



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Nahendeh)

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Box 1320
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, October 29, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:33 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Thank you, colleagues. I'd like to thank elder Jonas Lafferty for the opening prayer and reflections here today.

Ministers' statements. Premier.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 75-20(1):
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY
UNIT**

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the cost of delivering health and social services is increasing faster than our resources can handle, at a time when our government is also facing additional costs related to climate change and inflationary pressures. This is why the delivery of sustainable health and social services is an important part of this government's mandate and the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

Through the mandate letter I provided to the Minister of Health and Social Services, we are addressing several initiatives that aim to deliver a more sustainable health and social services system. The initiatives are complex and multifaceted, and not something the Department of Health and Social Services or the health and social services authorities should undertake alone. Consequently, on July 15th the health care system sustainability unit was created within the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

The focus of this unit is to provide a deeper understanding of which health and social services programs and services should be core to the NWT, analyze how these programs and services can be delivered more efficiently, and determine how these programs and services should be funded within our limited fiscal framework. The goal is to achieve all this while still working to provide our residents the highest

quality of care. This work will require careful coordination with the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as our three health authorities. It will also require analysis of a lot of information, including information gained from reviews that have already taken place, and engaging with those who are contributing most to our system - frontline workers and operational staff.

Previous reviews of the health and social services system were foundational in guiding operational changes based on our current service delivery, but they did not examine whether these services are fundamental to what our health system should provide.

If we expect a transformative change to happen, Mr. Speaker, we need to define and prioritize what programs and services are core to the Northwest Territories by using evaluative data, including our current population and demographics, legal and policy frameworks, and technological advancements. We are no longer able to keep expanding our health and social services to meet our growing needs; instead, we need to transform the way we provide health care and social services in a fiscally sustainable manner.

Moving forward with this initiative will better position us to actively respond to these challenges in real time and consider recommendations that can be implemented more quickly than others. We will engage the people who will be affected by change in the work of understanding challenges and identifying solutions and ensure our work is informed by northern expertise and lived experience, as well as wise and emerging practices within the sector. This will assure our unique fiscal, political, and legal factors are considered in any changes.

The work will be challenging. I am committed to working closely with the Minister of Health and Social Services and look forward to providing progress reports to Members of this House on a regular basis as we engage on this initiative for the benefit of all residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 76-20(1):
INVESTING IN HEALTHY FOOD FOR
LEARNING

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, when students have food security, they can focus on learning, growing, and participating within their school communities; and most importantly, on being kids. To help students succeed, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories are working towards signing a three-year funding agreement that will support the expansion of the NWT school food program: Healthy Food for Learning.

Once signed, this new agreement will provide a significant and important boost to the program, creating real results for students and families across the territory. Since 2015, the territorial government has continually invested \$650,000 annually into this program. This agreement is part of Canada's broader national school food program plans, which will invest \$1 billion over five years across the country, with the goal of providing meals to up to 400,000 children every year.

With the high cost of groceries, the new funding agreement will help provide relief to families experiencing pressures of food insecurity and socio-economic challenges. All 49 NWT schools, and all junior kindergarten to grade 12 students will have access to the Healthy Food for Learning Program as needed so families can feel confident that their children will receive substantial and nutritious meals and snacks at school.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my statement today in French.

[Translation] ... The schools have shared wise practices for what successfully a food program for them. This has included partnering with the local grocery stores, government departments and businesses, enabling students to play an active role; for example, in growing the food in school gardens. Elders and community members have also been involved in traditional food preparation.

Ensuring that all students have consistent access to healthy meals is vital as we work towards improving the students' outcomes and providing all Northerners with the best possible start in life. We want to make sure that all residents will have the best outcome. I am happy to conclude this agreement, and I will explain all of the details with the Canadian

government in the next few weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Translation Ends]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Colleagues, before we go any further, I'd like to recognize some special people here today. Range Lake North School, grade 8 class, welcome to our Legislative Assembly. We really appreciate you being here. As well as their teacher and chaperones. There's just one teacher or -- four teachers. I thought it was four so, yes, the four teachers. So thank you very much for bringing your students here today. As well as our students from Aurora College, thank you very much for being here today. Thank you very much.

Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 77-20(1):
OUR LAND FOR THE FUTURE: ADVANCING
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROJECT
FINANCE FOR PERMANENCE

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to maintaining ecosystem health while supporting sustainable economic growth for our communities. A key part of this is the NWT Project Finance for Permanence Agreement, now known as the Our Land for the Future Agreement, which will help to fund Indigenous-led conservation initiatives.

The NWT Project Finance for Permanence Agreement provides participating Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations with the funding to do the things we agree to do together in our shared conservation work plan Healthy Land, Healthy People. The GNWT has negotiated a separate agreement with Canada to fund its own needs.

Mr. Speaker, since 2018, the GNWT has been seeking long-term funding solutions to support the management of protected areas like Thaidene Nene while creating jobs in nearby communities. The NWT Project Finance for Permanence Agreement is an innovative model that brings both funding and partnerships to ensure Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations lead in the protection of important lands while creating local jobs and economic benefits through initiatives such as Guardians programs, eco-tourism, and sustainable development activities. The funding supports progress on shared conservation priorities and will also contribute to Canada's goal of protecting 30 percent of its land and waters by 2030.

The NWT Project Finance for Permanence Agreement is an Indigenous-led initiative that includes 23 Indigenous governments, the GNWT, the federal government, and three private donors. It works within our existing land management process and laws, including the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, and established land-use planning processes, ensuring that decisions about the land remain in the hands of the people connected to it. It does not override these frameworks but provides funding to support Indigenous-led initiatives we agree upon through these decision-making processes.

The Healthy Land, Healthy People plan continues to guide our conservation efforts, and the agreement helps provide the resources needed to accomplish these shared goals.

