the small communities, it's like I said the other day, trying to shoot an arrow into a dart board that's in Lutselk'e. But if we work together, we can do it together and we can make sure that we hit that bull's eye.

So, Mr. Speakers, it's the key here is working together. And with my colleagues here, we may have -- we may not always agree or disagree, and same thing with our colleagues on the other side. I served with the colleagues on the side too in the last Assembly. And the key here is continue to build relationships, build partnerships, most importantly work together, but at the same time we got to show respect. And to me when we do that -- because we got

good teachings from our elders, and the key here is to listen and to look to bring out the issues that's coming from the communities and to look for solutions. And I think the last four weeks that we've been here it's been really tiring going through the budget process. And for me now as the chair, as the deputy chair coming in, it's been an experience, especially when we're going through the budget process. And so anyway, I know that the situation we're in, but I think we will get through it together and we have to have a balance. And so I look forward to continuing to work with the Cabinet, with my colleagues, in a respectful way. And, Mr. Speaker, I will support the budget. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Colleagues, before I go on to the next Member, just would like to remind you that we use titles and not names in the House here, please and thank you.

To the motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are many encouraging things in this budget that will help to set us on a better path as a government and as a territory, both things that were initially proposed by Cabinet and both budget changes and policy changes that the government has agreed to through negotiations with Regular Members. I want to give just a quick rundown of the highlights for me and flag a few key items that are left outstanding that I think need to be urgently addressed as we move forward with this work.

So I'm encouraged to see the transitional housing for addictions recovery program which has been called for a very long time to address the big gap in aftercare, people returning from addictions, and to see the recent commitment to even expand that within the life of this government. I'm encouraged to see that we are continuing to support the transformation of Aurora College to a polytechnic. I'm encouraged to see more money to support better compensation of early learning and child care workers and additional funds put into repair and maintenance of public housing. I'm also encouraged to see the government has committed, in its response to committee, that it will include in its strategic energy plan a goal of reaching net-zero emissions for both nonindustrial and industrial emitters by 2050. I'm pleased that the government has agreed to examine and estimate the cost to introduce an Office of Practitioner Experience in the health care system that would help frontline health care providers get their concerns addressed in more effective ways. We need to change the

way we're doing things in the health care system, particularly in terms of staff retention.

Another recommendation that was made by committee in the health care topic was a health care workforce plan. It was derived from a suggestion made by the NWT Medical Association. The government's response, however, was unclear and simply referred us to the HSS human resources plan, which I want to be clear does not accomplish the same thing as a systemic workforce plan. So I will continue to advocate for such a workforce plan so that we can be proactive in deciding, first, what level of health care services are realistic and worth striving for, to plan and budget for appropriate numbers of professionals and appropriate types of health care professionals to be able to actually accomplish that and do it well without constantly straining and burning out our staff capacity.

I continue to be concerned about the elimination of the Office of the Children's Lawyer position. I'm aware that a letter has been sent to the Minister just this week by the Legal Aid Commission, which is the oversight body for legal aid, and it says, I quote: We believe that the role of the Office of the Children's Lawyer is misunderstood by the Minister and the Cabinet.

Now, the commission recommends restoring the full operating budget of the Office of the Children's Lawyer, and legislation requires that the Minister seriously consider any such recommendations of the commission. So I trust that will take place, and I look forward to that discussion continuing.

I also continue to be concerned about the reductions to Arctic Energy Alliance, reductions both to operating funding and grant programs to communities. We have major energy challenges in this territory, Mr. Speaker, and Arctic Energy Alliance has been doing crucial work in partnership with community governments to equip our homes and our communities with cleaner, more energy efficient technologies. This work is often incremental, small, but steady; it's behind the scenes, but it's incredibly important. And I hope the Minister establishes a closer working relationship with Arctic Energy Alliance moving forward to be able to support that important work.

We have much work ahead of us. I hope we can all keep our focus on the bigger picture and the collaboration that we need to make our consensus government work in order to achieve our common priorities. So I thank everyone for the hard work we've put in, but

there's much more work ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been a long five weeks reviewing and deliberating on the 2024-2025 Budget. I put forward my reply to the Budget Address which spoke to my initial reaction to the budget, which was that I felt we needed to do more to focus or attention on the priorities agreed upon by this Assembly. To this end, I put forward some changes I wanted to see and supported those brought forward by my colleagues, many of which I agreed with, and the majority of which spoke directly to these priorities. AOC put in some long hours and managed to find consensus on a list of changes we wanted to see in order to receive our support for the budget.

I want to thank my colleagues for their hard work on those requests. It was a truly collaborative process and I think showed what committee can achieve when we work together. I was particularly proud that we were the first group of MLAs to put forward our demands publicly so our constituents could see what we're fighting for. I really appreciate that commitment to transparency and want to continue that.

