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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

This is the unedited Hansard. Send corrections to:
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Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Unedited Hansard

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, October 21, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Please join me in thanking Elder Annie Inuktalik for the opening words and blessing today.

Colleagues, it's great to be back in this House again today. I'd like to thank the deputy Speaker for taking the reins at the end of last week when I was attending the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's 44th Canadian parliamentary seminar in Edmonton. It was a wonderful program and I am thankful that I was able to attend on behalf of the House as well with the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

I would also like to take a few minutes to provide an update on some of my work over the summer. I thank you for your time and attention.

This summer I had the pleasure of touring communities within my riding with Minister Wawzonek. It's almost been three and a half years of planning to get it done, but we were able to successfully do it. And my communities were very thankful for her to attend, and I would like to thank her as well. We still have one to go but we will get that one done.

Folks, these communities and the people who live there are the reason that I am here, to represent them and their needs. I am grateful they have trusted me to serve as their representative, and I will continue to do my best to represent them through my ongoing conversations with our Premier, Ministers, all Members of the Legislative Assembly and elected officials from other governments.

In addition to visiting throughout the Nahendeh, I had the opportunity to spend some time representing the Legislative Assembly in Ontario this summer. I was fortunate to spend some time in Ottawa where I had the opportunity to meet with Speaker Akoak and deputy Speaker Hickes from Nunavut. More excitingly for me was the opportunity to meet

with our Northern Youth Abroad participants and their staff while I was in Ottawa. One of the highlights of this visit was touring the senate and parliament with the youth and meeting with Speaker Fergus and Speaker Gagné. I thank all the speakers, deputy Speaker, and staff who shared their time and experience to make this possible. It was a great experience for our youth, and me as well. I cannot stress how grateful I was to be able to be part of that visit. It was truly a blessing to be able to be involved with these youths, spending time with them, helping them and learning from them. It's been said many times that the youth are our future and, colleagues, we are in great hands. Our future is looking bright.

I also had the opportunity to attend the recent Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meetings in Toronto, where I had the opportunity to meet with and learn from others colleagues from across Canada and throughout the commonwealth. I'd also like to thank the Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh for joining me on that great meeting.

Colleagues, finally I would like to draw your attention to the sash on the table beside me. Following the memorial service of Mr. Whitford this past weekend, his family gifted his sash to this Assembly. I am truly honoured to receive this gift, and I can think of no better place to display Tony's sash than in this chamber. Tony was an important part of this institution for many years, and I am honoured to have his sash in the chamber with us. He will always have a place of honour in this Assembly. Colleagues, when you look at Tony's sash, let it be a reminder of his service and dedication to this Assembly and to the people of the Northwest Territories. It is a reminder to each of us, not just of the great work that he did but of the great work we can all do for our people. Thank you, colleagues. Now let's get to business.

Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 64-20(1):
OTTAWA TRIP – OCTOBER 2024

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, as we approach the one-year mark of this government, I would like to reflect on the progress we have made in strengthening our partnerships with Indigenous governments and the Government of Canada. Our recent trip to Ottawa, as part of the Council of Leaders, is a testament to the collaborative spirit we have built with our partners, and I am pleased to provide Members of this Legislative Assembly with an update on that trip.

Earlier this month the Council of Leaders, made up of the GNWT and Indigenous governments from across the NWT, traveled to Ottawa to meet with federal leadership. Our delegation included all of Cabinet, along with leaders and representatives from more than a dozen Indigenous governments. Together, we delivered a unified message: The Northwest Territories stands at the crossroads of Canada's strategic future. Our region is not only essential to the national conversation on prosperity and security but, with the right federal investments, the NWT is positioned to make meaningful contributions to Canada's success on the global stage.

Mr. Speaker, our meetings focused on key issues affecting the North:

- The need for housing investments,
- The development of critical infrastructure,
- Strengthening climate resilience; and,
- Creating economic opportunities through resource development.

While specific priorities may differ between the GNWT and our Indigenous partners, we all recognize the strategic importance of addressing these challenges together. We emphasized the abundance of resources in the North and the need for targeted federal investments in infrastructure, housing, and climate adaptation. Our message was clear: These are interconnected issues that are essential for the future of our communities and our country.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is more than just roads and buildings; it is the lifeline that connects our communities to the rest of Canada. The North's isolation, combined with the growing impacts of climate change, presents significant challenges. Shorter winter road seasons, melting permafrost, and unpredictable weather patterns create barriers to economic growth. Strengthening infrastructure, through all-season roads, energy projects, and communications networks, will

help unlock opportunities and ensure long-term sustainability.

Housing is another critical area where federal support is urgently needed. Chronic underinvestment in northern and Indigenous communities continues to be a barrier to education, employment, and economic growth. Overcrowded homes and deteriorating infrastructure impact the well-being of our residents and hamper the development of our communities. We have made it clear that housing is the foundation of a thriving North, and without stable housing we cannot fully unlock the potential of Northerners.

Climate change, Mr. Speaker, is reshaping life in the North. The wildfires that forced nearly 70 percent of our population to evacuate last year remind us that climate impacts are real and immediate. The Council of Leaders called for stronger federal support for climate adaptation. This includes wildfire prevention, building resilient infrastructure, and ensuring our communities are equipped to face these growing threats.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is rich in resources that are critical to Canada's future. However, resource development must be balanced with respect for Indigenous rights, environmental protection, and meaningful benefits for Northerners. The Council of Leaders has emphasized the importance of federal collaboration to unlock the North's potential, particularly in sustainable resource development. The NWT holds some of the world's most significant deposits of critical minerals, which are essential for the global shift to clean energy. With the right investments, we can position the NWT as a leader in this transition.

Mr. Speaker, our visit to Ottawa reinforced a powerful message: The future of the North is the future of Canada. As global attention turns to the Arctic and northern resources, it is more important than ever that we strengthen our partnerships with the federal government and Indigenous governments. This trip marked the first time that the Council of Leaders has tried something of this magnitude working as a collective. I want to thank all the leaders that participated for their partnership in this effort, and their commitment to our unified message. I also want to thank our Member of Parliament, Michael McLeod, for his support and advocacy on behalf of the Northwest Territories during these meetings and throughout his time in office. I was also pleased to have our colleague Mr. Edjericon join us for the trip as a representative of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, and I thank him for being there. Finally, I want to recognize the

enormous contributions of officials from the Indigenous governments and the GNWT for bringing this event together.

The Council of Leaders is committed to working together to ensure the North is ready to meet the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities that lie before us to ensure that our shared priorities, housing, infrastructure, climate resilience, and economic development, are met. The future of the Northwest Territories is bright, and with the right support we will be a critical partner in building Canada's future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 342-20(1): CAPITAL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, have a look through past Hansard transcripts and year after year, you'll find speeches by MLAs complaining that the capital budget has failed to adequately allocate resources to the Assembly's priorities. I argue that the underlying reason for this pattern is that our capital budget setting process is disconnected from priorities by design, and we need to change that process if we want to see a change in budgeting.

Currently, departments are using a set of criteria for identifying capital projects none of which include priority consideration first. In most cases, substantiations are provided which do link projects to a priority item in some way or other, but this appears to be done after the fact not as part of an overarching strategic plan for actioning a given priority. What appears to be missing from our process is a more foundational conversation prior to budget development and across departments about the direction set out in the mandate and how that direction might impact not only our capital spending but even our organizational structure. The current process appears to operate under the assumption that everything we are currently doing holds intrinsic value and should continue regardless of our priorities. The problem we are facing, however, is we have limited resources and when analyzed strategically as a component of priority implementation, everything can't possibly hold the same weight. Strategic analysis may determine a very specific and limited course of action is the best way to effectively implement a priority when compared to other options, meaning projects

which aren't as comparatively effective shouldn't come forward or are discontinued. In absence of this process, we are taking a scatter shot approach, and MLAs are being asked by an exacerbated finance Minister to make ad hoc decisions about what to cut on the floor of the House. This puts MLAs in the precarious position of making cuts on the fly to a budget staff who have invested significant time in already and, similarly, without the above-noted priority analysis. This process has proven time and time again to not work, Mr. Speaker, and this territory is now deeply in debt because we keep building more and doing more and failing to change how we operate. These outcomes will not change until we change our processes. I will note specific examples of this problem throughout our review of the capital budget, and I'll have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 343-20(1): DEMPSTER HIGHWAY AND INUVIK- TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY CONDITIONS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Dempster Highway and the Inuvik-Tuk Highway experienced one of the worst summers and one of the worst falls in recent years. Mr. Speaker, as we know, this is a vital link for the residents of the Beaufort Delta for products and services. Mr. Speaker, I've been inundated with emails, phone calls, and texts, and I know that the Minister of Infrastructure has certainly received her share of correspondence from the management of the trucking companies in the Beaufort Delta as well, Mr. Speaker. To put it in context, we have about -- one company alone has about 15 trucks a week. Those are semi-tractor trailers travelling up the Dempster Highway and in some cases into Tuk as well. Mr. Speaker, we've had situations where drivers of those vehicles, and broker drivers from the trucks that are brokered to the trucking companies, have refused to drive up the highway simply because the maintenance costs have been so high and the delays. There's instances where because of the delays on the highway and the distance to get there, the additional hours required to come up the highway, companies, Mr. Speaker, have had to hire extra drivers which, of course, legally you can only drive so many hours in a day, that again adds to the cost of getting that product to our communities. And as well, Mr. Speaker, you may end as well with drivers that don't have the necessary experience to navigate the road systems up there as we know are unique.

Trucking companies have seen more claims, Mr. Speaker, more products coming up. Some of our products obviously have shelf lives that have been reduced. Products, liquid products such as soft drinks and so on and so forth, have seen more damage, more claims, given the condition of the highway. And, again, that affects the residents and it affects the products that we're getting up there.

Mr. Speaker, as well residents who typically would drive out either for family vacations or to take a vehicle to one of the dealerships in Whitehorse, I've had stories, Mr. Speaker, where they've left, packed their families up to head down the highway, and turned around and came back simply because it wasn't safe enough to drive that highway this year, Mr. Speaker. So, again, I'll have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure on what we're doing to ensure this doesn't happen again and what caused those delays this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 343-20(1):
NORMAN WELLS HIGH FUEL COSTS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 20th Assembly developed a federal engagement strategy. This will allow our relationship building on joint resources discussions to address the many challenges faced by our Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, this federal engagement strategy certainly covers the disastrous situation faced by my community of Norman Wells and the Sahtu residents for the high fuel costs that's being air transported.