Mr. Speaker, in April of this year, the federal government announced \$300 million to support the NWT Project Finance for Permanence Agreement, enhanced by an additional \$75 million coming from private donors. The agreement includes a strategic plan and financial plan, which outline how the funds will be used to ensure proper oversight and accountability. These plans are designed to ensure that the funding will be directed toward Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship efforts and related economic development activities. The agreement also creates an endowment that will ensure the long-term sustainability of these transformative benefits into the future.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT recognizes the importance of maintaining a balance between conservation and economic development. The NWT Project Finance for Permanence Agreement will contribute to a strong, diversified economy that includes new, culturally supportive opportunities in the conservation economy, alongside continued investment and development in the resource sector. By ratifying the agreement, the GNWT is taking a significant step to deliver its mandate commitment to promote reconciliation and responsible land management while supporting economic diversification in small communities. This agreement will help to support our shared conservation goals while ensuring that the land and water of the NWT continue to provide diverse opportunities for future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 386-20(1): MEDICAL RECORDS TRANSFER TECHNOLOGY

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, the digital age dawned so long ago that now our kids are almost born with a smartphone in hand and could not ever contemplate a world without high-speed internet. Indeed, our kids are now teaching us how to use our own laptops and phones. Yet, here in the NWT where the latest generation of health care professionals enter the workforce, they are forced into the way-back machine to relearn obsolete technology. Why? It's because NTHSSA still sends most diagnostic imaging onto CD-ROMs while other jurisdictions continue to upgrade dedicated medical communication networks. Using CDs to transmit and store vital data circumvents secure medical communications and therefore poses risks to both patients and medical providers, like leaking confidential information or opening the door to ransom ware attacks at a time when health care institutions are increasingly targeted. It should come as no surprise, then, that health technicians in other provinces are fed up with the NWT's backwards system.

Those aren't the only risks outdated systems have to our patients, however. Our cumbersome medical communication often prevents physicians down south from even accessing data at all. A patient sent for a CT scan in Edmonton would need their imaging sent to Calgary to be finalized and then sent back to Yellowknife to be burnt onto a CD for NTHSSA only to be sent back down to the appointment in Edmonton, on a CD I might add. That data may not arrive on time or be damaged resulting in physicians missing vital information and having to order whole new sets of CT scans which can bombard patients with 500 times more radiation than a simple chest x-ray.

That level of unworkable obsolescence is only matched by medical professionals here having to deal with three different charting systems, some still only available on paper. Sure, endlessly printing charts and burning CDs might save us from Y2K if it was 1999, but it's 2024 and we need to get with the times if we want more efficient public service. Our doctors and nurses can't keep working in the past; we need to bring them into the future. Thankfully, we don't need Doc Brown's DeLorean; we just need a Minister willing to work to bring our health care system into the 21st century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 387-20(1):
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY
GOVERNMENT

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal funding gap. Mr. Speaker, on May 29th of this year, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight tabled a report in this House that noted the municipal funding gap under the current formula would not work without substantial investment. Members discussed a funding formula that equalizes the gap for communities across the Northwest Territories. The government responded on June 13th, noting that MACA recently updated its community government funding policies to, one, provide a more equitable distribution of funding by basing allocations on a needs-based formula. The new funding policies came into effect in 2024-2025. Allocation will not be implemented until 2025-2026 to allow time to engage with community governments.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how the government plans to engage community governments. These changes will not only affect Tlcho region but other small communities as well. The change will have the greatest impact on small communities with population under 500 people. Mr. Speaker, I fear this formula change will negatively affect our Indigenous communities. We have been told that allocations will be implemented over a three-year transition period.

The Minister has noted that funding sustainable community government services is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. But, Mr. Speaker, what have the community government told MACA about the implementation of these new formula funding policies? How have the community government been engaged in decision-making? Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for MACA at appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 388-20(1):
RCMP SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH
OUTCOMES FOR UNDERHOUSED WOMEN

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak to reviewing policing outcomes. As discussed in this House many times, including our last sitting, with a motion on supporting mental health response, the NWT relies a great deal on the services of the RCMP. The NWT

asks more of them than what is truly their role, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe it's fair to treat them as social workers.

RCMP services are one of the last places we should be asking people to do more with less. I'm glad that there is some change on that front, for instance through partnerships between NGOs and multiple levels of government. Crucial services have begun to be supported, such as Street Outreach here in Yellowknife.

I believe everyone in this House is familiar with the Yellowknife Women's Society's report Overpoliced and Underprotected. It examines the relationship between unhoused Indigenous women in the NWT and their interactions with the RCMP. A key recommendation from this report asked the Minister of Justice to support a comprehensive review of policing practices in the NWT by the federal Civilian Review and Complaints Commission. Notably, such a review must be requested by the Minister of Justice, and it would be at no cost to the GNWT. When some Members have put this recommendation forward to the Minister in correspondence, he has responded that such a review would be too narrow in scope and take too long to see results.

There has also been interest in investigations on RCMP actions and whether they can be impartial without an independent external agency review. Currently, in the NWT the RCMP investigates the RCMP, albeit it from detachments from other jurisdictions, as we have seen in a recent inquest on a death in custody. Cabin Radio recently wrote an article discussing whether it is time to consider an oversight arrangement like that of the Yukon and the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, a civilian police oversight agency allowed by the federal RCMP Act.

Mr. Speaker, I realize I'm speaking about reviews about systemic problems and serious incidents and that these will likely require different approaches and processes, and that is fine. Residents need assurance that if there are negative outcomes in our current policing structures that an impartial review is possible for both serious incidents and systemic issues. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 389-20(1):
REGIONAL MEDICAL TRAVEL
COORDINATOR AND MEDICAL ESCORTS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I raised the a Sahtu issue of recruiting a regional medical travel coordinator during our past spring sitting. Mr. Speaker, the NWT health care system is in high demand. It seems, Mr. Speaker, today's society is impacted by many challenges beyond our control.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT is resilient in many ways to the challenge that it faced and is facing. One can only view the reactive approach to climate change impacts.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity during the week of September the 23rd for an invited ministerial tour of the Sahtu region. During this tour, many Sahtu residents raised the need for a medical travel coordinator and improvements to our medical escorts.

Mr. Speaker, after some research, the Sahtu region, in particular Norman Wells, there exists 24 funded vacancies. Can we restructure to create one or two medical travel PYs?

