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**LEGISLATIVE  
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**Day 33**

**20<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**HANSARD**

**Thursday, October 24, 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

Unedited Hansard



**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Thursday, October 24, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson):** Colleagues, I'd like to thank Lillian Elias, the elder, for the opening blessing. As well, I'd like to thank our sergeant-at-arms for the last time bringing us in. So thank you very much, Floyd, for your great service to us.

Ministers' statements. Minister from Municipal and Community Affairs.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 71-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BUSINESS  
LICENCE ESERVICES**

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to provide opening remarks this week at the 2024 NWT recreation and Parks Association Conference, and I wanted to recognize the program coordinators, youth representatives, and recreational professionals who have all gathered here in Yellowknife this week.

This year's conference theme, Resilience in recreation, is both timely and relevant. Recreation plays a key role in supporting resilience, in equipping participants with valuable life skills, in creating a sense of belonging, and in nurturing physical and mental wellbeing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone who has dedicated their time and efforts to promoting recreation and wellness across the Northwest Territories. I would particularly like to recognize the NWT recreation and Parks Association for their dedication to the promotion and delivery of recreation programs. Finally, I want to recognize the How I Survived podcast that officially launched Tuesday through a collaboration between the NWT recreation and Parks Association and the University of Alberta. I look forward to hearing firsthand stories of how recreation gave survivors of residential and day

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I hope that all participants have a wonderful conference and bring back valuable insight to their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** A Minister's statement dear to my heart. Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 72-20(1):  
COLLABORATIVE WORK ON LAND  
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to working collaboratively with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations on land administration and management, specifically around traditional use cabins on public land. Our ongoing efforts reflect our shared priorities to develop respectful, transparent, and effective land use policies that support traditional land use, harvesting rights, and community wellbeing. To achieve this, the Department of Environment and Climate Change is engaging with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to develop a new approach to the administration and management of traditional use camps and cabins on public land.

This work is focused on establishing appropriate long-term policies that respect completed land, resources, and self-government agreements, while also considering ongoing negotiations. We are working to develop land management practices that reflect the realities of today's Northwest Territories and its diverse land users. Our government recognizes the deep cultural and historical connection Indigenous peoples have with the land, Mr. Speaker.

The work to develop a new approach will take time and must be done collaboratively with Indigenous partners. In the interim, the department has been working to implement short-term solutions to address a number of concerns, including issues around lease rent and lease rent arrears. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories will pause the collections of outstanding arrears for

recreational leases held by Indigenous persons with asserted or established Aboriginal and/or treaty rights to harvest in the area where their lease is located. This pause will remain in effect while the work to develop a new approach is underway. We are in the process of notifying all recreational leaseholders about this program and are ensuring Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations have the information they need to support their Members. It is important to note that a pause in collections does not delete or forgive lease rent arrears. Mr. Speaker, any decision to forgive arrears for Indigenous land users with recreational leases will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific circumstances of each lessee. This program does not include property taxes or associated fees.

The department has also invited Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, through the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat, to participate in a collaborative process to reduce lease rents for recreational leases held by Indigenous persons with asserted or established Aboriginal and/or treaty rights in the area where their lease is located. We are hopeful that discussions will begin this fall, and that work could result in an amendment to the Northwest Territories land regulations.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, collaboration is key to this process. We will continue to engage with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations as we move forward, recognizing their vital role in land management decisions. This work is part of our broader commitment to reconciliation, fostering partnerships, and ensuring that the interests of Indigenous communities are respected and supported in all aspects of land management and administration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Ministers' statements. Minister for Infrastructure.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 73-20(1):  
UPDATE ON THE MACKENZIE VALLEY  
HIGHWAY

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to provide an update on the Mackenzie Valley Highway project, an ambitious initiative that reflects our continued commitment to fostering sustainable development in the North.

The Mackenzie Valley Highway project dates back several decades, with discussions starting as early as the 1970s. Over the years, extensive planning and consultation have taken place to ensure that this project respects the land and the communities it will serve. Earlier

this year, we strengthened our partnership with the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, or SSI, by signing an amended and restated memorandum of understanding. This agreement builds on our shared commitment to planning, promoting, and seeking funding for the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Their insights and knowledge have been integral in shaping a project that is not only economically beneficial but also culturally sensitive and environmentally responsible.

A year ago, we reached a significant milestone by submitting the developer's assessment report. I am pleased to report that the environmental assessment remains on track for completion by mid-2025. Pending the outcome of the assessment by the review board, we anticipate an additional 12 to 18 months will be necessary to secure regulatory authorizations, address outstanding land tenure requirements, and advance procurement for construction. As you know, we do not currently have funding secured for construction activities. While we do not yet have the construction funding in place, I want to reassure residents that we are actively working to update construction cost estimates and engage with Canada on potential funding opportunities. As you know, the GNWT does not have the financial capacity to undertake this project alone.

Mr. Speaker, while we have not broken ground on the Mackenzie Valley Highway yet, I want to highlight the work that was successfully completed on the Prohibition Creek Access Road. This 6.7 kilometer stretch of new all-season highway from Canyon Creek to Christina Creek, south of Norman Wells, opened to the public last month. Combined with the previously built Canyon Creek All-Season Access Road, there is now a total of 20.7 kilometers of the seasonal Mackenzie Valley Winter Road accessible all year-round, improving the safety, reliability and resilience of the Northwest Territories transportation system in the face of climate change.

This not only supports the ongoing improvement of the key transportation corridor through the Mackenzie Valley, it is also a capacity-building project to help prepare businesses, workers and residents, for greater involvement in future construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of the Mackenzie Valley Highway are many. It will improve transportation connectivity, improve safety and more reliable access for residents, businesses, and emergency services. Enhanced access will unlock new economic opportunities for local business, stimulate investment, and strengthen the regional economy, particularly important



given the recent challenges posed by low water levels, rising fuel costs, and the growing cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward I assure you we remain committed to working collaboratively with all parties to ensure the successful completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and together we can build a future that supports economic growth and enhances the well-being of all residents in the Mackenzie Valley. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 74-20(1):  
THE SIGNING OF THE INUVIALUIT  
COORDINATION AGREEMENT

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, on September 30th, 2024, Canada's national Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Government of Canada, and Inuvialuit Qitunrariit Inuuniarnikkun Maligaksat made history by signing the Inuvialuit Coordination Agreement and Fiscal Agreement.

This historic agreement identifies how the implementation of the Inuvialuit Qitunrariit Inuuniarnikkun Maligaksat, also referred to as the Inuvialuit Family Way of Living Law, will be supported in the Northwest Territories. This is the first coordination agreement implemented under the federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families in the territory, and the first for Inuit in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this agreement, Maligaksat will administer child well-being and advocacy programs for Inuvialuit children, youth, and families across the territory, including voluntary child and family support services and agreements. This means the GNWT's community social services workers will no longer provide voluntary support services and agreements to Inuvialuit in the territory. Instead, Maligaksat will provide these services.

While the GNWT maintains responsibility for protection services to Inuvialuit in the Northwest Territories, our government and Maligaksat will collaborate in areas of protection services like investigations, cultural continuity, and housing continuity planning. The GNWT will also maintain responsibility for prevention, including voluntary support and protection services for First Nations, Metis, other Inuit such as the Nunavummiut, and non-Indigenous children, youth, and families.

Mr. Speaker, we understand the successful implementation of the Inuvialuit Coordination Agreement requires collaboration and a shared vision. To that end, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to working with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Maligaksat, Canada, and all frontline staff to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

For a long time, Indigenous communities have voiced concerns about the delivery of child and family services, both past and present, often highlighting the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in the system. In response to these concerns, the Department of Health and Social Services continues to work to fundamentally shift child and family services to a culturally-safe system. We have a standing offer with all Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories to meet and discuss the GNWT's implementation of the federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families, and to share information and opportunities for exercising jurisdiction related to child and family services outside of self-government agreements. I encourage all Indigenous governments to reach out to my office to continue this conversation.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation on this historic achievement and thank them, the Maligaksat and Canada, for working with us to finalize this agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Ministers' statements.

Before we go any further, colleagues, I'd like to recognize Sheila Bassett-Kellett for being here. She's a former deputy minister. She was my boss at one point in time way back when, and she was a city manager. So welcome to our House. Thank you.

Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 374-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Northerners really care about their health care. It matters. And a lot of people are saying this, Mr. Speaker, many people. As a matter of fact, they also believe and acknowledge the Minister of health may mean well but they really feel deeply down inside that the Minister is out of touch. Many people are

telling me this, Mr. Speaker, good people, such as the workers, the employees, the staff, Mr. Speaker. But they say to themselves, why isn't the Minister in touch with the primary care health doctors, staffing levels, and their issues. It should be top of mind. I know it would be top of mind if it was my choice. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because when you're the health Minister, you should know what matters to the people, family, and Northerners. That's why I know I would know the numbers.

The Minister can't keep hiding between NTHSSA and say oh no, it's their problem. She either realizes that she's in on the problem or not in the problem. I worry that she might have quietly quit and keeps downloading this to the patient experience or the other boards to manage these problems.

Mr. Speaker, staffing at the hospital and in our system should be absolutely top of mind. Every day she should be getting reading and results of what's happening over there. I know this because people are telling me, Mr. Speaker, people who know better.

Mr. Speaker, the solution of this government may be trying to get -- to solve some of these problems by hiring more deputy ministers but, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now nurses and doctors and admin staff don't need more deputy ministers; we need smart people, Mr. Speaker. Again, the government's solution is getting a Russian -- sorry, a Russian nesting --

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** -- point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Government Leader.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is speaking about individuals who are not on the floor of this House, not here to defend themselves, referencing that the hiring of deputy ministers and said we don't need deputy ministers; we need smart people. I think that's clearly out of line. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Government Leader. Member from Range Lake -- or sorry, Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** It seems that we're always both to blame.

**MR. SPEAKER:** (audio).

**MR. HAWKINS:** I think -- (audio) Mr. Speaker, I didn't characterize they're bad people. As a matter of fact, if two more seconds the Minister would have said we'd hire a Jane Philipott, a health czar, Mr. Speaker. The intent was not to

hurt individuals or single the single individual out, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Thank you for your time. Member, your comments about the Minister is my area of questioning. Do you wish to withdraw those comments about the Minister at this time?

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I'm actually -- I can't actually -- seriously, I'm not wasting time. I can't actually hear what I'm asking to withdraw to be clear. And to be absolutely clear, Mr. Speaker, I was referring to an entity, not an individual.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. We'll just take a brief second here. Thank you.

---BRIEF RECESS

Member, so I guess I should be clear what I'm asking. You were very close to the line talking about the deputy ministers and about smart people, but saying the Minister's quietly speaking is of concern to me -- quitting, sorry, quietly speaking, quietly quitting. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I -- specifically to the quiet quitting comment, I certainly withdraw it, and I apologize for that and to the House. Thank you very much for recognizing the differences. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, remember when we were talking about the public service, we have to make sure that these hard-working people, we don't cross the line. And we were getting pretty close yesterday and today. So I will start calling it if it continues. Thank you.

Member from Yellowknife Centre, you may conclude your statement.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thought I had about two minutes on the clock. I plan not to abuse the time; don't worry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, where I was going with this is -- and, again, I recognize and I appreciate your Whitford guidance on that particular initiative, and I do recognize in my Member's -- I'm going to pause and say I thank the Premier for pointing that out. I do think good order does come with drama, but I do respect why he did that.

Mr. Speaker, to get back right on point, I think we should go so far as rather than finding new people in the system to solve the same problems, we need to hire a health care czar like Jane Philipott, someone who knows health care issues down to her DNA, she knows them

from the top to the bottom, only someone of that type of skill to see how our system works together because it's so important to know the full integration. So we can hire all our people or reshuffle the deck no matter what we get. At the end of the day, unless we're willing to think big and be big, we're never -- we're going to just keep getting the same results, Mr. Speaker.

So to wrap this up, Mr. Speaker, if the department again wants -- sorry, if the government wants to think big about health, maybe it should start asking the question why do we have health and social services tied together? Maybe we should allow them to go independently separate -- their ways. That way we can allow the health Minister to focus in on health and the system allowed to do what it needs to do. And my recommendation is we hire someone who -- like, an old fashioned hospital administrator who knows how to run these systems because that's what they're trained for, skilled for, and they certainly know all the ins and outs that make the very difference to making staff happy and the public's needs served. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 375-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is our responsibility to act as our constituents' advocates, and though we spend most of our time here working on the bigger picture, we recognize that when policies and processes fail, intervention into individual circumstances is necessary. We are our constituents' last resort but when it comes to working with medical travel, increasingly MLAs are becoming Northerners' only option. Medical travel's inadequacies are becoming so severe that it's consuming much of our constituency work, and this is clear the system is not working for our people.

I was hopeful earlier this year when I brought concerns forward of medical travel's inability to provide quality health care to my constituents. This failure has created severe financial burden on working families in my riding, caused them a great deal of stress, and deprived them of access to health care that they need. Initially, the Minister gave me a path forward to rectify the situation. We were asked to work with physicians who initially treated these constituents --

**MR. SPEAKER:** (audio).

**MR. TESTART:** Okay. We were asked to -- who initially treated these constituents in Alberta to provide updated paperwork which would supposedly ensure a reimbursement would be forthcoming. Unfortunately, the reimbursements health and social services offered amount to far below what the families spent cumulatively on hotels, flights, and meals there.

I was informed later that offering these families any reimbursement at all was an error. The Minister explained that she would only honour these meager reimbursements for one family only because they could not take back -- the department could not take back the assurances they gave the family first while I provided the necessary paperwork. None of the other families I'm working with in my riding will see any reimbursements at all.

Mr. Speaker, I'm dismayed to hear that what the Minister told me in the previous session was a mistake. Upholding the public nature of our health care services is not a mistake. Ensuring patients and their families are not put through additional distress when dealing with life threatening illnesses is not a mistake. Allowing patients who are incapacitated an escort who can understand a plan of care for their loved ones is not a mistake. Northerners want to see us work with them in -- work for them in this Assembly. So what does it say about our health care system when even their MLAs cannot help them? Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister about how we can fix our broken medical travel system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 376-20(1):  
PUBLIC SERVICE

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I care deeply about the public service as a past public servant and active local union president. I also recognize that the public service makes up a lot of the working population of this territory. And, yes, the numbers of total GNWT staff have gone up dramatically in recent years. The increase incurs in critical functions that we all rely on like health care and education supports. But the other thing we don't talk about as much is that through collective bargaining, people in precarious employment terms or casuals were made permanent. The increase reflects employees that were given the security and benefits of permanent employment through collective bargaining. Those greater numbers of employees were always there. We just started treating them more fairly.

Compensation and benefits can be excellent, but if a work culture is failing to support its workers they won't want to stay on. We've seen this in health care most acutely. I'm afraid the frustration and malaise has spread to all parts of the public service.

This past July, the results of the 2023 Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey were released, and employees have said quite clearly throughout all metrics that they are less satisfied with their jobs as compared to 2021.

I speak regularly to the president of the UNW, and she tells me that employee morale is at rock bottom. Members are telling the UNW leadership that they are stressed to hear their employer constantly talk about ways to save money. Unfilled positions are being cut while operational bottlenecks are not being addressed. Usually after a collective agreement is ratified, Members feel a bit of positivity but the UNW is not hearing much of that right now. Unionized employees tell their leadership that they are still stressed about finances while at the same time feeling like an axe is sitting above their heads.

When I was involved with the union, I heard from folks across the GNWT who said that they felt stuck within a hierarchy that expected unthinking loyalty and did not reward creativity. I have heard my colleague from Frame Lake speak many times about looking to ways that we might flatten those hierarchies and have more program staff feel supported to propose new ideas or more effective ways of providing programs and services without getting shut down or shut out. I think the public service is full of creative people in all parts of this territory who want to feel vital and valued.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to the Minister of Finance about this very issue for many years predating my time as an MLA. Seen through the lens of possibility, the 2023 survey reinforces many of my hopes for the public service that we should be creating opportunities for staff to grow and feel excited to get to do trailblazing work while being supported through mentorship options that will enable them to get to their and the GNWT's goals.

The best managers I had in the public service treated me as a respected part of a team where everyone's input had value and was discussed openly. If we want to build a positive GNWT culture, we need to infuse that culture with cooperation and support within our workforce as well as for those whom we serve. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 377-20(1):  
NWT LITERACY COUNCIL

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on a heartwarming note to end the week, I'd like to shine a spotlight on the transformative work that the NWT Literacy Council has been doing in communities across the territory. Their program Reading Together provides opportunities for fathers who are incarcerated to connect with their children through bedtime stories. They get to choose a book that their children would like, create a reading kit to send to their kids, including new pajamas, stuffies, and a toothbrush, and then the dad gets to make a recording of him reading the book and sending bedtime wishes. This program, with the help of the North Slave Correctional Centre, is strengthening language skills and literacy for both children and fathers in a powerful way. It bridges the physical distance separating families while nurturing the special emotional bond that is forged during bedtime story time.

Another innovative NWT Literacy Council program launched earlier this year is called Early Words. It's a partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, along with the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation and the Canadian Pediatrics Society. Early Words was actually created by a speech-language pathologist, and it recognizes that the foundation for literacy starts right from birth. It helps train frontline health care providers in how best to support families with early language and brain development long before a child reaches junior kindergarten.

The program has been piloted in Inuvik and Tsiigehtchic and has involved elders and traditional knowledge experts to understand how best to support early language development. The program also provides culturally appropriate books to health centres that are distributed to families and oriented to children at specific ages and stages of development. The funding for the literacy council's involvement in the Early Words project ends next March 2025 but the intention, I understand, is for HSS to carry on supporting early language development with the tools and resources provided through the project.

Now, I know that our health system has some tough work ahead to identify core and noncore services in order to make our system more sustainable, but I truly hope that this kind of program is viewed as core because of its crucial role in building our economic and social

foundations. Mr. Speaker, these Literacy Council programs are critical to set the stage for future lifelong learning, and I commend them on their work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 378-20(1):  
RED TAPE REDUCTION

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw attention to the difficulty small businesses encounter when dealing with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, owning and operating a small business in this the Northwest Territories is no easy feat. Overhead costs are high, there are extreme labour shortages, and ongoing recovery from disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change impacts are very real scenarios. With these challenges, what these small businesses can do without is administrative burden that impedes their entrepreneurship.

Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding have relayed the following examples to me highlighting their experience dealing with the Government of the Northwest Territories:

- It took 350 days to secure approval for road signage from the Department of Infrastructure, signage aimed at helping visitors arriving in Inuvik.
- Local suppliers are being disqualified in the request for proposal process due to unrealistic requirements.
- Having to wait 200-plus days to receive a response on an application for the ECE work subsidy program.
- A broad and vague application of the market disruption clause in the ITI SEED program.

These are but a few examples, Mr. Speaker, and they hit on various departments across the GNWT.

Mr. Speaker, if we were serious about building a strong economic foundation and supporting businesses in the Northwest Territories, we need to alleviate pressures on entrepreneurs. The Government of the Northwest Territories shouldn't be a roadblock or barrier to running a business. What is being done to improve this situation by way of revising policies, Mr. Speaker, streamlining processes and ensuring that service standards are met?

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories red tape reduction working group was created in November 2020 to encourage entrepreneurship by reducing red tape and regulatory burdens on small businesses. I would like to get a sense on what this working group is doing to reduce red tape and the burdens facing small businesses, Mr. Speaker. I would have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 379-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE SERVICES

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March and April of this year, the residents of the Beaufort Delta region were advised that they may have been exposed to an infection. The following communities and some of its residents may have been exposed:

- Aklavik,
- Fort McPherson,
- Paulatuk,
- Sachs Harbour, and
- Ulukhaktok.

Residents from the noted communities were advised that if they were patients at one of these health centres that they were to get tested for HEP C, HEP B, or HIV. Dr. Kondola, the NWT chief public health officer, stated that the possibility of contracting the infection is very low; getting tested is the best thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, the possible infection may have come from dental instruments that were not properly cleaned, disinfected, or sterilized. In this day and age, how is something as serious as this supposed to happen? We have all the new technologies at our disposal, and our small communities are still being neglected. Our small remote communities need the same care as the regional centres and the capital.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Department of Health and Social Services is trying to accommodate the residents of these communities with their dental needs. It seems the patients from the Beaufort Delta region are losing out on appointments and being comfortably accommodated. The residents who travel to Yellowknife do not arrive until late in the afternoon, at times miss their appointments and are placed in hotels that is not meeting their expectations.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that this government start to look out for the basic needs of our residents, the Northwest Territories, especially smaller remote communities. The health and well-being of these patients is very important to these smaller communities. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 380-20(1):  
ILLICIT DRUG CRISIS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I will be speaking about the drug crisis in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, there are drugs in our opportunities that have not been seen before such as the new types of fentanyl. Ambulances and first responders need to be prepared. We all know illegal drugs are causing chaos and affecting safe housing. I am worried that in areas where there is a lot of drug use happening, our most vulnerable residents will not get the support they need.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard that public advisories have been issued related to the detection of certain drugs. The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer has released alerts about overdose related deaths. The Premier has also spoken about introducing legislation to target criminal networks, which is essential, and I look forward to seeing it. But I see an even more pressing need that should be addressed now.

Mr. Speaker, our ambulance services and first responders must act quickly and enter areas where most people do not want to go - low income neighbourhoods, encampments, vacant apartments, and shelters.

Overdoses are on the rise. First response in these situations requires immediate intervention. One such solution is the use of naloxone to reverse opioid overdose. Media releases from the department of health remind residents that naloxone kits are available at hospitals, health centres, and pharmacies. They say drug users should be familiar with these kits and have them on hand. But, Mr. Speaker, the availability of these kits in health centres is not enough. Widespread distribution within our communities needs to be ensured. All our residents need access to paramedics or properly trained first responders --

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of MACA.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 381-20(1):  
TULITA HEALTH CENTRE PROJECT

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my statement is on the Tulita Health Centre that's currently under construction, a very unique design building located in the central part of the community. However, the project has encountered numerous delays, and today we're proud to say it's got a deadline for completion.

The 18th Assembly approved this capital project some five years ago. After COVID delays, recent barging delays due to low water levels, constant delays have faced this project from moving ahead. I was proud to escort the Minister of ECC and the Minister of Health and Social Services there during the week of July -- or pardon me, September the 23rd. Another delay happened where we couldn't make the trip in to Tulita to see the building and the residents as well because of bad weather. However, with deteriorating materials as we move along, the project is now at the very foot of a schedule that's going to see completion within the next couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very essential building and, as I mentioned, one long overdue, and despite the fact of challenges I'm proud to say, underneath this new administration or this new leadership we're going to see the light of day. Later I will have questions to the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 382-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP MODEL

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night the Premier and health Minister presented to the Standing Committee on Social Development on their new health system sustainability unit. I want to be clear that I commend the Premier for taking this action and support this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to get some comments on the record about this initiative. I heard staff saying they're not just looking at reducing service but repeatedly referring back to the core services inventory, so it really

seemed to me like services are currently the focus and appreciated the Premier's reassurance in that regard and just wanted to, again, get my comments on the record that I want us to look a little deeper.

Mr. Speaker, in March, the territorial medical association sent a letter to the Minister of health titled Restoring Balance with a number of recommendations for improving system sustainability. Those recommendations included reducing unnecessary medical travel, reducing inefficient administrative tasks, workforce planning, and optimizing partnerships for quality improvement. So there are a lot of changes aside from just service reductions that we can look at, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the NWTMA advocated for reevaluation of the health system's leadership model. This included the following recommendations which are particularly relevant to assessing the current management structures. They recommended that we analyze the efficiency of the current administrative model, including identifying and reducing any duplication of management positions between health and social services and NTHSSA and supporting a distributed leadership model that encourages problem solving close to the source rather than top down decision-making.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about system sustainability, we need to be talking about the management and staff retention concerns Members have been detailing repeatedly in the House this sitting and have pointedly emphasized in our accountability and oversight committee report read into the record yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I stand by that report and support and encourage the Minister to take bold and decisive action to address these issues. As a start, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see a public acknowledgement by the Minister of the significant systemic issues facing our health care system and public communication of a comprehensive plan to address them. Mr. Speaker, the principles of good leadership and management tell us that listening to frontline staff is key to effective decision-making. Let's listen to our doctors' and nurses' suggestions and carefully consider them in reviewing health care system sustainability. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the system sustainability unit needs to rate options based on potential savings level of impact and ease of implementation, and I can't

overemphasize enough the need to use change management principles and comprehensive planning when changes are proposed. We have to plan out our changes carefully to ensure effective implementation. Mr. Speaker, we are in this together. I know the health Minister wants to see change. I know MLAs want to see change. And staff want to see change. Let's get it done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 383-20(1):  
ADDICTIONS LINK TO  
INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about trauma and substance abuse problems of which is -- trauma is a priority of this government. Here in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker, especially in our small communities, we see intergenerational trauma and its impacts. Broadly, intergenerational trauma can be caused by a variety of different factors including removal of -- removal from homelands, genocide, sexual or gender violence, institutionalized and direct racism, incarceration, and exploitation.

We are all aware of the legacy of the residential school systems in the NWT. The tragic effects of these are still visible today and have led to trauma that is passed on through generations.

Mr. Speaker, many of those who went to residential schools turn to substance abuse as a way of coping. We know from government data that rates were alcohol abuse are high in the Northwest Territories. According to a 2023 report from the NWT statistics bureau, 72.3 percent of current drinkers in the Deh Cho riding are classified as heavy drinkers.

Mr. Speaker, we hear about the youth in Fort Smith this morning on CBC radio. This is also happening in our communities. Addictions destroy families. There is a strong link between trauma and addictions. Intergenerational trauma is alive and well from the government's decades of abuse of our people. I would like to know what our government is doing to address this problem. What opportunities are in place for healing for our people? I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 384-20(1):  
CULTURALLY SAFE HEALTHCARE  
SERVICES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It should be of no surprise that after hundreds of years of colonial governance, Indigenous communities struggle with our health care services and still do to this day. Our community has a long history of discriminatory practice such as forced sterilization, lack of acceptance for health and healing traditions, and this has fostered much fear and mistrust. This is compounded by the fact that their communities remain unserved by health and care services all while they suffer more than other populations from serious illness such as cancer due to contamination and pollution. It should therefore come as no surprise that they struggle to work with health care staff who often come from outside of the North, and they struggle too because they are often just as supported as the communities they are trying to serve.

In the last Assembly, improving cultural safety in our health care system and increase in services in our small communities was a big priority resulting in a report brought forward by the previous Minister which focused on providing the North with a culturally safety action plan. As a result, a cultural safety antiracism unit within the Department of Health and Social Services and Indigenous support staff at the office of the client experiences. However, my communities remain frustrated with a lack of community-based long-term care, northern-based addiction treatment and options, widespread midwifery services and recreation services for the youth. Now the Dene Nation has come forward with their own recommendations for this government to improve Indigenous health care. They are seeking the creation of a health care task force to ensure the development of strategies that are more responsive to the Dene people and their needs, provisions to provide health care workers with cultural training to enable them to understand and respect the values and beliefs and customs of the Dene people, an establishment of health care clinics in underserved areas where there is significant geographical barriers of lack of adequate and health infrastructure. The right of health care is for Indigenous nations, and this is a treaty right as the treaty included a clause to provide each community with a medicine chest. Today it feels like they're simply establishing more bureaucracy in the health care system and paying more administration to support Indigenous health care instead of honouring and responsibility provided in my communities with staff resources and strategies they need to live happier lives. Mr. Speaker, I would have

questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 385-20(1):  
CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR JULIE CAPOT-  
BLANC

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, Julie Capot-Blanc was born on February 11th, 1966, to Napoleon and Mary Capot-Blanc from Fort Nelson, BC. She was the sixth child of ten siblings. Julie grew up in Fort Nelson when the family eventually moved to the town of Fort Nelson in 1973. The family love to tell the story about when she was four years old. She would constantly cry after her older siblings when they would head off to school. After a bit of time, they got tired of it and her sister Violet decided that she would take Julie to school to stop her from crying. They did without registering her, but Julie loved it and she fit right in. This is how she started attending school.

Julie started visiting her sister in Fort Liard when she was about 15 years old. On one of her visits, she met Anthony, who turned out to be the love of her life. One time when they were hanging out with friends and her and Anthony started play-fighting. Julie pinned Anthony down and straddled him. Harry Fantasque said, Weh-ehh, we know she's going to be your wife, Anthony. A couple of years later, they ended up together and have been together since.

It was interesting that Anthony would not tell Julie this story until this summer. They had a good laugh and appreciated that Harry predicted their future!

I had the pleasure of getting to know Julie around 1996. Of those years, Julie held numerous jobs and sat on many committees that I worked with. In 2015, she found the job that was made for her. She became the government service officer for the community. I would like to share this story with you. As for her eulogy and some stories that are attached. I would like them to be deemed as read and printed in Hansard.

Julie cared about her job and always willing to go the extra mile, whether it was a road trip to an elder in a cabin or coming to another community to help. During the summer of 2023, she came to Fort Simpson and her and my CA helped the evacuees fill out the form so they would get help from the government. This was a typical of Julie.

Another of her passions was hand games. She started the Fort Liard Hand Games Society with



her nephew AJ Capot-Blanc, Margaret Klondike, Tyrone Berreault, and later Robert Loe and Roslyn Firth. She loved to follow the hand games team, whether it was in person or through multiple phone calls to her nephew to see how they were doing.

Unfortunately, on September 4th, 2024, she passed away, leaving a big hole for her community, friends and community and family. She will be greatly missed by her husband Anthony, her daughter Charmain, her granddaughter and partner in crime Madison, and her entire family and numerous friends. Thank you, Julie, for everything while you were and all that you've given. May you now rest in peace forever. You were dearly loved and will be terribly missed.

At 17, Julie welcomed a beautiful baby girl (Charmain Capot-Blanc). Charmain was their pride and joy. They enjoyed raising and doing things together with her. I can tell you; she was very proud of her. She loved to share stories about them with me.

In December 2005 she became a grandmother to Madison Julia Mae. From the first time Madison came home, she adored her. Julie was lovingly called Nana, and she referred to Maddy as "my little partner". She did everything and anything she could possibly do to help Madison. She was beyond spoiled by Nana. Benny, her great-nephew, was spoiled by Julie. She made sure he had what he needed.

Julie loved to go out on the land and would tag along with Anthony on his many adventures. Her mother Mary's best memories are of going camping with her. They would camp at Old Fort, the Petitot River and along highway 77. However, going boating on the river to their cabin at Fishermen Lake, was her favorite place to be. She found peace out there. Last year Julie tanned her very first moosehide. She was extremely excited and so proud, even showing it off to the elders. She loved beading earrings and would often give them out.

Over the years Julie has held numerous jobs and sat on many committees. Here are a few more stories about her as a GSO:

Within the community, Julie ensured residents and particularly elders, receive seamless service from GNWT departments and partners. Her good nature and diligence were offered to every client that came to the office. She took great time and care to bring services and information to elders' homes, cabins and where they lived, even if that meant on the highway. Julie did this often and kept regular check ins with her elders for many years and had a strong trusting relationship.

The Department of Executive developed a peer award program a few years back within Regional Operations to acknowledge team Members who lead with good values and service excellence. Julie has been recognized by her peers on numerous occasions for her support, excellence, and work ethic. The team will be acknowledging their cherished team member when describing the North STAR Award, which is the top award for serving elders, which Julie was nominated every year. She did everything with a smile and strong work ethic. She was a respected GNWT employee and Elder in her community and will be missed by her regional team and community.

Besides these passions, Julie was all about helping make the community of Fort Liard a better place to live. She was a hamlet and band councillor for the community. Residents of the community felt she was great at listening and assisting those in need of any services they required. She was about the people.

She was always available to anyone that needed a listening ear or a stern talking to (whether you wanted to hear it or not). She offered her help, support and advice when needed without any complaining. Julie had a big heart that was made of gold.

There were so many more fond memories of Julie to share but it'll turn into a novel, I'm sure. So, we ask you to think about your story with her, how you enjoyed that moment in time and fondly remember her.

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

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me further privilege to recognize Maureen McKinnon, the teacher from the Colville Lake school who is escorting the pages Briley and his brother Mason. Welcome to the Assembly. Mahsi.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to recognize Yellowknife North constituents Kate Hearn, whose birthday is today, and her husband Woody Stone. And I'd also like to recognize Yellowknife North constituents, if they're still here -- I can't even see -- Sheila Bassett-Kellett, former SAO of the city of Yellowknife, and Dave Kellett. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife South.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say I have two young pages in the House working with us today. Khalif Joseph and Junaid Mutoola are both residents of Yellowknife South. Thank you for being here.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Dave and Sheila Bassett-Kellett. Also Kate Hearn and her husband. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to recognize the -- I believe I can say the name properly. If not, I'm sure Hansard will say it correctly for me -- which is Araliya Fox. She's a Yellowknife Centre constituent, a student at William McDonald High School here in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I must apologize to Ms. Hearn. I had the pleasure of working with her when she was in lands. So I greatly appreciate you being here today as well.

If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chamber. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery, especially retired government workers.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 361-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just spoke about the health sustainability unit, and I think probably my questions are best directed towards the Premier on this one.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, can the Premier just reassure the public and reassure people watching that, you know, the sustainability unit is going to be looking at more than just service system cuts. If the Premier would like to share some more information

about that on the record, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for letting me address this issue. So across Canada, health care services are strained. The North is no different. We hear all the time in this House, I hear from my own constituents, there's issues in the health care system. That's not news. That's nothing new. That's an acknowledgement that I want to make clear that I am making today.

One of the things we're doing to address these issues is the establishment of the health care system sustainability unit. Now, this is a unit that is positioned within my Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs, so separate from the health care system, that is going to examine the health care system, look at what we are offering and how we're offering it, make a determination of what are the core services that we need to offer, so that we're in line and we can work towards this Assembly's priority of offering -- or ensuring residents have access to basic health care.

So this is not a unit to look at, okay, what's core and what can we get rid of. It's to look at what are the core services and how are we offering them and how can we ensure we're offering them in the best possible way. There could be instances where we are working at cross purposes in the system. When you have a system that is so large that it has so many employees that involves so many agreements with the Government of Canada, things can get missed. And we haven't had an opportunity to really focus on the system and really analyze it and see what we're doing. There have been attempts in the past. They've originated from within the system. And sometimes they just get absorbed into the daily work of the system. So this is to really look at what we're doing, how we're doing it, and how we can do it better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how will the system sustainability unit be using information like the 2020 Physician Workforce Plan, workforce planning in general, the letter from the NWTMA; how will they be using these documents to inform their work? There's been a lot of work done on system sustainability already by practitioners. How is the unit going to be taking advantage of this work that's already been done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the unit, it's not fully staffed up yet, but the

staff members that they have been pouring over all of these documents that the Member's referencing. A lot of work has been done. There's work that's been done 20 years ago that the staff are looking at. So we are really taking an approach that we don't need to start from scratch; a lot of work has been done. And even if there's, you know, letters from the medical association or things like that, those also offer insight into what issues we might want to focus on, so those documents are definitely being looked at as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you for those answers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how will the NWT Medical Association, the nurses' union, other organizations like that be engaged and have input into the decisions being made by the health care sustainability unit?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we're looking at this system, we need to speak with those individuals who know it best. And so a dedicated email address has been set up for frontline workers, workers throughout the health care system, to be able to reach out to the health care system sustainability unit and provide their input. We don't want this to be a top down approach. We want to hear from everyone. And so steps have already been taken, submissions have already been received, and from what I understand there seems to be a bit of an uptick in those submissions given that it's rolled out for a little while now and things are moving along.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that they've set up an email address. I think what I'd appreciate is kind of a reassurance that there's going to be fundamental inclusion in the decision-making by practitioners, by frontline staff. I noted the gap in my Member's statement of this happening in the health care system. It's not happening enough, this fundamental inclusion. So how is the health care system sustainability unit going to be including practitioner input into their decision-making beyond just an email address but maybe having physicians, nurses, representatives at the table? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll have to get back to the Member with some specific details about what meetings they plan on holding but there -- as I mentioned, this is not something that we're doing alone. And this unit is not there to make decisions about how things are going to work. They're there to look at, examine, investigate the system, and

bring forward recommendations for the decision-makers to be able to make decisions about how things work. And the best decisions are made with broad input. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 362-20(1):  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE, STAFFING  
AND ADMINISTRATION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services, and it's with respect to sort of a broader view of how to tackle some of the health and social services challenges. And, of course, first I'm concerned about, you know, is health too big? And that's not picking on anyone personally. It's a giant monolith. So.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister -- sorry, the Premier hands out portfolios per se, but would it help focus some of the challenges in by separating the portfolios so we could really deal with some of the robust challenges we've been raising and throwing towards the Ministers to say can you solve? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Yellowknife Centre, are you asking the Premier or are you asking the health Minister, because it kind of seems like you're asking the Premier a question.