Mr. Speaker, as the Members recall last week, my request to the Minister of MACA for a briefing package outlines the preparations taken to lobby our federal counterparts to end the Norman Wells high fuel costs crisis. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions to the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 345-20(1):
HOUSING

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, finding a solution to the North's housing crisis is a passion of mine and a key concern for my constituents. So this is why much of the work over the past year has been dedicated towards bringing together different

levels of government to get private homes repaired as quickly as possible in a way that is cost effective and centered on the services delivered by Indigenous leadership. In summary, this plan is to have the GNWT cover the first step of homeownership inspections so that a fully costed proposal can be delivered to the Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. That way the federal government, which has more resources than the GNWT, can directly from the Indigenous governments so we can then utilize those resources themselves appropriately. We all agree that First Nations must take control of housing in their respective communities, and they will only prey on a greater role of governance of the Northwest Territories that continues our work in permitting the UNDRIP declaration on the rights of Indigenous people which mandates reconciliation as self-government.

We also know all too well that homes across the North are aging rapidly and must be repaired soon before they are into full disrepair or have to be written off completely. This plan is endorsed by the First Nation leadership in my riding, Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, including the Akaitcho territory government, chiefs, and the Metis leaders. They are all encouraged by the response so far from the housing Minister and recognize the stronger effort this government has taken to lobby Ottawa, together with them, for more support and resources for the North. Let's continue to work together and set a model for how we can all work together to get results for our small communities. This is a key moment in our territory's history for both solving our own housing crisis and set a new path forward for reconciliation. I look forward to asking the Minister of Housing NWT later today on their efforts to work with myself and leaders of the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding to make this proposal happen. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 346-20(1):
MIDGENDERING

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this fall, a married couple reached out to my office. They told me that they had been facing systemic discrimination within the health system as queer folks for nine years. Over multiple attempts, they had taken steps to seek help from NTHSSA to correct this issue, but after a while they felt ignored or ghosted when they sought follow-up.

The issue at hand was one of misgendering. Both partners in this couple are cisgender

women. One of them happens to not present in a stereotypically feminine way. To put it plainly, someone had previously looked at this woman and decided she was a man, and for nine years the health system refused to correct this error. This is not an error that can be laughed off, Mr. Speaker. This is administrative and feasibly medical misgendering for this resident as she takes medication that needs precise dosages. If this medication had been adjusted based on her medical record that identified her as male, this could have had severe health consequences. Before reaching out to my office, this couple asked on many occasions that the gender designation on file be changed from M to F but were told that they would need to follow the change of sex designation process and forms. This is infuriating because the individual in question is not transgender. Her birth certificate and all other identification correctly identify her as female. She is not trying to change her sex designation but to correct her mistaken medical records.

Happily, Mr. Speaker, within a week of my writing the health Minister, we had this resident's file corrected. But how do we allow a situation like this to persist for nine years? In my conversations with this couple, we agreed that if she looked more conventionally feminine, the problem would have been solved immediately. This couple noted that on many times on their journey that their medical practitioners, such as nurses and doctors, were frustrated on their behalf but couldn't change anything in their record.

Mr. Speaker, I'm highlighting this issue today because I think it's a teachable moment on the differences between gender expression and gender identity. I will have questions for the Minister of health at the appropriate time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Colleagues, before we continue with Members' statements, I'd like to draw your attention to the presence of Joe Handley, a Member of this House from 1999 to 2007. Joe was the Minister in the 14th Assembly and the Premier in the 15th Assembly, but the boss of the house as well is joining him is Theresa Handley. So welcome both of you here. Thank you. Notice, Joe, or Mr. Premier Handley, I said the boss was her, right, okay?

Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 347-20(1):
ILLICIT DRUG TRADE

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of the Northwest Territories are

wondering when this government is going to start looking after their interest in safety. The residents feel that this government is failing them in all aspects of services - in housing, in health care, in education, and the list goes on. During this past week, the Justice department has taken a different perspective in terms of protecting our residents of our communities. In my community of Tetlit Zheh, like all other communities within the NWT, they are dealing with a drug crisis. I've always stated that if alcohol and/or drugs takes over the lives of our residents, it will have a negative impact on all governmental departments.

Mr. Speaker, during the past week in my community of Tetlit Zheh, there was a serious crime committed by two local male persons. The two individuals forced themselves into a public housing unit and held the two adults hostage at knifepoint. The unit is occupied by two adults and their children. The crime in question is considered very serious in nature and is related to the drug trade. As of today, one of the accused has been apprehended and charged with multiple crimes. The other assailant is still at large.

Mr. Speaker, within a few days of being arrested and charged with some serious crimes, which includes placing a resident's life in danger with a weapon, the accused was free on bail and reportedly back in the community where these crimes were committed. When is this government going to start protecting the residents of their respective communities?

Mr. Speaker, the residents of our smaller communities are terrified and are looking at this government for protection. The RCMP has done their part with the investigation and charged one of the accused only to be let down by this government and the system. When can we start feeling safe within our communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the justice Minister. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from the Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 348-20(1):
ELDERS' RIGHT TO AGE IN PLACE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about the ability of elders in our communities to age in place in their own homes for as long as they are able to do so. Many elders wish to remain in their home communities, in their own homes, as they age. To do so means they require the appropriate health and social supports to live safely and independently. Elders experience higher rates of social isolation, mobility issues,

and health conditions that require particular attention as we support their wishes to age in place. Not all elders can rely on family to provide assistance, and we need to think about that in terms of the support we provide.

Mr. Speaker, in case of an elder aging in place at home, one large concern is what happens when there's an emergency and there's no one to reach out to help. In one of my communities, an elder had to call the RCMP to help her to get to the health centre because the nurse at the health centre said she could not leave the health centre. So my constituents have concerns that this is happening, that nurses are not able to leave the health centres to provide care for these elders when they're unable to get to the health centre on their own. Elders are asking who do they call for help in an urgent medical situation in small communities? They are being told the nurses cannot provide care off-site. With the aging population, it is expected that more and more services will be needed for elders in our communities, and we all don't have emergency services such as trained medics or ambulances in some of our small communities.

Mr. Speaker, a change in policy is required that ensures that services elders need are available so they can age safely in their homes which includes health care in urgent situations. With our aging population, this is an issue that needs to be addressed now. I will have questions for the Minister of health later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 349-20(1):
PUBLIC HOUSING

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, echoing my colleague from Frame Lake, year after year during capital budget deliberations in this House, MLAs stand up and say we are not spending enough money on public housing. So why does this keep happening if we all agree that housing is a top priority?

Historically, the colonial federal government forced Indigenous families off the land, away from their livelihoods, and into poorly constructed public housing. In the early '90s, the feds stopped building new public housing. Since then, public housing stock has fallen into disrepair and shrunk while waiting lists have continued to grow. As of 2020, the waiting list for NWT public housing was almost 1,000 families.

We have been told that we cannot take on additional public housing units even if another partner builds them for us. The three arguments seem to be, first, that there's no money for increasing the housing operations and maintenance project. Sure, we take on new capital and incorporate forced growth into our O and M all the time but for housing, apparently we can't afford it. Secondly, there's a belief that it should be a federal responsibility so we must advocate and then wait until they agree to take it on. Third, the feds are giving lots of housing money to Indigenous governments so we should just step out of the way and let them solve the housing crisis. The problem is that no Indigenous government that I know has indicated they want to take over public housing. Certainly, they're providing more opportunities for homeownership, allowing families with higher incomes to move out of public housing, but our economy is still so low in small communities and trauma is so high that there will continue to be a great need for public housing.

Nunavut is a territory that is ambitiously tackling its public housing needs through the Nunavut 3000 plan. Now, as an Indigenous government they can directly access more federal resources, but they're investing even more of their own resources. That's \$560 million over eight years, and they're striving to build 1,400 new public housing units by 2030. Fundamentally, the GNWT needs to embrace its responsibility for public housing and allocate more of our own O and M budget to housing, not wait for the feds or Indigenous governments to save us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 350-20(1):
SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST
SERVICES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier in this sitting I shared concerns about early childhood education. Mr. Speaker, I have seen firsthand in my riding that many children are entering the school system on an uneven level. This limits their chances for long-term achievement and success. One of the issues I hear from constituents is about the need for speech-language pathology services for their child or children.

Speech-language pathology, or SLP, is a rehabilitation service that provides speech and language therapy to people with communication disorders. In the past, these services were directly available in schools. SLP

services were scaled back during COVID, Mr. Speaker. This resulted in less services in school which continued into the most recent school year. This time last year, the waitlist for these services was four to six months. This is too long for our youth to wait. And we all know, Mr. Speaker, that school readiness is essential for successful learning and development. SLP is an important health service in assisting children in need and preparing them for their entire education.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great need for speech-language pathology services in our schools to assist and treat communication problems for our children. Availability and access to this service is critical so that our children can thrive. Furthermore, access to health care is a priority of this government. I will have questions for the Minister of health at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 351-20(1):
FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has long prided itself on its fiscal discipline through instruments like the fiscal responsibility policy, robust capacity, and the financial management board secretariat. And a keen ability to leverage federal funding into 75 or 100 percent dollars, our government has proven it has what it takes to manage complex fiscal challenges. That is why it's so alarming that the GNWT's largest ever projected operating surplus has evaporated now to such a severe deficit that the finance Minister is asking the Prime Minister to raise the debt ceiling, essentially our credit card limit.