Through the subsequent process of negotiation, I can say that we were able to push both the budget and the government's business plans further towards the priorities I want us to be focused on. I certainly did not get everything I was hoping for, but I'm not sure anyone on either side of the House can say that. And that tends to be the nature of negotiations, Mr. Speaker, particularly in our consensus system. Our system is structured in a way which necessitates compromise both between Cabinet and Regular Members and among all Members of this Assembly. There has been much debate about the merits and challenges of consensus government but time and again, the territories communicated that they want to continue using this system and, in particular, during this recent election I heard loud and clear from my constituents that they want to see us working together effectively and respectfully, and I am committed to doing just that.

I want to speak to a few things I consider small wins we were able to achieve and things I will continue to fight on because we didn't quite get there. As we were working on negotiations, our AOC chair, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, asked us for our hills to die on, for him and our

deputy chair from the Deh Cho to fight for in negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, my first hill to die on was housing. It is the first priority of this Assembly and, accordingly, I felt it needed further emphasis in this budget. Through deliberations, we advocated for and succeeded in obtaining increased money for housing maintenance and also for some specific projects. Housing NWT also laid out during deliberations the impressive amount of work scheduled for this year, which I am pleased to see moving forward.

Perhaps the most important thing that will help us truly move the needle on housing in our territory are the commitments in the business plan to do a comprehensive needs assessment for housing in the NWT and an infrastructure deficit assessment. While we did not succeed in attaching much money to these initiatives in this round, they will help us quantify the problem and provide a foundation of evidence to inform our budgets going forward. I want to thank the Minister responsible for Housing NWT for her strong leadership in pushing the department to get those initiatives completed more with quickly than initial planned. Well done. In return, I am committed to using the information generated by these reports to keep pushing the government to put its money behind ensuring that we are serious about addressing our housing crisis as our top priority.

My second hill to die on was pausing or removing income testing for extended health benefits. This policy change is adding hardship to a number of my constituents who are already struggling with disabilities or chronic illness, Mr. Speaker, and I do not support the change. This one came down to the wire. And although we did not get what I was looking for, I am pleased that we received concession on our request to at least increase the income threshold, which I hope remains in place, and I strongly encourage the Minister to fight to ensure that deductible payments are spread over the year for folks above the threshold to help lessen the blow from this change.

My third hill to die on was restoring midwifery services in Yellowknife. Again, we did not get exactly what we were looking for there, but we did get a concession, which is really not what I was looking to achieve but as I said to the president of the midwives association last night, we have at least opened a door which can lead us to a path to expanding midwifery services in what I hope will become many communities in the NWT over time. To Heather and Leslie and all of the midwifery champions who raised their voices, I continue to encourage you to push hard. We will get there, and you will have my full support along the way.

I also want to acknowledge the significant number of changes advocate the for the health care system which I haven't mentioned here but which were agreed to wholly or in part by the department, and I am hopeful that we can see some meaningful change in our health care system over the next year and will certainly keep fighting for it.

I want to particularly thank the Member for Yellowknife North for her hard work on bringing forward constructive and thoughtful recommendations for policy and practice changes in health, which I think could make a real difference. I also want to thank the Member for Range Lake who has been relentless in fighting for our nurses.

I would note that I haven't mentioned a number of items here which I was glad we achieved; namely, the increase to Aurora College's funding. I have spoken a lot to the importance of education during this session so I'm not going to repeat myself again here, Mr. Speaker, but I want to thank the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake in helping to bring forward some proposals which could help us move the needle on that initiative. It is such an important initiative for our territory, Mr. Speaker.

As an aside, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend a special thanks to my girlfriend Rayanna who has been holding down the house while I've been working long days and nights over the past number of weeks. You mean the world to me and are my number one supporter. I appreciate you so much.

Mr. Speaker, the question I was facing as I phoned constituents and collaborators to tell them that we got some small wins, but not everything we were asking for by any means, was whether I could support this budget. I went to bed with this question not completely settled in my mind but came to work today with a better sense of clarity. I think if I was to vote against the budget now after the hard work by myself and my colleagues to develop consensus, work together on our respective priorities for our ridings, after the finance Minister and Cabinet came to the table in good faith and worked with us to find something we could all disagree with on some level or another, it would not respect the work we all did to find consensus. From day one, I never came here expecting to get everything I want. I like to think that I bring a realistic and reasonable perspective to the table. And part of that is understanding that progress happens in incremental wins, by working collaboratively with our colleagues on their priorities and, in turn, receiving their support for our own and committing to keep the pressure on so that over time, piece by piece, we can turn small wins into big changes. To that

