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**HANSARD**

**Wednesday, October 23, 2024**

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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

**This is an unedited transcript.**

**Please send corrections to Hansard Editor: [kate\\_covello@ntassembly.ca](mailto:kate_covello@ntassembly.ca)**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Unedited Hansard

**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, October 23, 2024****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, 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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson):** I'd like to thank Karen Mitchell for the opening blessing. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to rise on a point of personal explanation under section 1.8(1) of our rules. It says a Member may rise -- or sorry, raise a point of personal explanation in the Assembly at the earliest opportunity. This is my first opportunity.

The headline in the front page of today's Northern News Services, the Yellowknifer, reads as follows: YK Centre MLA wants finance Minister ousted. The headline is misleading with their word choice of "ousted". It leads the reading with the confusing impression that I want the Minister removed from Cabinet. I know this because a few people had inquired regarding the confusion it has caused. To be clear, no one has been angry but certainly confused with the impression that I wanted her removed from Cabinet, and they wanted to understand why. The article within the newspaper, without forensic review, appears on surface to be correct, but you have to decide to read it after the headline. For the record, I am only suggesting that it may be time to consider having a shuffle in Cabinet based on my concerns raised of which won't be revisited today.

Might I end on this point, Mr. Speaker, it is true that sensationalized headlines can be an opportunity to pump up and draw interest to an issue but left to stand alone it can cause confusion and unintended results which it appears to have had. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Assembly for hearing this clarification. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Ministers' statements. Minister for Housing NWT.

**Ministers' Statements****MINISTER'S STATEMENT 68-20(1):  
DAMAGE TO PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS**

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about an issue that is important to the maintenance of the public housing stock. I am speaking about the damage to public housing units and the costs to the local housing organizations and Housing NWT. I want to highlight how this damage impacts the work plan of the local housing organizations and Housing NWT.

Housing NWT and local housing organizations strive to support tenants to be successful. Part of that success relies on the tenant keeping up with their responsibilities. This includes taking care of their unit, keeping it clean, and preventing damage. If a tenant or their guest causes damage, the tenant is responsible for the repairs. Let me be clear, this does not apply to normal wear and tear. We are talking about major damage like broken windows in a public housing unit. Local housing organizations do their best to provide services as quickly as possible if a unit is compromised due to damage. However, avoidable damage that requires a contractor can be both costly and take time to repair. And if this damage occurs during the winter season, both the tenant and the Housing Organization are under pressure to find appropriate accommodation and a speedy repair. This also takes funding away from other repairs that are needed in public housing units.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act, Housing NWT is responsible for maintenance and repairs on its buildings while tenants are responsible for covering the costs of damages caused by themselves, their pets, or visitors. Tenants are also required to notify the landlord if there are any problems with the property. For example, if something breaks or if there is a health or safety problem, tenants must let the local housing organization know as soon as possible. Tenants must take this responsibility seriously. We can all agree that maintaining good quality housing stock is extremely important, especially with the housing situation across the territory. The more damage caused, the longer the wait times to repair the unit as

well as the higher cleaning and repair costs. Housing NWT aims to preserve the quality and longevity of our units, ensuring that they remain safe, comfortable, and in good condition for all tenants for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the damage that other people are causing to public housing units. We are seeing damage like broken windows and graffiti that is not being caused by the public housing tenants or their guests. When windows are broken or units are damaged, it takes time and money to fix - time and money that could be going towards completing other essential repairs inside of these homes. It also makes our communities look run down when we have boarded-up windows and homes in disrepair.

This both saddens and frustrates me, Mr. Speaker. We need to take pride in our communities and not cause unnecessary damage. We need to take personal responsibility for the state of our communities and recognize how important these homes are to our family, friends, and neighbours. This unnecessary damage directly impacts people's lives. Let us work together to keep our houses in good repair and condition and keep our communities beautiful.

In the Northwest Territories, there is always a call for more affordable housing. We have to remember that damages to units will take funds that have been allocated for other projects, such as building more affordable housing. Damage can also result in people losing their homes. Continued unnecessary damage to units can make it impossible for Housing NWT and local housing organizations to keep up with repairs. This means that eventually homes become uninhabitable and people cannot live in them.

Mr. Speaker, if tenants are causing continual damage, it can also result in evictions. Housing NWT and the local housing organizations do not take evictions lightly. Evictions are the last action in a long, tracked process seeking to address non-compliance with a tenancy agreement, including damage to a unit. This is an issue that concerns us all. No one wants to see people homeless or families compromised. We are invested in seeing all residents with a roof over their head and safety for their families. As part of our commitment to ensuring a healthier living environment, Housing NWT is committed to providing safe and healthy public housing units that are positively affecting tenants' well-being and provide a home for their family members. Together, we can create thriving communities and comfortable homes for everyone. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister for Housing NWT. Before we move on to other Ministers' statements, I'd like to recognize our former Premier Stephen Kakfwi. He was elected in 1987 and finished his job in 2003, but he's still a strong advocate for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Welcome to the House, Premier.

Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 69-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BUSINESS  
LICENCE ESERVICES

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to making programs and services more accessible to residents and do better to streamline administrative processes. Today, I am pleased to announce a new initiative that will change the way businesses in the territory obtain their business licenses.

The launch of our new eService program for business licenses is a major step in promoting a business-friendly environment that demonstrates our commitment to supporting the economic growth across the territory. This new eService program is designed to streamline the licensing process, making it more efficient, accessible, and user-friendly for business owners. By leveraging modern technology, we are reducing the administrative burden on businesses which will allow them to focus more on their operations and less on paperwork.

Mr. Speaker, this new service is specifically tailored for businesses in remote areas and small communities not governed by local business licensing bylaws. This focus ensures that even more isolated entrepreneurs have the tools they need to succeed. The eService program offers several key features that will benefit business owners, including the fact that it can be accessed 24/7 so that business owners can apply and renew their business licenses anytime/anywhere using a computer or mobile device. At the same time, the application process was simplified with clear instructions and fewer steps so that the residents can attain their business license faster. Applicants will also receive real-time updates on their application status in an effort to promote transparency and to reduce uncertainty. Finally, the system boasts strong security measures to protect sensitive information and to ensure the integrity of the licensing process.

Mr. Speaker, this eService program is a testament to our government's commitment to

innovation and efficiency. By embracing digital solutions, we are not only improving the experience for business owners but enhancing the effectiveness of our regulatory processes. I want to thank everyone who helped bring this project to life, including program staff, IT specialists, and the business owners who provided the valuable feedback. As we celebrate the launch of this eService program, I encourage all applicable business owners in the Northwest Territories to take advantage of this new tool. Whether you are starting a new venture or renewing an existing license, this program is designed to make the process smooth and more efficient.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate our government's commitment to supporting the business community and driving economic growth in the Northwest Territories. The launch of this eService program is one of many steps we are taking to achieve this goal. We will continue to seek an innovative solution and work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure the success and prosperity of all businesses in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Ministers' statements. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 70-20(1):  
ADVANCING APPRENTICESHIP, TRADES  
AND OCCUPATION CERTIFICATION

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, skilled tradespeople are needed everywhere, now more than ever. Apprentices and journeypersons are a vital part of our economy. They literally keep the wheels turning, buildings standing, water flowing, and the lights on. These careers offer good pay, advancement opportunities, mobility, and lifelong learning. Becoming a tradesperson means taking charge of your future and aligning your interests and skills with a rewarding career. Getting there requires certification, and the Government of the Northwest Territories is here to provide comprehensive support. We offer career planning, help with applications, help with preparing for trade entrance exams, financial support during technical training and educational support at every stage of an apprenticeship. In high school, students can jump into their future through the Schools North Apprenticeship Program, or SNAP. Through this program, students explore a trade, gain work experience, get paid, and earn high school credits, all while completing their high school education. It is a chance to see if a trade is the right fit and to start building a solid foundation

for their future career. This program could not be successful without the engagement of northern employers who take on SNAP students and apprentices, and we are always looking for more.

Career development officers are also there to support with study skills, access to educational materials, and help with the paperwork for technical training financial assistance. They offer personalized support to anyone interested in pursuing a trades career. They connect residents with resources for educational assessments, help with apprenticeship and technical training applications, and help understand the path to graduation.

Mr. Speaker, we have recently announced a two-year extension to the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupation Certification Strategy. This extension builds on our success in four important areas:

- Helping people receive training;
- Supporting them in finding work;
- Growing the workforce through partnerships; and,
- Making informed decisions with the right information about the job market.

Mr. Speaker, National Skilled Trade and Technology Week is held in early November each year. It is a time to raise awareness of the career opportunities in the trades and celebrate NWT apprentices and journeypersons who have successfully completed their training. Every year, awards are presented for outstanding achievements highlighting NWT's exceptional talent. This year, we are celebrating 33 new journeypersons and 20 top-mark apprentices.

---Applause

Thank you, colleagues. These individuals come from every region of the Northwest Territories and represent 15 different trades and occupations. These apprentices and their journeypersons will have a real impact on their communities. Their skills guarantee that the lights go on, roofs go over our heads, plumbing works, heating systems operate and, yes, that roads are built.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all Members of this Legislative Assembly to join me in celebrating the employers dedicated to strengthening our workforce, the apprentices working toward certification, and the journeypersons across our territory who have successfully completed their training. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 365-20(1): NORTHERN EMPLOYMENT

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the statement made by the -- do I need to worry about the clock here? Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the statement made by the Minister on trades skill development. It jives well with the statement that I was going to make today on workforce development.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of projects in the budget which claim to support workforce development simply by being implemented. It will require people to build and operate; therefore, we are building our workforce. But is this really part of a strategically-thought out plan? One of the key problems I see in our economy is that we aren't achieving education outcomes and sending students to post-secondary in sufficient numbers to produce a local workforce so many of the jobs we create go to southern contractors and employees because we can't staff them. Look at the employment numbers for the Giant Mine remediation project, for example. They're sitting at 36 percent northern employment. From 1996 to 2019, around 40 percent of employment at the diamond mines was northern. Meanwhile, our employment rate hovers around 65 to 70 percent overall and 50 percent for Indigenous persons. So there is a lot of room for northern employment growth. A fundamental question raised by comparative analysis is what role should the government be playing in the economy? Is it our role to be industry or to create an attractive investment environment and educate, house, and support a workforce who can take advantage of available jobs?