**MR. HAWKINS:** No, I'm asking the Minister would it help so they could focus in on the challenges we have if we separated them. So would it help her do her job if health was a standing unit itself, health and social services separated. 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, whether it's in one department or it's in two departments, we do have dedicated staff that deal with the health stream and then we have dedicated staff that deal with the social services. Like, we have a director of social services that kind of deals and falls under that. The majority of the -- you know, like, the -- is the operation stuff which amalgamates into NTHSSA. So the authority is -- oversees both those two areas. So if the -- you know, it's not -- it's not -- I would not make that decision alone. But I don't -- I don't see that it would, you know -- at this point, I don't see that it would make a difference because we do focus majority of our -- of my

time is focused on the health portfolio -- on the health area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the -- what I would surely describe as a sincere answer on that question. It's a tough one to say hey, what do you think of dividing your portfolio to two. I think it was a fair answer.

Mr. Speaker, most hospitals or hospital types or authorities are run by people with PhDs, you know, and they come with the credentials of things known as public health administrators. Mr. Speaker, do we have that type of talent in the department of health overseeing the NTHSSA or even the Stanton hospital? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the decision to create the NTHSSA as one territorial health and social services came in 2016, long before my time, while I was still an employee within that -- the health area. The governance council structure at the time of the day, I even remember watching the Legislative Assembly, I remember hearing and seeing and talking with other people that were attending those meetings and the consultations to create the structure. The communities were very afraid that they would lose their voice on how health care and social services should be in their communities and as the government of the day decided that they would create the leadership council, the governing council, so that is the current -- the governing council of the NTHSSA. As to what their credentials are, I -- you know, they -- they're -- I don't have that in information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, again, in my research and looking around hospitals across Canada -- I mean, I didn't look at every one, I want to be clear, I wouldn't want to give you that impression. Would the Minister acknowledge and recognize that being a public health administrator, typically a PhD of some sort, is a specialized skill when it comes to management of health authorities? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Can you please explain what you mean by public administrator? We have CEOs, COOs, and so are you talking about those positions or that -- thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very specific to health care administration. So it's a very technical skill about overseeing hospitals. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the structure, we do have a CEO that oversees the NTHSSA. 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. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is we do not have someone of that type of caliber in our system. Can the Minister confirm we have no one of that credentials of being a public health administrator or a PhD level person running the management of these types of authorities in our system currently today? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, we have credentialed staff within our authority running our authority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 363-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, several of my constituents were medivaced recently with life-threatening illnesses and were denied escorts because medical travel does not cover escorts for emergency circumstances, and reimbursements for their family members were denied. These escorts are vital in understanding the plan of care for their loved ones who were in an incapacitated state. But it's not policy to allow escorts for emergency medivac situations. I've raised this before. The Minister gave me some assurances that there would be a path forward. Now it appears that path has closed. Can the Minister commit to revisiting this policy, once again, because it's not working for the people I represent in this House. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the medical travel policy is -- like, as I mentioned in this House many times, right now we're in the midst of reviewing this entire process of medical travel, of moving people within the Northwest Territories. It is a complex process. There are approximately about 1,800 medical travel cases annually requiring many, you know, logistics. So when we -- when we're looking at the different types -- so when people are moving -- going for appointments, insured service appointments, so doctor's appointments, there's one way of doing that. If they're going for dental and they're

covered by an insurance, there's another way of doing that. If they're medivaced, there is no process for in that medivac -- emergency medivac policy, there isn't an escort -- nonmedical escort because the patient is being moved with medical escorts. And so I understand what the Member is saying, is that there might be sometimes where an escort may go down to Edmonton, learn the plan of care, and then travel back with that Member but then those circumstances are case by case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's doing this work but if they've -- and they've moved medical travel into the department so the Minister can really weigh on these things and it's not arm's length distance in the authorities. But what's the point of doing that if there's no exemptions that can be made? So can the Minister clarify what the exemption policy is for medical escorts, not for the people who are medivaced but for medical escorts. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Again, Mr. Speaker, that move was just recently done to remove the people that are actually doing the medical travel process from not having to now be the ones to appeal -- work with an appeal or an exception on their own work. So that part has moved into the department. The Member is asking what good is that. Well, every case is case by case and then it's looked at, so there's not, like, a tick list of everything because it's new within the department, so there's not -- there's not a case -- there's not a line by line item as to what it is. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister agree that being present for a plan of care for a loved one who is incapacitated would meet the criteria for an exemption? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within the policy, there -- there are -- we do have the policy. So if there are decision-making, if there are -- there are exceptions to some of those policies. I can't speak to the specific case but like I said, every case is looked at individually because there's -- every time we get BFs, you know, there's more information, there's -- everything is so complex for every different person. It's not the same for every single person that's travelling. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you my constituents are

frustrated. I can tell you this family is very frustrated. I hope the Minister will bring something practical about how to improve the system. But one thing I'll say, the rates are far too low to cover the costs of today. When is the Minister going to adjust those rates to reflect the reality of today's costs? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm really glad that the Member has asked that because that has been asked in this House over and over and over again many times. The rates are to make things equitable in the territory. So the rates fall in line with all of our policies. Some of our policies that are federally funded, and we try to match what those rates are so that it's equitable across all residents with that. And, yes, times have changed, things cost more. That is in the review process. The one thing that I would like to highlight is if we -- you know, that's a decision that will have to be made once we have all of those in front of -- all of the recommendations in front of us with medical travel policies. Can we afford all the changes that we want for every person, every elder, all of the rates to be equivalent to what we've heard in this House many times to government rates that are negotiated through the collective agreement? You know, there's costs after costs. It's going to make the changes. And once we have all those recommendations and it's reviewed and recommendations put in front of us, we will have to make those decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 364-20(1):

TULITA HEALTH CENTRE PROJECT

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My follow-up to my statement here are questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services. My first question there, Mr. Speaker, is the Tulita Health Centre, can the Minister provide an update on the progress of that unit? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Member wants me to answer it all in one question but the project has remobilized to the site and work has resumed this past summer, summer of 2024, with the completion date of 2026. This summer, due to low water and the no barges that we -- in order to not delay this project any further, that materials were expedited through air freight to the community

so the work could continue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank to the Minister for that progress update. Now we've got a date or a year. I seen the drawings and the colored designs. It's a very beautiful building with other features that the old facility didn't have.

My next question to the Minister is with this new modern facility, will there be additional staff opportunities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what will happen is the current staff will transition into the new building. There hasn't been any planning on new staff, but what I will say is that we are in the process -- in the early processes of looking at our health centres and the model of how we provide health services in our communities, in our small communities and so, you know, that's going to take some time and analysis to look through because, you know, what happens in some small communities is not the same in the other. Some communities are bigger. So at this point, no. Thank you.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for those two replies. It gives a better knowledge on the schedule of the construction.

My last question is that will the Minister work with my office for the additional materials that were there and got deteriorated, call it old stock. I've been getting some inquiries that local people are interested in the old material. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I will talk to my department, and I will talk to the Minister of Infrastructure. I'm not sure how that process and what materials are there and if they're no longer useable, but I can follow up on that material and what's the plan for it and get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 365-20(1):  
RED TAPE REDUCTION AND THE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RELATIONS WITH SMALL  
BUSINESSES

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I spoke about the issues entrepreneurs are having in Inuvik in processing applications and so on and so forth online. I referenced the 2020 red tape

reduction group. My questions for the Minister of Finance is this red tape reduction group proactively addressing these issues to address and streamline the application processes and, if so, how? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the red tape reduction working group was always set up to be an opportunity and a repository where anyone can direct them to an issue of red tape. So there's an email set up. There's an opportunity, [redtape@gov.nt.ca](mailto:redtape@gov.nt.ca), it's quite simple. They receive information about people who are running into, frankly, exactly the types of situations the Member mentioned earlier and then they will action them and they will investigate them and can coordinate across departments to find solutions. And I can say it actually hasn't been as fruitful as I would think it should be for the number of times I hear people say there's red tape out there. So, you know, I appreciate being able to sneak that email address in. I really do hope people can use it, but I can certainly say I intend to follow up on the items I heard earlier in the Member's statement. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. And, yes, oftentimes people have complaints and they'll bring them to their MLA or they'll bring them to their community leadership but have an opportunity to bring them to a website or an email like the email said, and unfortunately, don't do that. So we need to find a way to be a little more proactive.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister know how many files or how many policies have been reviewed based on the information that has been collected by the red tape review? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So since November of 2023, when I believe that's when the email went live, there have been three matters formally submitted all regarding different GNWT processes. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment about being more proactive. We do -- we did also go through the process earlier this year in seeking suggestions about more efficiency and specifically directing that to the public service and in that regard received over 1,800 suggestions about finding efficiency from about 900 individuals with different ones raised by different people. So there certainly is -- there are different ways to bring this out there and to get people involved and don't want to lose track of finding a better way that we can get the ideas

that are out there and the issues that people are running into in front of this group. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know that, you know, this issue runs throughout several departments, this is not just a Department of Finance obviously, and I, you know, appreciate that I'm speaking with the Minister of Finance. But I guess -- and I don't know if this question, Mr. Speaker, is even able to be answered but when you're looking at a terms of reference or looking at putting together this red tape review, does it kind of take into consideration other items like the innovative -- innovation action plan that ITI has and different things like that to kind of look at the terms of reference, I guess if you will, on the types of information we're looking to address here, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no, the red tape reduction working group really was meant to be focused on when a business or an individual runs into an issue and says, you know, I'm unable to get a license in an orderly fashion, I have to pay -- go to multiple departments in order to do something, I, you know, sought permissions or an opportunity, I can't get it done. This was an opportunity to say okay look, take that to the working group. They will cross those different departmental lines. Sometimes it's divisions within a department and they will -- they'll action that. But other elements of, you know, innovation action plan and such is a different element of what's going on. To the extent that there's barriers or blocks between different silos, again that certainly would -- could come to the working group, they could potentially get involved, but it really was meant to be something looking at how we are servicing the residents and businesses in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 366-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES PUBLIC SERVICE  
EMPLOYEE SERVICES

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are also for the Minister of Finance. I am eagerly awaiting the 2023-2024 Public Service Annual Report, which is a really nerdy thing to say. Can the Minister sneak peek a preview and tell us if the exits by reason shows an increase or decrease in resignations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've had a sneak peek. I can tell you that it's going to be tabled here in the House next week so certainly don't want to give too much away. But in the theme of a teaser, let's say that the number of exits by resignations is down from 523 down to 480 in 2023-2024. The number of exits down -- and generally down overall from 951 in 2022-2023 to 810 overall in 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's some tentatively possibly good news. When it was last mentioned in the 2022-2023 annual report, the leadership development program was on a hiatus since July of 2020 and an expected new option was to launch this year, Mr. Speaker. So can the Minister tell me the status of this program? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were some delays in getting this program back up and running to the caliber or quality that we were hoping for. I am pleased to say that we partnered with Aurora College and that there is now the leadership development program. It started just this month. Again, pleased to also say it is fully subscribed for level one which is currently running. Level two starts in January of 2025, and that will continue until August 2025. I don't know where that is at in terms of if it's interest level but, again, very happy to see that the first round is fully subscribed. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, a little bit of tentative good news there. Unfortunately, I was let down by the 2024 Employee Satisfaction Action Plan that was released with the 2023 survey results. It's vague. It doesn't speak deeply to tangible improvements probably because it start with "we need to build a plan." So how does the Minister wish to address employee morale based on the eight actions in that plan but also beyond them? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to be quite frank that building morale and changing morale and changing culture are more difficult than simply the action plan or the specific action item in any particular framework. It is really about creating cultures of change and showing the culture of change within the public service. So I do want to acknowledge that it is critical that the public service return to a place of good morale. It's been a difficult few years in the territory for a number of reasons, and that will no doubt affect people's state of well-being in the workplace as well as elsewhere.

Now that said, the implementation plan aspect of the action plan is underway. It's meant to be concrete measures whereby we can achieve some of those more aspirational goals as they might be described. And we're doing that in concert with -- with the employee advisory committee really to hopefully keep that connection flowing so that we're not just doing surveys but we're actually, even in between the different surveys, maintaining the connection to the employees who are filling out those surveys to check in as we develop the implementations which will hopefully get us to a better place with morale. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, I know -- thank you, Mr. Speaker -- it is a tricky one and an even trickier one is increasing Indigenous representation in the public service, Mr. Speaker. I know this side of the House is very keen on seeing how we can do a better job of that. The survey does not distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees so I have to assume that Indigenous employees are struggling with low morale too.

So what specific actions will the Minister propose to take to ensure Indigenous employees feel valued, heard, and supported in this organization above and beyond what's contemplated in the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Plan? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, this has the ring of a Minister's statement. There's so much that really needs to be said in this space. The territory has a population that is not reflected in the public service right now and arguably never has been, so we need to get to a place where that changes. I can only imagine that that impedes people's morale. That would make certainly sense to me if you don't feel -- see yourself reflected around you or in the services that you are receiving as a resident. So I want to reflect that first as just understanding the gravity and importance of this.

It also -- if we can get to a place of increasing meaningfully the diversity in the public service with the diversity that's present in this territory, that makes for better workplaces. It in and of itself improves culture.

So those are a lot of things without being a concrete answer, Mr. Speaker, and I'm mindful of the time given the complexity of what's being asked. We do now have online or published the reporting back in on the targeting in the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework, which is really a very targeted

document that's meant to change where we're at, to change who's employed, to really focus very specifically by department, by division, and by level who's employed. So I would ask folks to take a look at them. You know, it's going to take some time to turn those numbers around but we aren't going to do it if we aren't being held to account, so I want to be -- I want folks to go look at those numbers and to see where we're at and to raise those questions because that will hopefully show that we're trying to be responsive and trying to be honest with the problem that we have in front of us. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 367-20(1):  
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EXPOSURE AT  
HEALTH CENTRES

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although the chief public health officer stated that the possibility of contracting HEP C, HEP B, and HIV is very low, to date have there been any confirmed cases within the Beaufort Delta? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the cohort of numbers are very low and they're specific to each -- like, the communities are so small, I am -- at this point, I'm not aware of how many of the residents that the Member is talking about have completed testing. And if there were any, you know, those are health -- private health medical records, and so that -- you know, I wouldn't be able to discuss those here freely on the floor of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Informing the dental patients who may have been into one of these clinics, these specific dates is very crucial for their well-being and long-term health. What measures have been taken by the department or the health centres to ensure that all these patients have been notified and tested for these infections? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, the chief public health officer -- you know, the reason why the alert came out was there is -- they were notified of this, and there is a current investigation ongoing right now, an investigation that -- you know, that it wouldn't be -- I would not be able to speak to in the House as it's ongoing. But the reason why the



chief public health officer did go out and do an announcement publicly right away was to be able to put the information out there so people could -- they didn't -- you know, they wanted to ensure that -- not everybody is on social media, not everybody -- and because dental clinics are private businesses and NIHB does provide dollars for them to the GNWT, it's going to flow through to pay for the travel for them to go into the communities. They do all their own billing and scheduling, and so to be getting -- like, the list doesn't belong to the health and social services or the department of health or NTHSSA or the clinic. It belongs to the provider themselves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This will be my final question. Will the department be looking at alternative locations to send dental patients in order to take the stress off the Yellowknife dentists and to better accommodate patients when they're travelling? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I did ask the NTHSSA to -- early when we -- you know, with the pressures that we were hearing of hotel rooms being full all the time, you know, that is impacting insured service patients that are flying down for doctors appointments because dental and everybody is flying into the capital, I did ask them to look at other options. That is currently being looked in right now. But clients who are NIHB can also work with NIHB directly if they can find appointments closer to home that's not here. And like I mentioned, in the Beaufort Delta a lot of our families travel to and from the Yukon. And those questions would be best directed to NIHB to see what they would be eligible if they were to drive and see a dentist and drive back, you know, so those -- those are out of the hands -- like, those are things that we don't -- we don't pay for. So -- but I have asked the department to see if there's a way that we could help and assist some work around. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 368-20(1):  
EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND  
SUPPORT

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. So while the government's strategies around early learning have focused in recent years on the establishment of junior kindergarten and child

care programs, what has the department been doing to support literacy and language skills for children zero to five through supports to parents and families? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for their statement on the good work of the NWT Literacy Council.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment really works closely and relies on the good work of NGOs and community organizations to do a lot of this work. And so approximately \$900,000 in funding is provided to the NWT Literacy Council to support adult, youth, and family literacy initiatives, and a lot of these programs include capacity building and developing family centered community-based programs. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, there's also the Community Learning Development Fund which is approximately \$770,000, and this funding is directed at community organizations to promote and increase literacy skills as well. So those are two of our key components there. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that. Does the government have any programs to help support parents on their own literacy skills so that they can feel more comfortable reading to their kids, supporting their kids' language development, and engaging with teachers in schools? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's the programs that I've mentioned that are funded through the literacy council. There's also work that's done through Aurora College on the adult literacy and basic education skills program, and ECE also funds the college to make sure that they're maintaining that curriculum. There's also indirect funding through other departments. For example, health has funded family cooking activities and such, and those have an indirect literacy involvement as well. People are coming together, they're reading recipes together. And so there are also indirect activities like that. And then many of the schools in the territory also work to host literacy events. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How does the department support early child care workers to ensure that they develop the skills necessary not just to look after kids but to support early brain development and language development? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is certainly a cornerstone of the new federal agreement that is really focusing on ensuring that we're offering, in the Northwest Territories, quality child care that involves best practices and also includes professional development for the people providing those programs so that they have that toolbox behind them. So right now, ECE has developed the fundamentals of early learning and child care workshops. These will be available online starting in 2025, and they include early brain development and language learning as well as the best practices for early childhood development. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And finally, does the department see further opportunities to involve traditional knowledge experts and Indigenous language experts in developing and delivering these early language programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, absolutely. So, first of all, I think this is a good place to remind the House that the bulk of the dollars received from the federal government for Indigenous languages flow through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment right to Indigenous governments for language programming. ECE is also actively partnering with four education bodies across the territory to pilot the Indigenous languages instructor employment program. And the aim of this program is to recruit and develop Indigenous language instructors for the JK to 12 age group, and this is both for Indigenous second language but also Indigenous immersion programs. And there's also flexible funding that is afforded to all education bodies to be able to hire elders, traditional knowledge experts, as well as Indigenous language experts from communities, and to support early learning and child care programs. And then there's as well, Mr. Speaker, literacy funding from the literacy council that does support an increase in information sharing within Indigenous language communities as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 369-20(1):  
DENE NATION HEALTHCARE CONCERNS  
REGARDING CULTURALLY SAFE HEALTH  
SERVICES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on July 20th in 1900, the Treaty 8 was signed. And one of the things they mentioned in there was the spirit of intent to the treaty: As long as the sun shines, river flows, and grass grows. Treaty 8 talks about the medicine chest. It's also recognized in section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, the Dene Nation is calling for the health care task force that could be established to review the current health care administration system and Denedeh and develop strategies to ensure that there's more responses with the Dene people and their needs.