Mr. Speaker, the things driving these costs were known unknowns at the time the estimates were tabled, debated, and ultimately passed. How have we missed the mark so drastically with such a strong track record of fiscal prudence? Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we cannot simply hand wave our own responsibilities towards fiscal stewardship by blaming it all on external factors while painting a rosy picture that we're actually headed in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at some of the costs that are driving up it comes down to, what it would appear, project management and project management that has been challenged for quite some time, perhaps on a systemic level. The Inuvik wind project has now cost more than double what was originally budgeted. 54 million

additional dollars on a \$40 million budget. In 2019, replacement diesel generators should have been a simple task at the Jackfish Lake. Well, that took a year to get them here and costs \$500,000 of additional monies. And, of course, we have the Taltson project which is delayed by two years and costing an extra \$31 million in the overall package of increases of \$75 million for the power corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister talks about the stabilizing influence of the public sector on the one hand but on the other hand, how unsustainable our public sector expenditures are on the other hand. We can't have it both ways. We either must insist on prioritizing our economy and getting these projects so we don't keep adding short-term debt we can't afford. We are at a tipping point, and we are soon to tip over, and especially if Ottawa says no. So I'll have questions for the Minister about how we can better manage these projects, return to the tradition of fiscal stewardship that we've been so good at in the past, and start to turn the corner on our problems. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 352-20(1):
FISCAL DEBT

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, when I entered this building for the first time in 2003, the debt wall of the territorial government was \$300 million. Since then, it's raised 600 percent, Mr. Speaker. Every Assembly that's shown up time and time again has always shown up with their wants and needs, but then now is no different. But at the same time they've always talked about how they want to live within their means. I've yet to see that after successive governments. Yes, enthusiasm can be contagious, a contagious dream, but all I've seen is this so-called live within our means is a chronic failure. Then in May, some hope might have come when we heard the delirious excitement from the finance Minister about the latest projection of the world's biggest territorial surplus on record, \$294 million. What happened? Oh my goodness, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it was all about paying debts, paying capital fully, hopes and dreams abound, Mr. Speaker. But to my surprise -- and I'll frankly say I can't believe I'm still surprised from time to time on some of these issues -- late last week we get an e-mail, practically it's like sliding a letter under our door, waving the white flag and saying we're broke again, we're heading to Ottawa because we need more money. Yet another *deja-vu* of the *Oliver Twist* story, Mr. Speaker. It begs the question what happened

to the money? What happened to consultation with this side of the House? Does the Cabinet even need us? Well, they went to Ottawa without us; I mean, clearly they see beyond us. You know, Mr. Speaker, where is the proof that they've talked to us and said hey, can we work through things? Consultation with Members late night sending an e-mail is not consultation, Mr. Speaker.

Now, of course, the finance Minister and the Premier will say well, this is an operational issue, not a political issue. Perhaps if we're talking about office furniture and how you paint your walls. But, Mr. Speaker, when we're saddling the youth of the Northwest Territories a generational debt, it is a political discussion, Mr. Speaker.

So I always been reminded that my Cabinet will be there when they need me hence they're now asking us to suck it up. We can't afford this finance Minister any longer, Mr. Speaker. Five years of this type of growth, it was a billion dollars of debt while when she entered office, who knows where it'll stop when she leaves?

Mr. Speaker, we need to have a conversation about maybe -- and I stress maybe -- we should do a Cabinet shuffle because this type of moving forward is only going to bless the youth with a debt they will never be able to service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 353-20(1):
HAROLD COOK CELEBRATION OF LIFE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Good afternoon, colleagues: Today, I would like to celebrate the life of Harold George Cook. He was born on September 9th, 1949, in Fort Smith to Eddy Sr. and Mary Cook. He was one of ten children in their family. He was also known as Cookie. He was a student at Grollier Hall for many years. He played a lot of sports - hockey, cross-country skiing, softball, to name a few. He skied against some of the best in Canada, the United States, and in Europe. He was a world-class athlete. Sports and workshops are how I got to meet Harold and enjoy his friendship throughout the years. Once you became his friend, you were friends for life. He would remember the smallest things you spoke about, your family, and what was important in your life even if it was months since the last time you spoke. He was truly about your friendship.

His family spoke about how Harold loved his sobriety, his adopted family, traditional values, and healing drum songs. He had a quiet demeanor but at times showed his humour. If

you had the opportunity to have him tell you a story, he always had a serious look but there was always a glint of mischief in eyes. And let's not forget his love for two-step dancing, jigging, drum dancing, and even like Zorba the Greek.

During his celebration of life, a number of people spoke about him and the impacts he had on their lives. I have included stories from Mr. Paul Andrews, Mr. Raymond Yakeleya, and Ms. Natasha Delany at the end of my speech. I would like them deemed as read and printed in Hansard.

On June 25th, 2024, he passed away. His family and friends are going to miss him. It is very hard to say goodbye to an amazing person. We were lucky to have him in our lives. The family would like to thank everyone for their condolences and for coming out to say their goodbyes. He is now in the land of his ancestors, elders, and friends. He will be sadly missed.

From Paul Andrew:

Comedian, trickster, athlete XC skier, hockey player, politician, multi-language Speaker... My favorite story about Cookie... he said he was in Tijuana, Mexico. He noticed a Mexican selling blankets. Harold decided to buy one and began to negotiate. The Mexican was not lowering his price... so he said to the seller, "Senor, do know where I am from?" The Mexican said, "No, senor". Harold said, "I am from far away in northern Canada. It's cold, my people are oppressed, poor and starving." At the time Harold was pretty big... easily over two hundred pounds. He said the Mexican looked at me and said, "Senor?" He said, I said "Yes". "For a poor starving Indian, you're awfully fat." He loved to tell stories... and he had a few. He played hockey for the Lethbridge Sugar Kings, the University of Alaska and in Sweden. He skied against some of the best in Canada, United States and in Europe. In other words, he was a world class athlete. He has a family in Sweden. Although he says he lost touch with them... he was pretty sad when he spoke about his time in Scandinavia. He spoke Swedish pretty well... well enough to translate to talk to some Edmonton Oilers when they were in Yellowknife.

He also served as Vice-President of the NWT Metis Association in the early 70s. Cookie was a man of many talents but the one word that captures Cook the best is survivor! I met him almost 60 years ago when were both at the notorious Grollier Hall in Inuvik. He, like many of us was abused physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually... abuse that left him an angry, bitter, young man. Like

many, he tried to find solutions in the bottle... abuse severs relationship with oneself, others and the Creator... it puts you in a very lonely, isolated and ostracized place... Harold often spoke of the lonely places alcohol took him. Then one day he quit and the real Cookie was back again... in August, Cookie would have been sober 47 years. He laced his skates and started playing the love of his life again, hockey. He waxed his skis and glided smoothly over the trails again. He started to jig and drum dance again but mostly he became an advocate for Former Students, especially those who attended Grollier Hall... he tried his best to help victims of crime, especially sexual abuse because he had been there... like many of us he struggled with relationships but giving up was never an option. He was my inspiration for putting the plug in the jug. He enjoyed a good story and even a bigger laugh... Harold Cook was my friend!

From Raymond Yakeleya:

Harold was a short man, but a giant amongst us as he accomplished things we could not imagine in his lifetime. He was a Grollier Hall sexual abuse survivor and spoke loud and clear on the tragic conditions which many family and friends found themselves after this was disclosed with the Roman Catholic Church who offered no help for survivors and families caught in this situation of suicide and death... a very hard time for us all. Harold commented on this to me as we know now the RC Church was always interested in our money... That is the hard truth to deal with but we will get through it as we have always done so. Harold was a great athlete, a hockey player and cross-country skier... he played hockey at Grollier Hall, went on to University of Alaska and then Division II in Sweden where he learned to speak Swedish, married and had two daughters. He was also a Member of the TEST team and an Olympian who competed for Canada at 1972 Olympics in Sapporo, Japan in 1972. Quite an accomplishment!!! He told me funny and humorous stories of his journey, always with humour! His greatest accomplishment was sobriety after struggling with alcoholism and showed that it can be beaten... if you put your mind to it. He taught me that everything is possible and never gave up advocating for Grollier Hall sex abuse survivors and their families, and spoke often about support for them in their healing journey.

We are together to wish Harold a Time of Peace and Joy, as he enters the land of the ancestors, elders and friends knowing we will see each other again in the afterlife... I am thankful that

he can have peace and offer prayers for this. Mahsi.

From Natasha Delany:

Harold Cook was someone that many of us in the sobriety world look up to. Especially us that are Indigenous. I remember him telling me one time that I had the gift of beauty, and to not waste it. That I could use this gift to help the younger generations and to keep being a role model.

I also remember him going out of his way to support other Indigenous men in sobriety when they were going to court, no matter what he was doing he would drop everything and be there for them.

He never missed an opportunity to go to his 84 St. Meetings and spread his words and encouragement of hope. Many may not have understood him, but Corey and I had deep respect for him, as I know so many respected him as well. I'll never forget his smile, the best smile I've ever known. Please keep Harold in your prayers as he journeys home.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Range Lake.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to recognize former Premier for the Northwest Territories, and my neighbour, Joe Handley and his lovely wife Theresa Handley. Thank you for being here today.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to recognize my constituency assistant Sheila Nasogaluak who is joining us here in Yellowknife for the week. And I know we all say it, but she is the best.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize the ex-Premier Mr. Joe Handley. And also, first time to this House here, two students there from the Colville Lake school Mason Kochon and Riley Kochon. Welcome to the House there, young fellas.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome and recognize former Premier Joe Handley and his beautiful wife Theresa. And also, I would like to recognize my constituent assistant from Fort Providence Ms. Phoebe Parent. Welcome. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize Joe Handley and Theresa, his wife. Thank you for being here. And I just remembered in the early days when I was a chief, Joe was my MLA. So it was great to see you, great time to work together. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I don't see her in the House, I believe I have constituent Ariella Fox from Yellowknife Centre, and I'd like to acknowledge her officially on the record. As well as I'd like to take a brief moment, as you did, Mr. Speaker, acknowledge the Handley family. Mrs. Theresa playing hearts with her at Avens and, of course, I served with Premier Joe Handley for some good years at the House, and we did some wonderful things. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I must recognize former Premier Handley. I appreciate him being here, and I must say I have a new-found respect for the work that he has done as Premier as well as all others who have done that work. So thank you. And I also want to recognize him as the chair of the board of governors of Aurora College and thank him for that work as well. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 10-20(1):
JOE HANDLEY, RECIPIENT OF SYMONS
MEDAL

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge former Northwest Territories Premier Joe Handley who was named one of this year's Symons Medal recipients. The Symons Medal is awarded to outstanding individuals who have made an

exceptional contribution to Canadian life, and former Premier Handley has no doubt earned this honour for his decades of dedication to northern society.

Mr. Handley has had an impressive career as an educator and public servant who has worked as deputy minister for numerous departments, including the housing corporation, renewable resources, and economic development. Since his previous election to the Legislative Assembly for Weledeh, he was named finance Minister and ultimately became our 10th Premier in 2003.