I recognize that answer isn't black and white. Of course government contracts play a significant role in the economy here but when we're facing tough questions about where to put our money, I think we need to be carefully considering not just the benefits one type of investment might produce but the opportunity costs of that investment compared to others and what outcomes government is best positioned to meaningfully change. This kind of analysis is contained in the Greenland economic report I tabled last sitting and, again, I strongly encourage us to be applying this kind of analysis to our business planning. If northern employment is an outcome we're trying to achieve, let's analyze how best to achieve it

and use that information to shift resources accordingly. We can't afford to be doing a little bit of everything and just hoping that it will all somehow come together in the end. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 366-20(1): HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE CRISES

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, later today I will read a report in the House that shares our observations and serious concerns regarding the crisis conditions that have developed in the delivery of health care and social services and the lack of affordability and availability of housing stocks across the territory. In response, we are calling for an immediate course correction and meaningful intervention by the government to address these unsustainable issues.

Mr. Speaker, committee acknowledges the capital budget is before us, but we cannot approve it without seeing real commitments for change and a shift in government resources that better reflects the concerns of the NWT residents and the priorities of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to collaborating with our partners in the Executive Council to solve these problems. Consensus government requires us all to work together and be accountable to our constituents and to the Assembly's shared priorities. Mr. Speaker, by focusing on those priorities, we believe we can create a more prosperous and resilient future for everyone. We look forward to continuing this important conversation and hope to see the necessary shifts during this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, it is not lost on committee the gravity of the position that we have taken, and we would reiterate that we are urgently seeking a course correction from government with appropriate resourcing behind it. Committee is deeply concerned about the fragility of our health care system and the apparent inability to put appropriate resources into housing. Mr. Speaker, we will speak further to this matter later today. Thank you.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 367-20(1): AURORA COLLEGE LOCATION



**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Yellowknifers are passionate about their beloved multi-use green space park, Tin Can Hill. It is a favoured destination for fat bikes, dog walks, sled rides, and local photo shoots, just to name a few activities throughout all the seasons.

As Tin Can Hill is in my riding, one of the first conversations I had after Cabinet was selected was with the Minister of ECE. I asked the Minister about plans for the site by the Aurora College transformation project to seek clarity on what the situation was, what was coming, as it was not clear to me or the public at that time. Mr. Speaker, it's still not clear to me or the public now nearly a full year later.

Part of that conversation was about how ECE had set out on a path to undertake an environmental site assessment. I was given assurances that I would hear more about the ESA in March. Seeing as how it's nearly November, you can understand my frustration and the frustration of residents. Another part of that conversation with the Minister was my highlighting the GNWT's willful lack of consultation before entering an MOU with the city of Yellowknife for the parcel of land we know as Tin Can Hill.

Yesterday I tabled a journal article by Sherry Arnstein entitled A Ladder of Citizen Participation. Since 1969, it has been referenced by policy analysts and advocates to show how far governments take steps up the ladder of citizen participation and ultimately how much influence they have over government decisions.

I'd argue that the GNWT often only reaches as far as informing our citizens which you'll note that the article considers a form of tokenism. In my experience, most people would like to feel heard on issues like this one that matter very much for their quality of life. The GNWT's own public engagement employee guide advises of the GNWT's obligation to engage as being politically advisable, in brackets, (optional), which leads me to wonder where it was considered optional for talking about the development on Tin Can Hill.

Mr. Speaker, it feels as though because the GNWT knew what kind of feedback it was going to get, it did not seek that feedback at all on Tin Can Hill. This means we haven't even stepped the foot on the ladder of citizen participation. We should take the concerns of our residents seriously. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. We should take the concerns of our residents seriously, seeking feedback on new initiatives and adequately incorporating feedback where appropriate or explaining why we can't. It's clear we haven't done a good job of this for the residents who care about Tin Can Hill, and I want to be crystal clear I don't blame GNWT communications staff at all. I'm frustrated with GNWT decision-makers. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 368-20(1): RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about getting community projects started in the Tlicho region, especially now that we're focusing on capital infrastructure that's before us. So, Mr. Speaker, there's currently no swimming pool in the Tlicho region. In the past, Behchoko and Edzo both had a seasonal swimming pool which was opened during summer months. This created summer employment and training opportunities for our young people.

Behchoko pool was dismantled due to asbestos. The pool in Edzo burned down in 2014 and was never replaced. Mr. Speaker, we know these facilities improve our communities and create healthy ways for youth to spend their time. This is true when we look at other jurisdictions. The new pool in Yellowknife is nearly completed. The city of Iqaluit aquatic Centre, which was finished in 2016, has raised a recreation fund of more than \$1 million to help low income families access the pool there. Yesterday the Government of Alberta pledged to spend \$60 million on its municipalities over the next three years. The Tlicho region has a sportsplex, but not all youth and families use the facility. I can tell you that families will use a swimming pool to spend quality time with their children. A year-round swimming pool in Whati and Behchoko would create meaningful employment, new training, and career opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know what help we can provide our communities to get projects like these underway. Tlicho citizens will visit the Ruth Inch Memorial Pool in Yellowknife for Tlicho family swimming on Saturday, November 2nd. Mr. Speaker, my constituents tell me not everyone can drive to Yellowknife to use the pool at the scheduled times, especially residents from Whati, and I am worried about

the road conditions during the upcoming winter months. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 369-20(1):  
WINTER ROAD SEASON

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Project planning for the upcoming winter road season.

Mr. Speaker, winter is upon us, and the winter roads construction and maintenance will be starting soon. Mr. Speaker, preparations are needed for the high volume of expected traffic. Mr. Speaker, the Sahtu resupply grocers, projects, the LTL truck loads will be into the hundreds. We have our window. It is short and one only.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Fort Good Hope has secured financing and land for their home manufacturing construction centre. The inland communities of Deline and Colville Lake, the annual fuel resupply is well over and beyond a hundred truck loads. The GNWT fuel supplies are in four of five communities. Mr. Speaker, in addition, the commercial industrial community of Norman Wells will include truck loads well into the hundreds. More importantly, we cannot overlook and undermine our public safety obligations.

Mr. Speaker, project logistics and planning are essential to assuring, maintaining schedules, budgets, and safety. It is critical for project assurances our next schedule House sitting is February 5, 2025. We cannot wait. Winter road construction on average starts the later part of November.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the last winter road season, the Minister of Infrastructure supported a similar engagement to expedite consultation with the stakeholders. I will have questions to the appropriate Minister later. Thank you. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 370-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE STAFFING CRISIS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I will continue talking about our staffing crisis in the health care system and specifically address a source of longstanding

frustration amongst shift workers, the fact that many are being denied the full amount of leave that they're entitled to.

Physicians, nurses, and other practitioners are given a certain amount of leave under their collective agreements except that the health authority retains the ability to deny anyone's leave application due to operational requirements or regional procedure. Our health system does require a certain number of people on shift 24/7, but we are not unique in this. Surely, other health systems have come up with formulas to ensure frontline staff can take leave. Currently, a combination of chronic understaffing and also our policies and how they're applied make it virtually mathematically impossible for all of our shift workers to take all of their leave. In some cases, someone's application for leave sits undecided with approval pending for so long that even if it does get approved at the last minute, it's impossible for someone to plan a vacation anyways. Our veteran nurses are being pressured to forego their vacation so that younger nurses can take their days off so they don't mutiny. Many are expected to be available on their days off even if they're not being paid to be officially on call. At our territorial hospital emergency room, practitioners are even being denied sick leave when they're legitimately sick because there's no one to cover. We need to retain our employees and not rely primarily on locums and agency nurses. We know that it's more cost efficient, provides higher quality health care with more cultural safety. But why would a nurse or doctor choose to work as a contracted employee for the health authority when they could have more freedom as a locum or an agency nurse? A major reason is the employee benefits, including leave. But if we don't allow them to take that leave, then what's the point? It is one reason we're seeing more and more health care practitioners quit their jobs and either leave the territory or choose to work as locums. Our embattled health care shift workers need the Minister and the health authority to first acknowledge the problem and communicate a clear plan to solve it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 371-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today my honourable friend from Yellowknife Centre will be tabling a survey authored collaboratively between us about health care experience in the Northwest Territories. This

work expands on the joint town hall that we undertook in the summer attended by over a hundred people. I invite the House and the public to read the survey and note that while 59 percent of respondents rated their quality of care as excellent, only 25 percent were satisfied with their overall health care experience. Here's what some of them had to say, quote:

- Stop saying it's a staffing issue for all health care and properly staff. You have managers who have no idea how to manage. They never listen to the staff who do the work.
- The whole health care system is falling apart. There are no appointments available and when you have one, you feel that it's a rushed appointment and you're not listened to. The doctors are burnt out. How are we spending money on all these locums and not on our employees.
- The individual health care workers are great, but, quote, for people with complex health concerns, there seems to be no connective tissue with holding the overall system together and providing health care in an informed and coordinated way.

Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't clear, our health care system is on life support. The constant churn of locums and temporary staff have completely evaporated continuity of care in the Northwest Territories. The government has structured the health care system in such a way that it competes with itself for staff. Workers are leaving permanent positions to become locums to do less work for the same pay. And who could blame them? Look at the perks. Free housing, free rental cars, no paperwork to complete, live anywhere in the country. And there's more, fly for free and get enough Aeroplan points to get as many as ten free flights a year.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT for some reason has optimized the health care to be utterly dependent on a fly-in culture that is making health care outcomes worse and staff retention next to impossible. Where there were once six-month contracts, now they are measured in weeks or days. To quote one health care worker, it's a free for all. Mr. Speaker, you cannot have a thriving health care system in a community if your nurses and doctors don't live in the community. What is happening in the NWT is not what's happening elsewhere in Canada despite what the Minister and government may say. No one will help us but ourselves to solve this problem and if the

Minister cannot get the job done, then it's time for her to step aside for someone who will. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 372-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague, Mr. Testart had said today, we're talking about health care and the survey we had discussed as well as the actions and desperate needs our citizens are suffering from. As noted by MLA Testart, we held a joint town hall, a conversation with the community, Mr. Speaker, around health care. It was desperately needed. The Minister of health was invited but declined and suggested a different date almost three months hence from the inquiry of when could you be available. Unreasonable scheduling I considered, but it is what it is. My good colleague in conversation said hey, let's offer more flexibility. We waited a week for a further response. And, Mr. Speaker, lest we forget, a nonresponse to come to a meeting is still a response.

But peculiar as that may be, Mr. Speaker -- and it is in its own way -- almost two weeks after our health care town hall discussion, she attended another Yellowknife MLA's meeting. I'm not suggesting anything bad. I'm just saying coincidence; I think not. Now, if she had attended our town hall meeting, the Minister would have seen firsthand, Mr. Speaker, the Baker Centre was filled to the brim. There was not a seat available. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd hate to call out the centre, but they were almost at fire capacity with enthusiasm, great people, respectful people, wanting to share their stories. They wanted to be heard. They had passion. They had problems. But they wanted to be part of the solution. There were stories to tell, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, deeply personal journeys that describe the trial by ordeals as they struggle to get help from anyone.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister would not have heard our professionals our terrible. No, she would not have heard that. But rather she would have heard great adjectives about these great teams. The only colourful adjectives used, Mr. Speaker, were "fantastic", "wonderful", "kind", and "caring", all perfect elements of our health care systems and the professionals that serve it so well.