My question to the Minister of health is will the Minister agree to striking a task force comprised of leading health care practitioners and community members and elders, and can they be accomplished within the next year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have an amazing team called the cultural safety and antiracism unit. That unit is staffed with all Indigenous highly, highly intelligent group of individuals that are all Indigenous from the Northwest Territories, and they are guided by the Indigenous advisory body that are appointed to that by the Indigenous governments from the Northwest Territories, and they are the ones that, you know, tackle a lot of the work in our health care system on making sure that all of our policies, our programs. They do the anti -- cultural safety and antiracism training with all health care practitioners. So, you know, I would hate to take away any of that work, but I would look to work with the Member to see what this department is not, you know, doing maybe. Maybe they can do a presentation to the Dene Nation on all of the work that they're doing and hear from them themselves to see if there's anything that they may add to the work that they're doing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. That was -- I really appreciate that. And it would be great if the health -- you, as a Minister, could work with the -- this work, working group, and also with the Dene Nation so that we all come on side and -- because it's an issue that was been brought up, and I've been hearing about it, so I just want to see if there's a way we could work together on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Yes, you know, I -- as the Minister, you know, I have met with the unit.

I have -- we have actually done a presentation to standing committee. You know, if the Member wants me to meet with him and if he wants to invite me to meet with him and the Dene Nation together to hear from them on what their thoughts are, you know I would be more than glad to. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Also you had mentioned earlier cultural base workshops and training for staff. Is it possible that we could also use local members from our communities that know best about their culture and their environment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, when this team does training, they do use the Indigenous people from wherever they are doing the training. The MLAs were able to take this training and the senior management took this training within the government. And so they do -- as the MLAs may be -- like, remember at the beginning after our first Assembly that there are Indigenous -- it is led by Northerners, that training, Indigenous Northerners, and they do have people coming in and doing presentations, adding to the work that they do. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister for Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. One thing I keep thinking about is our young people in our communities that we have drugs and alcohol that is hitting home to our young people but there's limited in terms of addiction services they could go to other than going south. Is there a program or is there part of your plan going forward to look at how we're going to address this issue for our young people here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the Community Wellness and Addiction Recovery Fund, there is still funds available in there for communities to apply on. So I would say to have your -- like, to reach back out to the communities that you represent to see if they've applied on this fund. I can send you the information. Those -- they could create an on the land or a community program for the youth or any community member in their community. For youth addiction programs, we currently piloted a couple of programs. I can get more details to that to the Member for youth treatment, on the land treatment within the territory. For adults, we still continue to be able to send those who need facility-based treatment out. So those options are still available. But I can provide him a list of

all of the different options to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 370-20(1):  
COMMUNITY SUPPORTS FOR SUBSTANCE  
ABUSE AND TRAUMA

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of health. What mental health supports does the health system make available to trauma survivors in small communities? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community counselling program provides mental health supports to all residents in the Northwest Territories, including children and youth. They also help facilitate referrals to more specialized service, including access to facility-based treatment. There's also, again, like I mentioned just previously, the Community Wellness and Addiction Recovery Fund that is something that the government does provide a fund so Indigenous groups can access to create their own community-based, on the land, cultural, Indigenous-based programming within their community. And then, again, the Community Suicide Prevention Fund. Thank you.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how are services for addictions and trauma being measured and evaluated and what are the statistics on these programs? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we collect data, both on the community counselling programs and the facility-based addiction treatment programs, but I don't have the specific details of both. Last year, I think this was about 200 NWT residents that accessed facility-based addictions treatment. The community counselling program and facility-based addiction treatment programs have performance monitoring framework in place which outlines data and indicating reporting requirements. The department also completes quality assurance audits of the community counselling programs delivered across the Northwest Territories and are planning for their audit to begin November 2024. And the Department of Health and Social Services also administers biannual surveys for residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister mentioned funding earlier. How much of this funding has been distributed to the communities in the Deh Cho riding? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Community Wellness and Recovery Fund, there has been \$573,000 to the Deh Cho First Nation which include -- including in that is KFN. The amount -- yes, so split between those two. And then there's the Community Suicide Prevention Fund which there's another additional \$185,206 to Chief Sunrise, K'atlodeeche First Nation, DFFN. So all together, those three groups and KFN received \$185,000. Thank you.

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

Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 371-20(1):  
MEDICAL RESPONSE SERVICES IN SMALL  
COMMUNITIES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope he will answer my questions, for Minister of MACA. So can the Minister explain what money MACA provides for training first responders in small communities? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know the actual amount, and I can get that for the Member. But we do have a fund available for first responder training that is eligible for communities that apply for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So how do communities go about applying for these fundings, especially those without first responders? I have three communities. There's Whati, Gameti, Wekweeti, and I heard of other small communities that don't have first responder. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the community checks with their local fire department to see if it's required or if they want it, and then that their community government reaches out to the regional superintendent in order to get the process going to see if we can get the training or the funds to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Well, one of the question was that what is the criteria for some of these -- you know, I'm

sure there is a criteria for community governments to apply. But I would like to ask another question because maybe I will do a written questions to some of the stuff that -- I have lots here but I can't -- some of them will go on written, written questions. Yeah, so I can -- I only have four, and then I have second set of questions --

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. So maybe he can answer this too as well. Paramedics, because they provide money. They provide money to train. So paramedics in the NWT. So are paramedics in the territory supplied with naloxone kit to administer on site during an emergency?

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That there would be a lot of detail behind how a community operates their emergency services, if they had one. Depending on the type of service they would have in their community, you know, basically as even as a first-aider, even as a lay responder you would be eligible or trained -- eligible to be trained to use naloxone kits. So depending on the services, depending on accessibility, but just the old quick search of the interweb here I was able to find out that in the Tlicho region there are four spots where you could get naloxone kits through using our wonderful GNWT websites. Behchoko, you can go to the health centre. Gameti, the health centre. Wekweeti, you can go to the health cabin. And Whati, you can go to the health centre to access the naloxone kits for first responders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I'm happy with the response because he's -- but I'm kind of worried about other communities that don't have, you know, paramedics or -- paramedics or first responders. So this is -- 9-1-1 is MACA responsibility so I'm going to ask this. So what is the average ambulance response time in Yellowknife currently? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Monfwi, that is not the line of questioning that you are going through was. So therefore it's out of order. I will go to the next person on that because it's a different question -- set of questions. It's not the same one. Do you have another question in regards to what you were starting your questioning with? Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. Well, I thought 9-1-1 was part of MACA so I did -- I wanted to know what's the average.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Monfwi, the ruling was that you ask questions on a topic. This is another topic. It's not the department. It is very much specifically to -- you could say MACA, it could be water if it was on this question. So therefore the question was about the ambulance response, that's where your questions need to be focused on. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with you on this.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 372-20(1):  
FUNDING FOR YOUTH CLIMATE CHANGE  
ADVOCACY

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your long pause on Yellowknife made me worry for a moment. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, during this morning, many of my colleagues had a really I'd certainly say an enormously incredible presentation provided to the committee from the NWT climate youth advisory group. And I want to use just a moment of my time saying they were a fantastic bunch of young people. They were extremely well represented by the Hay River reps, and they spoke well and clear and they had wonderful focus. I think they are truly the promise of tomorrow.

But, Mr. Speaker, when I asked them do they have funding for their advisory group and their recommendations on how they present things to the government, etcetera, they said they don't get funded. Now, they get a per diem when they meet, which is a few dollars a day, but that said, all their work goes unfunded. So my question specifically to the Minister of ECC is does the Minister recognize and respect the hard work that that little coalition is doing? Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you very much for the question. Certainly do welcome the input and respect the input from that group and all of the other groups that participate in the climate file. I think this is certainly a very challenging space right now in that we look at our rapid rate of

climate change in the Northwest Territories and certainly having their input, especially of the youth, in that forum is very important. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad he and I share the same point of view of welcoming and respecting their points of view. It's critical. Mr. Speaker, if he does so, as he just said, would he find ways to work with his department to help fund this group and a territorial advisory group? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. I'm certainly always supportive of youth participation in all of government across the whole Northwest Territories, and I would definitely go back and have a discussion with the department to see what opportunities we could look at in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I understand it correctly, the Arctic Council is holding its first Arctic Youth Conference in Tromso, Norway, January 2025. If I understand further, not only it's the first but -- in the sense of this type of initiative, but they've also sought funding from the federal government, although not guaranteed and certainly -- and as such, that brings me to the question to the Minister which is if their application with the federal government fails to send an NWT delegation to the Arctic Council's Youth Conference portion in Tromso, Norway, would the Minister find ways to see if he could help support their initiative whether fully or in part? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would certainly be supportive of working with the department to see what opportunities are available to support that initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Colleagues, time has expired. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 42-20(1):  
APPOINTMENT OF SERGEANT-AT-ARMS  
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, October 30th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Mr. Chris Comeau of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, be recommended for appointment as sergeant-at-arms of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories as recommended by the board of management of the Legislative Assembly;

And further -- sorry, I was trying to speak slow enough for the interpreters.

And further, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of the appointment to the Commissioner;

And furthermore, that the Legislative Assembly expresses its gratitude to Mr. Floyd Andrew Powder for his years of service to the legislature and to the broader community.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Motions

MOTION 42-20(1):  
APPOINTMENT OF SERGEANT-AT-ARMS  
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,  
CARRIED

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave earlier today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Yellowknife Centre is seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion that he brought forward just recently. Any nays? Seeing no nays, Member from YK Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll read this one through. The interpreters have already heard it, so.

WHEREAS the sergeant-at-arms of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Floyd Andrew Powder, has indicated his intention to retire from the position;

AND WHEREAS it is desirable to name an individual to fill the position of sergeant-at-arms;

AND WHEREAS Section 54(3) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act provides that the sergeant-at-arms shall be appointed by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories on the recommendation of the board of management, approved by motion of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the board of management is prepared to make a recommendation.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Mr. Chris Comeau of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, be recommended for appointment as sergeant-at-arms of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories as recommended by the board of management of the Legislative Assembly;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of the appointment to the Commissioner;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Legislative Assembly expresses its gratitude to Mr. Floyd Andrew Powder for his years of service to the legislature and to the broader community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to extend a heartfelt recognition to master warrants officer retired and sergeant-at-arms Floyd Powder for his dedicated service and hard work within this Legislative Assembly. Floyd's deep commitment to honouring our veterans and serving the territory and Canada is reflected in his advocacy for Metis veterans and efforts in identifying grave sites as part of the Indigenous veterans' initiative, these plus many more activities which Floyd has participated in.

As a valued NWT Metis Nation beneficiary and military veteran, Floyd has represented the NWT Metis Nation and all veterans related issues. I am deeply thankful and proud to recognize Floyd, a member of my community in Thebacha, for his honourable contributions.

As Floyd embarks on this new chapter in retirement, I wish him all the best. Thank you, Floyd, for your service and dedication. And I'd also like to welcome Chris Comeau to his new role as sergeant-at-arms. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion. Member from Hay River South.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had the honour of working with the sergeant-at-arms, Mr. Floyd Powder, in his role and capacity with the veterans' programs, and he's done some amazing work with that, and I hope -- like I tell people, when you retire it's not really retire; it's a change of careers and you can do whatever you want on our own time. And I hope he continues to do that. I want to thank him for his work here in the Legislative Assembly, and I want to wish him well in his future endeavors.

I also want to congratulate a good friend of mine, somebody I grew up with in Hay River. When he moved to Yellowknife, I was a little disappointed he came across the lake. Some 25, 26 years ago, we started a career together in Justice with the corrections entry level training. And we started the same time, and I left a year earlier coming into politics and a year later he soon followed me into the ledge. And I'm honoured to work with him and work with him again and, you know, longtime friends from a small town in Hay River, we grew up together. When I saw the email that he was being accepted for the position, I was a little shocked that he was leaving Justice but hey, we all change our careers at some point. But, again, I'm excited for both of them and happy to be working with Mr. Comeau again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Hay River South. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise also to recognize the appointment of Mr. Chris Comeau. I'm sure he will do -- I know he will do an excellent job because he's already been doing it. And this is -- being sergeant-at-arms is I think an understated role in the Parliaments of the Commonwealth, but it is an important one and, in some cases, a lifesaving one. So I do absolute the work of our sergeants-at-arms. And to Mr. Powder, who is a constituent of the Range Lake riding, thank you for your years of service. I know that every day you took our sittings as seriously as any other, including youth Parliament when many of us paged. And I know he runs a good page program because he put me through my paces. So thank you for your service, Mr. Powder, and welcome to the legislature, Mr. Comeau. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've already read the motion in to acknowledge Mr. Comeau will be coming in. And to him, I wish

him the greatest success as he follows Mr. Floyd Powder.

I asked Mr. Powder the other day, who I only casually know but gotten a little bit better -- known a little better since I've come back to the Assembly in this last year, I asked him the other day what are you going to do? And he has a long list of what -- you know, they often say retirement is not for the faint at heart. In other words, you end up doing so much. And he started in the most passionate way describing how he wanted to do this work for Indigenous veterans, headstones, and it -- just the list was going on. I mean, I almost needed a -- someone to help scribe and write them all down. That man has plans but most importantly, that man follows through on them. And I want to finish by saying that his commitment to duty through his service as a Canadian member of our military or his service here at the legislature certainly hasn't gone unnoticed. He's definitely cut from a different cloth. Extremely respectful and certainly extremely respected by all of us. So I want to thank him, wish him well in his journey, and I would ask him not to be a stranger of this House as he will always be known as a friend of this House, and I thank him for his services. Thank you very much, sir.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Not too much the Speaker gets to speak about a motion, but I had the pleasure of working with Floyd in the 19th Assembly and got to work with him as a Speaker. Amazing man. Talk about recognition of veterans out there, and he knows everybody. He seems to be connected with people. And the interesting part, as you travel across Canada people know Mr. Powder. They talked about his commitment to the work that he does here in this Legislative Assembly, but as they call his volunteer service to the residents of the Northwest Territories. So I thank him very much for everything he's done for us.

I'm excited to work with Mr. Comeau. We've already had some conversations on how things he would like to improve which is very difficult because Floyd had a really good ship run here and so -- but he has some really good unique ways of looking forward to how we're doing things. And I'm excited that we have Northerners here representing and protecting our Legislative Assembly. So thank you very

much for everything you guys have done and what you're doing today.

Notices of motion. Sorry, motions. Notices of motion. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

### First Reading of Bills

BILL 13:  
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2024-2025,  
DEEMED READ

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 14:  
APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025,  
DEEMED READ

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 14, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3) for Bill 13 -- I should have done this before -- and 14, is deemed to have been read for the first time and is ready for second reading.

That's 11 and 12? Okay. My mistake, my notes are wrong. 11 and 12.

Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

### Second Reading of Bills

BILL 13:  
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2024-2025,  
CARRIED

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, be read for the second time.

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour, please read your hand. Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 14:  
APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025,  
CARRIED

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 14, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, be read for the second time.

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole and other matters, Tabled Document 193-20(1), the 2025-2026 Capital Estimates.

By the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House. I will now turn the floor over to the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I now call Committee of the Whole to order. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates for the Departments of Municipal and Community Affairs; Education, Culture and



Employment; Infrastructure; and, Environment and Climate Change. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume the first item. Thank you.

---BRIEF RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. Does the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs wish to bring a witness to the chamber? So I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** I do, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, I'm sorry. So I'm going to go to the -- does the committee agree for the Minister to bring in witnesses?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Okay, thank you. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left is Gary Brennan, deputy minister, and to my right is Grace Lau-a, a director of community operations.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in tabled documents?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs begins on page 67. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 68 with community operation with information items on page 69. Are there any questions? Seeing none.

Department on Municipal and Community Affairs, community operation, infrastructure investments, \$7,075,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Next we have is regional operation on page 70 with information item on page 71. Are there any questions? Seeing no questions from Members.

Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operation, infrastructure investments, \$32,848,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Members. Please return now to the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs summary found on page 67. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$39,923,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 43-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026  
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – MUNICIPAL AND  
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS – 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 Municipal and Community Affairs at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, for total department is deferred.