I want to offer my sincere congratulations for his achievement of this historic award and wish him all the best as he continues to contribute his best efforts towards positive change and progress for our communities. We have gained much thanks from his ongoing leadership, and I am privileged to have him as a constituent of Range Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 322-20(1):
HOUSING

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Housing NWT. First, can the Minister confirm what is the current number of people on the NWT public housing waiting list? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current number of people on the housing waitlist is 897 applications across the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So next, can the Minister confirm whether it is expected that all of those 897 families can be housed through federal funding to Indigenous governments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I don't have that information. Based on what I know to date, Indigenous governments are working on market home plans, other type of market rentals for professionals in the community. The 897 on the waiting list are looking for affordable public housing units so, unfortunately, they may not meet the criteria for market home plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you. And thanks to the Minister for that. Can the Minister confirm that

a major barrier to increasing our public housing stock, at least up to this point, has been resistance to the idea of increasing the transfer of resources for O and M from the GNWT to Housing NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories, through our finance department, provides us about \$80 million a year for Housing NWT operations. We do get funding from CMHC and from CIRNAC to operate and maintain the homes across the North. That's an additional \$20 million. So that's the sum of our public housing operating funds throughout the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And finally, does the Minister believe that it is both a federal responsibility and the GNWT's responsibility to fund public housing through capital and O and M resources, or is it only a federal responsibility? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a shared responsibility. It's important that this government and the federal government realize that we need to invest in public housing in the North. I pressed this with Cabinet and my FMB colleagues. This is important. It's a priority of this government, of the 20th Assembly. The work we do and the message we brought to the Council of Leaders in Ottawa was a shared responsibility, working with Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories, making sure that the message set across from both the federal government and Indigenous governments is these are public housing units in our communities that our families and people in the communities live in and need on a day-to-day basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 323-20(1):
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY AND INUVIK-
TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY CONDITIONS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure regarding the condition this year, as I mentioned in my statement, of the Dempster Highway and the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. Can the Minister provide some context on why this year there were delays and what had happened to cause the conditions on the highway this year? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there were some delays and some particular challenges this year owing to the nature of the spring melt and just an unusual amount of snow that came in last year resulting in an unusual spring as that was melting. So that certainly posed challenges to the department and to our contractors. We also had two different contracts up in that region that were both out for renewal this year, and so that had to go through the usual public procurement processes. There was some delays therein. Every time, though, Mr. Speaker, we were reaching out to existing contractors who were continuing to work, the contracts were getting extended and, really, a big shout-out goes out to them for always working through those projects and those needs. And I appreciate I have heard a lot from the region and every time I would, would go back and was always quickly able to be assured that work was happening and was able to be assured when it was going to happen. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you Minister Wawzonek. And, yes, we did have a huge amount of snow this year in our region. So can the Minister kind of provide an update on the current status of those contracts now that were, as she had mentioned, had expired and where they're sitting today? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to say that all of our O and M contracts for the region are -- for the Dempster region are now in place, they're being operationalized. The ITH O and M contract is still being finalized. We spent a lot of effort on this one this summer and have certainly been approaching it, I think, from a view of some relationship building with contractors in the region. I do expect to have an update on that this week, and I'm looking forward to it being in place before the freeze up. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks again, that is good to hear that the contracts will be let. So I guess, finally, Mr. Speaker, going forward, has the Minister tasked the department with coming up with kind of a long-term plan to ensure that years like this year is not something that we'd expect going forward next year and in future years, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is regular reviews and regular eyes on both highways throughout the entire year. What I've asked for

though, and very happy to commit to the Member that this information will flow to the Members from the region as well, is that we have outlined in advance what the regular maintenance process is, what are the regular times when there's someone that does go out and inspect, and what is the regular maintenance that's going to happen. So MLAs and Members and regional residents know themselves in advance what they can expect. Obviously, when there's extreme weather events, which there seem to be regularly, we will then also have to go out and do more. But at least folks will know in advance exactly what to expect, what's happening, and then there's hopefully less surprises and more eyes on the ground, frankly, to monitor and see how our efforts are going. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from YK Centre.

QUESTION 324-20(1):
FISCAL POLICY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on my acknowledgements, I just want to correct the record. It's not hearts, we were playing bridge at the seniors -- I don't know why I thought that earlier.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance, and it's with respect to my Member's statement earlier today. And what's causing me concern is this entitlement to write the federal minister exclusively on their own decision including Cabinet's without it informing Members that they're asking for more money. So my question for the Minister of Finance is, is what is the reasonable threshold on taking on new generational debt that will warrant a conversation with Members prior to writing that letter? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about two years ago we began a very extensive process of having the fiscal responsibility policy reviewed. That process was undertaken with the Members of the House during the 19th Assembly, and part of what we did at that time was to review and to include an expressed threshold in our own policy after which point we would then be obligated to go to Ottawa. By doing that, it put an obligation on us. It was an obligation that all parties in this House, and anyone really within government would know, that once we hit the threshold of being within \$120 million of the borrowing limit, the Minister of Finance would then be obligated to write to Ottawa to seek a

borrowing limit increase. We do keep this House informed through various presentations, both to Members confidentially, to caucus, so that when we are approaching that threshold, we are now triggered to go to Ottawa to write. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unilateral decision to ask for how much, that's the problem here. We have no idea what generational debt this Minister is now taking on and saddling this Assembly. So this is well beyond an operational decision, Mr. Speaker. How much debt has the Minister requested from the Minister of Finance of Canada? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker. At this point in time, we've simply put Ottawa on notice that we're going to need to have a conversation with them, that there's a lot more information that will have to go into that, a lot more planning, including, quite frankly, happy to have that conversation with Members of this House. It's not a unilateral decision. We are triggered by the fiscal responsibility policy. We've undertaken that effort to begin that conversation, but the process is not one that happens overnight. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, my questions aren't intended to be a trial by ordeal. My questions are intended to be like be honest. How much are you asking for? So you sent a letter requesting we don't know how much we need, we don't know how much we want, but we want more? Please, we must be able to narrow it down a little bit because Northerners are the ones who are going to be saddled with this debt. Hence, Mr. Speaker, what range of debt has the finance Minister requested that Northerners will now carry without a MLA discussion? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say it again. At this point, the conversation's only just begun. So we've put Ottawa on notice that we're going to be coming to them in order to make this request, that there's more information coming. Our offices here in the Department of Finance and Fiscal Policy are looking at what kind of options we are going to be looking at, what kinds of needs we might have, what is on the capital plan for the next several years, what is in in the operational plan for the next several years. Mr. Speaker, if the Member doesn't believe me when I answered that the second time and doesn't believe me when I'm answering it now, I'm happy to share the letter with him.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, please and thank you, address it to the chair.

Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. That was a hint of Mr. Whitford style of managing the House, Mr. Speaker. Good for you. Mr. Speaker, what if Ottawa says no; what is plan B? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have certainly made efforts with fiscal responsibility here to try to make changes within our main estimates. Obviously, the main estimates come to the floor of this House, and we see how the changes to the main estimates go in the last government, and we were -- or when we last -- Assembly -- or last session, we were certainly asked to roll back some of the changes that we were proposing at that time. But it's a conversation for this House generally when the main estimates come forward, what else we can do to adjust them if that's the situation we find ourselves in. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 325-20(1):
PROJECT COST OVERRUNS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get to the bottom of these cost overruns that I brought up in my Member's statement. Can the Minister of Infrastructure speak to what appears to be a systemic problem with how we're budgeting projects? Let's start there. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was a number of challenges that arose in 2019 or post 2019 where budgets and projects that were in the past Assembly -- actually two Assemblies ago now, then run up against COVID. There was a number of delays and as really I think everyone out there, whether it's government procurement or private procurement, saw increases into the huge -- in the huge numbers in terms of what kinds of impacts fuel had, inflation had, interest rates had, labour market challenges had, and the government is no stranger to that. So what we saw across the private sphere certainly impacted us as well and the projects that we had, again, 18th Assembly moved forward under delay and wound up with significant overages. So that has been a systemic problem but it's a systemic problem that didn't just affect our government. It's affected governments everywhere in Canada. It's affected private

residents. It's affected private businesses. And we're certainly no stranger to it.

What we've done, Mr. Speaker, to support some change, we've already introduced an increase in planning and an increased focus in planning. We've brought back ADMs, we brought back peer review groups to actually make sure that when we go forward with a budget now that we know that that budget's more accurate. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure, not Minister of Finance. Sorry about that. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the two portfolios are closely intertwined so I understand the confusion there. Because when Infrastructure can't manage its projects or can't predict these projects, it impacts the finance side. Our entire operational surplus wiped out because of cost overruns largely driven by capital costs, especially around NTPC, which is this Minister's -- within this Minister's remit as well. So why does NTPC continue to fail to bring its costs under control, continue to post these large cost overruns that are driving us into short-term debt? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, colleagues. That kind of infrastructure/power corp, can you rephrase the question to be Infrastructure.