It was a tough crowd, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because we had seniors who demand answers. And certainly, they do, Mr. Speaker. It

was a passionate crowd. Mr. Speaker, some of their stresses were about availability of seeing a doctor, the referrals that never seem to get referred, the referrals that get re-referred, the questions and treatment by locums who get referred to another locum and then get followed up on a locum. You know, the passion of getting to know your doctor is impossible.

Later this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I'll table a summary of our findings, and we'll have a further discussion as the week goes on, including today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 373-20(1):  
CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF JAMES BILL  
NAHANNI

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, James Bill Nahanni and his brother, George, were born to George and Dora Nahanni on December 3rd, 1945. As some folks said, they were an early Christmas present for their parents and siblings, Francis and Mabel. During the Celebration of Life, a couple of stories had us laughing, like the time he would meet with a friend and his favorite saying was One for the Money, Two to get ready, and Three to go, go, go. Or when asked where was his wallet, he would reach to his back pocket and say, It's here, nice and safe.

James loved to drum dance. He was always the first one up and ready to dance. The chief spoke about his passion to dance and every time he would see him, he would ask when the next dance was going to be.

I can tell you that James was a vibrant, hard-working and humorous person. People loved to chat with him about everything but mostly about the old days, what it was like, and how were things different. In speaking with his children, John, James and Genevieve, they told me the one thing that everyone told them about their dad was how he loved his community and over the course of the last week of his life, they witnessed a lot of visitors coming to visit him, including drummers on Wednesday evening. They talked about how he wanted to get up and dance but realizing he could not, he sat up and listened to the live drum music in his home. That night, he went to sleep with a big smile on his face and the next morning he talked about the honour of the drummers being in his home.

Colleagues, it is very difficult to do justice to him but I think his daughter Genevieve did an amazing job during his eulogy. I have attached it to my statement, and I would like it deemed read and printed in Hansard.

Unfortunately, James passed away on August 25, 2024. On Wednesday, August 28th, he was laid to rest and later the community held a supper and one last drum dance for him. I believe he was looking down on us with a big smile as the family started the dance.

The family would like to thank the community for all the support during this difficult time. The outpouring of support relieved so much stress, and they were so grateful and appreciative for the kindness, thoughts, prayers, words, and deeds.

James will be sadly missed. God bless you, James.

Celebration of Life (Genevieve Piercey).

James Nahanni was a vibrant and humorous man. He loved his community and over the course of the last week, we have witnessed the outpouring of love and respect his community had for our father.

Jim was Mabel's baby brother. She loves all her siblings very much, but Jim was the baby. Mabel was happy to help him all the time. She helped all her family with growing and learning. It has been her honor to help. Mabel has shared that she is happy that Jim is with the Lord and saviour. He is missed already but will be in our hearts forever.

A little story. When Jim was young and it was berry picking time, he was running around in the bush. Everyone left and Jim was left behind. George, his twin brother was running around yellowing. "Jim is missing!" they began to look for him, and when they went back to the first place, there was Jim, sitting next to a tree, resting.

Over the past few years, my father and I re-connected and became closer than we have been for many years. We have had many laughs and he has shared many stories with me about when I was a child and growing up. I am grateful for the time we had together and was honored to be able to be there for him to support him with his cancer diagnosis and treatment. During the last year, dad and I talked about his plans for his care, and he shared his greatest desire was to be at his home and in his community. I am honored that he entrusted this to his children. My siblings and I have been able to honor him with making his last requests happen. Jim was a blessed man to have such strong connections to his family, friends, and community. We will miss him dearly, but we are all blessed to have had him in our lives. My father always said, 'Take it easy' and 'See you later' when we ended our conversations. So, I will 'See you Later' Dad, and I will 'Take it easy' until we meet again.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### Returns to Oral Questions

#### RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 297-20(1): WELLNESS AND ADDICTIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by the Member for Yellowknife North on June 13th, 2024, regarding Wellness and Addictions Recommendations The Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness: Healing Voices, which took place on April 30, 2013. Specifically, the Member asked if the department had addressed the recommendations made in the Healing Voices Report.

The Minister's forum consisted of 12 members who traveled to 21 communities to listen to Northerners about what they felt were the best ways to stop the destructive impacts of alcohol, drugs, and other addictions, on NWT communities. The Healing Voices Report included valuable feedback from community members that was then organized into recommendations. Of the 67 recommendations made, the Government of the Northwest Territories accepted 59. As requested by the Member, I have also provided a copy of a list which provides an update on Recommendations 7, 11, 29, and 54 for which the Department of Health and Social Services has responsibility. Later today I will also table of copy of this update on recommendations 7, 11, 29, and 54. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Great Slave.

#### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Vicki Johnson. She is a constituent of mine. She is doing good work with the Tin Can Hill conservation committee, and she is here today to see the exchange with the Minister. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Hay River North.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the 8th Premier of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Stephen Kakfwi, who was in the gallery today; I'm not sure if he still

is. In addition to being Premier, he served as a Cabinet -- survived as a Cabinet Minister for 16 years. I'd also like to welcome Kyla Kakfwi-Scott, the deputy secretary in the Premier's office and her daughter Sedia. I'm happy to welcome all three generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to see people in the gallery and watch the hardworking Members.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 348-20(1): HEALTHCARE SERVICES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I had a longer Member's statement, I could probably talk for hours on this particular subject. But that said, there were a lot of concerns I did want raise and hence the question -- oral question period, sorry.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that was raised passionately about was being able to call for appointments, and the phone rings and rings and rings, finally takes a message, and it takes days for someone to reply if they reply. Some constituents have complained that no one even calls them back. Mr. Speaker, even my email to the Minister highlighting this took over five weeks to show up for a response what they're doing. So my question is is what is the Minister doing about the health care problems with respect to accessibility by calling in for appointments? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this issue has been on the books now and on the radar since -- you know, it's more -- it more happened more so when the lab changes happened that we do not have the technology within the hospital that allows for calls to be in queue and all that. And so there is work going on between -- NTHSSA is working with -- I think it's Infrastructure or TSC -- to ensure that this issue is being rectified. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, around the concerns of accessibility, when a person gets through or doesn't get

through, they finally just show up and find out they can't get appointments for weeks or months. Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister doing again about in-person now accessibility to see a doctor? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, I will, you know, take the Member -- and, you know, we've heard this in Yellowknife that this has been an issue, and we've just recently moved into the new building this summer and started the primary care clinic. There are going to be, you know, wrinkles that come out. As for appointments, you know, if there are -- I can bring this back to NTHSSA to find out further information or what's the wait times or how -- and I've had other people come and say the opposite saying that they are able to get appointments, they are able to get walk-in appointments. So I will follow up with the NTHSSA to see where we're at with waitlists or how long it is to get an appointment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly look forward to what I'm being told -- or sorry, looking forward to the Minister's response. And further to that question, the other issue is accessibility to their information, Mr. Speaker. So, of course, the Minister did say they've moved in there, but it's been five months.

The next problem of course is, as I said, accessibility of medical records. Patients aren't getting their records referred to south and they can't get the responses from their needs -- from their tests et cetera. So what can the Minister do to improve those rates, and does she track them? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, that level of information on record moving is very operational. And right now what we do know, and I have mentioned it in this house before, that our systems do not communicate with Alberta where a lot of our referrals go. So there is, you know, work going on right now to -- and I mentioned it in previous sessions that we are looking to upgrade the EMR, electronic medical records system, within the Northwest Territories. And with all of those options that have been raised by Members have been highlighted as things that we need to ensure that when we look to building a new electronic medical records system in the Northwest Territories that it's going to have all of those components in it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just quickly, another clinic in town here, you can dial in and get your records through the internet obviously. I'm old. I say dial, but stream. Mr. Speaker, the dental clinic does phone follow-ups and check-ins, Mr. Speaker. Why is the technology so available, Mr. Speaker? I want to know what the Minister is doing, what -- I want to know what the serious blockage is, why a dental office can do services the health care system can't do, why a local medical clinic can do services, again a billion-dollar department can't seem to manage. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do know that there is technology out there. It's how are we going to implement it across the Northwest Territories. And that is what we are -- that's why we are looking at the EMR. We're not just going to look at it in one section and in one region as that's what we've done in the past, and then they don't even talk together. So we have to look at it as how we're going to roll it out throughout the Northwest Territories. And in the meantime, you know, one of the other barriers is some of this technology has to go through these privacy issues, is it safe enough to use for health information. So, again, these are issues that arise when we -- even to try and have a booking system online, there's so many layers that have to make sure that there's going to be no breach to this system to breach private health records. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 349-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE LOCATION

**MS. REID:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we are in the capital budget process, we're all aware that there is no new money for a new Yellowknife polytech campus. So can the Minister please explain why the issue of locating a campus on Tin Can Hill has been silent after much fanfare in 2023? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Member continuing to bring up the concerns of her residents around Tin Can Hill for much of the last ten months. The Tin Can Hill site was originally identified for the proposed Yellowknife North Slave Campus for Aurora College. The site is currently owned by the city

of Yellowknife, so some work needed to be done to assess whether or not it was an appropriate location to consider. So prior to any potential land transfer, an environmental site assessment was required to be done. There was a phase one that was done. At the completion of phase one, it was recommended that more information was needed. So phase two was initiated. Of course, phase two, with evacuation last year, the sampling that was required could not happen last year, and so there was a delay in that process. That process was completed this summer, and a series of technical reports were produced. And what I am waiting for now is all of that technical report information to be consolidated and then look forward to being able to publicly share that information. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, the Minister told me last fall that the ESA would be ready in March 2024, and then it was May 2024, and now it's nearly November. In more recent conversations, the Minister has asked me to reach out to the board to ask more questions about the specifics but then the board turned around and told me to talk to ECE. So that's why we're here today. Regardless, however the ESA turns out, however the technical report turns out, positive or negative for development, what is the intent for the MOU with the city? Will we terminate the MOU, or will we just delay a choice over and over and over again? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will admit that there are some fine lines between what decisions were made with the GNWT and what decisions will ultimately be the board of governors for Aurora College. So I will acknowledge the Member's frustration and that, but I'm happy to continue that conversation.