'Mr. Speaker, I have engaged discussions with many private sector enterprisers, workforce recruitment is a national concern particularly in the trades sector. Similar challenges are faced by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Later, Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 390-20(1):
HOUSING WAITLIST

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a critical issue in our territory and especially in our small communities. It's housing. We know there is a housing crisis in this territory. Shortages of housing, inadequate housing, and a great need for public housing. Last week, the Minister of Housing NWT stated that the waitlist for housing across the North is 897 applications. I've asked myself, Mr. Speaker, in this House, how can this be the case if suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing is a priority of this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories isn't doing enough to ensure a path forward for people in need of housing. Indigenous governments are doing what they can, Mr. Speaker, to leverage federal funding and develop housing solutions for their participants and beneficiaries. Just last week, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Social Development received a public briefing from representatives of the Gwich'in Tribal Council

on their new and innovative programming that is putting homes on the grounds in communities and housing families. But they can't do it all, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories must meet its obligations for delivering on public housing programs.

Mr. Speaker, I won't speak on the capital estimates investments in the housing as it is before Committee of the Whole. But what I will say is that housing is a human right. This Assembly passed a motion to acknowledge and affirm housing as a fundamental human right, and I will state again that housing is a priority in this Assembly. And I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 391-20(1):
NON-MEDICAL ESCORTS FOR ELDERS
DURING MEDICAL TRAVEL

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about medical travel in the Northwest Territories. As residents, we may all come to rely on the health and social services medical travel program at some point in our lives for health care that isn't available in our home communities. Travel is necessary, Mr. Speaker. This is a reality in our territory with 33 communities spread across the vast land. With little access in and out, limited services are available.

A principle of the medical travel policy is that the cost of medical travel should not be an economic barrier to access insured health services. Many patients who require medical travel also require non-medical escorts to accompany them for many reasons. For example, elders who travel south or to a larger centre may face language barriers and unfamiliar terrain. This makes it difficult to communicate and navigate in these settings. They need an escort to ensure their appointments go well because of the language barrier. Without this support, the service itself is at risk.

The criteria for non-medical escort says escorts can travel with a patient to provide interpretation if needed. When it comes to the government policy, Mr. Speaker, I hear from residents that they're often not allowed an escort even though one is needed. I often hear that doctors and practitioners approve an escort for medical travel but then the health care centre staff arranging turns around and says no, and their request is denied. I would like to know who is making these decisions on

behalf of our elders and why they are being denied non-medical escorts. One of the principle of the medical travel program is that it should be transparent and accountable. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for the Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 392-20(1):
MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBRE LINE

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie Valley fibre line was completed in 2017 -- oh, sorry -- Government of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, this was welcomed news for the residents on the anchor tenants, the Inuvik satellite station facility, and the new north networks and their satellite station facility as well.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has made a long-term investment to improve telecommunications service and to support economic development along the Mackenzie Valley. Mr. Speaker, with the ability to handle greater volumes of high-speed data traffic with increased reliability, the link provides better access to health, education, and many government services in the Mackenzie Valley communities.

For the town of Inuvik, Mr. Speaker, the benefits of being connected to the Mackenzie Valley fibre link are immense. The connection allows Inuvik to strengthen its position as a base for satellite ground stations in Arctic research organizations and additionally qualified local contractors have been able to participate in contracts related to the long-term physical maintenance of the fibre optic link.

Mr. Speaker, I also understand that the second line, the redundancy line, is now complete. Once the 778-kilometer Dempster fibre line to Dawson becomes operational, it will offer backup. That means if one line goes down, the other can pick up the load. But, Mr. Speaker, businesses and commercial entities in Inuvik are questioning whether or not it's truly redundant given that our line, Mr. Speaker, runs from Inuvik down to McGill Lake and on through to High Level and into Alberta. The line that's being proposed on the Dempster Highway runs down as far as Fort Nelson. Now, I do understand that there is a potential to have another link go from Fort Nelson over to McGill Lake but, again, that's creating a loop and to get true redundancy, Mr. Speaker, I think we're going to need that link from Fort Nelson into Alberta as well. So, Mr. Speaker, those are the concerns that have been brought to my

attention, and I will have questions for the Minister of finance later. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 393-20(1):
EFFICACY OF HEALTH CARE
SUSTAINABILITY UNIT

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, health care sustainability should not be about cuts to services. It is unfortunate that that's the message that the media took away from last Wednesday's public briefing on the new health care sustainability unit. From the perspective of those working on the frontlines of our health care system, we have neither the Cadillac nor the Ford Focus that the Premier was referring to but, rather, a vehicle with the wheels coming off that is running on fumes.

Yes, the health care system has expanded over the years but let's put this in perspective. This is not just about the addition of noncore services. Some of the positions that have been added that remain unfunded include pediatricians, a fifth emergency room nurse. These are not frills or nice-to-haves. The tool that we need here is not an axe but it's a screwdriver to tighten things up. And if we're using the vehicle metaphor, we need to first know what our destination is and then take the right amount of fuel for this journey, so we don't keep ending up stranded on the side of the road out of gas.

Our quest for health care sustainability must fundamentally be about delivering the basics right. There is resounding consensus that we need to focus on delivering primary care right. It's about using our resources wisely to offer the best possible care as efficiently as possible.

Now, last March, the NWT Medical Association offered valuable recommendations about how we can reduce medical travel and medevacs when someone could receive better care at home. In small communities, community health nurses can be assigned a physician to work with on a regular basis who would act as kind of a consultant. We can embrace the full potential of Telehealth. Now, frustratingly, the recent primary care reform ignored what doctors have been calling for many years and missed the opportunity when rearranging the team assignments to assign doctors to small communities.

Mr. Speaker, the fuel we need for this journey is our health care staff. We need this new unit to center its work around the insights of frontline staff. The Premier referred to how complex this

initiative is but actually we need to focus on a simple goal. We need to figure out how to ensure we have the right amount of staff, the right kinds of staff, doing the right things. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 394-20(1):
EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION RELATED TO
BUREAUCRATIC PROCESSES

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in July 2024 the GNWT released the 2023 Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Report and attached an employee satisfaction action plan to that report. I do note, with some disappointment, that favourability scores were noted to decline across all indices relative to the 2021 survey. A couple of items I'd like to highlight, Mr. Speaker:

- Only 58 percent of staff felt that innovation was valued in their work.
- Only 52 percent said they felt valued as employees or that commitment to quality was a high priority.
- Overall, morale lowered by 4.9 percent since the last report was done.