MR. TESTART: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Infrastructure perhaps can speak to -- let's -- or sorry, you've given me a pickle. But structural -- so the structural debt of the power corporation, I suppose, whichever Minister wants to answer that question, I'll leave it in your hands.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, colleagues, I should have said this at the very beginning of my oral questions. We need to focus on the Minister and the set of questions. We can't be moving from department to departments. Even though the Minister is Finance and Infrastructure and the power corp, we need to focus on the set of questions which was Infrastructure. I'm going to allow the Minister to answer this, but this will be the last time I will allow it. Thank you. Minister of power corp.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Slash Finance. It is a pickle, Mr. Speaker, thank you. So first of all, Mr. Speaker, the challenges that are being faced in the Northwest Territories Power Corporation that are certainly impacting the Department of Finance are not exclusively related to cost overages relating to different projects. There's a significant amount of impact from low water which is a situation entirely outside of my control or really that of anyone

else in this House. We have been in a situation where the Snare plant has been burning a significant amount of diesel and in a situation where during -- because of the overhaul, the amount of diesel being burned down in the south is being burned at a rate that is much higher with the cost volatility of diesel since COVID. So, again, there's -- fully, I don't have the numbers in front of me right now but it's a significant amount that is entirely related to that effect right there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I apologize for the confusion. Mr. Speaker, how are we going to -- like, what is the Minister's solution to at least forecast these costs better so we're not constantly blowing up our operational surpluses and going to Ottawa to increase the credit card? How can we put a plan in place or a system in place that allows us to control these better? Because whatever's been done to date isn't working. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question. NTPC is very conscious of the fact that they play such a critical role in the Northwest Territories. There's a lot happening on this front. Right now they are working on a continuous improvement initiative which is meant to help manage their project management -- or to improve rather the project management. So, and coming from that one of the things is to look at the Inuvik project and do a bit of a lessons learned, do a bit of a post review of what went wrong and what could be done better. A lot of things went right. It is now a project that's providing significant energy to the Inuvik community and a lot of what went wrong wasn't necessarily strictly within their control again. All of which is to say, though, there's a lot of opportunity to learn from that project. That process is underway. It will feed into the continuous improvement initiative.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, there is also a desire there to do a better job of trying to grow the industrial base load. The sales have been simply flat for too long for NTPC; in fact, long before my time in this House at all. We need to change that if we're going to make a real movement in terms of having growth in the revenue, and that is also some work that's underway. This last year was the first year that the power corp attended one of the roundup out in Vancouver. It was an opportunity to try to improve their balance sheet. So lots happening on that space. And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is it time for -- as we're on the power corp, is it time for the board to be -- private board to be -- or public board to be reinstated without deputy ministers to steer the power corporation towards sustainability and towards running the company like a business rather than a department? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, again, appreciate that feedback as well. That work in fact is underway. I'd like to -- very happy to commit to get an update to this House, to the public, as to where we're at on that. The expectation I have is that there will be perhaps two deputy ministers who remain given that this is Crown corporation that does rely significantly on public dollars to help stabilize our power rates but otherwise looking to get professionals into that space who understand the energy space, who understand the complexities of the energy space, and who are in a position to run this power corp hopefully even better than it's being run now. So, again, that work's underway, and I'm happy to get a more detailed timeline over to Members. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of power corp. Oral questions. Member from Sahtu.

QUESTION 326-20(1):
HIGH FUEL COST IN NORMAN WELLS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement to the Minister of MACA, my first question is will the Minister of MACA accept this invitation to travel to Norman Wells and meet with the mayor Pope and town council to discuss and develop a joint federal town of Norman Wells strategy for lobbying for the funds needed to eliminate our high fuel crisis? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although my department really has nothing to do with the cost of fuel, I'm more than willing to talk -- or work with the Member to arrange a visit to the community if that's so wished -- what he liked to do, and we could figure something out. We could have further discussion on what exactly needs to be done and what we'd like to do. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank to the Minister for that response. To help kind of clarify, I want to initiate a discussion between his department and the local government to develop an application that could be sent to the appropriate federal

departments to offset the \$6.6 million that's costing our government, or the citizens in this case, for unit price fuel. So will the Minister provide the briefing as mentioned last week in preparation for the measures taken to have our meeting in Norman Wells? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Member would like to arrange a meeting, we could sit down and discuss this and then at that point maybe we could find out exactly what department needs to be addressed with the concern. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply. I'll phone LA Travel and make arrangements.

Our festive season is coming. We've got 65 days there before the big day of Christmas coming. Our festive season starts prior to that, and we need to lessen the burden and concern and stress that this financial cost is being placed on our family homes. So it's a very privilege for Ministers to come to small communities. In this particular case, what better designate on behalf of this government to have that meeting in Norman Wells with the community leader? So I look forward to --

MR. SPEAKER: -- Member, a question, please.

MR. McNEELY: The question is what day the Minister wants to travel. Thursday?

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to check my schedule and get back to him.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Slave Lake -- Great Slave.

QUESTION 327-20(1):
MISGENDERING

MS. REID: I've moved provinces? Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister please explain why the couple's self-advocacy to change the designation on their file from M to F was not successful? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to acknowledge the medical misgendering of this resident's medical file, and I would like to extend my sincere apology. I know my

colleague has raised that they were frustrated, they were hurt, the hardship that it put on them having to deal with this for so many years. The details of why and how this didn't get done on a -- you know, when they tried to deal with it in person, I don't have those details. But what I can say is that we will make sure that this doesn't happen to any Northwest Territories' resident again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I do appreciate that she was able to rectify this issue in a very quick way, and I'm glad to hear that she's looking at it going forward.

Mr. Speaker, what current training does NTHSSA provide to both medical and administrative staff on 2SLGBTQIAPA+ identities and expression? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, diversity and inclusion training is available to all health and social services system staff, including specific workshops on the diversity, inclusion in the workplace training, 2SLGBTQIAPA+ 101 inclusive workplace awareness training, mitigating unconscious bias training. They also have PDI that they can use for other training. There is other self-learning training if health and social services staff wish to take on, but these are the training that we do have through diversity inclusion. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's very well and good; I'm a little bit disappointed it's only voluntary for situations such as this. So can the Minister commit to further education for staff on the presentation and identification of genders specifically in administrative health services? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, I am committed to ensuring that health and social services space are safe, equitable, for all residents accessing the services and that everyone should be able to feel safe when they're coming into any one of our health services throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 328-20(1):
SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST
POSITIONS

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how many speech

and language pathology services positions currently service preschool and school aged children in the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment -- or is it health? Oh, health?

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, sorry. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have the actual numbers of how many speech-language pathologists that we have. But what I do know is that many of those positions that we do have across the Northwest Territories are vacant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, well, that's what I was going to say is how many of those SLP positions are currently vacant and how many are filled? That was the next question, but if she can still answer.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can commit to getting that information back to the Member. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one school in Tlicho region says 80 percent of its students need speech and language pathology services. So with that in mind, I want to ask the Minister how many children in Tlicho region are on the waitlist for speech-language pathology as compared to the whole of the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am unaware of how many children are on the waitlist in the Tlicho region. But what I can do is I can commit to getting those numbers. I also would like to highlight that, you know, the waitlist, yes -- however there is a waitlist, our speech and language pathologists that we do have are seeing -- and what they're doing is they're triaging so they're seeing youth under 5 and then youth between 16 -- 6 and 17 who have severe needs, so safety issues -- so speech-language is not just for speech but it's also for swallowing, so if there -- we're utilizing the staff that we do have for those severe issues so that -- and right now, so that means a lot of the stuff that's needed by them are the consultation piece so that they -- what speech-language and department does is they work with the schools, they do the consult and then they make a plan for that child, and that's what that -- you know, and that's the issue that

we're having with the low numbers of speech-language pathologists in our system. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I want to ask the Minister what is the current wait time in the NWT for speech-language services and, specifically, for children in school and why they are still -- why they are vacant, why there are so many vacant positions in the NWT? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I can commit to getting the wait time for the children back to the Member and to all the Members. I mean, we have -- we do track a lot of these. And the -- so what -- but within this, what I would like to say is that we have these positions. We are unable to -- you know, we advertise these positions. If people don't apply on them -- they're unionized positions. We aren't able to contract out the service. That is -- you know, so there's no means to fill these positions other than trying to get -- if we can get terms or, you know -- but we can't even -- we're not even able to. What we're advertising is the positions. I know that in the school authority, some of the school authorities, they've been able to use third party funding in some of the school authorities to do contracts with speech-language pathologists. But they're not bound by the rules that we have to follow with our unionized employees. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 329-20(1):
CAPITAL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT
PROCESS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance. In developing the capital plan, what criteria are used by departments to review, rank, and prioritize projects? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to do justice to the process that is undertaken. There is a risk-based analysis that's done. It's done -- it comes up through -- from frontline department staff through to each individual department. There is a peer review process that then goes on where the ranking is reviewed, it goes to an

ADM committee where it's again reviewed, and only at that point projects that make it through that process with sufficiently high ranking go on to the deputy ministers and then ultimately on to the financial management board to determine which project might proceed in any particular year or not. There is a fairly significant -- I don't have the matrix in front of me but one of the top considerations, of course, is health and safety of the population and then other items of ranking down below.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that none of the projects that come forward are anything less than the top ranking of ensuring health and safety for the people and the residents of the Northwest Territories. There's always a lot more that are on that list than what we often have the ability to do. But, again, I'm more than happy to ensure that that information perhaps is -- if it would be of assistance, we can table it here so that it's more easily and readily available for members of the public who may want to understand that risk process. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that commitment from the Minister.

So Mr. Speaker, can the Minister describe the process that Cabinet goes through to assess the implications of the Assembly's priorities have for our capital budgeting and how we might need to shift resources to achieve them? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the priorities of the Assembly are priorities of the Ministers that stand here just as much as of MLAs. When matters come through our individual departments, that is I know certainly reflected in our mandate letter. I can speak for myself, Mr. Speaker, that it's reflected in the mandate letter that I have for my departments, and mandate letters very much govern what comes forth in departments as they're trying to ensure that they achieve what's in these mandate letters which are themselves a product that comes from other priorities and then, of course, decision items go whether to the Cabinet packages or FMB packages when it's approvals of financial items and thereto within the financial management board's review processes that those templates are available online for review for any member of the public. And it does include in there the kinds of different considerations, including alignment with the mandate and an analysis of political factors including, again, alignment with the mandate. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister feel that that process is sufficiently effective at taking a

strategic, high level approach to priority implementation in terms of determining what the best course of action is, you know, for a given -- I guess what I mean by the question is, you know, are we taking a strategic process or are we simply having each department kind of look at the priorities and what that department can do as opposed to kind of thinking holistically what's the best way to attack the problem regardless of what departments we have. So just thinking more strategically in general about what we could do, not just what we can do with the current structure that we've got. If that question makes sense to the Minister, Mr. Speaker, do they feel that process is sufficient, or does the Minister agree with me that we could be doing more to strategically plan out our priorities? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we can always do better, we can always do more. So certainly happy to continue the conversation around how to continue to engage our process to be more strategic. I actually did find, Mr. Speaker -- it's the very back page of our capital planning document that's in -- those of us sitting in this House have it here. It's the very back page has the capital planning process in detail. Members of the public will see it in the tabled document. You know, and, again, the infrastructure acquisition plan and the process of GNWT dollars being assigned really does come down to one of being around critical risk areas. When we get into strategic conversations that very much involves the federal government as being a potential source of funding for major projects which then, you know, could actually be where we advance some of those bigger wish list items that we may have. How that project -- or how that process develops might be questions for the Premier's office with respect to federal engagement. The big question, Mr. Speaker, and I can feel your glare that I want to wrap up here, but it's a big question, lots to be said. Always can do better. You know, and, again, I'll probably just leave it there and expect the conversation to continue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Minister pointing out appendix B. Certainly that is the question -- the answer to the question I was looking for in question one. And I would just gently point out that -- or perhaps pointedly point out consideration of the priorities is not considered in that process.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to drafting a proposal for a new process for capital budget

development which helps to better align it with the priorities of the Assembly? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy to do that in part because although this is a summarized process, the priorities of the government are, as I said earlier, always part of every decision paper that comes before Cabinet or the financial management board, and they govern the work of every Minister through a mandate letter. So in ensuring that we're reflecting that both to the public as well as in our summary documents, it's critical. And if that's not coming through in terms of understanding where those opportunities are for the priorities to be reflected, then we absolutely should find a way to ensure that that's more clear. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 330-20(1):
ILLICIT DRUG TRADE