---Carried

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

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Does the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment wish to bring in witnesses into the chamber?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to my left I have James Fulford who is the deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment. And to my right I have Terri-Lynn Locke-Setter who is the assistant deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled documents? Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, committee. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment beginning on page 19. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning at page 21 with education with information item on page 22. Are there any questions? Thank you, I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have some questions -- or a question about the Aurora College student housing unit in Fort Smith. There's renovation of a couple units there. So my question is not so much about that project but, you know, the capital plan indicates repairs for those but there's no funds for other Aurora College capital needs proposed this year. So what are the timelines, priority levels and expected funding for other critical areas or need across the Aurora College campuses? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, those were the priorities as identified by Aurora College for housing within their envelope of housing. What I believe that the Member is referring to is the facility's master plan. And the department has included the facility's master plan in its 20-year capital needs assessment and have also ensured that they have put this funding plan forward to the federal government and shared it with them, and the GNWT will continue to

work alongside Aurora College on their capital needs as they do come up in their transformation plans. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I appreciate that answer. I would appreciate some more detail on how discussions are going with the federal government. And, you know, if the Minister can kind of speak to expected capital items coming forward in the next couple of years that this Assembly will likely be looking at for Aurora College capital needs, I'd appreciate that discussion. Thank you. So I'll frame that as a question, thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have indicated to the college that I am certainly keen to receive their list of priorities and also understand what it is that they need and what years that they do need them so that I can further community that as well to my colleagues. And for potentially further information, I'd be happy to share the floor with the deputy minister through yourself.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Respectfully, I believe the Minister was looking to refer to her deputy.

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

**MR. JAMES FULFORD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have a lot to add to the Minister's response. We work closely with Aurora College as matters, including the determination of, for example a Yellowknife site are determined, there will be more requests and discussion about future infrastructure needs and we're -- you know, continue to work with them at a very close level. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's it for questions for me on this item for now.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, here on the education item, there is a high school boiler replacement for Ecole Sir John

Franklin, and I was -- I've been talking to the Minister, and I think most Yellowknife MLAs are quite aware of all of the challenges that Yellowknife schools are facing. So could the Minister provide a substantiation for this project to start, and we'll go from there. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this project within Sir John Franklin High School is a boiler replacement. The current system within Sir John Franklin is a hybrid system that has both a biomass boiler and a conventional boiler, and this specific project replaces the conventional boiler. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And would the Minister characterize this issue as a high-need item in terms of the matrix that we make decisions on renovations and replacements? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, items within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for the education stream are certainly prioritized based on safety and accessibility. And when we live in a place with typically quite harsh winters, heat is of the essence and doesn't only keep the school warm and kids able to sit and learn, it also keeps water flowing. So definitely is an important one. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I recognize that, and I'm glad that she used accessibility in her answer. As she recalls from yesterday, I did ask the Minister of Justice about an accessible washroom and, as the Minister's well aware, the folks behind the parent advisory committee for Sir John are seeking an accessible and gender-neutral washroom in that school. Could the Minister speak to how she is prioritizing that requested project that is an accessibility project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I certainly do -- or am in support of this request and is one that I

think is important. For this current year, our -- sorry, our capital projects had already been brought forward for this capital planning process and so we have earmarked this project for further years' consideration. And as people will note, for the projects we have brought forward within our small capital projects, they are largely based on safety and on accessibility across the board. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I know the PAC for Sir John has reached out to her and is looking for a path forward on this project, obviously not in this particular budget but maybe for next year's budget. And so I'm wondering if I could get a commitment from the Minister to respond to the PAC to look at different funding pots that may exist for this kind of work if the money is tight for her? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, I've had the opportunity to go back and forth with the parent advisory committee on this one, and we did advise that we have located a couple of pots within the federal government that we're currently trying to follow up on to see if they're ones that we can tap into outside of this traditional capital funding process, to see if we can push this project along. And we'll be sure to continue to see what we can find and report back to the parent advisory committee. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister. I hope that we do have some school boards listening so that they can also reach out. I know there are many schools in our fine capital that are looking for projects like this, including in YK1. So it's more of a comment than a question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I got is Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So my first question is a follow-up to my colleague from Frame Lake's questions about capital related to Aurora College and the polytechnic transformation.

You mentioned that the facility's master plan, projects have been included in the government's 20-year capital plan but that you're mainly looking to the federal

government, if I understand it correctly, to fund those projects. So how is it decided which projects identified in the facility's master plan will come to the GNWT for funding, such as the student housing unit, and which must be funded by the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we have -- I don't think it's a secret to anybody in this room that we have quite a huge need when it comes to infrastructure across the Northwest Territories and across every single department. A lot of our infrastructure in the territory was built around the same timeframe, and so a lot of it ends up coming due around the same timeframe. And so the demands on our dollars for infrastructure are quite large and traditionally education facilities, be it our JK to 12 education facilities, are the responsibility of the provincial or territorial government. That said, there are pots that provinces and territories can dip into for post-secondary institutions. And so in order to maximize the amount of dollars that we have to spend on our education facilities, it makes the most sense for us to do our best and due diligence to try to invest our dollars in our JK to 12 and see what other dollars we can attract to the territory from the federal government for -- is there anything you want to add to that one?

**MR. JAMES FULFORD:** Sure --

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Chair, may I pass to the deputy minister? Thank you.

**MR. JAMES FULFORD:** (audio) has the Minister indicated, there is a large infrastructure deficit. At this time, the magnitude of investment to achieve all of the projects in the facility's master plan just isn't there so we look to the board of governors to give us direction on those areas where we can make process incrementally, and that -- the duplex in Fort Smith would be an example of that. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So can the Minister or her staff clarify in that process of working things out with the Aurora College board, did you ask them to identify projects like under a certain funding limit, like within a certain funding range? Okay, we could afford to do things around this range, what have you got for us, or did you ask them to identify projects based on the level of urgency? I'm just wondering how this particular project was identified as something that we should do now

and not something that we should look to the federal government to fund or put off until later. I'm interested in how the process of prioritization led to this particular project this year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, for the operational details of how we collect information from education bodies and Aurora College and etcetera, I would like the opportunity to pass to the assistant deputy minister, please.

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

**MS. TERRI-LYNN LOCKE-SETTER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. ECE uses the same process as most other line departments as the corporate planning. With our departmental priorities, we first do a callout to all ED bodies that's JK to 12, Aurora College, and the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre, and we do that around now. So we start departmentally our annual process in the fall, and then it rotates right to the end where we are today.

As for priorities, we work with the same priorities that other departments do, the primary criteria being the protection of people and then the protection of assets. And then we have secondary criteria around urgency, impact severity, mitigation. This one in particular was around the housing needs in Hay River and the condition of the current housing units in particular -- Fort Smith, apologies. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So it sounds like this one was identified based on the severity of the impact or the need, which is good to hear.

I want to turn to another item on this -- well, actually, items that are not on the list. But in general in terms of capital dollars that are allocated to education authorities for projects, what efforts has the Minister taken to ensure that we can align education authority buildings, assets, with ECE's own capital standards in terms of how regularly technical assessments are carried out, you know, the kinds of investments that are made into asset management, and how things are decided when they need to be repaired or replaced. So what efforts are being made to ensure that we're aligning education authority management

of assets with ECE's own capital standards? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there is a -- so this bleeds into Infrastructure as well. So the assets are actually owned and maintained by the Department of Infrastructure and then we work together on ensuring that they are cared for and the communication between education bodies and infrastructure and ECE is all a bit of a team approach to it. So we do have a list of schools across the territory and we do have -- and I know -- what does FCI stand for, sorry? Thank you. Facility condition index. This is the problem when you speak in acronyms all the time. Sometimes you forget what they mean.

So we have a facilities condition index, and every single school in the Northwest Territories has some rating numbers that go with them. So how we prioritize schools that are kind of next up in the list is using those numbers, but there's also other pieces that factor into that. Things happen throughout the year. We know that there is also wear and tear on schools from events that occur and climate change as well. So while we have our facility condition index, we also have other factors that will move a school up and down on the list and prioritize others, obviously with accessibility as well depending on the student body. There are different factors like that that might determine what school's up next. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And certainly this is a new area for me as well, but can the Minister confirm whether or not education authorities are actually aligned with ECE's own capital standards or they're not yet. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So our capital standards were updated in 2020. A lot of our school buildings predate 2020. And our capital standards apply to new builds in the territory that will follow that standard but it doesn't mean that all of a sudden we -- we would never be able to, for example, tear down every school in the territory and start over. So we have to start from somewhere. So the schools that have been built post 2020 would follow those capital standards. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you for that clarification; I appreciate it. That's all the questions. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I got is the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, I know that we've been talking about this for quite some time, and the local leaders and Tlicho government have been talking about it too as well. So Behchoko's school planning, you know, it says planning for Behchoko school and estimated completion date or time within completion is 2025-2026. So I just wanted to ask the Minister where it's at with the planning at the moment? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So the estimated completion is for that portion that has been funded which is the planning -- the preliminary planning portion and so not the entire school build. So I just want to make sure that we're all on the same page there.

So when we recently went to Ottawa, I had the opportunity to join the Tlicho government with meeting with federal representatives and federal minister in order to sit down and discuss what it is that the Tlicho government are asking for. As the GNWT, we are certainly in support of the efforts of the Tlicho government to relocate Chief Jimmy Bruneau School to Behchoko and want to ensure that we are working closely with Tlicho government in supporting their timeframe and also supporting their desire for what they'd like to see in this new structure. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I know that, you know, we need the new school and we've said it many times. And so I am glad that, you know, it looks like the Minister is working well with the Tlicho government so -- which is, you know -- I am very -- you know, I appreciate that. So -- and which is, you know, we need -- we need a good working relationship with them to move forward on this project. And so I'll leave it at that.

But there is another one here too, because we're still planning -- in the planning stage and, you know, we still have quite a ways to go and we know what to do in the communities, and the

community government knows what to do to move forward on this too by, you know, doing the subdivision in Behchoko.

So Jean Wetrade Gameti school, it's a beautiful school. You know, it's a beautiful facility in a beautiful little community, you know. So it says here school perimeter fence. So is there a timeline of when this project will be completed? Because I know there was a concern before where some of the young people, they walk to school, you know, in a -- during the school year so they were concerned about a lot of other issues too as well, you know, for the safety of the kids. So when will that project be completed? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that project is projected to be completed within the 2026-2027 school year.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Menzi Community School was on the book last time, and it's not listed as a project listing now. What happened to it; why it's not on this? Because it was on it the last time but it's not on there anymore, so I just wanted to know what happened for the same thing. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't have the historical information on that project, but I'd be very happy to get that for the Member and bring it back.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi. That's it? Okay.

Next on my list I got is the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question about the Deh Gah School perimeter and playground fencing. When is that to be completed? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we've learned from since -- as the assistant deputy minister informed the House, this process starts well in advance of us sitting here today and so there is quite a bit of lead time. And the school in Fort

Providence has informed us that, in fact, they do not need the fencing that was previously identified. And so those dollars have actually -- and the Member, as well as yourself, Mr. Chair, will probably go back to your computers this evening and find an email from myself that was sent earlier today. But those dollars are looking to be reallocated to another school in the territory as those dollars have been identified as no longer being needed by the school. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Deh Cho. Does the Member from the Deh Cho have any further questions? Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? Okay, I don't see none.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, education, infrastructure investments, \$2,330,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Members. Please return now to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment summary found on page 19.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2025-2026 capital investments -- or sorry, capital estimates, \$2,330,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 44-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026  
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – EDUCATION,  
CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT –  
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 Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The motion's in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration in the Department of Education, Culture and

Employment, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, total department is deferred.

---Carried

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

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

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers.

Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have Robert Jenkins who is an assistant deputy minister with the Department of Infrastructure. And on my right, I have Celeste MacKay who is an assistant deputy minister in the Department of Infrastructure.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled documents? Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, the Department of Infrastructure beginning on page 53. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 54 with assets management with information items on page 55 and 57. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain which kind of highway repairs would fall under capital versus which might fall under operations and maintenance? We see a number of different highway projects listed here under asset management. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could direct that to assistant deputy minister MacKay, please.

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

**MS. CELESTE MACKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's really by the scale and complexity of the repairs. So small regular repairs are done under maintenance. Larger, more complex repairs are done under capital. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so for the public to understand better for each of our highways how much money it actually takes to keep up these highways each year, you know, and some of those repairs might be small and some might be big, do we have any document or something that we could see that would show us for each highway how much we're spending on that highway each year to -- basically for asset management, small or large repairs, or reconstruction, just to keep that highway passable. Does that information exist, or could it be produced for committee? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We certainly can produce that. The information that's presented in this format wouldn't necessarily show it the way that I think the Member's looking at. So we'll produce that. And I think just better than that is I propose I'll probably table it in the House since that does seem like information that would be valuable. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** I definitely appreciate that. So when the department is considering new highways, new capital highway projects, is the data about how much it takes to maintain and repair a highway each year -- is that taken into account in terms of predicting future O and M and capital costs for a highway; is that taken into account before embarking on a new highway capital project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I mean, that response is probably not dissimilar for highway roadways

as well as any other project that goes through the capital planning process. And so, for instance, obviously there's a ranking system that we would go through in terms of understanding what kind of issues is at heart. For instance, whether it's protection of people or protection of assets. And there's a secondary criteria that you go through. The projects all go through also whether or not there should be any MACA or economic considerations where you would get into, you know, understanding the different values of different projects, land management discussions are there, have -- are there planning needs, is it going to run into difficulties in terms of not having the right, you know, establishment in the background of having access to roadways, having access to the area that's -- that is required for a road, climate change considerations. I mean, all of these things are considerations that take place within any decision, including a highway. And as for the operations of it, again certainly that is a factor and there's a best estimate that is given. I would note that until an asset, including a highway, has been in operation, any estimate is just that, it's not -- it's an estimate, and it's only through the period of operation of the asset that you would then know with more certainty what forced growth there might be or if is to be forced growth. But if it makes it through as a necessity as a project, then it gets put into the operations bucket as well for the business planning process. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thanks to the Minister for that. And I do look forward to us, when we are discussing new highway projects in the future, hopefully having some data at our fingertips about the full cost of repairing and maintaining our existing highways, we'll be able to take that into account fully when we consider new capital projects.

My only other question on this section has to do with the deferred maintenance part. I definitely support us allocating money to maintenance to -- of assets to protect life safety. I guess I'm wondering why such projects that often seem so urgent and so important to protect life safety don't otherwise rise to the top of our list of projects that we need to consider and have to be slotted and sort of compete for other -- with other funds under the category of deferred maintenance. Can the Minister explain why the types of projects that end up in deferred maintenance wouldn't appear otherwise at the top of the list of things that we need to fund in our capital budget? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, again, let me direct that one over to assistant deputy minister MacKay, please.

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

**MS. CELESTE MACKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The deferred maintenance projects, this fund is intended for repairs that were delayed and backlogged due to budget limitations. It's used to address maintenance issues like structural repairs, building code upgrades, exterior envelope failures, those types of things that maybe have been put off for other priorities over the years but as they become more of a priority, they enter our work plan.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I guess my area of confusion -- and maybe the Minister can clear this up -- is that on the one hand it seems to be the place where projects that keep getting deferred end up that aren't necessarily top of the priority list but, on the other hand, we see that some of these projects are there because it's a life safety issue. And so I don't know how both of those can be true. Can the Minister explain? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I mean, there's -- yes, I mean, I'll perhaps try one more time to direct it to the assistant deputy minister, but just to start out, I mean, there are -- projects that are coming in under the small cap fund or small -- that are under the definition of being small capital projects, so things that under the threshold of \$600,000, those items would tend to be within each department which holds their own individual small capital projects. And then beyond that, at some time they do make their way in to deferred maintenance which puts them under the rubric of being an infrastructure managed project. As there's not enough space to do everything in small cap, there's obviously not enough space to do everything in deferred maintenance. I mean, determining when it's a deferred maintenance and not, as it becomes more and more serious it certainly ratchets up the scale. If there's opportunities to find funding for standalone projects, then those tend to be the larger projects that we would go out and seek independent or third-party funding or, really, you know, quite frankly, federal government funding. But the federal government pools don't necessarily align to



deferred maintenance and tend to align to new projects, so this is where we get into the challenge of trying to achieve all of the goals and all of the things, you know, with the different pools and pots that are available to us. So it's a risk management assessment. Maybe I'll stop there, Mr. Chair, and if there -- if that is helpful, I'll pause, and if not, we can perhaps direct it again to our assistant deputy minister.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** She was referring it to the (audio).

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

**MS. CELESTE MACKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Minister noted, it is a risk management approach. Things that are of immediate risk are dealt with immediately through the operations and maintenance fund. If it's not an immediate risk, then maybe it's something that's dealt with through the deferred maintenance project. We have building condition assessment of every building that's done on a rotating five-year basis, and it looks at every single system of every single asset that we have. So through that system, we're able to see, you know, which risks can we manage with different tools in our tool belt. So this is one of the tools in our tool belt.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I know that I'll just be continuing to learn about the capital planning process and, you know, certainly my concern is that we ensure that we are able to address all of the most severe most urgent life safety issues and we don't have projects competing with each other that are all at that level, and that we also have enough money to ensure that we're taking care of our assets and preventing sort of disasters or breakdowns or life safety issues down the road. So I'll just continue to have this on my mind but keep learning about the process. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just make a reference to the sweeper designated there for Norman Wells as part of the asset upgrade. That particular unit was brought to my attention several times there. Being so old, it was getting difficult to get replacement parts. But this -- my question to the Minister is this whole area of asset management and

positioning, particularly positioning your fuel supply tanks, one of the things that we have learned in our discussion during the wildfires in Fort Good Hope was positioning fuel supply or storage in designated communities. Has this been discussed, this part of the asset management and acquisition of new tanks and positioning in different communities in case there's a fire in Deline or one in Good Hope again so that there's sufficient inventory to support our aircrafts with the Department of ECC? Thank you there, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, yes, I'm glad to acknowledge the one item there that -- under asset management that is looking for a replacement. I would note there is quite a bit of work actually happening in this space of improving our fuel services in terms of the storage and the access. In fact, it's a pretty significant overhaul. Mr. Chair, it does happen to fall under programs and services section, so I certainly can speak to it now but -- or could come back to when we hit that section. I'm in the Chair's hands.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** I've got nothing further there, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just a really basic question to start. The capital asset retrofit fund, there's two lines here, TCA and DM. Could the Minister explain to me what the difference is, please. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are the different funds from which they are -- to which they are allotted. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, sorry, I'm a newbie too. Would the Minister be willing to give a substantiation of this project? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me see if -- oh, you

know what, somebody has it in front of them. May I direct it to assistant deputy minister MacKay.