I do note that an action plan was published with the report, and I support all those action items; however, I do wonder if a few items were missing. One of them that I'd like to highlight today is the prevalence of overly burdensome bureaucratic processes and how those can, over time, grind people down and reduce morale. I've spoken to staff who have had to go through processes of multiple weeks to get approval to do something like respond to a comment on Facebook.

The other thing that I wonder needs more emphasis is the need for empowerment. I would note, Mr. Speaker, that when employees apply to the GNWT, they go through an incredibly burdensome hiring process where they have to do exams, they have to go through sometimes multiple interviews, and provide pretty serious qualifications only to get into a position sometimes where they have very little decision-making power and very little power to act without oversight by management. So I think reduction of micromanagement needs to be looked at as well.

Another quote that has stood with me, and I wanted to share today, is something that someone said to me the other day when I was chatting with them about how things are going

at work - If you truly care about your work, your time at GNWT will be limited. That's an unfortunate sentiment for someone to hold in their job.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have an excellent, excellent public service. We have excellent staff at the public service. I request unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are going through processes that ensure that we have excellent people in their roles, and then often we're in that role putting them through processes which effectively tell them that their expertise isn't as valued as it could be. So I want us to be looking at that when we're thinking about employee satisfaction, and I want us to be looking at our processes and empowerment of staff, I think it could help us save money over time as we build up our internal capacity for decision-making, maybe we don't need so much management. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 395-20(1):
BOURQUE REPORT AND
DECENTRALIZATION

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking to get started on the Premier's 50-year vision for the future of the Northwest Territories, a vision of decentralization of services and power to Indigenous self-governments. The vision is supported by the action of the previous Assembly which is committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, a declaration that internationally mandates the right to self-determination.

Furthermore, decentralization of services for Indigenous governments was mandated in the devolution process passed a decade ago. As well, in fact, these rights have been pursued for generations. Yet, today, we stand here in this Assembly, year after year, with no real progress towards goals once more.

The cost of inaction is seriously holding our communities back. Indigenous governments alone passes the knowledge, traditions, and perspectives that are needed to solve our health and housing crisis, and they need access to the resources to make it happen. Indigenous governments are allocated \$1.6 billion out of the \$2.2 billion budget this government gets on an annual basis.

Mr. Speaker, but, yet because of the stages of the colonial remain in place, much of those funds don't make it to our small communities or are allocated through restrictive policies that don't work for our people. A new deal for the North that respects Indigenous governments would therefore give them the resources and empower them are largely entitled so their communities can thrive. This new deal for the North will take a lot of effort and a lot of time, but thankfully a lot of that work has been done already.

In 1992, as the Northwest Territories was on the cusp of division, a report was commissioned in the Future of the Government of the Northwest Territories written by the late Jim Bourque that outlined the solutions of the North, needs for the fair future, and this Assembly is committed to working towards. The biggest solution offered in Jim Bourque's report was the NWT Constitution which would clearly outline the role and functions of Indigenous governments and have governance in our territory. Unfortunately, despite all the time and money spent on the research, a Constitution to produce the report, it was never enacted and instead it was shelved for generation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can call on this government to take another look at the Jim Bourque report. We need to work as soon as possible as the claim is being settled. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. To do so, we must work together to figure out a process to achieve these goals through the Council of Leaders and working group and committee to make this progress that has been promised for decades. As Canada makes its way for a long journey towards justice and reconciliation for Indigenous people, the North can -- sorry, the North can use this critical junction we are striving for as an opportunity to develop a model of governance. Mr. Speaker, I would have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 396-20(1):
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In economics, there's a phrase called Jevons paradox which occurs when technology progresses in a manner to increase efficiency

but the resources actually inversely further demanded because we've lowered the cost. So in order, Mr. Speaker, historically governments have been trying to find ways to be more efficient, but in turn, people -- efficiency gains enthusiasm which increases consumption. This is called the rebound effect of Jevons paradox.

So a good example is when you make fuel efficiency vehicles, Mr. Speaker, people tend to drive more and hence consume more fuels. Mr. Speaker, in the end it results that just because you make something cheaper and solve a problem, you don't necessarily take into the greater consideration of the demand it's now created.

Now the EU has noted, Mr. Speaker -- and this is where it's important -- that this principle of efficiency on economics also applies to government policy, and it can apply to us. So how does it apply to the GNWT?

Well, take the encampment, for example, Mr. Speaker. Are we addressing the cause or are we addressing the system of some of these problems? By fixing it with a Band-Aid solution, Mr. Speaker, is the government temporarily making things worse? Are we empowering people? That is really addressing the cause. Are we finding ways to create sustainable communities and independent people? I'm not so sure.

Mr. Speaker, I agree something needs to be done, hands down. I would definitely stress that, you know, things -- solutions like Aspen Apartments, you know, fixing it up is not a terrible solution in any way. But for 38 units, 38 potential families waiting for a solution between one and two years away from now, has done nothing to solve the problem.

Mr. Speaker, you know, sometimes I say a four door Corolla could solve our problems; why are we buying Escalades? We don't need them, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing wrong with Aspen Apartments that couldn't House people today. In other words, we could be saving and changing the lives of 38 people -- 38 families. By sewing these seeds, possibly we'd be getting the right effect.

Mr. Speaker, we also have other temporary solutions when we're scrambling for them. The government has the Territorial Treatment Centre, the TTC, right across the street from the encampment. We could be partnering with the women's society, we could be partnering with the YWCA, or even the Salvation Army to temporary solve the solution. Let's not bring a hammer when we don't need one, Mr. Speaker. We could work with our communities in partnership with our social agencies. And I'll

have questions for the Ministers during question period later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 397-20(1):
ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PASSING OF
ADAM YEADON

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, it has been over a year since Adam Yeadon passed away on the fire line while protecting his home community of Fort Liard. Family members, residents and fire crews led a small, private ceremony in Fort Liard in remembrance of Adam. Colleagues, He leaves behind a partner, a young daughter, dad, brother and sister. And many cousins and nieces and nephews.