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Justice Minister. In recent years since marijuana has become legal, the inclusion of hard drugs into our smaller communities has increased dramatically. Every time a known drug dealer is apprehended, they are set free with a promise to appear never to be seen again, and another person is sent to finish the transaction. When is this government going to start protecting the residents of the Northwest Territories by imposing stricter sentences on drug-related crimes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If every drug dealer who was arrested was never to be seen again, we'd be in a much better position I think. But the fact is that they often stick around. So just -- you know, there's three branches of government, the executive, legislative, and the courts. And so in the same way that I can't tell you, Mr. Speaker, what to do or any of the MLAs what to do, I can't tell the courts what to do. To add more complexity, the Criminal Code is actually a federal statute. So that's the federal government who makes that determination. So what we're dealing with here is a situation where the courts, which are independent from the executive, are interpreting the Criminal Code, which is a federal statute, and that's how they make their determinations about bail. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I just met with all of the Ministers of Justice and Public Safety last week, and I

met with all of the Premiers earlier this year, and bail reform is a topic at both of those tables. There is a big push nationally, and I'm part of that, to take steps to ensure that what the Member is talking about doesn't happen. If there are people who are negatively impacting a community, if there are drug dealers that are, you know, actively working to get people addicted, are kidnapping people, torturing people, getting them into human trafficking, that we are sentencing them appropriately starting right when the application for bail is made. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm on the same page as the Member. This has been one of the focuses of my time as the Minister of Justice and will continue to be a focus. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Local authorities have always requested the assistance of community members, and the residents are much too eager to lend their assistance and regain their community and feel safe within their own homes. When and how will this government start to join in the fight against alcohol and drugs to ensure the safety of our future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we are in the fight. We've been in the fight. One of the things that I do in relation to the RCMP is I provide the policing priorities of our government. So the RCMP, again, they are independent. Their operations are dictated by them and by the Department of Public Safety federally, but I provide the policing priorities. The number one policing priority that I provided -- and there's only four. Number one is to disrupt the supply of illicit drugs and alcohol in the Northwest Territories. So we are working on this. I have committed to introduce additional pieces of legislation that is intended to help the communities and the RCMP address these impacts. And, again, I'm working nationally advocating for bail reform and an examination of the laws around search and seizure to ensure that we are giving the law enforcement the tools they need to be able to investigate and arrest and prosecute and put away drug dealers and those who are harming the community. One of the things we need is for people to testify. And I know it's tough in small communities. People's families are threatened. But ultimately, that's one of the biggest issues we have is that it's hard to get people to testify against drug dealers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final: Public engagement is key to finding solutions. Will this government look at reaching and conducting public consultation to find solutions to this crisis that we are facing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Department of Justice has gone out to communities to consult on issues. For my policing priorities, I actually write to leadership across the territory and ask what I should include in those policing priorities. Ultimately I'll say the solution to this problem is a public health solution. As long as there's a demand for drugs, there's going to be drugs. There's no two ways about it. It's been borne out around the world and over the ages. So what we need is for -- what we need is healthy communities. That's really the ultimate solution. And so in my role as the Minister of Justice, we are looking at how we can better integrate health and the law enforcement to try and direct people where they need to go. We're looking at integrating services so that those people who need assistance have an easier time getting assistance and we have a -- we're more effective at delivering assistance. I'm not going to speak to the health file. I know my Minister of health is capable of that. But we are taking a whole-of-government approach to addressing this issue. I recognize the seriousness of the drug issue in the Northwest Territories. We've added RCMP officers every year since I've been Minister. We've just approved a new crime reduction unit that is being staffed right now and I hope to see going operational soon. We have the new emergency response team, Mr. Speaker. A lot of work is happening in this area. Is it going to be enough? If we all work together - the government, the communities, and residents, then I think it will be but it's going to take a lot of effort. And we're putting that effort in and hopefully we're going to see the results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 331-20(1):
HOUSING

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 19th and 20th Assembly, I've been advocating for housing in -- affordable housing and housing repairs, and in my riding we have got over 350 units and mostly HAP units. The cycle of those units are reaching 44 years now out of their 50-year life cycle.

Mr. Speaker, I've been working with the Minister of Finance and housing Minister. I just want to ask the Minister of housing if she could give me an update on where things are at on my letter that I put forward to her office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform the MLA that Housing NWT has a contribution agreement for the Akaitcho territory government to complete the home inspection units as requested. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this hard work in the last 19th and 20th Assembly to get this project off the ground, I just want to thank the Minister on that which is really appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, now that we are going to get this money to do the homeownership inspections, I would like to continue to work with the Minister so that we are able to put this proposal forward to CMHC. So I want to know if we can continue to build that relationship with our Indigenous partners. Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intention of this work is to provide data and build a business case for the Akaitcho territory to look for federal funding to increase the supply of housing in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. And I'm glad that we've been able to put this together and work together, and as this plan goes forward, I'm hoping that we could get our cousin over there in ECE, Minister, to help us out on some training components of that too. So I look forward to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to end it there and I just want to say thank you to the finance Minister, the Premier, and the Minister of housing for helping me on this project. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, I would like to remind you this is oral questions, to ask questions, not Members' statements, so please focus on that. Thank you.

Oral questions. Member from Deh Cho.

QUESTION 332-20(1):
SENIOR CARE SERVICES

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of health. What health care services are currently available to seniors in their home in the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, home care provides -- in all of our communities, we have home support

workers and they provide bathing and making meals, nursing services for wound care and health checks, help with organization, and taking medication. In some communities, they provide palliative care for those who are dying and want to be close to home and family members. They loan out equipment, such as bathroom equipment and walkers. They do provide respite care to help out in the home so caregivers can get a break. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. And thank you to the Minister for that. What is the GNWT doing to ensure elders can age safely and independently in their homes? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all of our home -- all of our communities have home support workers and in the larger centres, we have home care nurses. In the smaller centres -- smaller communities that have nurses, they do do the -- have a task as part of one of their duties is to do the home care assessments for seniors at home. And like I mentioned in all of the other, they're the ones that do the assessments as to what that elder needs in their home and then they assign those duties to the person -- or the home care worker in that community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Will the department or GNWT establish a policy to allow for in-home care during emergencies? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this has come up many times in the House, and NTHSSA's policy was put in place to protect the health and safety of all staff. Under the Northwest Territories Safety Act, the employer is required to take all responsible measures to ensure the health and safety of their employees. And nurses in the health centre may do home care and home care assessments during the day that are scheduled, but they are not first responders, Mr. Speaker. They're not the ones that run out to the emergencies. They are trained to do services within their health centre with the tools that they have. So unfortunately what we see in the smaller communities, and my colleague and I from MACA who is responsible for first responders, we have had our first initial discussion on what -- you know, what can we do and what can we do to work together to look at some options for communities that don't have services like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that, that information from the Minister. I think that we can look at setting a time for meetings. We can have a discussion about how we can make that work for our communities. So I'm asking the Minister if she could commit to setting up a meeting so we can have a discussion to make that thing happen for our community. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I would be glad -- and I know the Member, you know, has previously invited me to visit her communities that she is the MLA for and those discussions that we can have during that time. But just to be clear, the discussion is at a high level right now. Like, MACA does have money for first responders. I can't speak to the details of that. I have enough under my own portfolio, but I know health and social services does not -- like, the nurses in the health centre are not first responders. So we're trying to work together to try to see what can we do together to try and -- so MACA and health and social services can work together to try and come up with some solutions or some options. But I'm willing to sit down with -- you know, with the Member and discuss what, you know, and within her communities. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 333-20(1):
FISCAL POLICY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to come back to the questions around the official breach of the fiscal responsibility policy, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to start my first question off surrounding about -- sorry, encapsulating the question about when it was realized. So someone will realize, unofficially, there was a breach of the fiscal responsibility and then they'll confirm it through some analysis. So when were both of those areas identified? So in other words, when did they unofficially recognize that they had gone over and breached section 6(5)(c), and when did they officially confirm that it was in breach of the policy? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance does continuous monitoring of the fiscal health of the Government of the Northwest Territories and we do periodic updates to myself, to Cabinet, and to all Members of the House. As part of our capital

budget and part of the changes we've made previously, one of those was to do a fiscal update here. And it was in preparations for that that we have identified that, indeed, we would be in a position that we would have to go to Ottawa because we'd be within that \$120 million target. That is what led to the letter being sent. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Minister getting towards the answer which was specifically when, but maybe I didn't use the words specifically and hence that was the opening she used.