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

**MS. CELESTE MACKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The aim of the capital asset retrofit fund is to deliver energy efficiency projects for GNWT facilities in order to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, reduce our energy use, and reduce our operating costs. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you. And I assume this is across the whole of the GNWT, but could the Minister please tell me what communities, what facilities, this will apply to in this go-around for this capital asset retrofit fund? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me see if I can kind a list (audio). I think everyone is -- the work plan for 2025-2026, Mr. Chair, we have a -- there are some items that are in Gameti, the school, then Gameti has some upgrading. Yellowknife is getting upgrading to the Tatsaoti'ne building, a district heating system. Fort McPherson, Chief Julius School, heat recovery optimization. Sachs Harbour's school is getting heating upgrades. There's some funding allotted for LED lighting upgrades in both the Sahtu and South Slave that's yet to be completely finalized. Deh Cho, Fort Simpson, again lighting upgrades. Wrigley, Chief Julian Yendo School lighting upgrades. And then some O and M money set aside to support the LED projects that I've just been describing. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And can the Minister speak more to why some of the projects in some of the communities or facilities have not yet been defined; why are we asking for money for projects that aren't yet defined? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is one of the areas where there's a funding pot that is in existence, and it remains there at all times even when perhaps projects are not yet defined. So it's an

effort to ensure that we're distributing those funds equitably across different regions but at the same time trying to identify projects that are able to move ahead in any one particular year. So the projects that we have now been identified and scoped and are more ready to go, there's others that we're certainly, you know, again hoping to get that money out the door and just wanting to keep some held back so that it can be accessible to different regions when or if a project gets identified. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank, Mr. Chair. So I can appreciate that answer, but if we haven't decided by the time that we're in this House I just -- I don't understand why we would assign money to a hope. Wouldn't we want to come back the next year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, these are fairly small-scale projects. For example, some of the projects I was describing are under \$100,000 or sitting at around \$250,000, and for lighting, it's not -- those aren't necessarily projects that are, you know, significant. Heating upgrades, similarly \$100,000. So my point with that simply being that while we don't necessarily have everything lined up at this point early on, this is for the 2025-2026 season which does provide a fair bit of time and a fair bit of room to still maneuver, so there will be some money that could lapse certainly but at the same time not -- yes, I mean, wanting to have a little bit of flexibility. Again, the projects themselves, we're talking about LED bulbs and biomass boilers, but particularly the LED bulbs, it is expected that the money can be spent. I can certainly look back and confirm to what extent this set pot does get spent every year versus not. I'm happy to do that.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, if the Minister could provide some information to committee on that, that would be greatly appreciated. And, yeah, I don't know if I agree with her characterization that these are small amounts of money, especially when we're looking for every little bit of money we can. So I'll just leave that as a comment. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you. For Dehk'e, Frank Channel bridge,

it says estimated completion date 2027-2028. So when is the actual construction going to start for the Frank Channel bridge? I know the last time they said it was going to be last fiscal year. It didn't happen. So now when is the actual -- is there a timeframe for when the construction's going to begin for this project? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this project certainly was -- did get to -- or was delayed over the last short while. I can say that at this point there's been some positive developments that at this point we are working with the Tlicho-Kiewit partnership, and it is expected that there's going to be a start-up project -- start-up discussions have already begun. This -- for this year, this concurrent year, there's a production of aggregate underway and the next stages would have an estimated completion date -- I believe the construction itself will start in 2026, so in the next fiscal, with a completion date -- again, tentatively at this point, but '27 -- it's in the fiscal of 2027-2028.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, that's a long time because we know that Frank Channel bridge, there's a lot of people that are concerned about the Frank Channel bridge, you know, even to travel on it. And, like, this -- our school buses go on it every day. And I know I talked to some of the residents. They were really concerned. They said they don't feel comfortable travelling on the Frank Channel bridge. And I thought, you know, the last time, when the other Minister was here, she did say that it was going to start last fiscal year 2024-2025 and to date, it's -- I mean, 2027-2028. So it's a long time to wait, especially for, you know, the condition of the Frank Channel bridge is a concern for a lot of our own community members and it's being used every day. You know, people travel on it and the big trucks travel on it to Yellowknife. So it's just a little disappointing because I know a lot of people have been asking in Behchoko too that, you know -- even in Tlicho region -- when are they going to start the constructions, because they did hear that too because it was said by the previous Minister as well too, so. And it's good that, you know, plow, dump truck in Behchoko, and it's -- so that's going to be -- that's for 2025-2026 fiscal year. So when is it -- when are they going to get this -- like, how many dump truck they're going to get for -- to maintain the Highway No. 3? Is it just only for the Highway No. 3 or within the community access?

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, first I want to acknowledge the frustration on the Frank Channel bridge and certainly have also been watching that project over the last short while and was certainly looking forward to seeing it at a different stage of completion. This was a project that is expressly in the Tlicho Infrastructure Cooperation Agreement, and that is an agreement that is certainly -- it is unique in terms of how we are conducting procurement. So that uniqueness sometimes has taken a little bit of time, but certainly the hope here is that once we get to a place where an agreement is signed, which it is now, that we ultimately have a product that is one that is better engaging with the community on whose lands -- with the government on whose lands this project is taking place. So I do want to acknowledge the challenges we've had to date but, again, we're in a good place now in that that agreement has been signed.

Similarly, the comments around from the community members, Mr. Chair, just wanting to, again, say we do monitor the bridge carefully. It is -- it's an old bridge and wasn't designed for the weights of trucks that are now available but heavy loads can reconfigure themselves so that they are not placing inappropriate strain on the bridge.

As for the plow, dump truck, that is meant to service not only Highway No. 3 but also the Tlicho highway. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** No, that's good. Okay, the school -- the school is going to be completed in -- I mean, with the new school in Behchoko, it's planned to be completed, like, I think within ten years. So that's why it's really crucial that Frank Channel bridge, because I don't think -- I think a lot of parents are concerned. So I'm glad that she addressed that. So, yeah, we have to think about the young people that's going to be, you know, travelling on it from Behchoko into Edzo to attend high school -- junior high school and high school. So it's a serious issue for us, especially for the community members.

And I'm glad that there's a new plow -- or the dump truck because I went to visit the facility that -- the infrastructure -- the highway departments in Behchoko. And I saw a lot of these -- they had, like, two or three dump truck and the plow truck too, and I told them, I said holy, I said, are these new? And they said no,

these are hand-me-down from Yellowknife, and we painted it. So it looked new. So I'm glad that, you know, they are going to get a new -- new equipment which is -- you know, it's good. So that's all I have is that -- yeah, thank you.

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

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is in regards to the James Creek maintenance camp. It's stated here that they're going to be fixing up the existing camp. Is there works underway for a new location? I have been told in the past that there was -- they were looking at a new location for a new camp. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this project is a retrofit of the existing location. The Member -- yes, quite correctly, there was originally back -- way back, 2016, looking at replacing the camp, and there was funding back at that time to do so. There was some challenges in that the first site that they landed upon was determined to actually not be suitable for this kind of camp based on the geotechnical and the investigation of the area and, unfortunately, no new sites could be identified in the area that were both compatible with the technical needs, compatible with what was required for the spaces and also appropriate for the local community. And as time rolled on, the new proposal simply started to look like the budgets were becoming quite a bit different as, of course, time moved past what that budget was. So with the budget that was available from now quite dated, it's been decided that rather than losing that funding, rather than being further in a situation with a camp that's increasingly out of date, that's where the decision has come to use the money that is available and rescope to retrofit the existing facility. Thank you.

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

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the answer. The other question I have is in regards to capital assets on the retrofit fund. For the Aklavik, they were working on the septic tank in Aklavik and they came into some problems. Can you give me some update on what's been done so far? Like, is it safe? You always talk about safety of human lives, and is this project safe for the students and the staff within the school? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll direct this to the assistant deputy minister, please, MacKay, please.

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

**MS. CELESTE MACKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. An environmental consultant has come in and removed the piece of material that was knocked off during the renovation and has taken it back for testing and stabilized the space where the piece of material fell off. And also they've reviewed the ventilation system to confirm that the ventilation does not run through that crawl space, so it's safe for occupants to use.

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

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's more of a comment. I've seen people work with asbestos in the Mackenzie Delta and when they work in those areas, they confine -- they seal the whole area right off before they even work on it and they use special equipment and ventilation and all that precautions before they even start work or -- in that area. So it's pretty well contained. And so hopefully there's no contaminants that will place the students and the staff in danger because they're still using the facility at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any questions from Members? Seeing none, I'm going to go to the Department of Infrastructure, asset management, infrastructure investments, \$93,935,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Members. Please turn to page 58, energy and strategic initiatives, with information items on page 59. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With regards to the Slave Geological Province corridor planning and environmental assessment, could the Minister please give us a substantiation for that? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm certainly happy to do that. So this project obviously represents a pretty significant potential in infrastructure investment. At this

stage, the project is focused on planning as far as Lockhart All-Season Road. That would take from the end -- what is now the end of the Ingraham Trail, commonly known thereof as Ingraham Trail or Highway No. 4, all the way up to Lockhart Lake, and the funding that is here right now would get as far as having a regulatory application in 2025-2026 in order to begin an environmental assessment.

This certainly has been around, as I said, for some time. This was initially advanced back in 2019, and certainly interest has continued in getting to a point where a decision on whether or not to proceed could actually be made. So that's, you know, really a big part of the investment here is for that purpose. This is 75/25 percent funded with the federal government, and the costs to date have been around planning and regulatory review studies. And the work -- you know, again, because of the nature of it, it continues to reflect priorities around economic growth and economic foundations as well as in this case a collaboration with Indigenous governments. Mr. Chair, I continue to receive correspondence from YKDFN and Tlicho governments, in particular, around their interest in seeing this advance and seeing what stage it's at. Mr. Chair, I'm mindful of time. I'll pause there and see what other questions the Member might have. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I would like to know if the Minister can explain how she sees the timelines of this particular environmental assessment aligning with the regional strategic environmental assessment that is underway. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so the regional strategic environmental assessment is led by the federal government. So far be it for me to speak on their behalf, but I am aware that there's been some delays in getting that underway. I'm also cognizant that certainly some of the regional governments are indicating, and the federal government has confirmed, that we would -- that this project and its environmental assessment can move forward even while or in tandem with a regional strategic environmental assessment. It's been our understanding and expectation, frankly, that the two can be supportive of one of the other. The information that we would be doing for an environmental assessment would be relevant to the regional environmental assessment and vice versa. So

as far as a more detailed response than that, I'd need to confirm what the latest federal plans are on the RSE, and I don't have that in front of me. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would the Minister be willing to follow up in writing with committee on that? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, assistant deputy Jenkins does indicate what we are told is that they're getting started this year, so I'll -- we'll go back and see if we can't get something more definitive from the partners that sit at that table, and then we'd be more than happy to follow up or at least give an update if I'm waiting on someone else for information. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. Nothing further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, my questions are around kind of the -- all three of the big kind of planning projects that we've got here. To be clear, the Taltson, Mackenzie Valley Highway, Slave Geologic Province.

So it appears that the fiscal responsibility policy does not require any kind of assessment of O and M implications for proposed capital projects and whether the government could even afford those costs going forward. So I guess I'm just kind of curious how this much -- how planning for building of this kind of -- this much infrastructure all at once fits within, you know, the Minister's -- finance Minister's perceptions of what the implications of the fiscal responsibility policy are? That's my first question.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's -- I'm always happy when someone is referencing the fiscal responsibility policy, but I don't know that that's -- that policy's really meant to guide the development of the fiscal strategy and the fiscal stewardship on the operations side yet not

necessarily in the same way as it applies here, although I know that may be something to look at for the future into how they intersect one with the other. But as far as the three big projects, they are each at different stages and they do each have slightly different obviously sort of end goal benefits.

Fundamentally, all three are opportunities to see a catch-up in the scale of infrastructure that exists in the Northwest Territories, particularly in terms of transportation infrastructure. The Mackenzie Valley Highway at this point, as is spoken of quite frequently, is a critical corridor up the -- you know, up a part of Canada that is right now thoroughly underserved in terms of the transportation network. It's already in EA. We are working very hard to make sure that there is no delay, that -- certainly from our end on that EA process and expect it out next year with then the ability to proceed according to what the board may dictate and move forward with a design and a procurement process -- or rather regulatory process and then design procurement. So that's where that one's at. It's at a very different point. With that in hand, we can go and get final dollars hopefully from the federal government to support its building.

The Taltson project's a little different in that we are but one member. That is being led by all of the Indigenous governments who are in the watershed region. The GNWT's one number of that group. That project will advance as a group. It's not expected to advance with the GNWT alone, and it certainly wouldn't advance without support from the federal government financially. But it is different, again, in that it's advancing step by step with that entire group, so multiple MOU partners sitting together. And it is on the side of the energy infrastructure needs.

And then last but not least, of course, Slave Geologic Province, Mr. Chair. Again, you know, noting again the complete lack of any roadways in this country connecting the south to the Arctic, and this is an opportunity to do so. The Nunavut government has reinvigorated their work on creating a report and hoping to see it connect down into our territory. But that is for this one off out of the three. But without continuing to make some progress to advance, we wind up in the situation we've been in for 30 years which is people talk about it, but nothing's actually studied and nothing's ready to go. So the funds we have here are really to -- for Taltson and -- or for -- rather for Slave Geologic gets to a point where we can make an actual decision where we know what the project would look like, where it would be, who would be interested, and who might contribute. But right now, without that, we just keep talking about the lack of infrastructure. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So yeah, I'm kind of curious in particular on -- to get a bit deeper into kind of O and M costs. So any of the projects will do, really. I mean, any of them have implications for that. So how do we propose affording to operate additional infrastructure like this? I mean, looking at our fiscal outlook, looking at the infrastructure we've got, it seems like we're having a very difficult time kind of affording what we've already got. So who are we envisioning is going to pay for the operations? Are we anticipating developing cost sharing agreements with other governments? How are we -- how are we proposing that this is going to be something that we can even afford? Because getting capital money is one thing but operations and maintenance, of course, is going to be enormous for any of these large projects. So what's our planning around that? Like, how are we ensuring that what we're doing is realistic and within the bounds of what the territory can afford to do?

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the GNWT is having significant challenges maintaining its operations. We are struggling in the health care system obviously with the health authorities running a fairly significant deficit that continues to grow, and struggling in the energy sector right now because of the lack of interconnectivity between our systems and the tremendous costs that continue to build up because of the reliance on diesel and the volatility of fuel. But our fiscal challenges aren't necessarily being driven by operations and maintenance on the highways. Those costs are going up. I mean, I certainly am seeing it on the -- you know, in the Tlicho with the winter roads, the winter roads going up. The Sahtu is likely to see increases. But that is not what keeps the finance Minister up at night. The situations facing us with -- in terms of the health authority budgets is of a bigger concern, of the energy sector is a bigger concern. But operations on highways and roads, again quite frankly, Mr. Chair, their costs are not insignificant, the building costs are not insignificant, but the costs of not having transportation and being in a situation where I can't resupply communities in fuel services division, where we can't get supplies in when there's an evacuation in Yellowknife for instance, those costs are also significant. So we do -- I do want, you know, again emphasize estimates are made before a construction

decision is made as to what the total might be. And I'll use an example of the TASR where they've entered into a P3 project. That TASR project has a set amount that we can plan for every year. There's an amount in a sinking fund that we use to pay for the operations and maintenance of that highway that goes to the Tlicho government who are the third party. That kind of work is certainly being contemplated for these other projects. Again, Taltson in particular, it's going to be a cooperative -- cooperation project. The next stage is to get an entity that these Indigenous governments can be part of. That may well be where the business case for Mackenzie Valley Highway or Slave Geologic end up, but I don't have that information yet. That's the next step for Mackenzie Valley Highway, quite frankly, is to have that conversation. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And so, you know, I appreciate that answer from the Minister. I'm very glad that they are considering the O and M for these. You know, that does bring me some comfort.

So I want to speak a little bit -- I mean, we heard from the ECE Minister just today detail the magnitude of costs for infrastructure for the college, for example. And of course, there's only so much federal money we can seek. The same can be said for housing, which MLAs have been clear is a priority. And so one of the problems we have is we can only seek so much federal funding. We can only receive so much federal funding. So how are we able to effectively action our priorities when we're simultaneously trying to advance multiple projects that are outside the possibility of affordability for the territory to build and also trying to advance what I might describe as competing priorities. So help me understand how it all makes sense. How are we going to effectively -- because, I mean, this has been one of the conversations we've been having over and over and again in the House, you know, during this budget session is, you know, how do we effectively action our priorities? And if all of our planning and staff time and federal funding is going towards other projects, of course the opportunity costs is that we're losing out on things that we also have prioritized. So I'm trying to understand how to make sense of all this and make sense of the -- you know, the Minister's gotten up, and with a very somber expression, spoken about dire financial outlook but we seem to be planning as if our fiscal outlook is positively incredible. So, Mr. Chair, if the Minister could kind of comment on that statement, I'd appreciate it.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I hope I don't just have 40 seconds. That's a big one. Mr. Chair, at this point these three projects do have federal funding to get them to that point where there's an understanding that -- you know, the environmental assessment work wouldn't necessarily become stale if it doesn't happen to move forward with funding in the immediate year after. It goes through still a permitting process. And even with the permits in hand, I can think of a mining project here in the territory that's been sitting fully permitted ready to go trying to get funding sorted. They are not -- it doesn't go stale. It doesn't go bad. Obviously at some point it becomes not a tangible priority. But having those permits in hand doesn't mean that we're under the clock or under the gun to have it funded the next year. It certainly gives the opportunity to go and have a conversation. It's not possible to go to Ottawa and say, will you fund a project that I haven't -- I'll put through in EA that I haven't got a regulatory permit for that I'm not really sure where I'm going to put it, but can you fund it. So that -- these three are all at different phases of that kind of planning and preparation so that we can go with a meaningful business case with permits in hand to say we're ready, it's shovel ready, let's move forward.

In terms of balancing different priorities, Mr. Chair, this is certainly a bigger question and probably one better placed to the Premier in the sense that it applies -- we would be looking to the federal engagement strategy that is a whole of government strategy and a whole of Cabinet strategy that does look to be founded upon the priorities of the 20th Assembly and the mandate that's developed to deliver upon that.