end, Mr. Speaker, I will support this budget with a strong commitment to keep fighting for change going forward, to keep putting the pieces in place to ensure that change happens and gathering evidence which will make it harder to refuse the next time we deliberate. I care so deeply about this work, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to put everything I have into it. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Member for Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank my colleague, the Member from Boot Lake, for showing me, working with me, and I also want to thank the Minister of Finance too. This has been a really learning experience for me, Mr. Speaker. It's my first six months here, learning how to do what we do and how to help people, how to get things moving, how to work together, and especially learning -- well, yeah, learning how to work together. I don't have a big speech like everybody else did but I support that, and I too will be -- and I want to thank -- I also want to thank all my colleagues, like everybody here, working with us. And I remember when I first got here and I said something to the effect of when you have a house, you got to figure out what's your priorities in your house then you figure out after if you're -- whatever you find is not working, you figure out how to fix that. You need money for that so that your budget comes into place and how you spend your money is how you're going to operate your house. So that's the same thing that we should work for, and we work together in this House so that way we have what we need.

Some of us are getting what we really need, some of us are not getting what we need, and that's okay, and that's the way things work. And so with that, I wanted to say I want to thank -- again, thank my colleagues, all the people that work here, and the people, the translators, the technical people. And also my family, my wonderful husband, my daughters, and my son, and do the thing that my daughter told me to do - now take a break. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spoke substantively yesterday in my role as Minister of Finance. I don't want to rehash that, but I do want to make a few comments, largely thank you's. And firstly, Mr. Speaker, it's to every single person that is in this building. The work

of session is long and difficult and it can be very exhausting and emotional, and everyone from our pages to the folks that help feed us to the folks that are cleaning up after us, a heartfelt thank you because it certainly makes the day palatable. But also, Mr. Speaker, to the officials specifically who help keep us all on track and keep things moving. A lot of things have to move often very quickly, and they are the ones that are making that happen. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the government executive office staff, they too are helping to move things quickly under difficult circumstances and often with fast-breaking changes, and they make it all happen with smiles so a significant thanks to them. Everyone here is a tremendous professional. So one more, Mr. Speaker, and that's the public service who aren't necessarily in this building but who are often watching us, who are often sending us information, sending us documents, responding to requests. And particularly in the budget session and particularly this particular negotiation, a lot of things were having to change across departments and often quickly. A lot of departments were being asked to revise, to review, to reconsider, to reexamine, documents, business plans, budgets that they had spent months putting together and they were being asked to quickly look at it and try to see what they could do to make change. So a lot of the ability to be in a consensus government but that thanks goes back to the entire, entire public service that is behind all of us that you happen to see here.

Mr. Speaker, the chair and deputy chair, very grateful to them. It has been a real pleasure. I think we've gotten to all know each other very much better, and I am very grateful to have them sitting with me and making these discussions. My colleagues here, Mr. Chair, I do want to give them a special shout out. They are very patient with me even when I am very impatient, and I am very grateful to them for that.

Mr. Speaker, very briefly -- again, I'm not going to say a lot. Five years ago was the first time that I had the privilege to take on this role and be in this, this was a financial transaction. It was a financial negotiation. But just as governments evolve and consensus can evolve, it has turned into something very different from that, and I am very proud of the fact that the kinds of discussions and the kinds of effort that our colleagues have put in has resulted not only in the items that I spoke to yesterday, I do hope that folks will look at the tabled document today, will look back at the asks that were made, because the document today outlines the entirety of what was agreed to. And, Mr. Speaker, it's eight pages long, has 41 items of

change. I'm not going to read them all in. But there's significant business planning change, policy work, legislative proposals are being discussed therein, timelines, dollars are changing, how the dollars should be spent, so it's not only about a cash transaction here. It really is about government and how we can be a consensus government. So, again, with all of that gratitude, Mr. Speaker, I'll end there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife South. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The question is called from Bill 10 be read for the third time. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

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. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. 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 Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. All those in favour, 16. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, zero. The motion has been carried. Bill 10 has third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills.

Colleagues, our new Commissioner, the Honourable Gerald Kisoun, is unavailable to join us today as he is in Ottawa on official business. I am pleased to announce that Abigail Crook of Hay River has been appointed as our Deputy Commissioner.

Ms. Crook is a mother to three sons, a grandmother of eight, and a great grandmother of four. She is a lifelong advocate on social issues, including justice, culture, and languages, with a long history of community involvement. Ms. Cook has decades of experience with the friendship centre movement and has been a key leader with the Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre for many years and is the current president of the

Northwest Territories and Nunavut Council of Friendship Centres.

Colleagues, we are fortunate to have Ms. Cook as our new Deputy Commissioner. I'm also pleased to let you know that her official duties will be providing assent to the bills today.

Mr. Clerk, can you please determine whether the Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Abigail Crook, is prepared to enter the Chamber and assent to the bills.