I can tell you it weighs on us a lot of his passing, and it is my understanding that firefighters across the territory doing the same difficult work Adam did, are thinking of him and how he lost his life. When you hear the message that the fire crew staff heard each day, the safety of your team must always be the first priority, it brings it home about the critical importance of safety in the field.

The family, his friends, community, would like to thank NWT Fire for creating the scholarship in Adam's memory for people in post-secondary education in forest-related fields.

This past fall, Adam was remembered by the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation at the Canadian Firefighters Memorial in Ottawa. The family would like to thank the department for all its support to get there and be part of this event as well for having the Minister attend.

In closing I would like to use the words of Adam's partner, Keanna McLeod's word: He was such an outgoing person. Everyone liked being around him, and he was loved by all his friends and family. He liked being outdoors, being on the land, discovering new places, experiencing new things and more importantly meeting new people.

In closing, I wish to use the quote I heard from NWT Fire: Though nothing will repair the hole his absence leaves in the lives of those who knew and loved him, our steadfast support remains with his family and friends as they navigate the difficult path forward.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Monfwi.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker [Translation] ... Anita Wedzin, Diane Lafferty, Deniza -- and Linda Mantla, they're all here; they live here in Yellowknife, going to school. They want to, they are looking to further, to education. I know that their parents and their family members and also a lot of these young kids, I don't know who they are from the school, I am happy that they are here, I do believe, and also they are here with their teachers as well, the ones that are here, masi cho. [Translation Ends]

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Ms. Tarlson's grade 8 class from Range Lake North, which is a school in my riding. Great to see you here today, and it was lovely to speak with you before the session. Go Hoyas.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a constituent of mine, Verna Abel Catholic. I just want to say welcome to the Assembly. Also to all the students from the college and the students from Range Lake as well. Thank you.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize my CA, Georgina Neyando, who has travelled down with me from Fort McPherson to be here to take in some -- do some work here in the Assembly on my behalf. I'd just like to welcome Georgina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the students of Aurora College. That's an excellent campus downtown in the Yellowknife Centre riding. It's not exclusive in Yellowknife. Yes, we have a campus college in Fort Smith and Inuvik, but today we have the Yellowknife students. Hooray.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize a constituent, Corinna -- it looks like Puskas. I haven't met her but that said, I'd like to -- or Puskas, my apologies. Corinna Puskas and

our -- seeing our proceedings before the House. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Amy Lee, a long-time colleague of mine way back when. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have people -- or see people in our gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Member from Monfwi.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 16-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON THE STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Your Standing Committee on Social Development is pleased to provide its Report on the Statutory Review of the Mental Health Act and commends it to the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Mackenzie Delta, that Committee Report 16-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on the Statutory Review of the Mental Health Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Standing Committee On Social Development Report On Statutory Review: Mental Health Act

Executive Summary

The Standing Committee on Social Development (Committee) was tasked with undertaking the first statutory review of the Mental Health Act (Act). Committee sought feedback on the Act to inform its statutory review.

Committee appreciates everyone who offered their feedback at public meetings and in written submissions. Committee thanks the Department of Health and Social Services for their willingness to work with us, and for providing great insight on the current operations of the Act, including challenges and strengths. Committee believes the forty (40) recommendations listed in this report will help improve the Act and its operations.

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct a comparative analysis of the Northwest Territories' Mental Health Act against other jurisdictions' mental health care legislation, to significantly reduce and mitigate the administrative burdens and procedural complexities of the Mental Health Act (including Forms under the Mental Health Act) and present constructive amendments to the Mental Health Act for consideration.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories allow flexibility to the Mental Health Act Review Board to hold hearings outside of the current notice requirement of seven days with the consent of all parties by reviewing Section 70(1) of the Mental Health Act to remove the seven-day notice requirement and defer the minimum notice requirement to the Mental Health Act Review Board Regulations.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 10(2) of the Mental Health Act to determine a more realistic timeline to issue a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment, in consultation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and physicians including psychiatric professionals.

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 17 of the Mental Health Act and compare to similar provisions in other jurisdictions to determine the appropriate length of time before a certificate expires in order to issue a renewal certificate.

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the

Government of the Northwest Territories assess the addition of a provision added to the Mental Health Act for the Mental Health Act Review Board to review a certificate after a cancelled hearing based on best practices and national standards.

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review Sections 66(1)(a) and Section 74(1)(a) and (b) of the Mental Health Act to remove the ability to apply to the Mental Health Act Review Board to cancel Form 2 – Certificate of Involuntary Assessment.

Recommendation 7: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the Mental Health Act and its regulations (e.g. Section 16(1) of the Mental Health Act Review Board Regulations) to reflect timelines in days or business days, rather than hours, where appropriate.

Recommendation 8: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Mental Health Act Review Board to clarify where and how the Interpretation Act applies to the Mental Health Act and determine if the current two-day timeline in Section 67(2) remains a challenge despite the flexibility afforded by the Interpretation Act.

Recommendation 9: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Mental Health Act Review Board to find ways to streamline the hearing process and evaluate the time it takes to conduct a hearing and reasons why the hearing process may be deemed too long.

Recommendation 10: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and expand the role of the cultural advisor under Section 71(5) and Section 68(1) of the Mental Health Act including adjusting the wording “to a review panel” in the Mental Health Act to “a time deemed appropriate for patient needs”.

Recommendation 11: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories include a specific provision in the Mental Health Act that outlines that the Mental Health Act Review Board panel may disclose information to the cultural advisor to the extent the panel deems necessary or wording that outlines how and when the cultural advisor will receive information.

Recommendation 12: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide training to staff and Mental Health Act Review Board panel members on the disclosure of information provisions held within the Mental Health Act, and the processes that follow them.

Recommendation 13: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review, compare and adjust definitions and terminology in the Mental Health Act against healthcare operations and language to promote appropriate and streamlined operationalization of the Mental Health Act.