To date, Mr. Chair, we -- obviously the housing funding that we have is, you know, outside the wheelhouse of what I have in front of me to speak to today. But it comes from different sources in the federal system as well, so we want to be able to be in a position to maximize what is coming in the territory from every single federal funding source. Canada Health, you know -- or sorry, the -- I'm getting the acronym wrong. They've changed the federal government's department of late but it's now housing, infrastructure, and communities. There's a very specific pot of money and it's very large, and we want a lot of it to come here. But there's a point that we might need to make too about also making sure that we have other things that are moving forward. So we've been fortunate to date. There is a lot of money that's come into the housing corporation, a lot of money has come into Indigenous governments

for housing, and we've still been able to advance these projects.

So with all of that said, Mr. Chair, that's the goal, is to continue to achieve that kind of success where things can each continue to move at slightly different stages which allows that money to flow out. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker -- sorry, Mr. Chair. It's been a long day.

I wanted to start just picking up the conversation first with Taltson pre-construction planning. I understand that for now we have 100 percent federal funding to continue with the planning, and I understand the GNWT is only one partner at the table; however, I think it's time for us to start considering what the GNWT's own portion of the future investment would need to be and to contemplate -- in a public way, to have those numbers out there publicly and to have the discussion as to whether that GNWT portion of the investment, both in terms of capital and ongoing O and M, is realistic, is palatable for people. And so I ask the Minister today would she make public what is estimated to be the cost to the GNWT of a Taltson project starting with phase one. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so typically a large project like that, the planning estimates would come through the -- or sorry, this capital planning process if it gets to that stage. But, Mr. Chair, let me take a slightly different approach with this one which is to say, again, it is an MOU-based approach. And I have been very clear with the partners when I sit at that table that it is an MOU approach, that it is not a GNWT only project; it is meant to advance as a group. And, again, our next step was to try to create -- there's been a decision on a preferred route. There's been a lot of discussion about how GNWT can support those partners with resolving their legacy issues and a change in terms of maybe having a stronger role there because it hasn't been resolved to date. And then the next stage would be to try to create a -- what we call project company or project co which can be the entity that actually advances the project, becomes the proponent. So I'd like to propose that I go back and make a commitment that I'll go back to that group, to the steering committee, and discuss how we can do better to maybe socialize some of the numbers. I think other members of that

group are also looking to be able to engage their membership so that everyone is aware as to what the kind of project is at scale. So, again, I do want to go back to them, but I'm going to make a commitment that I'm going to do that and see if we can all get the information out so that GNWT, public, but also members who are members of those groups can benefit from that. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do think that that is an important step, so I appreciate the Minister taking that back to the working group.

I want to turn now to the Slave Geological Province corridor planning. So the Minister mentioned that this one is actually only 75 percent federal funding. Can the Minister explain to us how much of the GNWT's own money we're using for the planning, both this year and over the course of the -- is it four or five years that we have federal funding; how much is the GNWT spending of our own money on this? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the totality of this, of what is planned to do all of the planning, is a \$40 million project. That is cost shared 75/25 federal to GNWT. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, so that would amount to \$10 million of GNWT funding just for planning, which I would consider a very significant amount of money for something we're not even sure is a good idea.

In terms of this project's priority ranking, I know that all the projects go through the planning process. We see at the back of our books that it has to be evaluated according to impact, severity of impact, and urgency in mitigation. Can the Minister share with us how this project was rated in terms of the urgency of the project, the severity of the impact, and also mitigation, so what other options could there be instead of this project; how were those rated in terms of priority? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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



**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this project initially came to -- into play for the GNWT before my time even in this House. And so its initial conception did not go through the same exact processes that we have now put into place today. But understanding the kinds of potential outcomes -- and I'm just trying to get to the substantiation sheet where there's a macroeconomic analysis lens that has since been applied to the project, due to the time, to try and determine what some of the benefits would be. Sorry, Mr. Chair, I'm just looking through -- oh, Mr. Chair, look, it's coming right at me now.

So -- yes, so as I said, initially when it came through the GNWT's process back in 2018-ish, or perhaps earlier than that, did not necessarily have the same rigor that we're applying now. But it has continued to go through the process, and it is being -- the same lenses are being applied now. So, for example, the macroeconomic lens considerations that every project does go through has economic effects estimated as being growth in terms of output in jobs over 30 years. Somewhere between 17,000 to 33,000 in gross sort of outputs, and then 20,000 to 40,000 in jobs. And the idea there, of course, is trying to analyze what the potential impacts would be over that period of time for having access to this region in a way that we do not currently.

Specific employment opportunities in terms of person positions, somewhere between 680 and 1,400 per year rather than over 30, a little bit of an easier number to grasp, Mr. Chair. And showing actually benefits that could be realized not only in the Northwest Territories but Canada which would be important for seeking investment from the federal government. I mean and, again, going on in this particular lens with the different benefits that it could have.

So, you know, Mr. Chair, there's -- the other assessments are done. I'm not sure -- again, I'm conscious of the time so I'm going to stop there, Mr. Chair. But if there's a specific item that's from the lens or the risk analysis that the Member wants me to speak to, I'm happy to do that.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So my understanding was that it already had been rated in terms of priorities under those categories that I mentioned, but if it has not, then I would strongly urge this government to do those ratings and then to be able to compare to other projects that we're considering and in

terms of, you know, by the same apples to apples what, you know -- what is the severity of how this would impact people if we don't do it, how urgent is this. And then in particular, I think this is underrated, the question of mitigation, what else could we do instead? Is this the only possible option to achieve those outcomes? Is this the only possible way we could get any of those jobs, or are there other possible solutions we could consider that could cost less money and put less of a burden on our fiscal situation here?

So I guess I'll request from the Minister that she come back to us for this project with an explanation of how this project is rated in terms of those categories of priority with a bit of explanation for each as to why the government might feel that it is urgent or that there's nothing else possibly that could achieve the ends sought. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, first, I guess I misunderstood. So the priority -- the primary criteria rating has been done here. It did get a score B -- B, A, A, and A which is for direct impacts, severity of impacts, and urgency mitigation. Sorry, I apologize. When the project was initially began and the funding was secured from the federal government to get to the regulatory proceedings, back then there was not this rigor. It is going through that process now. But it was just the idea of a comparison when we started, it wouldn't have had that because that wasn't being applied the way it is today. So I am sorry if I wasn't clear that it is going through that process now.

But in addition to that, so if we were to stop, to date we've incurred \$4.8 million only to date, and it's really the next stage, and the project went sort of on a bit of a pause when the regional economic assessment was requested to see how we can best fit in the work that's happening on the one to the other. Obviously if we are to walk away from the 75/25, then the federal government would not be paying any of the 75 so we would be on the hook for whatever amounts have been incurred to date. Again, that's not a -- well, it's \$4.8 million, Mr. Chair, so it is what it is but we would then be, you know, again, losing that opportunity with the 75/25. So, you know, other opportunities, what else can we do?

Mr. Chair, that's, again, pretty big question that I'm a bit hesitant to get into today sitting here on -- with the capital budget. How do we save the economy of the Northwest Territories is kind of the question and I, again, don't know that I'm

in a position to try to answer that without running the clock, so I will stop. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So as this is a very lively discussion around these infrastructure projects, can the Minister indicate if these, Taltson, Slave Geological Province Road, Mackenzie Valley Highway, if they're revenue generating projects. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, Taltson is contemplated to be revenue generating. Not necessarily in huge dollars but it depends. The issue is we are dependent or expecting that there would be industrial load added by having the Taltson construction. So, for instance, even right now with the overhaul that is expected to hopefully be fully absorbed, that excess energy would be fully absorbed by the Pine Point line. To do the expansion, it certainly links south and north and a significant number of communities. But to be revenue generating depends on there being at least another one, if not two, and hopefully three, new industrial projects that are added to it. There are a number of prospects that could line up well in their timing, whether it's lithium here in the North Slave, whether it was gold projects in the North Slave or otherwise, and that would make it revenue generating.

The Slave Geologic Province is also anticipated that if it were to get to a point of going forward, could also be revenue generating from a number of different aspects. One being as a toll road into a mine rich -- mining, mineral resource rich area and/or as an access point to the Grays Bay Port. So, again, those are pretty far out considerations. We're not at a point of doing a business case, but those would be the kinds of considerations.

As for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, Mr. Chair, right now that business case is a next major step that is to be had. I don't know that that's been necessarily billed as the priority being about revenue generation as opposed to about fundamental interconnectedness for the territory. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the Dempster Highway, of course the O and M costs for that are shared between the Yukon -- the Government of the Yukon and the

Government of the Northwest Territories. Is it possible that the Slave Geological Province, which would link to Grays Bay cross interprovincial borders or interterritorial borders, could a similar agreement -- I mean, this is a hypothetical but I hope the Minister will indulge me, but given we've had success, we know what that relationship looks like, if a similar relationship were struck with Nunavut on the Slave Geological -- O and M for the Slave Geological Province. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I can say there's certainly some -- as I mentioned, some renewed interest from Nunavut now organized to have a bit of their own project company that's out to develop and become a proponent to potentially on the Grays Bay Port, and they have reached out to the GNWT to see where we're at on Slave Geologic Province. They're turning their mind to it. I'd actually point the Member also south of our border, and Alberta is also showed a lot of interest. I think they are seeing perhaps less fossil fuel dependent future for themselves as well and are looking at where they can find new opportunities, and they are also showing a lot of interest. So this may be a corridor that has inputs from other jurisdictions. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, that is very positive. And I know most of northern Alberta is on very heavy fossil fuels so creating a pressure valve for them would probably be in their interest. Also the Grays Bay Port project could be a new link for sealift into the Northwest Territories. Is that something the Minister has looked at as well, to lower cost of living in the Northwest Territories by providing sealift from, say, the port of Montreal rather than trucking everything in with heavy trucks? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there was a lot of nodding at this table when the question was posed. So as far as being cognizant of the possibility that this could create another way in which to bring assets and supplies in, you know, yes, the answer is yes. As far as it -- my understanding, there was a fairly old dated business case for the Slave Geological Province that is in rather dire need of update. We're not, again, at that stage yet. But that -- yes, again, the short

answer is that definitely creates the potential for a corridor. I mean, you know, as I said earlier, really, if projects don't move forward to the place where they are studied and ready -- I'm cognizant these are expensive things to move forward on but if you don't have the information, you don't have the knowledge, you haven't done the studies, you haven't done your environmental assessment, you cannot make a construction decision, and you cannot advance the project. And that's, really, what these -- that's the stage that these ones are still at. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Minister spoke of, you know, a significant number of jobs, probably hundreds, thousands potentially, with all three of these projects, millions of dollars in opportunity, perhaps billions if it leads to an explosion of exploration activities and development in a mineral rich area that would be opened up through Slave Geological Province, for example. We know the Mackenzie Valley Highway is in -- or is a critical need for the territory with the effects of climate change harming marine resupply up the Mackenzie Valley -- or the Mackenzie River. And, of course, Taltson is the key to the government's clean energy future. So it seems to me that all the three projects here are almost nation building projects that have -- that can, you know, in terms of bang-for-your-buck investments, these are very well thought out. These have had a lot of time and attention by very smart people who work for our government and have been shepherding these over years, by very capable Ministers as well, and I see no reason why we should be picking and choosing winners and losers here. There isn't a limited cap of political capital you can take to the well in Ottawa. If you have a willing partner in the federal government, I'm sure we could get a lot of these things funded, especially if they're northern minded and want to do some nation building. I can only think if the Mackenzie Valley pipeline had gone a different way, the kind of economic activity that could have been opened up in the Northwest Territories, the kind of major infrastructure that would have come in as well, would have been transformative. We might not be in a have-not region of the country with that -- with something that opened up the region and resource development as well and enriched everyone down that transportation corridor. And when I think of something like the Slave Geological Province, that's what I think it could be. I think of the benefits that could go to the Akaitcho, to the Tlicho, to Nunavut groups,

to people in the Northwest Territories generally. And if there's opportunities for sealift, if there's opportunities for marine supply, that's -- that could be a game changer too. You know, these are creative solutions to the infrastructure deficit we have. I know the Minister's very passionate about this, and I just wanted to indicate I very much lend my support to these projects. And it is a bit disappointing that, you know, we have -- oftentimes we are very critical, and Members of this committee are for critical of these projects, when I think we should be embracing them fully and finding ways to make them happen instead of, again, picking winners and losers. So the Minister doesn't have to comment, but I think it's important that we continue to prioritize these projects as a government and we get them done as soon as possible because we don't want to be looking back 60 years later at what could have been, at another Mackenzie Valley pipeline. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you, the Member from Range Lake. Is there any other Members that want to add to the discussion on this item? Seeing no hands, I'm going to continue on.

Department of Infrastructure, programs and services, infrastructure investment, 19 million -- sorry? Sorry, colleagues.

Department of Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, infrastructure investment, \$71,500,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Members, because we got translation here, we'll take a short recess.

--- BRIEF RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll call the meeting back to order, committee. Thank you, Members. We're going on to continue on. Please turn on to page 60, programs and services, with information items on page 61. Are there any questions?

Department of Infrastructure, programs and services, infrastructure investment, \$19,440,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Members, please return now to the Department of Infrastructure summary found on page 53. The Department of Infrastructure, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$184,875,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 45-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026  
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – INFRASTRUCTURE  
- DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT,  
CARRIED

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consider next is all -- the motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Infrastructure, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, total department is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. And thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the chambers.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Department of Environment and Climate Change. Does the Minister of Environment and Climate Change wish to bring witnesses into the chamber? Minister.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness into the chamber. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my right, I have Dr. Erin Kelly, deputy minister. And on my left I have Jessica St. Arnaud, director of finance.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed to the details contained in the tabled documents? Committee, agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, the Department of Environment and Climate Change begins on page 23. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning at page 25 with environment and management monitoring and climate change, with information items on page 26. Are there any questions? Seeing no questions, I'm moving on.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, environmental management, monitoring, and climate change, infrastructure investments, \$249,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Next we have is regional operation on page 27, information item on page 28. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I'm going to ask a question about a random one of these assets and kind of dive deeper than just one singular asset, but let's just talk about the boat, the replacement boat for field work in Inuvik. Can I please get a substantiation for that item? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This specific item is part of a fleet of equipment that the department uses to deliver the programs for the department across the Beaufort Delta region. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So in some of my comments to the Minister of Finance yesterday, I know in our substantiations we talk about different ways that we make decision makings -- decision-making, pardon me, around the various metrics and choices that we make for selecting these items and considerations that we make about these items. There has been great conversation in previous Assemblies around the climate change considerations of these items. And so not to pick on the boat, not to make my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake angry, it was just picked at random, I'm just curious as to why in climate change considerations for boats and trucks and other assets that run on fossil fuels the climate change considerations are none? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the question. I think that some of the challenges, especially in the Northwest Territories and certainly based on location, is having adequate infrastructure based on the resources that are available within that area. So in the Beaufort Delta, for example, the boats that are used to deliver the programming there need to be of a certain size and ability to deliver the programs to ensure that our staff are safe as they're doing that work. And there's not really anything currently on the market that would be able to enhance the goals in the way of not using fossil fuel. So currently, a majority of our large patrol boats are all four cycles which is certainly a move forward in the way of more environmentally friendly than perhaps in the previous years when it used to be a two-cycle engine. These are far more fuel efficient, much more economical, and certainly do provide some benefits to the climate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And arguably, when we talk about all of our assets that put out greenhouse gases, be they vehicles or buildings or whatever the case may be, I guess how one boat in Inuvik is not going to break the GHG bank, so to speak, but to see that there's no -- no impact of just any asset, I don't know if I agree with that. Maybe the Minister could speak to that. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I -- I mean there certainly is an impact in a contribution to the greenhouse gas total from all of this infrastructure that's on our landscape; however, I mean, like I said earlier, you know, the options of to go to other technologies are somewhat limited and, yes, much of the infrastructure that is on the capital plan is replacing existing infrastructure so it's not additions to the fleet but part of the replacement cycle. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you. So I can respect that answer. I just -- I guess I'd like to hear from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change that, in fact, yes, having -- even though there aren't any other options, vehicles, all of our infrastructure that emits greenhouse gases, does impact climate change. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I do agree with that statement. It certainly does have an impact. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I will take away some further comments to the Minister. Nothing further at this time.

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

**MR. TESTART:** I'm curious now, Mr. Chair, so I'm going to ask. As the Minister is the Minister responsible for Climate Change and the government's climate change plan, and he's got officials there, is it possible to calculate the carbon emissions or carbon impact of one truck in the GNWT fleet? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll pass that to Dr. Kelly.

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

**DR. ERIN KELLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We don't normally look at that level of granularity. I'd have to take that back. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Would that information -- sorry, thank you, Mr. Chair. Would that information be useful to our climate change planning to -- and implementation of our strategy and our goals to reduce emissions? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That level of detail would be really hard to calculate. We take a much broader approach to how we do the calculations on the greenhouse gas emissions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the GNWT does calculate its fleet -- like, its

combined fleet in terms of emissions; is that correct?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not 100 percent sure we do it to that level in-house, I'm certainly happy to get that information for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I think that's a much more useful -- useful metric because then we can -- we can factor it into those larger emissions pictures as we look for -- you know, actively seek for replacement technologies. I think it's very difficult when you're dealing with certain types of equipment, as the Minister said. So I just wanted to get a sense of what we actually look at and what's possible and what's useful fundamentally when we're trying to deliver on the climate change strategy and meet our net-zero goals, our 2050 net-zero goals. And that's probably a broader conversation that he will have to have with the Minister of Infrastructure. Nothing further, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Any further general comments from Members? Okay, thank you. Seeing none, continuing on.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, regional operations, infrastructure investments, \$430,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next, we have wildlife and forest management on page 29 with information items on page 30 to 32. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So first I wanted to ask some questions about the territorial fire centre. Can the Minister just provide us with the total budget for building this new project. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The total budget for the project is \$32 million.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, and so has work already begun on this project? I note that the budget extends over a number of years and this isn't the first year, but has substantive work already begun in constructing this centre? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the project is well underway. It has not reached the construction phase however \$16 million has been spent to date. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** So just to clarify, \$16 million has already been spent but construction hasn't begun? Does that mean materials have already been procured, or that \$16 million has been spent on, like, planning stages?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Planning and material, I believe.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. Can the Minister explain what the priority ranking for this project was in terms of severity of impact and, like, mitigation in terms of what would be the alternatives if we don't build this new centre? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the primary criteria ranking was direct impact was a B, severity impact was an A, urgency was an A, and mitigation was an A. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And so currently these services are already being provided out of a leased space, so -- but an A rating for mitigation, I think -- unless I'm misunderstanding the system -- implies that there's very few to no alternatives. What's wrong with the idea of just continuing to lease space instead of building a new \$32 million building? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, currently, there is leased space at 149 McDougal Road where the forest management division operates out of which consists of office space on the second level. There are shop spaces where they do mechanic work as well as a lot of technical work on telecommunications equipment on the main floor, and then the basement is a warehouse with an elevator that is very inconsistent in quite an old building that stores a lot of the material for the fire suppression. And there's also a warehouse off site at one -- on King Street, as well as 22 sea cans that accompany that warehouse that stores additional fire equipment.