Mr. Speaker, once the breach is noted, what does accountability look like or should we expect from a Minister who, as she says, they continuously monitor the situation? So in other words, her fingers must be constantly on the pulse of what the debt looks like. So what type of public accountability should the legislature expect that she's now going to Ottawa over this breach of policy? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this House is responsible for the budget of the Government of the Northwest Territories. If there is -- I mean, this is a bit of a hypothetical, what kind of accountability there is. We have made a number of changes in my time in this role, both in this government and in the last, to improve the availability of information, to improve the transparency of the information, to provide increases in terms of the availability of the fiscal responsibility policy, its clarity. This was the first year, the first government ever, that we actually put the fiscal strategy out in front of the public. These are all parts and parcel of the different types of accountability that are available for someone in my role and on the part of this government. So if there's some form of accountability that the Member wishes to see, I'm certainly happy to hear about it. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't agree more with the Minister that accountability can be hypothetical some days, at least from this perspective of the House.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately the question now is recognizing section -- I believe it's 6 -- sorry, yeah, section 6(5)(b) about the strategy on doing this, why isn't there a consultation line in there with Members to inform them immediately when such a breach of major policy happens? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we could certainly go back and look at the fiscal responsibility policy again and reconsider if there's some element within that that we want to look at in

terms of changes how and when we report on different elements. The last time we did the review, there were some elements that were rejected by the Members at the time through the conversations we were having. There may be a different appetite from this group of Members as to what kind of responsibility they want to see in terms of reporting or engagements. One of the things that we certainly changed there was to have more of a fiscal update in the fall session with capital planning. So, again, certainly happy to take another look at it. We can see if that's a good use -- or a good opportunity and see if there's new appetite within this Assembly to make some of the changes or different changes that perhaps the last Assembly didn't want to make. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister giving me a recap of the 19th Assembly but officially we're in the 20th Assembly, and we're almost a year into it, Mr. Speaker. So that said, I'm hearing conversations but really at the end of the day what would be helpful is the Minister commits to adding a component that Members are included earlier before decisions are made such as taking on generational debt, especially in a case like this when they're now reaching out with an unknown number that could potentially be any number and the Assembly, including the Members on this side of the House, have to take responsibility for. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister, with great urgency and zeal, add a component of communications in the fiscal responsibility policy that respects our duty of this House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of conversations that happen in this House. There's a lot of communications that happen in this House. There are briefings that are done in a consensus government confidentially to Members and through caucus processes which we then don't speak about, really to protect everybody's ability to have those conversations. So I guess if I can look back and discuss with the Members through their -- what maybe was missed, what was maybe not heard, what was maybe not seen, to ensure that firstly the processes that we do have are effective, and that the processes that we have are achieving the targets that we want them to. You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to find a way to make it better. I don't think it's appropriate on the floor without talking to everyone in this House to determine what that should be. So I'm not today going to say, yes, this is the way to do

it. I'm more than happy to ensure that we are communicating effectively. We have a lot of protocols between MLAs and Ministers about how we communicate, what that process looks like, what kinds of information, what's marked as confidential versus not. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not for mine to say, here standing today, which of those we want to upend or change. I'm more than happy to ensure that Cabinet -- or to take it up with the Department of Finance, that our financial processes are meeting that target and achieving that and if there's something more we need to do, then there's something more that we can do. I almost want to keep going, Mr. Speaker, but I feel like I've ended so I'm going to stop there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member from Yellowknife North. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 334-20(1):
HOUSING BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

MS. MORGAN: Just under the wire. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are still about housing but this time for the Minister of Finance. So this 2025-2026 capital budget proposes to allocate about \$11.5 million in capital spending to Housing NWT and that allocation is hovered around the same amount for the past four years, from around \$10 million to \$13 million. So is this allocation based on the actual urgent needs for retrofits and new builds for Housing NWT, or is it based on, like, a predetermined number that was set based on a perception of what the GNWT can afford to give HNWT for capital? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT is a Crown corporation and so their process is obviously a bit different than that of a department or a line department within the government. As such, they will go out and determine what level of need they may have. They will do their own assessments. They do their own capital planning. That number does come forward then, ultimately, but it doesn't go through exactly the same processes. They are also then out looking always for other sources of revenue, including GNWT, but also federal government, as well as their own sourced revenue that come in from having rental payments and rental amounts that come back. So, you know, that then filters into that total bucket of what they have does then influence what is in their capital budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that does lead into my next question. So acknowledging that the GNWT's capital needs assessment doesn't include Housing NWT assets, I'm assuming they do their own capital needs assessment, but Members here have not seen it. So how does the Housing NWT capital needs assessment feed into GNWT decisions about what are the priority capital needs for the territory? How do the two capital needs assessments talk to each other or feed in? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT does indeed, it's correct, take under -- undertake, rather, its own capital needs assessment process and that then -- and, frankly, starting from their own LHO. So each individual LHO is feeding up into the Housing NWT's system and then ultimately those reports are coming forward to financial management board when there's an ask put forward to support additional funding based on that work that was happening within the housing LHO to Housing NWT and then to determine what the needs might be. So it still is part of the total fiscal financial picture of the government. It's just, as with all the other Crown corporations that we have, from NTPC to the health authorities, they do ultimately come forward for funding, but it does -- it does happen through its own system. It doesn't have the same risk-based analysis that I happened to be speaking to earlier today. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So if Housing NWT has its own different way of identifying risk or prioritizing needs, are representatives from Housing NWT in conversation with, you know, deputy ministers at the meetings when -- I guess it's -- I forget the term, is it a working group? But when you're trying to decide overall for the whole government what are the priority capital needs, are we ranking housing needs in relation to other infrastructure needs? And if so, how do we compare or rank those things, or does Housing NWT just get a set amount of money and then they can decide how to rank and prioritize what they need? Does that make sense? Sort of?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Please, colleagues, remember to look at me. Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I happen to know that Housing NWT is actually putting together some information about their capital process and how they do their ranking and how they do their assessments because that then does feed into what we do at the financial management

board and the Department of Finance and our processes. So, for example, when there's an increase on utilities costs, that's a forced growth matter that comes to the financial management board from Housing NWT, and it goes through the same forced growth process as everywhere else. And in that sense, they are in fact then compared. If there was an initiative over in housing saying, you know, we need an additional navigator, that too does get assessed at the same time as the other initiatives that happen at the financial management board. But the day-to-day operations that happen over at Housing NWT are separate day-to-day. I acknowledge that that's a bit tricky so again I don't want to commit on behalf of the Minister, but I happen to know she's already tasked her department with this work. I just happen to have heard that from her directly. So they are going to put together some information that will hopefully help delineate the operational side of what's happening and how that is feeding into those processes I described. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Great. So just finally, does the Minister of Finance have some idea when we will get this briefing or explanation of how it's all going to work? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That's definitely a little outside of my wheelhouse, Mr. Speaker. And I'm honestly just going off of a briefing I happen to have about where I was present with the Minister for housing. So I don't want to commit on her behalf. I know that she feels it's a priority. Again, brought that initiative forward to really help this Assembly to understand how things happen there. So I will commit to getting a number -- or to getting a date, and we'll make sure that that comes back to the House. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Colleagues, our time is up for 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. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 197-20(1):
2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT DIRECTOR OF
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: 2023-2024

Annual Report Director of Child and Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Minister of Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

TABLED DOCUMENT 198-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND
NUNAVUT WORKERS' COMPENSATION
APPEALS TRIBUNAL 2023 ANNUAL
REPORT

HON. VINCE McKAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Northwest Territories and Nunavut's Compensation Appeals Tribunal 2023 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

TABLED DOCUMENT 199-20(1):
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER OF THE
INVESTIGATION INTO A COMPLAINT THAT
MR. RICHARD EDJERICON, MLA FOR TU
NEDHE-WIILIDEH, BREACHED THE
MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Colleagues, pursuant to section 106(4) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Report and Recommendations of Northwest Territories Integrity Commissioner of the Investigation into a Complaint that Mr. Richard Edjericon, MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, Breached the Members' Code of Conduct.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 41-20(1):
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTEGRITY
COMMISSIONER RESPECTING THE
CONDUCT OF THE MEMBER FOR TU
NEDHE-WIILIDEH

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that the recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner be accepted and that this Assembly reprimand the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh and impose a fine of \$2,500.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Notice of motions. Motions. Member from Yellowknife North.

Motions

MOTION 41-20(1):
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTEGRITY
COMMISSIONER RESPECTING THE
CONDUCT OF THE MEMBER FOR TU
NEDHE-WIILIDEH,
CARRIED

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today regarding recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner respecting the conduct of the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Member from Yellowknife North is asking for unanimous consent to bring forward this motion today for discussion. Is there any nays? Seeing no nays, Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Integrity Commissioner received a written complaint and carried out an investigation pursuant to Section 100(2) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act;

AND WHEREAS the Integrity Commissioner submitted an investigation report dated October 8, 2024, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly into the conduct of Mr. Richard Edjericon, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh;

AND WHEREAS the Integrity Commissioner has concluded that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh violated the Members' Code of Conduct;

AND WHEREAS, based on that conclusion, section 102(c) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act provides that the Integrity Commissioner may recommend to the Legislative Assembly one or more punishments in accordance with Section 106;

AND WHEREAS the Integrity Commissioner, pursuant to section 106(1)(a) of the Act, had recommended the Legislative Assembly reprimand Mr. Edjericon and require him to pay a fine in the amount of \$2,500.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that the recommendations of the Integrity

Commissioner be accepted and that this Assembly reprimand the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh and impose a fine of \$2,500.

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? Any abstentions? Motion has been carried.

--- Carried

Colleagues, I would encourage you if you have any questions in the future, if you're not too sure, to reach out to our Integrity Commissioner. I had him on speed dial in the 18th and 19th Assembly. He is very helpful in providing some clear direction to help you move forward. So thank you very much.

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. With the Member from Deh Cho in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024; Committee report 9-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. The committee also wishes to consider Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. And Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital estimates for the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Does the committee agree? Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with the first item. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I now call the committee back to order. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act 2024. I will ask the Minister of Justice to introduce the bill.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm here today to present Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024.

The Department of Justice routinely brings forward Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Acts which make changes to various statutes that require minor amendments, or where errors or inconsistencies have been identified. These must not be controversial, involve the spending of public funds, prejudicially affect rights, or create a new offence, or subject a new class of persons to an existing offence. The proposed amendments are minor, uncontroversial or non-substantive, and many consist of technical corrections. The amendments are of such a nature that the preparation and legislative consideration of individual bills to correct each statute would be time-consuming for the government and the Legislative Assembly. This concludes my opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, to the Minister. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'd like to ask the sergeant-at-arms to escort the witnesses in.

Thank you. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses, please.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. With me today, I have Mr. Brad Patzer, assistant deputy minister Attorney General with the Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, the committee that reviewed the bill for any opening comments on Bill 7.

I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 7. Yes, I'm going to go to the -- sorry, I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on June 12th, 2024, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. Bill 7 introduces amendments across a range of existing legislation in the Northwest Territories. These changes are administrative and

technical, aimed at improving the clarity, consistency, and accuracy of both English and French language versions of the legislation. The clause-by-clause review of Bill 7 was held on October 2nd, 2024, with the Minister of Justice. During its review, the committee moved four motions to amend the bill, with concurrence from the Minister on all of them.