Recommendation 14: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the suitability of the Inuvik Regional Hospital and the Hay River Health Centre as designated facilities (including an analysis of environmental and staffing capacity) under the Mental Health Act and review the ability to add different classes of designated facilities within the Mental Health Act and its regulations, using other jurisdictional models as an example.

Recommendation 15: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and expand the definition of “mental disorder” in the Mental Health Act by conducting a jurisdictional review of definitions.

Recommendation 16: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories establish an ongoing territorial working group with involvement from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and health staff/professionals to ensure legislation, mandates and processes align in administering the Mental Health Act and providing services for mental health crisis emergency response in communities.

Recommendation 17: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories evaluate whether the definition of the acceptance of a patient after conveyance can be moved to the Mental Health Act’s regulations.

Recommendation 18: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the definition of “health professional” within the Mental Health Act to determine if the list can be further expanded where appropriate.

Recommendation 19: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the

Government of the Northwest Territories review provisions related to the apprehension, conveyance, and transfer of patients under the Mental Health Act, including consulting with Royal Canadian Mounted Police and medical staff to have agreement on proper protocols and the development of a flow diagram for the transport of patients under the Mental Health Act in and out of territory.

Recommendation 20: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review provisions of the Mental Health Act and its regulations related to the apprehension, conveyance, and transfer of patients to specify the responsibility of peace officers in these processes.

Recommendation 21: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review provisions related to Short Term Leave in the Mental Health Act, especially related to the enforcement of a lack of compliance and streamlining administration so that Short Term Leave is less burdensome on staff, and that the review of these provisions be done with the lens of reviewing similar provisions in other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 22: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 52(1.2) of the Mental Health Act, Section 7 of the Apprehension, Conveyance and Transfer Regulations, and other sections of the Mental Health Act related to the temporary detention of patients, and bring forward changes to the Mental Health Act that provide solutions to issues related to the temporary detention of patients. This review should be completed in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, designated facilities, and relevant staff.

Recommendation 23: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create a strategy to analyze and close the gap in pediatric psychiatric care in the Northwest Territories.

Recommendation 24: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend the Mental Health Act to specify an authority who is responsible for oversight of the Mental Health Act, while also allowing flexibility to the Minister of Health and Social Services to designate such responsibility.

Recommendation 25: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the

Government of the Northwest Territories significantly reduce the administrative burden on the Director of Designated Facilities as defined in the Mental Health Act through legislative amendments and regulatory change.

Recommendation 26: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories consider amending Section 9.1 and Section 28(2) of the Mental Health Act after evaluating their capacity and operational effectiveness.

Recommendation 27: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide additional education materials and training support to staff responsible for providing patients with information about their rights under the Mental Health Act.

Recommendation 28: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories explore the possibility of an independent rights advisor or neutral party that vocalizes and reviews patient rights under the Mental Health Act with the patient, including whether this responsibility can be added to the cultural advisor role.

Recommendation 29: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review, amend and simplify Form 1 – Notification of Patient Rights and Other Information using an operational lens and a lens of persons with lived experience while also evaluating the benefits of creating a separate form specific to patient rights, as depicted in Alberta and British Columbia's mental health care legislation.

Recommendation 30: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 37(6)(d) of the Mental Health Act and in particular, the use of the word "willing" within this section.

Recommendation 31: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend the requirement of assessment and appointments for patients under Assisted Community Treatment and Short Term Leave prior to the expiry of a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment or a Renewal Certificate to ensure better coordination, streamline information, and reduce the number of forms and administrative tasks.

Recommendation 32: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend provisions in the Mental Health Act related to Assisted Community Treatment to expand Assisted Community Treatment to align with Community Treatment Orders as seen in other jurisdictions, including:

Removing the requirement that a person be an involuntary patient to qualify for Assisted Community Treatment;

Ensuring that care is decentralized from an institutional setting, and;

That there is a greater commitment to culturally safe and decolonized practices in health care.

Recommendation 33: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 40(1)(b) of the Mental Health Act to ensure clear information on the extent to which housing and income supports are available to patients under Assisted Community Treatment.

Recommendation 34: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure external stakeholders involved in community care understand their obligations to support the operationalization of Assisted Community Treatment under the Mental Health Act, including increasing awareness of obligations to ensure efforts are made to inform patients of non-compliance and the consequences of non-compliance.

Recommendation 35: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish more supports and funding to action Assisted Community Treatment as defined in the Mental Health Act in small communities across the Northwest Territories.

Recommendation 36: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish the addition of a public facing navigator role for Mental Health Act processes.

Recommendation 37: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review the role of the psychiatrist during hearings under the Mental Health Act and provide information about their role to the Mental Health Act Review Board, psychiatrists and other staff to ensure there is a clear understanding of their role.

Recommendation 38: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the

Government of the Northwest Territories create internal processes to mitigate concerns regarding discharging mental health patients under the Mental Health Act too early by working with physicians.

Recommendation 39: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories improve on the ability to cancel certificates on involuntary assessment issued under the Mental Health Act through policies, procedures and legislative change.

Recommendation 40: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories embrace technological change by implementing procedures for Forms under the Mental Health Act to be signed electronically or verbally, as well as implementing secure file transfer processes for Forms under the Mental Health Act.

Introduction And Background

The Mental Health Act (Act) requires the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees to commence a review of the Act, and any other related legislation, policies, guidelines, or directives considered appropriate by September 1, 2023, and every five years thereafter (s.105).

The Standing Committee on Social Development (Committee) has conducted the review process for the Act's first statutory review.

The Northwest Territories (NWT) Mental Health Act was passed on October 8, 2015, and came into force September 1, 2018. This Act repealed and replaced the Mental Health Act from 1985, which came into force January 1, 1988.

The Act sets the processes and rules that must be applied to the way people living with a mental disorder receive care and treatment. The Act aims to protect and support the rights of people living with a mental health disorder and those acting on their behalf.

Public Engagement

Between March 2024 to April 2024, Committee engaged the public.

On March 25, 2024, Committee received a public briefing from the Mental Health Act Review Board (MHARB). Committee also received a technical briefing from Department of Health and Social Services (the Department) on the Mental Health Act. The MHARB and the Department's presentation is included in Appendix A.