One of the challenges, certainly, is in the efficiency of being able to deliver the program from multiple locations when the staff is based in one building and that was some of the rationale to support this, to get all of the operation into one facility and there's not other spaces available within the community that could accommodate this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Can the Minister explain what would happen if we didn't build this building? What else would we do instead? Or what would be at stake or what would be risked if we didn't build this building? I understand that there are convenience issues, efficiency issues, but can the Minister explain what's the alternate scenario of not building this building? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, part of the -- sorry, it's not necessarily an issue of convenience as much as also an issue of safety. Currently part of the facility has a small engine shop in a building that's essentially an office building. There's also the fact that our staff have been -- the warehouse is located in the basement so there are a lot of challenges with moving equipment and supplies in and out of the basement which creates significant risk to the staff. And the warehouse at King Street is a significantly old warehouse that is very outdated, hasn't been renovated in many, many years. It was built in the early '60s. So the operation out of Fort Smith also supports all of the regions across the Northwest Territories, so it is the headquarters function, and the warehouse and the supports

support all of the five regions across the NWT, and this also is the location that provides all of the support for the fire operations across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. When this project was thought up, was there alternatives that were identified in a, you know, project proposal in terms of how else they challenges might be addressed? And does that document still exist somewhere? I know that it's -- we're a little bit further along into the project now but I'm just trying to understand how a project like this gets ranked as sort of top priority as a major new capital building in our territorial budget when it seems that there are alternatives to building a \$32 million building. But were other possible solutions to those challenges considered and compared to both the cost and implications of building a new building? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there were. So maybe a little bit of history. So we started -- the original planning started for this project back in 2015 with the conceptual design. After the conceptual design phase, in 2022 we did put this project out as a modified P3 through Infrastructure as another alternative way of doing it, but the costs that came back on the proposed P3 project were out of the scope of the budget so that specific approach was not taken, and we went back to taking the approach of the design putting it out to tender as the project moved forward. And so I'll pass it to Dr. Kelly to add additional detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**DR. ERIN KELLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's -- as the Minister noted, this is the headquarters for forest fire management for the entire Northwest Territories, and the facility that we have right now hasn't been doing what we need it to do for many, many years. I think with the last several fire seasons that we've had and how challenging they are and a knowledge that climate change is impacting our fire regime in the territory that this has become a critical issue. You can't -- you need a building where you can get the work done and get the materials out to the regions efficiently and effectively when you have as many fires as we have going on right now, and the only suitable option through a number of studies that we looked at

is to build a new fire centre within Fort Smith. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just quickly go to another project I wanted to know about on this list which is a project down on the Ingraham Trail which is within my riding. If the Minister could explain a bit more about what is this 80-foot detection tower that is going to be built on the trail, where exactly on the trails you know, and explain what are some of the purposes of that new project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, so this is part of the territorial detection network. So a number of sites, I believe to date there's been 12. We have 12 detection sites, nine of those would be camera-based. This would be the same type of setup where it would be a remote camera installation that would allow for remote observation of the area. The specific location on the trail, I don't have that information currently at my fingertips. But it is part of a much larger territory-wide project to install these infrastructure detection sites near communities to ensure that we have adequate coverage to detect forest fire activity within a zone that could potentially impact a community at a very quick rate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay thank you. Next on my list now I got is the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the ECC has received its report into -- or its after action report that had a number of recommendations. Many of those were capital recommendations that are -- I think you could find here quite clearly. So does the Minister feel that the investment by these expenditures is sufficient to meet the recommendations in that report? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this capital plan was developed prior to the report, the after action review being released, and some of the projects within this plan certainly do address some of the concerns raised through the after action review but they don't necessarily cover all of those. A lot of these projects were supported by an initiative from the federal government on a

three-to-one cost sharing basis. And so what ECC did was took their allocation for capital and used that to leverage the federal government dollars to get -- to catch up on some of the backlog capital projects that were lagging behind. It's quite a demand within our budget and it certainly did take some of the years off of where we could have potentially landed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister point out, like, some kind of -- some of those high level investments that meet the recommendations of the after action report. Like, the most significant pieces in this list that could help meet those -- the new -- or the need that's left unfilled that's called for in the report. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So specifically to pick out individual projects, I think that overall a lot of the -- we look at -- we have communication projects. We have the detection projects. We have additional -- like, in here we have the wild land fire trucks, we have the -- sorry, the value protection trailers. So these are all pieces of infrastructure that are designed to support communities to ensure that the communities around the territories have the resources within their communities to support the community as well as ECC in how we are able to quickly respond to incidents. Currently now we have wild land fire engines in the South Slave essentially and in Yellowknife region. We don't have that type of infrastructure currently up in the Beaufort Delta. So, you know, that's one example where now we will have more infrastructure available to the departments in all of the regions in an effort to come across and have a consistent approach across the NWT. And part of our plan is we've gone through time -- and this started a number of years ago -- was trying to have consistent infrastructure in all regions and at all bases, so regardless of where our employees go within NWT the equipment is the same. So the training that they receive they can use regardless of the region or location that they're in. So that's part of how this infrastructure plan supports the overarching goals of the report from the after action review. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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



**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And it's the -- does the territorial fire centre factor into those recommendations as well? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I think the territorial fire centre is a key piece in our ability to respond in a timely manner and an effective manner. It will be a facility that allows for our territorial -- I lost my train of thought there, sorry.

It allows for our territorial leadership, so our territorial duty officer and support staff, to have a facility that has all of the necessary tools to support the regional operations. It allows our team that is looking after equipment, warehousing, resupply, communications, detection, to have a facility that's all in one that allows for the work as well as the storage for all the related equipment and parts to be located out of one facility. It allows the management team and the team that does the significant amount of work to work within one location. Also within this plan it allows the capacity for the department to ramp up operations in the summertime. The amount of staff that's in the operation during the winter time is significantly different than the requirement during a fire season and which -- and that requirement has certainly been growing year to year as we have much more fire activity which requires more summer staff, more seasonal staff, and the new facility will have the capacity to support that. Currently, in the facility that we're in, there's not adequate office space, there's not adequate infrastructure to support a much larger contingent of people. So I think it's certainly something that will definitely enhance the ability to be responsive.

The proposed location is at the airport which will be closer to other infrastructure that supports the fire program in the air attack program, and part of the plan is also to move -- the heli bases in Fort Smith and Hay River are currently right next to residential areas, so part of this overarching plan is to also move those bases out to the airport. It increases public safety because of the flight paths do currently interact to a certain extent with the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. So -- well, that's -- anyway, that sound very positive. I think the one thing that we've become aware of is that the NWT -- or we need more national coordination on this. We need more things like

task team 2 that can do operations in the Northwest Territories persistently and not just when we have an emergency and whenever, you know, federal public safety initiatives around emergency forces and things like that or disaster relief forces. So I think having a facility like this sounds like a good way to anchor the NWT in that process because we have a -- you know, a high quality facility with adequate space and all that, then we can start bringing in those teams, modeling fire suppression exercises, and all the stuff they do. So I think this is a good way to meet the recommendations. We, of course, do not -- of the 2023 after action report, we, of course, don't want a repeat of that. We want to be able to get a handle on this going forward and make sure our citizens are safe. My biggest concern from that report is we would not be investing the required resources in it and oftentimes we hear -- with no offence to this Minister or any Minister but that, you know, we've already done everything, we really don't need to do that much, but thank you very much for your report, third party reviewer. And in this case it does seem like when there's -- when the department says we've actually done a lot of the work, well, we have this list of projects that speak to that. So I applaud the Minister for -- and the department for being proactive in getting this work out and in matching those federal dollars and in satisfying a lot of the recommendations that were made. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the -- I'm looking at the 18-foot sport shed for Fort Providence versus the jet boat to Norman Wells. Okay, so one is -- 25, 26, 25, 26 -- okay. What's the -- why is one -- what are the difference with the two boats? One is a -- this one's a jet boat. So (audio). Can you explain why one versus the other for two different places? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Certainly. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when the specifications are designed for these boats, specifically boats -- you know, trucks are a little bit different where you can go with one standard design. Typically what happens is the -- as the tender is being developed and the specifications are being developed, there's an interaction between FMD who coordinates that procurement and the specific region and the needs of that region depending on varying factors. So the potential rivers that may be -- where the boat may be used in the

Nahendeh riding could be significantly different than the river that the boat is used in Fort Providence which could be different than a boat that's used in Yellowknife. So typically that's the reason that they may not be exactly the same. It may be due to the different terrain. Also depending on the program that the boat is supporting, there may be different needs depending on equipment or material that may need to be moved or used or how the boat is configured. So they're not all necessarily the same but they're certainly based on the need of the specific program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay, thank you. I guess water's really low in the Fort Providence area and all the area. Up in the Sahtu, it's low too. So I guess -- anyways, that -- I have a question about that centre, the one that was in Fort Smith, the territorial fire centre. That -- okay, so you said it was -- there was \$32 million allocated for it. \$16 million was already spent. That's just to -- and there's no way to relocate that to anywhere else; it stays in Fort Smith? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, the FMD is a headquarter function. So it is part -- forest management division is considered part of headquarters but it's based out of Fort Smith. So that's one of the large key employers for the community. The program has been there since devolution -- before devolution, it's been based out of Fort Smith. If I was to try and go back in time, I would say since the '60s. And so over time, it has evolved into the location that it is at now, has a significant number of deficiencies that I identified earlier which is certainly part of the driving force behind the new fire centre in ensuring that we have the adequate infrastructure to support the program and the rest of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** What services can expand to the smaller regions for, like, jobs from that territorial centre? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the territorial forest fire centre supports many regional operations. So every region has a regional fire base so in the

five -- Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith, Norman Wells, Fort Simpson, and Inuvik, all have regional fire bases, and there are also smaller bases at other communities within all of those regions. So Fort Providence, for example, has a base and fire crews based out of there.

We certainly do attempt to work with the regions, and I've also had some conversations with the department about looking at decentralizing some positions that are able to be essentially, you know, done from other locations across the NWT. So at this time, those conversations are continuing not specifically related to the territorial fire centre, however. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. I really hope you would keep the Deh Cho in mind for any positions that you can move out of the region -- out of the central area to the Deh Cho region. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll take that as a comment. Okay, I'm going to continue on. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. I'm not going to ask -- carbon emission is important, but I'm not going to ask about that regarding these trucks. One truck, is that one truck allocated for Behchoko? Because, you know, a lesson learned from the forest fire 2023 and prior to that Whati went through the same thing probably in 2017 or 2018, and now we have all-season road and this truck, it's going to be useful. There's Behchoko, Edzo, and Whati. Why only one truck that's allocated to Tlicho region?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, some of the -- so I don't have the specific number, but I can give you a pretty good ballpark number.

So within the Department of Environment and Climate Change, there's approximately between, I'd say, 120 and 140 trucks that are used across all of the departments and divisions and many of those, depending on location within NWT, if you're driving constantly up and down the Dempster Highway or if you're driving on winter roads or, you know, Whati, for example, right where the -- so part of the plan here and how these are disbursed throughout the capital plan for the department is to try and take an all-of-territory approach in how we

approach replacing motor vehicles so that we're constantly rotating that inventory and ensuring that the locations that require new trucks that spend a lot of time patrolling the highways and driving in those kind of conditions, we're trying to ensure that we replace those very regularly. And we will use some of the other vehicles that come out of those locations and use them in other locations where they're just running around town. They're always maintained in a safe condition. But it's a very large fleet of trucks across the department, and ensuring that --

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** (audio).

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I do apologize. Yeah, okay, you know, Highway No. 3 and Tlicho highway, it's one of the busiest highway right now, and Highway No. 3 from Behchoko to here and then partways to Fort Providence, that's the busiest highway because of the Deh Cho Bridge. So that's why I'm kind of a little bit surprised because you said, you know, like, they go on the road. You know, these -- our community members, they watch, you know, for forest fire and things like that so why only one truck that's allocated and knowing, you know, people drive on the highway, especially in the summer. Highway No. 3 is one of the busiest highway. It's one of the busiest highway in the Northwest Territories than South MacKenzie's highway, highway leading to Fort Smith. So I'm just a little bit surprised that, you know, only one truck to go on the highway in Tlicho region. And after what we went through in 2023, I thought there would be more than one truck.

And not only that too, you know, like, this territorial fire centre that's in Fort Smith, Frank Channel, it's right in the centre. We have the channel over there. And just like what my colleague said from Deh Cho, why everything -- it just seems like, you know, like, territorial fire centre in Fort Smith is going to get upgraded more but the Frank Channel, we're close to the capital where all the infrastructures are, why Frank Channel -- there's nothing going to Frank Channel. Like, we do need fire centre just like the one that Fort Smith is -- will be receiving. I'm just a little bit -- like, this is not good because, you know -- I know you said that you've been -- you know, that fire centre has been there since the '60s but that's the south, south of us and, you know, it's a long ways from where majority of the people live because Frank Channel is -- or Behchoko is -- you know, we're right in the centre. And Deh Cho too, and Fort Providence, they're just right there too, and we're getting nothing, less. So why is that? Why

only Fort Smith is on the budget to get almost everything?

What you went through in 2023, we went through the same thing. So I -- if he can answer why only in Fort Smith, not in other places where, you know, we had the same problem. We lost four houses. We lost four infrastructure but not in Fort Smith, you know. So why everything is going to Fort Smith? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so for 2025-2026, there's one truck for the Tlicho region; however, the capital plan for trucks is spanned out over the 20-year capital needs assessment so those trucks are constantly being replaced. So I don't have the specific detail on previous years but as things go forward, that's a constant. I'd also like to just say that so within the last -- since 2016 in Frank Channel specifically, there has been a significant investment in the base there. There was a new crew standby facility built. There was a new warehouse built. There was a new dispatch centre built. They recently replaced the communication tower this past summer. So there has been significant investment. The investment, how the department has been looking at capital is that there's more than just -- there's -- we look at the whole region and over a five-year average is how it's been approached so that obviously you can't break out totally evenly amongst all of the regions every year, so if you look at it in a bigger picture, the approach has been to try and break that out more evenly over time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, well, that's good, no, that's good. I know that, I see that. You know, the -- it's -- I live in Behchoko in -- you know, so I see -- I see the new infrastructure that was -- you know, was upgraded and so which is good, you know, but we're -- I'm just saying that Frank Channel is in the central locations. You know, we're close to Yellowknife, we're close to south. You know, we're not too far off in the south. We're closer to the border. So that's why I'm saying, you know, like, territorial fire centre, I think, you know, why not that go somewhere else? It should have been more -- or, you know, like, build fire centre, you know, in a lot of those small communities, small -- you know, or regional -- or other regional centre. I'm sure we will benefit more from that because unemployment rate is high in small communities. We don't have a college. So where -- if our young people wants to be

educated, they have to go somewhere else and this is a good summer job for a lot of our young people. So that's why I'm asking. I'm asking about that territorial fire centre from a lesson learned from 2023.

But there's another one here too. Territorial, it says -- it just says territorial, but it doesn't say the communities, where it's going. Like, that whip line floats and air attack officer, wildlife simulators, all that, there's a lot of them. Where are these positions -- or where are these equipment going, which communities? Where -- like, is it going to the territorial fire centre in Fort Smith? I'm not too sure. It just says territorial. It would be nice to know where some of these are going to be going. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for question. Yes, I'd love the opportunity to explain this one. So the territorial infrastructure is infrastructure that supports the territory as a whole. So I can go here and look at the lightning detection system, which is a piece of territorial infrastructure. So there's a network of detection sites across the NWT that provide lightning data to all of the NWT, to all of the bases in all of the regions, as well as to the territorial fire centre. This type of infrastructure supports all of the firefighting activity. So it's not necessarily assigned to a specific community because its location may not be in a community.

Very similar, the whip line floats are a piece of infrastructure. That is there to support the 802 water bombers so that if there is a damage to a float on one of the aircraft, that that aircraft is not out of service for a long length of time. The lead time to build these floats is approximately four years so this is the kind of inventory that we need to have available and on-hand to ensure that we can support the overall territorial fire operation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Okay, I don't see anybody else have their hands up for -- to this item here. I'm going to go to continue on.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, infrastructure investment, \$24,417,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Members, please return now to the Department of Environment and Climate Change summary found on page 23. Department of Environment

and Climate Change, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$25,096,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 46-20(1):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026  
CAPITAL ESTIMATES –ENVIRONMENT AND  
CLIMATE CHANGE – 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 Environment and Climate Change at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried. Consideration of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, total department is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, committee, and thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Thank you. What's the wish of the committee? I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled

Document 193-20(1) and would like to report progress with four motions carried. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder, please. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

### Third Reading of Bills

BILL 13:  
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2024-2025,  
CARRIED

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput that Bill 13 -- supplementary -- oh okay, now I'm like all flustered.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

#### RECORDED VOTE

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

Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha.

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

Thank you. 16 in favour. Zero opposed. Zero abstentions. Motion passed -- bill passed, sorry.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 14:  
APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS  
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2024-2025,  
CARRIED

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I'll get it right this time, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 14, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

#### RECORDED VOTE

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

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

Results of the recorded vote are 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 14 has had its third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Madam Clerk.

**Orders of the Day**

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Kim Wickens):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Tuesday, October 29th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
  - Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act
  - Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act
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:** This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 29th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Unedited Hansard