The phase two of the site assessment is now done. It is highly technical information that I'm going to be honest that is something that I need to be able to work with the experts within multiple departments in order to understand what is required so that I can make sure that I'm passing along accurate information to the Member. So phase two is now done. All partners involved in that being the Aurora College board, the city of Yellowknife, and also the GNWT, will ensure that everybody is receiving the same information so that we can ensure that we're working together to communicate that information. I want to apologize to the Member for the delay in that but also want to ensure that we have accurate information that we are able to share publicly. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'll reiterate my question perhaps in a different way. If the environmental site assessment and all of the technical work shows that there is contamination and remediation needed on the site, will ECE terminate the MOU? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ultimately the decision of where the North Slave campus will go rests with the board of governors, so I would need to make sure that I'm getting direction from the board of governors as to whether or not they would like to hold on to that site or see that MOU go. But for right now, I don't have that information because that's not a decision that rests with the GNWT; it's a decision that ultimately rests with the board. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Yes, but as I said in my Member's statement, the board then threw it back to you when I asked them the same question.

Many Yellowknifers believe there was inadequate public consultation, a flawed site options analysis for this location. Will ECE commit to adequate public consultation and a transparent site evaluation process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, I hear the Member. I heard the Member's statement. I hear the Member's concerns of her constituents that she continues to raise. The intent of doing the site assessments was to determine whether or not the site was, even to begin, viable for a North Slave campus. And so as always, there is a commitment to keep the public informed, to seek meaningful input on decisions that absolutely may affect residents of the Northwest Territories, and so I want to recognize and acknowledge that the Tin Can Hill is obviously a site that's very important to the residents of Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories and that should any further steps be taken beyond the -- or sorry, once the conclusion of the environmental site assessment and that information is made public, then for sure there would absolutely be public engagement that would occur.

I think it's worthwhile here, Mr. Speaker, informing this House and members of the public that while I have oversight over post-secondary, I do not have oversight over the operations of Aurora College. The board of governors does maintain that control. And while I -- it is my authority to open and close campuses on the recommendation of the board

of governors, ultimately where within a community that piece of property resides is the authority of the board of governors. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 350-20(1):  
NORTHERN EMPLOYMENT

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ITI. When we're looking at workforce planning for capital projects, what analysis are we employing to help us plan to ensure that we're maximizing northern employment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism, and Investment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance has a number of procurement practices, and the strongest one being the Business Incentive Policy that is used for procurement practices with all GNWT procurement. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I'm asking about workforce planning, not necessarily procurement. When we're looking at workforce planning for capital projects, so planning out how this project is going to be implemented in such a way and what needs to be done to ensure that there is a workforce to implement the project, a northern workforce, what analysis are we employing to help us plan to ensure we're maximizing northern employment? Sorry to repeat the question, Mr. Speaker, but I just felt that the answer was speaking more to procurement than employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd say one of the strongest workforce planning documents and tools that we use within the Government of the Northwest Territories is our Skills 4 Success document. And that document has a -- it acts as kind of a Bible, if you will, of what jobs are and will be in demand over the course of the next 20 years in the Northwest Territories. So that document works by looking at, you know, what are the expected capital infrastructure happenings in the Northwest Territories and what skill sets are we going to need. So that talks about positions of leadership, it talks about trades positions. It's identified 20 different trades positions that we will need. Thankfully, earlier today we were able to celebrate 33 new journeypersons in the Northwest Territories as

well. In addition to that, we also have plans, like for example the revitalization of the Great Slave Lake fishery. So in addition to our Skills 4 Success, we also have very specific documents within different sectors and those documents have deliverables as well. So, for example ECE and ITI teamed up on that one. ECE was able to offer subsidies, ITI was able to offer grants, and we were able to really work to make some great change in that sector over the last few years. And so there is a primary document but also very sector-specific ones as well. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a much more comprehensive answer and more along the lines of what I was looking for.

Mr. Speaker, considering these plans that we have in place across sectors, why aren't we making more progress or increasing northern employment figures at the diamond mines, projects like Giant Mine, or even GNWT contracted projects? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess there's a couple different ways that I can answer this question. And I'm not trying to be evasive of the Member at all. I think there's a few different ways that we can kind of interpret these questions. But for within the example say of diamond mine, fly-in/fly-out work is not for everyone. I know over the course of the last two decades, a lot of people who started working in diamond mining aren't necessarily there. Some have chosen to return to employment in their communities or return to life at home. But certainly a fly-in/fly-out isn't for anyone -- or everyone.

One piece of good news is that a lot of the advanced project mining are on existing road infrastructure or around and centered around communities. So, for example Pine Point, people will be able to drive to mine sites. You know, we're looking at -- or hearing about -- good news about gold mining close to Yellowknife. We're hearing about a mining project close to Fort Simpson. And so that will really change the dynamic that currently exists at a lot of our bigger mines in the Northwest Territories. Some work that is being done in order to improve some of our numbers in the Northwest Territories as well are looking at things like our curriculum renewal, making sure that we are focused on affording students the education that they want in order to meet our desire to see as many northerners employed in these projects and also working with organizations like the Mine Training Society and dev corps as well to make sure that it really is everybody working together at the end of the day to connect people to the training



opportunities that do exist in the Northwest Territories. We have a number of training programs and subsidies within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and we want to make sure ultimately that people are taking advantage of them because we really do want to see Northerners successful in the workforce. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate, again, the comprehensive answer from the Minister. I always appreciate these exchanges where we go back and forth like this and get these comprehensive answers on the table.

Regarding Pine Point, I'm glad she brought that one up because the Standing Committee on Economic and Development and Environment recently met with some representatives from Pine Point, and they were saying one of their big challenges is going to be finding employees to staff this mine, that we're simply not producing the numbers of trades people that they're going to need. So I guess what I would ask the Minister is how can we move the needle on this? How can we ensure that we are preparing Northerners to enter the workforce, to shift into positions that are available in the workforce, so that we don't have this problem of creating economic activity that Northerners can't benefit from? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very thankful for this question. I had the opportunity in June to travel with a number of deputy ministers down to the Pine Point mine site where we had an incredible tour of what was there before, what they envision being there tomorrow and years down the road. The good news here is that we've got a few years to put together the trades people that they need. One of the things that I asked them for on that tour was their workforce planning document of exactly what trades people that they will need so that we can make sure that we're supporting that in the Northwest Territories.

One of the key things that we need here, Mr. Speaker, is employers who can support trades people, so that is employers that can support our SNAP students. If you are a red seal journeyman in the Northwest Territories and you can support a student whether you live in Yellowknife, and hopefully outside of Yellowknife as well, we need employers to be able to support these students so that we can grow more trades people. That is the number one thing I would say today that I need is the

support of employers so that we can get more people trained up and through the system. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Colleagues, we've had three sets of question, and we spent 20 minutes on answers and preamble. Please be succinct in your questions and succinct in your answers. Thank you very much.

Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 351-20(1):  
WINTER ROAD PREPARATIONS

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my statement on the winter road preparations for this coming season in the Sahtu -- and I just remind the House it's an annual resupply. And so my first question to the Minister of Infrastructure, when can the Minister of Infrastructure be available to meet the project contractors/participants to engage in preparation discussions similar to last year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would expect -- I expect that the officers and the -- the project officers in the department, officials there, are already doing that. They've certainly been expected to do that for some time. We know that there's going to be more traffic on those winter roads this season just as there was last season when there was less barges. With no barges, fully expecting that road to be busy. So those meetings are already underway. Mr. Speaker, it was -- certainly, it was helpful for me to meet with some of those involved last year just to get a real picture of it, to have that opportunity, and I'm certainly happy to do that again and can work with the MLA for the region and for perhaps from the Nahendeh region since folks are coming through that area as well. We want to make sure we're maximizing everyone's ability to get as much through that winter road as possible. Thank you.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply. In addition to my statement of cargo and fuel and essential services going into the Sahtu, we've got another developer that's going to be coming there to the Sahtu to do some activity around the Colville Lake area. I'm not too sure if the Minister's aware of that, but that'll be additional traffic.

My next question: Will the Minister confirm this preseason/prejob meeting, if that can be held in

Norman Wells? This will give us -- I plan to attend -- and other opportunities for other engagements. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can confirm on behalf of the department that someone's going to be there. There's no question that some representatives -- senior representatives from the department can go. I want to just double check my own calendar. I've got commitments already to -- a couple of other regions where I've been waiting to get to. So certainly best efforts on my part. I'm always happy to go back. I've been to Norman Wells here a couple of times already in this government. Happy to go back. If I can't be there in person, I'll certainly make sure that I'm available in some other means. But I also wouldn't want to delay having that in-person there in the region based on my calendar. So someone will be available to make sure we're there and, as I say, I'll make my best efforts. But it was a helpful meeting we had last year. Going to need to do more this year, and so I want to emphasize we all want to work together and have a task force that's moving this ahead. Thank you.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that willingness to participate. I feel comfortable already that we'll have a safe discussion.

My next question: Will the Minister support more resources as similar actions taken last year during our January discussion to ensure that we have a suitable, durable road surface for the heavy truck traffic? Mahsi.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely we will have to prioritize that work again. Just by way of some example of what we did last year, we were widening the road that gave the ability for trucks to be going but also didn't impede smaller traffic with folks who may be doing their own personal resupply, had more signage, increased patrols, increased checkpoints, which was not only a safety issue; it helps increase the flow of traffic and make the flow of traffic better. And we've also had some increased maintenance, increased improvements. Again, everything we can do to keep the road in a state that people can continue to pass. Mr. Speaker, that worked well last time. We had positive feedback. We'll take any constructive feedback on that as well if folks have it available so we can continue to make it even better this year. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for the final supplementary. I feel very assured here. The winter before, it took our department and traffic to go five hours for 90 miles, 90 kilometers. So you can do the calculations on the speed limit. Last year was excellent.