I want to thank the committee for its work on the review of Bill 7 and, in particular, to committee staff also who brought forward thoughtful changes for committee's consideration. Individuals may have additional comments or questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 7. Any comments? Seeing none. Does committee agree that there are no further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Can we proceed to clause-by-clause review of the bill? Committee, we will defer the bill number until after consideration of the clauses. There are 33 clauses in the bill, and we will review them in groups. Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 10, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Clauses 11 to 20. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clauses 21 to 30. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Clauses 31 to 33. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now turn to the bill number and title. Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, to the bill as a whole, does the committee agree that Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024? Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to thank the Minister and your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the chamber.

Moving on. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Committee Report 9-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 9-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Act. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development for any opening comments. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development on June 12th, 2024. Throughout the committee's review, the committee received positive feedback from students on this proposed change to the student loan. The committee also heard caution from the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to make sure decisions were being made from an evidence-based perspective but ultimately informed the committee that the loan element increase would be something that the department could support. However, when the committee discussed the topic of Northwest Territories' students advancing themselves academically, the committee could not ignore the many aspects of the Northwest Territories' education system that needs to improve so that Northwest Territories' students from all regions and communities have every opportunity to fulfill their academic potential. In particular, our Indigenous students require and deserve dedicated unwavering support from the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The committee has made recommendations to ensure that support be provided by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Individuals may have additional comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 9-20(1). Is there any questions from Members? Seeing no further

comments, Member from Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the motion.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories increase education funding to Indigenous communities and Indigenous students in the Northwest Territories to improve the education outcome of Indigenous students. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Chair, I would like to speak to the Motion 1.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): The motion is in order. To the motion. MLA Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Masi, Mr. Chair. I support this motion because an increase in education funding for Indigenous students would have a huge impact on my community and Tlicho region and communities across the territory. The Standing Committee on Social Development has discussed how to improve education outcome for Indigenous students. During the 2020 review of early childhood to grade 12 education in the Northwest Territories, the Auditor General of Canada recommended the Department of Education, Culture and Employment identify what is required to provide equitable access to quality education for all students and take action and that this should include providing additional support for small schools. The Auditor General found that the department of education adjusted its funding to offset the higher cost of living for schools in remote communities and provide more administrative support to schools. This is good progress, but we must take further steps towards reconciliation by closing educational gaps for Indigenous students. We can do this by increasing the amount funding students in small communities can access. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member of Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories make a public commitment -- okay.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): My apologies to Member from Monfwi. Member from Range Lake was going to speak to the motion, then I'll come back to you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you very much to the mover of this motion

and the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development. She's very passionate about this topic, and we spent a great deal of time at the standing committee talking about how we could incorporate these concerns into our report on Bill 8 when this issue of funding Indigenous communities and Indigenous students is relevant to every community in the Northwest Territories.

The school boards in Yellowknife, for example the English school boards, they have -- run a third of their funding comes from Jordan's Principle to support Indigenous students. And that's just scratching the surface of the actual need out there. So this is an important aspect of this work going forward to strengthen and support the education system and to correct the historic deficiencies in ensuring equal access to education and that has not been possible due to a colonial system. So I support this motion. I think it's important that we continue to advocate for Indigenous students regardless of community in the Northwest Territories and indeed in Canada as well. So I'm happy to support this motion, and I hope the Minister of education will support it as well and find a way to make more resources available to Indigenous students and Indigenous communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

--- Carried

I'm going to go back to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chair. Motion 2, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories make a public commitment to guarantee continued reconciliation efforts in regards to education outcomes for Indigenous students such as the removal of semester limits and increase access to funding under the basic grant. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. I'm going to go back to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I support this motion because a public commitment to guarantee continued reconciliation efforts like the removal

of semester limits and increase access to student funding under the basic grant, it will help improve education outcome for Indigenous students. These commitments should be made in the same spirit as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action number 10 which highlights the need to:

1. Provide sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation;
2. Improve education attainment levels and success rates;
3. respect and honour treaty relationship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? One abstention. Motion carried.

---Carried

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker (audio) recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories study the disparity of educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and put forward a plan with solutions to ensure that our Indigenous students are not left behind. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. I'm going to go back to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I support this motion because it is clear that significant disparities exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students when it comes to educational outcomes at all levels in the education systems. We have seen this time and again through reports on outcomes, and we see it in our communities directly. The GNWT must study this problem properly. There's so many studies that exist regarding this already, and it's getting to be too much.

The Standing Committee on Social Development believes that students in small communities who show desire to pursue post-secondary education should have access to enrichment programs or streams to nourish their potential.

Committee also believes educational outcomes in the NWT cannot improve until access to therapeutic interventions such as speech therapy are properly funded by the government. Students must have security about financial assistance and feel assured that the progress made will continue, and the government will keep honouring treaties. These are key issues for Indigenous students.

Year after year, the gaps remain. It is time for the GNWT to find solutions to these problems so that our Indigenous -- I repeat, Indigenous -- students can also prosper and reach their full potential. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Three abstentions. Thank you, motion carried.

--- Carried

Moving on, the motion's in order. To the motion. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to Committee Report 9-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. To the motion. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 9-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Act. I

will ask the bill sponsor, the Member from Yellowknife Centre, to introduce the bill.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to introduce Bill 8 for consideration of the House. I have further comments, and I'll provide them at the time. Actually maybe I'll just provide them at this particular time and that way we'll keep the process moving a little faster.

First of all, I want to thank the committee for its hard and diligent work as well as, and particularly the chair Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, about her continued robust and relentless effort to ensure we raise Indigenous education standards for all, and I'm very, very appreciative and respectful the work.

I want to thank the Minister for acknowledging this important issue. It's -- it will help at least at minimum 20 students to change the narrative that we want to come back to bring enormous professional skills and so with her effort, this has helped -- this will help this process, and so I'm grateful for that.

I also would be remiss if I didn't note that she also brought this up in the previous Assembly, so she does deserve some credit and it should be acknowledged that this was an issue she raised, although I didn't know until later, but she deserves acknowledgement for raising this matter as well as the -- when she was a Member. I appreciate Mr. McNeely being the co-sponsor of the bill that, with his help, and working together has made a difference.

Mr. Chairman, just to wrap up but to grab it in a broader form, this definitely was a grassroots issue. I want to point out that a constituent of mine owes -- is owed the lion share of the credit which is James Thomas. He brought his family and himself, in particular brought this issue to me and saying that this would make a difference to students wanting to pursue further education. And, of course, it's hard to say no to education. And, you know, it's through his efforts and certainly passion that this was important. It certainly was on top of mind of his family that this would have a true and genuine impact on students, again pursuing further education, and this -- to put it in context, those who are pursuing things like Masters and PhDs, I mean, those are the people we want to come back and bring those specialized skills. It's hard to get them. So if we can train our own and bring them back, I mean that's -- we consider a success.

I last area I want to point out, Mr. Chairman, on this particular opportunity is 11 young people wrote in, and that's extraordinary. Even in my previous three terms, I've not seen that type of passion and interest in writing in. And you

know, it's just a reminder that as I sidestep from your second and point out when the elections officer talks about wanting to change the age of elections to get young people interested in elections, you know, sure statistically that may be theoretically true, but the fact is that young people will engage with the fullness of robust interest and enthusiasm when the matter -- the issue matters to them. So the lesson being taken by that point is is this matter -- this issue really mattered to 11 people and, as a matter of fact, it's really hard to get any feedback or consultation on any bill most of the time but to get 11 people, who are younger, is extraordinary, and that milestone shouldn't go overlooked or over -- passed over or ignored. It was extraordinary. I had nothing to do with that. As a matter of fact, the only thing I had to do with it was saying that now's your chance when I spoke to Mr. Thomas, tell your friends. And they wrote in all on their own.

Mr. Chairman, again, I just want to thank the committee for its work. The recommendations provided by the committee, I do support as well, and I did vote in favour of each of them because they are important and I do believe that education is certainly the incredible gateway to opportunity, and it will help -- help in its own way raise people's standings and ensure that over the longer haul we have healthy stronger people. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the Member -- would like to bring in witness into the chamber?

MR. HAWKINS: Agreed. Yes, I guess I'm it.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Member --

MR. HAWKINS: (audio).

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Member, please take a seat -- oh, sorry. Member, please take a seat at the witness table.

Thank you. We will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 8. I want to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, if our education outcome is improved in small communities, we would enjoy -- we would have -- our Indigenous students are going to -- that's the same -- that's what we want for our Indigenous students as well, if our education is improved in our small communities then they will have the same access and we will have a lot of our students in that field, in the doctorate, in a Master's

program, you know, undergraduate degree. But in the meantime, I know what I'm doing here so -- okay, so I -- I'm going to get back to the report, yes.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: (audio). Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on June 12th, 2024, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review. The committee received written submissions from 11 students eagerly welcoming this bill as well as a student's oral submission at the committee's public hearing held on August 20, 2024.

On October 8, 2024, the standing committee held its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the bill's sponsor, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, where the committee passed a motion that Bill 8 was ready to proceed to Committee of the Whole.

I thank the committee for their efforts in reviewing this legislation. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 8. Any Members? I don't see any. Is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments? Can we proceed to clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee agreed, okay, thank you. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Agreed. Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Clause 2, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now return to the bill number titled Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee agreed. The bill as a whole, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Does the committee agree that Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, is now ready for third reading? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree that concludes our consideration of Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act? Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Thank you, Members, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026 Department of Finance. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026. Does the Minister of finance have any opening comments?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: No, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Minister. We have agreed -- my apologies, I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Please show of hands for the record. All those in favour? For the record, show of hands. Show of hands, all those opposed, for the record. Thank you. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

--- BRIEF RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering

Committee Report 9-20(1), Bill 7, Bill 8, and Tabled Document 193-20(1), and would like to report progress with four motions carried and that Committee Report 9-20(1) is -- that Bill 7 and Bill 8 are ready for third reading. Thank you. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Do I have a seconder for the report of Committee of the Whole? Member from Kam Lake. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstentions? Unanimous vote.

---Carried

Consideration of Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Tuesday, October 22nd at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 297-20(1): Wellness and Addictions Recommendations
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions

17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

19. Second Reading of Bills

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20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024
- Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act

23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 22nd, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:38 p.m.