Assent to Bills

THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Ms. Abigail Crook): Please be seated. My first language is Cree, so I'm going to say a few words in Cree.

First of all, I want to say [No translation provided].] meaning thank you with respect. [No translation provided]. Meaning our friendship, people and friendship. I'm here to be part of your Assembly and to be a friend for whatever you need.

So I'd like to say tansi, Mr. Speaker, Premier, and Members of the Legislative Assembly. It's a pleasure to be in the House with those who serve the people of the Northwest Territories.

I wish to acknowledge we are gathered today on Chief Drygeese territory. We are grateful to be on this land and all the lands home to many Indigenous people, including the Dene, Inuvialuit, Metis, and Inuit. I am honoured to be here at my first event as Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. I couldn't memorize this so I'm going to have to read from it.

I'm looking forward to working with Commissioner Kisoun and getting to know the people of the Northwest Territories. I want to thank my family and my friends and the community for their support, and I hope I will make you proud. It's important that we all work together and support our communities, and particularly the youth. Listening to the voices of the youth will make our future brighter for the Northwest Territories, and I always believe in acknowledging our future leadership, which is the youth, and I continue to support their endeavours in any way I can.

So now as Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent the following bills:

- Bill 2, Missing Persons Act;

- Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025; and,

- Bill 10 Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2024-2025.

Mahsi. Merci Beaucoup. Mahsi cho. My friend taught me how to say this word and I think I forgot already. Quanani and Koana. [No translation provided].

People that don't understand, there's different levels of different dialects of Cree. And I'm a very proud Cree woman and proud to speak my language. So [No translation provided].

You're leaders of our people, and you are also there to help all our members in the Northwest Territories, and I wish to thank you. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, I'd like to thank the Deputy Commissioner, the Honourable Abigail Crook, for being here today to provide assent to our legislation. It was an honour to have her join us in this Chamber.

Colleagues, before I adjourn today's sitting, I want to take the opportunity to say a few words. I promise to keep them short, maybe, because I know we all have places to be and people to see.

First and foremost, I want to say thanks to each of you for a productive sitting. There were some long days and some long evenings, but you were able to accomplish the work before the House. This is no small accomplishment, and you should be proud of what you have achieved. We've seen estimates considered and approved, committees have delivered reports, motions have been debated, and important legislation has been passed on or introduced and referred to standing committees. I know you have not always seen eye to eye, but I am pleased that you were able to remain respectful towards one another and even during difficult discussions. Our residents expect to see and hear respectful debates in this Chamber, and I thank you for living up to their expectations.

I'd also like to congratulate you for the passage of the first full budget of this Assembly. During my first term in office, I was a Regular Member. And during my second term, I was a Member of Executive Council, so I have seen the budget process from both sides. I know the learning curves can be steep and that it takes a lot of work, communication, and compromise to get through a budget. I know that everybody may not be completely happy with the end result. As my former colleague, the Minister of Finance said, not everybody's going to be happy. That

means you've done a good job. So thank you very much. You got it right, folks.

Communication and compromise are the keys to effective consensus government. I can tell you as being the Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with the finance Minister and the Premier to discuss my concerns on the budgets, and I have to say thank you for that opportunity.

I'd like to thank both Cabinet and the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight for continuing on what consensus government is about. Congratulations on a job well done. This is true consensus government, what you guys did and achieved.

Colleagues, I want to thank the pages who joined us for this sitting. It is refreshing and inspiring to see the youth in this Chamber. They are our future. And colleagues, let me tell you, we will have a bright future in their hands. Thank you very much to them all, and please give them a round of applause.

---Applause

Finally, with great personal importance to me, I want to thank our interpreters. As an institution, we strive to honour, respect, and strengthen the languages of the territories. The hard work and dedication to our interpreters make it possible for us to do so. So, again, thank you very much, and I think we need to give them a big round of applause.

---Applause

Colleagues, this House is not scheduled to sit again until this autumn, but I know that we will all be busy with the ongoing work of the government and committees. Although our work will continue and keep us busy, I encourage you to enjoy those days ahead with families and friends. It is their support that makes it possible for us to do our job. I encourage you to spend some time with those closest to you, let them know how much you appreciate their support and assistance.

Colleagues, our summer is short, but our days are long. I hope each of you have the time to get out and enjoy all that spectacular territory has to offer, the Midnight Sun, the land, the water we call our home, and the warmth and welcoming people. We have world-class festivals, beautiful campgrounds, and some of the most stunning landscapes on earth. Please get out and enjoy all our territory has to offer. I look forward to seeing all of you back in Chambers in October for our next sitting.

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, October 17th, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 297-20(1):
Wellness and Addictions
Recommendations
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 36-20(1):
Government of the
Northwest Territories
Response to Tabled
Document 118-20(1)
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
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday,
October 17th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