My last question there, Mr. Speaker, is this industry is challenged by a shortage of drivers, particularly experienced winter road drivers. What act of measures or efforts the Department of Infrastructure is doing to support that industry? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This certainly is a challenge. It's a challenge across industry. But given the situation we're in, we are trying to bring in more licensed drivers. Some of that backlog, I will say, you know, a bit of a plug for folks who are looking to get their licenses as new drivers, if they want to take a driver's course first, that might reduce the number of repeat customers that we have over at the DMV. But with respect to those that are looking to be professional drivers, that's a different category. They're struggling with the same issue in that we have the same limited number of people doing the licensing exams. I can say knowing what's coming, knowing the pressures that we're in for supply, we are opening up additional appointments here from the end of this month and into next month. Doing that by ensuring that we're maximizing folks within our department with these skill sets and looking to bring to ensure that all of the positions are filled and try to do everything we can to fill those positions quickly so that we can address the existing backlog to get more drivers licensed and move supplies where we need to. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 352-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE PLAN

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Based on the Minister's experience as a nurse, as a regular MLA for four years sitting over on this side, and now as health Minister, can she confirm from her experience whether the problem exists, whether the problem of health care shift workers not being allowed to take the full leave that they're entitled to? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the health care system, there are areas where health practitioners have to provide 24-hour care and within that health care system, those practitioners, nurses, you know, they fall under, you know, unionized employees and they are allotted time based on their years of service. So the longer employees have way more time. You know, and we've heard -- and I know we have -- there is an acknowledgement within the health authority that within that 24-hour care model that sometimes it's unfortunate but that not everybody can access all of their leaves due to operational requirements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's a great first start to just acknowledge that there's a problem. And understanding that the health authority is an independent authority, is the Minister aware of whether policies are being reviewed around when and how frontline staff can take leave, or will she request that those policies be reviewed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can commit and say that what has been committed to by the Stanton is that the policy that is within Stanton for leave is going to -- or is being reviewed currently. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a good first start. Would the Minister agree that when someone applies for leave, there should be a deadline for either approving or denying that leave that gives reasonable notice for that person so that they might plan their leave? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those employees that are unionized employees, they have -- you know, when they apply for leave, it is the expectation that as the employer that they do follow the collective agreement, so 18.02-2(2) does speak to that. And so it gives them two weeks to respond to any employee that puts in leave. And if there are scheduling needs that need to be done in this advance, that those employers notify the union and that those -- they still have to have a set date as to when leave is put in and they still have to follow a two-week, and they have to respond in writing and the reasons why if they're declined. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So will the Minister commit to ensuring that a plan is developed to enable health care staff to take all their leave, to address policies and planning procedures in the short term, and over the longer term, to address chronic understaffing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do and I will and I have had communicated this to NTHSSA and to the other health authorities, you know, and so that way that we do have a plan in place and that, you know, when people can't get their leave, as many members said, that it does impact them. So thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 353-20(1):  
BEHCHOKO SWIMMING POOL

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the swimming pool in Edzo burned down, there was insufficient insurance proceeds to rebuild the swimming pool. Due to newer building standards, the replacement costs, even when limited insurance, was something the community government could not afford. To make this matter worse, the insurance payout was less if you do not rebuild within three years. Therefore, I want to ask the Minister, can the Minister commit to trying to find funds for the Behchoko swimming pool? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The territorial government supplies -- or sorry, funds communities through our community funding. It's up to the communities whether or not they want to utilize some of that funding for things like the pools -- or for, like, pools. However, the government doesn't build pools or operate pools for communities so it's up -- at the end of the day, it's up to the community whether or not they want to use their own revenues or go out to other sources of funding for building such facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, with the CPI cutbacks, it's not possible to do that so that's why I asked the Minister. So can the Minister work with other government or charities to fund our swimming pool? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the regional staff have

worked with the community governments on their funding and how they can utilize it; however, at this time it's not our responsibility as a government to go out and look for funding for communities for infrastructure like this. If the government is looking for resources and assistance on maybe what funding could be available, I'm sure the department would be willing or working with the community to look for those funding sources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure this one he can do. He's got a lot of staff. There's a lot of staff that are out there. Can the Minister commit to supporting community governments in the Tlicho region for writing grants and planning swimming pool projects? There's a lot of staff out there, so I'm asking the Minister if he would commit. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal and Community Affairs, unfortunately, does not have a lot of staff. And I know that we do have staff available that could potentially assist with the community, so I think it's best if the community reaches out to the regional superintendent so that maybe resources could be found if we have them available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, the territorial government hired the -- recently like 1,600 employees within the last few years. I'm sure those people can do something. They must be useful for something, to do something for the community. So I'm just asking the Minister in -- or I don't know who, or maybe for finance. But in the supplementary budget, is it possible to divert money for a swimming pool in the Tlicho region? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Monfwi, your questions were to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs so I'm going to turn that question to him. Should you have another set of questions, you can reach it out to the finance Minister. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish I had all those employees. At the end of the day, I think we have to realize not all these employees are indeterminate full-time employees that are working -- you know, they're term employees. There's relief workers. So at the end of the day, we don't have those employees to assist with the community right now. Any other questions like that, I guess

would have to go to the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 354-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE SITE SELECTION

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to ask a second round of questions to the Minister of ECE. Will the Minister work with the board, the college board, to conduct a robust public consultation process for site selection? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy to respond to the board anytime they reach out to me. It would certainly depend on whether or not the board was welcoming of that but I will support the board any way that I can and any way that, you know, works well for us. But I certainly can't dictate to the board how they choose to do their operations. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister make the technical report she spoke of earlier today publicly available? There are members in the community who would like to review them. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that some form of report from the environmental site assessments will be made public, and I look forward to ensuring that I share that with the Member once it is out there.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can specifically the scientific reports be made publicly available? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have to check in with the department that actually owns those reports. It is not ECE that owns those reports at the end of the day. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how many ways to ask it, so I'll pass along.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member, could you please stand.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing further.

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

QUESTION 355-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE CONCERNS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the health care worker I spoke to about the recent round of engagements within the system the Minister's undertaking and the authority's undertaking said, quote: We don't need more opportunities for feedback. The reason health care workers don't feel heard is because there's never any real action or bold moves on the feedback we've given for years.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of health today, in these town halls that she's having with health care workers what is she hearing? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, alongside with the CEO and the deputy minister as well as the COO of Stanton, had a town hall for Stanton staff so not -- we did not have one with the Yellowknife region as of yet which the primary care falls under. What we heard were a lot of operational issues. We also heard a lot of, you know, even just internal how, like, funding for different things within. We did hear leave, you know, and that's where the commitment was made to review the policy. You know, there is a sense of frustration, and I acknowledge that, and so what we are taking away from that first town hall that we had with Stanton is to compile everything. The one thing that we'll do is that we will -- you know, it's now the Minister's office has heard from the staff, the department has heard from the staff, you know, I -- and we -- the CEO has heard from the staff, the COO has heard from the staff. So we are going to be following up back with looping that back to the staff as to where we are with following up. Some of them were easy fixes and were committed to right on the fly during those meetings. We'll continue to have those meetings throughout the territory. Some may say that they are -- they're not -- you know, that they're not the all and be all for everybody, but they are one voice where I'm able to hear what the concerns are as well as the CEO and as many people -- you know, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, the NTHSSA is the operations and they do have a governing council, and with that, I have to go work through and with the governing council in order to -- you know, to know what's going on and to the -- with

the direction that they're giving. So this is a better way for me to really hear, and in partnership to be able to work with them, in looping that information back around and providing me with areas where I can then be more holding them account to that. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the governing council joining the Minister on these listening sessions? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you. As Stanton is a territorial hospital, it doesn't fall within one of the regional wellness. So each of the regional wellness, so each of the regions have a COO, and then they have a council -- a regional wellness council that has a chair. And so what I have -- within Stanton, we did not have the chair of the governing council at this meeting. But we do plan to have the chairs of the regional wellness as long as -- as well as the COOs and the CEO and the deputy minister moving forward with all of the other regions because they do have chairs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm looking for accountability as well, and I hear this refrain that it's the governance council that's in charge; it's not the Minister, there's only so much she can do. So why are these -- why are we not bringing the governing council to listen to these meetings? It doesn't matter if it's Stanton. They're responsible for the entire thing. The individual wellness council's, fine. But the overall management of the system and oversight of the system is one body so why are they not being involved with this effort?

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the chair of each of the regional wellness council is a member of the governing council, so that is the governing council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the workers are looking for bold action. They're looking for a clear commitment. So what is the Minister's idea for how to solve this problem? What's the clear commitment and deliverable that she can give hope to workers that things are going to get better and improve? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before that, you know, we are -- as this whole year I've been working with the governing council and working with the Members, hearing from the Members, hearing from the public. It's not that

I -- you know, it's -- I don't sit here on having deaf ears. I know that there are real issues within our health care system. You know, there are real issues that people are sicker and that we need serious -- and so I hear the Members. And, yes, there are things that we are looking into. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 356-20(1):  
RECREATION PROJECT FUNDING

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for Finance. I know that from the -- from the budget, we know that there's -- the Government of the Northwest Territories have over 6,000 employees and over 4,000 positions are located in Yellowknife. We don't even know what some of these people are doing because maybe many of those positions -- we know many of those positions are duplicate. Maybe GNWT can hire a consultant to help small communities to apply for programs in the small communities, such as a swimming pool or other recreation facilities, because many of these communities lacks a lot of recreations. We need recreation programs for our youth.

So with that in mind, I want to ask the Minister, GNWT has many projects that are funded by the federal government. Can the Minister work with other government or charities to fund projects like our swimming pool? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first, with respect to the fulsomeness of the public service, a lot of the growth in the last little while has actually been in the Department of Health and Social Services. A lot of other growth has actually been as a result of Jordan's Principle funding which is allowing additional services in ECE. And that said, there is a very active conversation happening, led with the Department of Finance human resources, around ensuring that we don't have positions that are sitting unfilled, that are not being fully utilized, and with a view to having those positions taken off the books so that they don't artificially or inappropriately inflate the numbers. It doesn't answer the end of the question which is to what extent there can be some supports to communities to help increase their recreational capacity.

Mr. Speaker, that, I think, is a shared goal of many people in this House, including Ministers

here. It's not one that I can come up with a solution standing here. I'm happy to sit down with the Member, with a human resources perspective and with the Minister of MACA and see if there's ways that we can support communities so that they can use the funding that they have to achieve their goals. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the deputy ministers are listening or they're understanding -- they're listening right now. So what I would like to ask the Minister is that -- this question that I asked the MACA Minister. In the supplementary budget, is it possible to divert money for a swimming pool in the Tlicho region? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, nobody likes a short answer of one that just says no, but unfortunately this instance the short answer is no. The supplementary estimates are -- they come forward as having been gone through the financial management board to bring about issues or things that arise. One example is the collective agreement that was finalized, so this comes forward to bring a couple of collective agreements in. And I have to obviously comply with the collective agreement. Another major item in there was fire suppression funding. We have to pay the bill for our fire suppression funding. Another big one in there, Mr. Speaker, is commitments made in the House for the main estimates. So the supplementary estimates right now aren't going to be the place where we can just move that money around. But, Mr. Speaker, there are funds -- I know the Minister of MACA already spoke to to work in his department. I know the Minister of MACA wants to see supports to communities. So, again, my suggestion is that we all sit down and see if there's a way to assure that the money that's for communities is being effectively used by them. I know as a Minister, I have funds that sit in infrastructure that we want to see go out the door to communities and if they're not going out the door, that is a problem we want to solve. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm sure they can find a way to do this, and this government is good at hiring consultants. You know, if they hire a consultant, they can -- if there's a will, there's a way. So they can find money to help our neighbours -- to help their neighbour. So it's more of a comment. I don't have any more questions, so I'll just leave it at that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member, please ask the questions. I don't need the preambles. Thank you very much.