Committee also received written submissions from:

Association of Psychologists of the Northwest Territories

Royal Canadian Mounted Police – G Division

Canadian Psychiatric Association

Raymond Pidzamecky – Registered Social Worker

Department of Health and Social Services – Materials to support the review of the Mental Health Act and Technical Briefing

These submissions and presentations are included in Appendix B.

Committee appreciates everyone who offered their feedback at public meetings and in written submissions.

Committee categorized public comments received into ten (10) themes.

Before presenting each theme, Committee would like to note the importance of an Act that both protects the rights of individual patients and others, while also ensuring that its' administrative processes are streamlined and avoid instilling more burden on the health care and emergency services sectors. Committee believes that the Mental Health Act is in need of numerous updates and therefore presents its first recommendation:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct a comparative analysis of the Northwest Territories' Mental Health Act against other jurisdictions' mental health care legislation, to significantly reduce and mitigate the administrative burdens and procedural complexities of the Mental Health Act (including Forms under the Mental Health Act) and present constructive amendments to the Mental Health Act for consideration.

The themes are listed below:

Issues with timing

There were a few issues in the Mental Health Act raised to Committee that were related to timing.

Firstly, the MHARB and the Department both highlighted that as currently legislated, the 7-day requirement to hold a hearing is very stringent, and more flexibility is required. The MHARB emphasized that a review of Section 70(1) is required to allow for the process of scheduling a hearing to proceed at a quicker

pace which in turn would make greater strides in addressing the needs of the patient. Their recommendation was to remove the wording "give seven days" and replace it with "on consent of all parties". Whereby the consent of all parties cannot be obtained, their recommendation was for there to be a minimum wait time-period set in the Act's regulations. As noted above, the Department presented similar concerns regarding the seven-day notice requirement and recommended that a shorter time period be set out in regulations, with an added ability to shorten the notice period with the consent of all parties.

Committee notes these concerns and presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories allow flexibility to the Mental Health Act Review Board to hold hearings outside of the current notice requirement of seven days with the consent of all parties by reviewing Section 70(1) of the Mental Health Act to remove the seven-day notice requirement and defer the minimum notice requirement to the Mental Health Act Review Board Regulations.

The second issue related to timing is related to timelines in issuing a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) noted to Committee that there are issues when no involuntary assessment can be reasonably issued within 24 hours, and as it is currently required under the Act. They presented that the current 24-hour requirement may be an issue for nursing stations that are busier and/or with minimal or stretched resources.

The Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) noted that the 24-hour requirement seems to be excessively short, and that in many jurisdictions it is one week. They described an example whereby a health professional may conduct an assessment, conclude that a person may meet the criteria and want more information before completing a certificate. They note that attempts to contact a secondary person to obtain collateral information can easily take a few days.

Committee would like to mitigate these concerns and therefore presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 10(2) of the Mental Health Act to determine a more realistic timeline to issue a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment, in

consultation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and physicians including psychiatric professionals.

Another issue related to timing relates to Form 4 – Renewal Certificate, which can only be issued within 72 hours of the Certificate of Involuntary Admission or previous Renewal Certificate expiring. The Department made it clear to Committee that in other jurisdictions, renewals may occur within seven days of the form expiring.

Committee therefore presents the following recommendation in hopes that this review will be conducted with an operational lens and the review will analyze data respecting the length of admissions to inform appropriate timelines:

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 17 of the Mental Health Act and compare it to similar provisions in other jurisdictions to determine the appropriate length of time before a certificate expires in order to issue a renewal certificate.

Another issue raised to Committee by the MHARB is that they would like to determine or understand why hearings are being cancelled. They note in their presentation to Committee that out of approximately 70 applications received in the past five and a half years, they have conducted approximately 15 hearings while the rest of the applications were cancelled before a hearing occurred – and three quarters of those cancellations occurred within 48 hours of the hearing date. It was noted by MHARB that they currently have no authority to review a certificate after its cancellation, and because of this they lack statistics and research that may be helpful to strengthen the hearing process.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories assess the addition of a provision added to the Mental Health Act for the Mental Health Act Review Board to review a certificate after a cancelled hearing based on best practices and national standards.

Currently under the Act, applications can be made to the MHARB to cancel any certificate issued. Due to this ability, patients admitted under Form 3 – Certificate of Involuntary Admission could potentially be required to apply to the MHARB twice within the span of only a few days if they had applied for their initial Form 2 – Certificate of Involuntary Assessment to be cancelled. In short, the review of Form 2 – Certificate of Involuntary

Assessment would not result in an automatic review of their Form 3 – Certificate of Involuntary Admission as it is currently legislated.

The Department noted to Committee that there have been several instances when a patient on Form 2 – Certificate of Involuntary Assessment has applied to the MHARB; however, a hearing could not be arranged due to the legislated timelines for the review as well as the short duration of the certificate (currently 72 hours). It was suggested to Committee by the Department that the ability to apply to the MHARB for a review of Form 2 - Certificate of Involuntary Assessment be removed as it cannot be reasonably provided.

Noting the above reasons and issues related to the timing of certificates, Committee presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review Sections 66(1)(a) and Section 74(1)(a) and (b) of the Mental Health Act to remove the ability to apply to the Mental Health Act Review Board to cancel Form 2 – Certificate of Involuntary Assessment.

The Department let Committee know that the timelines for screening applications to the MHARB may be too short, especially if a weekend or holiday intervenes. Currently, the Act requires that the chairperson of the MHARB review an application within two days of receiving it, and either refer it to a review panel or dismiss it. Committee clarified with the Department that the Interpretation Act currently applies to the two-day timeline set out in Section 67(2) of the Mental Health Act. Although, it was emphasized by the Department that work is needed to confirm with the MHARB that the Interpretation Act applies where there is a time of office closure during the two-day timeline. Another piece of clarification is needed to determine whether the two-day timeline remains a challenge despite the flexibility afforded by the Interpretation Act.