Oral questions. Member from Sahtu.

QUESTION 357-20(1):  
TULITA FOUR-PLEX TRANSFER

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for this opportunity for another question. My question today is to the Minister of housing.

We have a beautiful building there in Tulita, the Tulita four-plex, that was transferred ownership to this government. It was designated for health staff but it's currently not ready and that ownership was transferred last -- the beginning of the summer. And I would like to know what measures is the housing Minister taking to make it occupied for the health staff so that'll release the current building for the teachers? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Member for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. The four-plex in Tulita has been transferred over to health for use for the nursing staff in Tulita. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of health -- no, I'll wait for another opportunity. Thank you. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from the Sahtu, please questions, because I got a whole list of people that want to still get on the second one. Members, oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 358-20(1):  
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question for the -- is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Doctors are complaining about not being able to provide timely and effective feedback with respect to the structure of the system and the problems they see. Primary care doctors more specifically have proposed initiatives. I'm asking what forum does the Minister allow good conversations and discussions about proposals that doctors are providing that can help save the health care system? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the NTHSSA, the primary care sits within NTHSSA and the doctors work within the NTHSSA. And so the doctors have -- you know, they have the medical director. They have the territorial medical director, they have the COO, they have

the CEO, and they have the governing council. So they have very many levels that if they're not being heard, you know, they have very many levels. And if the -- you know, and if they're still not being heard after they've gone all the way up to the governing council, then that's when -- then, you know, the discussions between myself and the governing council can happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that answer from the Minister, but when the doctors are suggesting to open up the CT scan that -- system and creating avenues to help patient care and expedite it in the sense of service and save money, it's going on deaf ears. So what next if no one seems to care about the advice and direction offered by doctors, especially our primary care doctors? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as that is very operational questions, I -- you know, that is the first time I've heard that issue so that would be something that they -- I would recommend them to be raising with the COO and the CEO. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are more concerns and, apparently, that's been highlighted many times, and I think even another MLA pointed out scheduling. These doctors are saying they could provide suggestions through efficiency and management of time by doing their own scheduling and they're reaching the point that they're considering leaving, if not some have already left. Maybe we could start with the first clarity on this particular issue is how many primary care doctors do we have in Yellowknife and working in the Stanton hospital? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have to get back to the Member on that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been made aware that it's close to five or six doctors have either left or just recently have given their notice of leaving. I'd like that to be confirmed with respect to the numbers I've asked a few moments ago. Is the Minister aware of this, and what is she doing about it? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, this conversation that has come up in the House, it came up yesterday and, you know, and it

has -- many people come within our system and, you know, we are doing exit interviews to find out why and we are using the data to change the way that, you know, we're engaging with staff or retention. So what I can say is that I don't get notified whenever there's a health care person or a doctor within the whole Northwest Territories that is hired or has left, you know, and so therefore if the Member wants to know, I -- like, I was willing to share with the Member yesterday, the variance, like, when staff are -- you know, and any -- and positions, I can provide that to the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 359-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now we have a system that competes with itself as I said. This is not coming from my analysis; this is coming from health care workers, doctors, nurses, allied health care professionals. Why has the choice been made to prioritize locum contracts, temporary workers, and agency nurses over full-time staff? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been no prioritize on locum workers or agency workers. Mr. Speaker, we have to follow the collective agreement. We cannot bargain outside the collective agreement on indeterminate employees and therefore you know, this -- and which leaves us if we don't have any indeterminate employees, then we have to go to the next steps which we go for terms, and then if it impacts units being closed then we would discuss that with the union and get the consent to be able to look at agencies. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister willing to look at the length of contracts? A six-month contract means the worker's going to stay in the Northwest Territories for at least a longer time commitment. We're talking about contracts that are two days long, that are a week long. Will the Minister commit to stopping that practice and ensuring contracts are long enough to keep people in the North and keep money in the North and keep continuity of care in the North? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, you know, I can commit to having that conversation again with the NTHSSA of what their practice is. I am not familiar of how long contracts are, if they're -- you know, I mean, in the past, you know, the only time I've ever seen a short enough contract in my time working in the health authority was within, you know, maybe over Christmas so that we didn't have to shut down services so maybe a two or three-week contract. But, you know, as the -- as it is now, we are struggling with staffing. And whether Members in this House or anywhere, you know, we don't know exactly how long this is going to be throughout Canada. We don't know. And, you know, this is priority -- this is priority not just for me, it is a priority for Canada. It's a priority that we are going to be discussing at the next health Ministers' meeting because it is an issue. It is an issue across Canada. We are struggling to find and retain health care providers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government's pumping billions of dollars into health care right now. This is not -- this problem is a northern problem. So what's the Minister's northern solution? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Canadian government may be pumping millions into the -- into health care but as you -- it's not only even at the health Ministers' table now. It is at the Premiers -- you know, the Premiers are discussing the health because it is not sustainable. Our health care budgets in all of the territories and provinces are not sustainable. And so there are issues throughout Canada. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that number is \$200 billion over ten years. So, you know, I appreciate that it's going to be divvied out in different places. We need to have a resolution to this. We need to find a way to retain workers. This is a blockage that's been identified to me. Will the Minister at least commit to doing an exploration of this, working with staff, working with the whole team, and coming up with a solution that's meaningful, impactful, and will actually solve this problem instead of just more listening exercises? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during my time as the Minister so far within this year, you know, we have excellent staff, you know, and, yes, they



are -- they are tired and, yes, there are, you know, very -- not just at Stanton. In the regions, you know, you most recently hear about in the regions we have, you know, obstetrics closures, we have nursing stations that are on emergency services. And so what we're -- you know, like, what we're trying to do is we're looking at it as a whole of territory because as I said in the very beginning, this is a whole of territory issue, and Stanton is our territorial hospital and it is at the brink. And the Members are correct, the Members in Yellowknife have raised this and the people in Yellowknife have raised this. But the issue, you know, from Yellowknife is all of the people that are coming in from the small communities, so we still need to look at what is going on elsewhere so that way there's not such the burden on the territorial health system in Yellowknife. And so that is what I'm committed to do. I am committed to working within our structures. I am committed to working with my -- looking at my legislation to see the authorities that I have over the health care system and working with the rest of the Members in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 360-20(1):  
EDUCATION OUTCOMES

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the answers I got earlier from the Minister of ECE and note that she just kind of finished on the point she needs support from industry. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, let's connect the dots. Education outcomes, will the Minister speak to the education outcomes and how that's relating to our inability to sufficiently provide a workforce for industry in the territory? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I feel like by the question, the Member already knows the answer. Absolutely, our education outcomes are linked to employment a hundred percent. And this is why within the Northwest Territories we're doing things like looking at the ELCC program in conjunction with the Government of Canada and making sure that our ELCC service providers have education and certification that they need in order to provide support at the zero to age 4 level. Then we're looking at our curriculum renewal. We're switching to the BC curriculum which is also going to help out. We

were looking at -- you know, our students need school-based mental health and wellness because they need to be mentally cared for in order to be able to learn at the end of the day. So this is a huge focus of mine. The other piece around this is our review of the Education Act which is also taking place in this Assembly. And then there is also, of course, the new post-secondary education legislation that was passed in the last Assembly to make sure that the post-secondary education that is being offered to Northerners is quality education so that we can ensure that we have a robust workforce at the end of the day. And it is absolutely all connected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess where I -- where I'm a bit confused is, you know, when I look at education outcomes, workforce planning, you know, let's focus on the Giant Mine project for a second. That project is only achieving 36 percent employment. This is a project that's going to be spending billions of dollars in the territory over a number of years. Why have we failed to maximize northern workforce in that project if all these plans are working so well? What's the missing piece, Mr. Speaker?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's worth saying that this project is led by the federal government. We do not as the GNWT hold the reins on this project. I think that it is an accumulation of everything that I have mentioned here today. It is also a matter of making sure that projects are right-sized for the Northwest Territories which I know in having sat down with one of the key leaders on that project that they are doing what they can to make sure that projects are broken down and they do have a focus of northern procurement. However, they do work within the federal system and the federal system -- I think we have some room to work together to make sure that our procurement rules align and that our goals at the end of the day align as well. So I think there's always room for improvement in the territory, and I think we should always maintain our drive and desire to always do better. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Department of ECE or ITI have stated goals for workforce -- increasing the northern workforce in the territory? Have they set a number that they're trying to achieve either at the diamond mines, Giant, through northern -- through our contracting? Are they looking to achieve a goal?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member, direct it to one Minister, not -- though she has the two different

roles, I am going to turn it to you as the Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with all of our mining projects -- well, our diamond mining projects, we do have socio-economic agreements which in them do contain northern employment goals in them. So that is baked in to a lot of what we do in the territory. And it is always our goal to ensure that our industry in the Northwest Territories is serving and benefitting Northerners. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Colleagues, our time has come to the end.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Before we do that, I'd like to welcome the students from Sir John Franklin High School for attending here. They got to watch a lively debate and thank you very much for being here today.

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. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

### Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 15-20(1):  
REPORT ON COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT  
ON THE HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE  
CRISES IN THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES, RECEIVED BY THE  
ASSEMBLY,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to provide its Report on the Committee's Statement on the Housing and Healthcare Crises in the Northwest Territories and commends it to the House.

Mr. Speaker, this report sets out the accountability and oversight committee's concerns and call for urgent government intervention regarding the crises conditions that have developed in the delivery of health care and social services and affordability and availability of housing across the Northwest Territories. Through correspondence before the

fall sitting, committee issued the following statement to their Cabinet counterparts:

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is committed to upholding the four priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly, which are:

- the suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing;
- a strong economic foundation;
- access to health care and addressing the effects of trauma; and,
- safe residents and communities.

Mr. Speaker, committee has become increasingly concerned with the crises conditions that continue to develop in the delivery of health and social services and the affordability and availability of housing in the NWT. After a thorough consideration, committee is not able to support a capital plan while the top priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly still require urgent attention, action, and associated funding.

We have heard from our constituents, frontline staff and practitioners, that our primary health care system is seeing unsustainable challenges. We are calling on the government to make immediate changes and adopt a more staff-centric approach that will incorporate the input of our critical health care staff and frontline workers, protect their mental health, and show them that they are valued. We are requesting a fundamental culture shift which we acknowledge may need to include changes made to the foundational governance and accountability structure.

Mr. Speaker, we also wish to see adequate supports given to youth mental health and other HSS services such as therapeutic and diagnostic supports. Failure to solve these problems impacts our capacity to deliver services and our fiscal sustainability goals by causing unnecessary costs to address the crises points.

Committee is concerned that Housing NWT is not making significant progress on addressing the housing crisis that exists across the entire housing continuum in the Northwest Territories. Given the available data, we believe that Housing Northwest Territories has enough information to take meaningful action to advance the creation of more housing units. We need more investment into the creation of housing units.

It is not lost on committee the gravity of the position that we have taken and would reiterate

that we are urgently seeking a course correction from government with appropriate resourcing behind it that reflects both the Assembly priorities and the concerns of NWT residents.

Committee is very concerned about the fragility of our health care system and the apparent inability to put appropriate resources into housing. Committee remains dedicated to fostering a transparent and collaborative budget process. It has become clear to us that failing to fix these problems is undermining our ability to practice responsible fiscal management and puts our goals in jeopardy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that by putting appropriate focus on our shared priorities, we can achieve a more prosperous and resilient future for all. We look forward to continuing this vital conversation and hope that we'll see the appropriate shift during this government session.

Committee understands that the capital budget is before us; however, we cannot approve the budget until we see real commitments for change and a shift in government resources that better reflects the priorities of this Assembly.

This report is presented to the House as a demonstration of committee's ongoing commitment to transparency alongside a continued call for action to better and more immediately address the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in recent discussions, it has become clear that the government's mechanisms to address the serious issues that have arisen in housing and health and social services are falling short of what is necessary to make meaningful change. As we navigate the complexities of our fiscal and policy landscape, we are reminded that it is imperative that we, as a government, make informed decisions that reflect the needs and values of our communities and residents. We are becoming increasingly concerned that those needs and values are not being addressed meaningfully, so we are prepared to take a strong position to urge the government to act right away.

Mr. Speaker, committee observes that Housing NWT is not making, nor plans to make, significant progress on addressing the housing crisis that exists across the entire continuum of the Northwest Territories when considering the Housing NWT Action Plan 2022-2025. The lack of meaningful metrics and targets put forward by Housing NWT in their action plan make it

difficult for committee, or any other stakeholder, to ultimately understand the capacity and capability of the organization.

Mr. Speaker, committee advocates for the Housing NWT to use all available data and evidence now to advance the creation of new housing units across the entire housing continuum to advance the creation and/or retrofit of housing units aggressively and ambitiously. Committee requires a far greater commitment from Cabinet to put more resources into supporting territorial housing needs. Committee is ultimately seeking a commitment to the creation of expanded housing units and resourcing behind that commitment, Mr. Speaker.

In the spirit of reconciliation, committee acknowledges and supports the work done collaboratively with Indigenous governments. To that end, committee also expects that Housing NWT will better demonstrate and report on how they are working with and supporting the work of each Indigenous government in delivering their housing strategies. The government must support the bilateral relationship between the Indigenous governments and the federal government to ensure that additional resources can flow directly to Indigenous communities.

Mr. Speaker, finally, committee acknowledges the ongoing and serious challenges faced by municipalities and small communities who are attempting to identify lands suitable for housing stock development and are finding the options limited and not suitable. As such, committee urges the Department of Environment and Climate Change to commit to and proactively pursue arrangements where bulk land transfers to municipalities can occur, including implementing transparent, clear processes to help departments and municipalities understand how they can participate.

Mr. Speaker, committee maintains that any real or perceived limitations of municipalities (or interest of the community, community type, community legislative and administrative tools, and community capacity and resources) are the concern of the municipality and would encourage ECC to not take a paternalistic approach.

Mr. Speaker, committee is aware of the increasingly unsustainable issues faced by both the Department of Health and Social Services and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authorities, including the indications from frontline staff and practitioners, that the primary care system may be on the verge of collapse.

Mr. Speaker, committee is calling on the Minister of Health and Social Services to make all actions necessary to immediately intervene and stabilize primary, secondary, and tertiary care. We have seen evidence that the current management model is not staff-centric, nor does it foster problem solving or incorporate the input of our critical health care staff and frontline workers. We wish to see a governance and management organizational structure implemented right away that signals to staff they are valued.

Mr. Speaker, a culture shift is required that empowers our frontline staff and makes the Northwest Territories an attractive place to live and work. We know that HSS has received evidence-based observations and clear, achievable recommendations from a number of sources. For example, the March 1st, 2024 correspondence from the NWT Medical Association, which was tabled in the House on May 28, 2024, contained organizational and systemic change recommendations. Committee calls on HSS to respond to these recommendations.

Committee is also concerned that there are not adequate levels of support in schools for youth mental health and other vital health and social services such as therapeutic and diagnostic supports for our children and young people.

Mr. Speaker, committee sees evidence that not enough is being done to show appreciation and support for our health care staff and our frontline workers, including supporting their physical and mental health, and we call for concrete action.

Committee urges more efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of health care frontline workers, specifically around point-of-care staff. Committee is also aware that many of our practitioners are not being supported in the face of significant challenges with critical staffing and resource shortages. For example, Mr. Speaker, we know that health care practitioners are regularly denied requests for annual leave, and policies related to organizational demands are interpreted and implemented in such a way that makes it challenging for staff to take the leave allotted to them.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight's Report on Committee's Statement of the Housing and Health Care Crisis in the Northwest Territories. In conclusion, committee remains dedicated to fostering a transparent and collaborative capital budget process that gives the appropriate, urgent attention to our territory's top priorities. We believe that by

focusing our attention to prioritize and adequately fund health care and housing issues, we can achieve a more prosperous and resilient future for all. Committee is very concerned about the fragility of our health care system and the apparent inability to put appropriate resources into housing.

Committee will continue to consider the capital plan that is before us, but our concerns with operations and services are serious ones. As previously stated, committee is not in a position to support a capital plan while we feel the top priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly are not being addressed to the best of our abilities.

Mr. Speaker, committee is calling for a shift in resources that better reflects the priorities of the 20th Assembly. We look forward to continuing this vital conversation during the Fall 2024 session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Update on Recommendations from Healing Voices Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a survey authorized by both myself and Mr. Testart. This survey is called Your Health Care Patient Experience in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, I have been advised that there was a motion for tabled item number 13. My mistake, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Oversight, Mr. Speaker, not a mistake. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member from Range Lake, that Committee Report 15-20(1), Report on Committee's Statement on the Housing and Health Care Crises in the Northwest Territories, be received by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has carried and has been received and adopted by this Assembly.

---Carried

Tabled documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Minister of Infrastructure.

### Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 11:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, October 29th, 2024, I will present Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 12:  
BUSINESS DAY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, October 29th, 2024, I will present Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. 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, Tabled Document 193-20(1), with the Member from the Sahtu in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** What is the wish of committee? The Member from Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee would like to consider Tabled Document Capital Estimates 2024-2025, Department of Finance and Department of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Agreed. Okay, we will start after a short eight-minute break. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** No, thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. Thank you, Minister. We have agreed to begin with the general comments on the capital estimates. Does any Member wish to make any general comments before we consider the tabled documents in detail? Seeing none. Thank you, Members.

No further general comments, we will proceed to the details of the tabled documents beginning with Department of Finance. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the chamber?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have Bill MacKay, the deputy minister of finance. And on my right, Dave Heffernan, the government's chief information officer.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Agreed. Committee, the Department of Finance begins on page 33. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 35 with the chief information officer, with information item on page 36. Are there any questions? Mr. Morse, please go ahead.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is a general question, and I figured now is

as good of a time as any to ask it. So, you know, Members are provided in advance, you know, some pretty substantial project substantiation for all of these kinds of items. And my first question that came up when I was looking at those is why are the kind of more detailed substantiations not shared publicly? It seems like information that is not -- I mean, I can understand that specific numbers might need to be taken out for contract reasons, but is there a reason why the substantiations can't be made public? Because I personally can't see one. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Morse. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the materials -- I mean, the information that we're providing in general wouldn't have the procurement detail in it. So the procurement detail traditionally, and across a lot of different governments, not only ours, they don't want to put the number to which then bidders would simply bid to to meet that budget. But, you know, again, I -- if there's information that we're speaking to here, it typically wouldn't be considered confidential. If the question is about making our budget documents bigger, then I can certainly take that back and have a look at it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Morse.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you. Yeah, I guess to get into some more specific questions, I would encourage the Minister -- I mean, I prefer making information public as much as possible. It helps the public do their own scrutiny. Even if they don't read it, the information's out there. And I think that substantiations are important for helping them understand why Members may make the decisions the way they make, why Members may not oppose projects, but it's a little bit hard to say when all you have is the name of the project and nothing more to go on. So I would always encourage transparency where possible and when there isn't really a good reason not to be transparent. And I can just say for the substantiations that I've been able to see for all of these projects, there's nothing in there that need to be confidential. It's all this is why the government's spending this money. And I dare even say the substantiations are quite good.

So to get into a specific question, on the NWT courts modernization part, I note -- well, actually -- sorry, Mr. Chair. This is exactly what I -- this is the problem I'm talking about. I was about to start asking questions about the substantiation and I'm now just realizing, of course, that substantiation is confidential. So I

got to find a way to ask the question what the substantiation is. So can I get a description of the substantiation of the NWT courts modernization, please, before I ask questions about it. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Morse. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And -- doesn't help. Mr. Chair, I was -- I'm looking at a blank page. Can I turn that to the deputy minister, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister. Deputy minister McKay.

**MR. BILL MCKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the substantiation for this project is to replace the aging EOL courts management system, so that's called FACTS, and that manages day-to-day operations but it's -- it's fairly old and needs to be replaced so we need to modernize it with an electronic system that will allow for e-filing and digitizing of court-related paperwork. So it'll basically modernize and make the system more user friendly. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, deputy minister McKay. We'll go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Mr. Chair. And, yeah, if I could get a bit elaboration. The part that I was kind of interested in is alignment with government priorities. So is there substantiation speaking to that specific item? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there is. And I appreciate the question it doesn't necessarily line up from the title of the project what it is. But by having a modernization project of this nature, we're actually being -- making it easier for residents to access government services. It provides the ability to make services more accessible to all residents across the entire territory. It helps us decentralize those services, gives an opportunity to greater decentralize the services but also greater decentralize potentially positions associated with those services. These are obviously economic drivers. They are also obviously public safety drivers. And certainly to the extent that the justice system needs to conduct itself quickly and efficiently and in a manner that is in best keeping with best practices, that is definitely a core function of ensuring the justice system which is functioning at its best which is certainly a safety element. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** That's it for this round. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member from Frame Lake. Any further questions? The Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, I'm just scrolling furiously and possibly not getting somewhere where I want to get to fast enough. However could I get a substantiation for the technology service centre infrastructure ever greening, please. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member from Great Slave. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is simply an amount that allows us to ensure that the existing infrastructure that we have -- technological infrastructure we have remains current. There are a number of assets that come due for support and that are -- whether that's servers, the networks, storage, telecommunications, all of which, I think -- you know, I don't want to presuppose or assume, but technology changes very quickly. It changes quickly on a government scale as well and so this provides us the ability to maintain some currency within that space by using this project budget. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister. Back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Excuse me, I'm having a little bit of a frog in my throat. It says here replacement of capital server network and storage infrastructure. In that substantiation, does the decision -- does the decision-making process that Cabinet commits to for many of its decision-making instruments apply? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member from Great Slave. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I mean, obviously every element of the budget does at some point come through the department of -- well, sorry, not the department of FMB but through the FMB. But this is an item that is a standing -- I guess a standing element sort of its own pot. It doesn't necessarily, quite frankly -- I mean, what we're dealing with is -- just to put some numbers to it, 7,000 different devices for all staff which, you know, 6,000 plus public servants, offices across 33 communities, some of which are on fibre,

some of which are still on microwave, so an allocation of \$1.95 million does -- is meant to support all of that. It's a standing item. The individual decisions are -- which computer or which office gets a new system don't necessarily come to us, but ensuring that there's a pot there available for the folks to do those operational decisions, that part is. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. The Member of Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so I know that in the last Assembly there was a great deal of interest from the Members around how we make decisions and specifically how Cabinet makes decisions on various pieces of information before them, be it decision instruments, be it financial decisions. And so part of that conversation was climate change consideration so I'm just asking I guess, do climate change considerations occur in the substantiations of these projects? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member of Great Slave. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So climate change considerations are part of the substantiation sheets. And -- yes, I mean, in this case with respect to the \$1.9 million allotted, or roughly thereabouts allotted to maintain our basic infrastructure, it's -- this was not a consideration or a factor that, you know, went strongly really one way or the other. There was not a lot considered in this particular element. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. The Member of Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So something that I've been thinking about, and noticing a lot lately, is the conversation around computer servers, and specifically AI search engine servers, that sort of the thing and the like, contributing greatly to greenhouse gas emissions and water usage. So I recognize that these servers might not even exist necessarily in the territory. If they do, fine. If they are small scale, also fine. But I would hazard to guess that because of the way that the climate change considerations work, if these servers are indeed out of the territory we can say then, no, they don't impact climate change in the territory but, you know, everything's interconnected. If the Minister has any comments on that, that would be great. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member of Great Slave. Minister Wawzonek, do you have any comments?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I actually have to say I was wondering if the question would be more around the waste that's created by electronic devices, but -- so, again, I can say, look, I appreciate that, bringing attention to this particular item, you know, maybe when we go back and we look a little more carefully, if there's some element that we still want to consider when we are putting forward the substantiation but, you know, again, the essential nature of having this basic equipment to run the government I don't think is lost but just making sure we are turning our minds to the impacts. We don't -- they aren't right now using the kind of, you know, AI servers that are typical of having extremely high energy needs and very high emissions but as the Member said, there is a lot of interconnectedness when we rely on companies that have huge footprints. So, again, keeping those considerations in mind is appreciated, and we'll make sure to make note of it. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. Next on the list we have the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I have, well, first a question about the courts modernization project. It looks like the budget for that project has more than doubled since it was first proposed. Like, this is a three-year project and -- well, I guess the first question is the current estimate of the budget over the three years, do we have any assurance that that's going to be the final cost, or do we expect that costs might still sort of increase further beyond what the estimated budget is now? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member from Yellowknife North. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This project has seen an increase to its original budget, and it's likely to see some further increase. Mr. Chair, I don't get to do opening comments in terms of the topical areas we hit but I will say with respect to the IT infrastructure, over the last few years there's been numerous occasions where we've seen an early stage budget that winds up being significantly off, and that is something that the department, with the chief information officer, is trying to get a better handle on. Understanding the nature and the needs of the project more at the front end allows us to understand what the actual infrastructure -- technological

infrastructure requirements are better so that we can have a more accurate budget which has been a way of doing these kinds of projects, precisely like this one, that we are going to see a few budgets get adjusted as a result of that but hopefully as that process unfolds and becomes more engrained, we will see more accurate budgets earlier on. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. To the Member of Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering if this is the type of project that would have been improved by the project that's listed second, the information management and technology planning study's initiative. It seems like that initiative is trying to prevent situations like this from taking place but maybe the Minister can comment on whether this is a good example of what might be prevented by that planning study's project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member of Yellowknife North. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is precisely what I was speaking to. But if I may, I might suggest having the chief information officer just speak to that a little bit further. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. Mr. Heffernan.

**MR. DAVID HEFFERNAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this is exactly the kind of thing that we're trying to address with the \$1 million in preplanning or the planning studies. Oftentimes, when -- in the past, when a project was approved, we only had a high level idea of what the project is. We didn't have detailed requirements. And so this is all intended to give you a better upfront estimate. Similar to how you would do it in a building of a building or a road, you do sort of preplanning, geotechnical design, that sort of thing. This is very similar. But in the IT world, it allows us to get to a greater degree of certainty on what a project scope is going to be, what the budget is going to be, and then hopefully avoid these situations where we end up with a two-year project that turns into a five-year project that doubles its budget and takes forever to complete, so.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Mr. Heffernan. To you there, Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that's good news. I'm also wondering if in a project like this where, like it's multi-year and then year by year either we realize we need to increase



the scope, like the replacement of driver's licensing system, my understanding was that it initially was supposed to be improvements and then later on decided well, we better replace the whole system. So if a project is sort of year after year, either the cost turned out to be way greater or the scope is increasing, to what extent do we have off ramps for a project like this where there might be an option to just like stop and not do any more? Like, is it sort of decided that as soon as a project is started that we have to follow it to its conclusion and just keep spending sort of any amount of money to just finish the thing, or what kinds of consideration goes into at what point do we find an off ramp and just say it's good enough or -- I mean, using this specific project as an example, but maybe there's others too. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member Yellowknife North. Minister Wawzonek.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One consideration with -- well, I guess two considerations with off ramps initially. The first one that I was going to suggest is that we not put ourselves into a situation where the cost of coming off on the off ramp actually winds up being just kicking a cost down the line and being greater later. Again, not dissimilar to actual physical infrastructure that you can delay a renovation, you can delay a fix, but you may wind up with a bigger problem down the line. We do, you know, obviously -- and certainly I'm trying to put it back into this context, if it's clear that the value can't be delivered within the scope of the project that it is, you certainly -- and we have seen projects in the IT space in the last few years that have had to come to a stop and not advance because the initial estimate is just too low, and it can't move forward. In other cases, you can take it and limit the scope and do just part of what you want to do. You can try to create a system that will allow you to build onto it later, and then you can also then, you know, try to ensure that the technology that you're using or the software that you're using is at least modern, can at least be, you know, again triaging what the situation is. So there's definitely these opportunities to either stop a project, delay a project, or rescope it, depending on just how big the problem is or how much risk there is involved. That's probably about the best I could do without a more specific example. But, again, I appreciate the question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Minister Wawzonek. The Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** That's fine, Mr. Chair. That's all my questions on this. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member from Yellowknife North. Any further questions from committee? Seeing none.

The Department of Finance, Office of the Chief Information Officer, infrastructure investments, \$5,068,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you, Members. Please return to the Department of Finance summary found on page 33.

Department of Finance, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$5,068,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 41-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026  
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – FINANCE –  
DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** I move that the committee defer further consideration of the capital estimates for the Department of Finance at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Inuvik Boot Lake Member. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bconsideration of the Department of Finance 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, total department is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. And thank you to the Minister. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

Committee, you have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Department of Justice. Does the Minister of Justice wish to bring in witnesses to the chamber?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, Mr. Chair, I do. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Does committee agree? Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the chamber. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me on my left is Charlene Doolittle, the deputy minister of the Department of Justice. And on my right is James Bancroft, the director of corporate services with the Department of Justice. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed to the details contained in the table document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Committee, the Department of Justice begins on page 62. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning on page 63. Are there any questions? Okay, seeing none.

The Department of Justice, corrections, infrastructure investments, \$880,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Next we will -- we have court services on page 65 with the information item on 66. Are there any questions? We have the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I note that the project here listed is a washroom accessibility upgrade for the Yellowknife courthouse. Could the Minister, please, provide a substantiation for this project. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thanks to the Member from Great Slave. Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Yellowknife courthouse was built in 1977 and 1978, and the existing washrooms on floors 2 to 6 are original to the building. These washrooms have a 90-degree enclosed vestibule entry with doors on each side of the vestibule. Obviously, this is not an accessible washroom, and upgrades are required to ensure that all residents are able to use these facilities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Minister of Justice. The Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. And it's always good to hear that we are increasing accessibility to our public-facing offices. I'm curious, and I apologize if it's not the right Minister that I should be asking but as it is his project I will ask him. The way that we weigh capital projects and how we choose certain buildings for upgrades,

I understand it's a bit of a sliding scale of this is falling apart or this is very, very important. Could the Minister speak as to why this upgrade is occurring over maybe other buildings in the GNWT? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member Great Slave. Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'll speak a bit to my experience in my previous role. You know, I was generally given a slate of options for capital projects and some of those include accessibility options, and so as Minister I would move forward with those that I personally prioritized those. In this instance here, these repairs -- or sorry, these renovations are resulting from a human rights adjudication panel decision about the accessibilities of the washrooms. And, you know, that's why we have the human rights adjudication panel so that when there are issues like this identified, they can be rectified. And so I'm thankful that this is one that we are rectifying. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Minister of Justice. The Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that clarification; I greatly appreciate it. I don't have any further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you to the Member Great Slave. Any further questions from committee? Seeing none.

Department of Justice, court services, infrastructure investment, \$600,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Members, please return now to the Department of Justice summary found on page 62. Department of Justice, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$1,480,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 42-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026  
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – JUSTICE –  
DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the capital estimates for the

Department of Justice at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Justice, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, total departmental deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. And thank you to the Minister. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. There is a motion on the floor there to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. Mahsi. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now report progress. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 193-20(1) and would like to report progress with two motions carried. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Do I have a seconder? Member from Hay River South. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Reports on Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Kim Wickens):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, October 24th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements

4. Returns to Oral Questions
  5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
  6. Acknowledgements
  7. Oral Questions
  8. Written Questions
  9. Returns to Written Questions
  10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
  11. Petitions
  12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
  13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
  14. Tabling of Documents
  15. Notices of Motion
  16. Motions
  17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
  18. First Reading of Bills
  19. Second Reading of Bills
  20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
    - Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates
  21. Report of Committee of the Whole
  22. Third Reading of Bills
  23. Orders of the Day
- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, folks.

This House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 24th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Unedited Hansard