Committee notes that timeline requirements stated in hours versus days, may lead to confusion and inconsistent application. Committee therefore recognizes that the Mental Health Act and its regulations requires review to change timelines of hours to business days or days, where appropriate.

Committee presents the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 7: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review

the Mental Health Act and its regulations (e.g. Section 16(1) of the Mental Health Act Review Board Regulations) to reflect timelines in days or business days, rather than hours, where appropriate.

Recommendation 8: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Mental Health Act Review Board to clarify where and how the Interpretation Act applies to the Mental Health Act and determine if the current two-day timeline in Section 67(2) remains a challenge despite the flexibility afforded by the Interpretation Act.

Another issue related to timing brought to Committee by the Department is that hearings need to be shorter, especially because longer hearings have an impact on psychiatrists, patients and families, and their time. The duration of hearings is not set out in legislation, but Committee finds it important for the Department and MHARB to work together to streamline the hearing process. Committee therefore presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 9: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Mental Health Act Review Board to find ways to streamline the hearing process and evaluate the time it takes to conduct a hearing and reasons why the hearing process may be deemed too long.

Cultural support

Currently under Section 71(5), on request by a patient, by their substitute decision maker or by the medical practitioner, the MHARB shall engage an Elder or cultural advisor to a review panel. During their public meeting with Committee, MHARB emphasized that cultural advisors can make an important contribution to the patient-centered approach and help the MHARB conduct its business in a culturally sensitive manner. It was brought forward to Committee by MHARB that the role of the cultural advisor is not clearly delineated and the procedures for their duties during a hearing are not set out.

During their presentation, MHARB suggested to modify the wording in Section 71(5) of the Act, specifically the wording “during the hearing”, to afford the MHARB the flexibility in bringing in the cultural advisor at a time deemed more appropriate for patient needs. The Department also suggested to Committee that clarity is required regarding the role of the Elder/cultural advisor, specifically that the current “vagueness” of their role could be

addressed by expanding Section 68.1 in the Act so that they can be engaged to the extent for any purpose(s) requested by the patient.

Committee understands the importance of an Elder/cultural advisor to support the patient, and therefore presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 10: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and expand the role of the cultural advisor under Section 71(5) and Section 68.1 of the Mental Health Act including adjusting the wording “to a review panel” in the Mental Health Act to “a time deemed appropriate for patient needs”.

It was brought to Committee’s attention by the Department that information being disclosed to the Elder/cultural advisor may be too broad, and at this point, they may receive every relevant or relied upon record which could be interpreted as being the patient’s chart. It was noted that this disclosure of information could be detrimental to the patient – and requires review to determine how the disclosure of information fits within the cultural advisor role under the Mental Health Act and in accordance with the Health Information Act.

The MHARB suggested that a provision be added to clarify that the panel may disclose information to the extent the panel deems necessary for the cultural advisors to perform their role. Related to the same issue, the Department suggested to Committee that a provision be added to outline what information may be disclosed to the cultural advisor, and that consent of the patient or their substitute decision maker be required prior to disclosing information. It was also proposed by the Department that staff and MHARB members may need education on the disclosure of information provisions and processes for withholding information.

Committee hears these concerns and presents the following two recommendations to help mitigate challenges related to the disclosure of information:

Recommendation 11: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories include a specific provision in the Mental Health Act that outlines that the Mental Health Act Review Board panel may disclose information to the cultural advisor to the extent the panel deems necessary or wording that outlines how and when the cultural advisor will receive information.

Recommendation 12: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide training to relevant staff and Mental Health Act Review Board panel members on the disclosure of information provisions held within the Mental Health Act, and the processes that follow them.

Clarification on terms and definitions

It was highlighted to Committee during the Department's briefing, that a review and clarification of terms and definitions within the Act is required, and more specifically to review and compare terminology for consistency with current operational language. It was reiterated that some of the language in the Act can be quite confusing operationally. For example, under the Act, a patient can be Involuntarily Assessed or Involuntarily Admitted. Therefore, if they are Involuntarily Assessed, they are admitted to the hospital, but they are *not admitted* as a patient under the Act. It was suggested to Committee by the Department that there needs to be an assessment of the Act for clarity and simplification of definitions for the ease of appropriate operationalization. In hearing this feedback, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 13: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review, compare and adjust definitions and terminology in the Mental Health Act against healthcare operations and language to promote appropriate and streamlined operationalization of the Mental Health Act.

The Department made Committee aware of concerns regarding "Code Gridlock status" – meaning that bed allocation is over capacity and may impact the ability of healthcare staff to provide critical care services, especially at Stanton Territorial Hospital (Stanton). This can be seen as a barrier to transferring clients from a designated facility to receive acute psychiatric treatment at Stanton, which has the only inpatient psychiatric unit in the NWT. Committee notes that there are challenges in providing appropriate standard of care for inpatient psychiatric treatment when there are consistent fluctuations in environmental and staff capacity at designated facilities across the NWT.

For this reason, the Department suggests that there be a review of the suitability of the Inuvik Regional Hospital and the Hay River Health Centre as designated facilities under the Act, with an assessment as to whether their designations need to be revoked. It is recommended by the Department that the Act

be evaluated to consider different classes of designated facilities based on the levels of service provision available, standards of inpatient psychiatric treatment and care, and levels of responsibility.

Committee takes in this feedback, and presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 14: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the suitability of the Inuvik Regional Hospital and the Hay River Health Centre as designated facilities (including an analysis of environmental and staffing capacity) under the Mental Health Act and review the ability to add different classes of designated facilities within the Mental Health Act and its regulations, using other jurisdictional models as an example.

It was recommended by the Department at the public technical briefing that the definition of "mental disorder" in Section 1 of the Act be reviewed and compared against Alberta's recent new definition. It was suggested to Committee that changes to the definition could be reviewed against other jurisdictions where recent changes have occurred to determine if updates should be made to the NWT's legislation. Committee notes this suggestion, and presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 15: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review and expand the definition of "mental disorder" in the Mental Health Act by conducting a jurisdictional review of definitions.

In a written submission by the RCMP, they note that there is no clarification as to what the meaning of the word "accept" is, when conveying patients to a designated facility under Section 90(d) of the Act. The RCMP state that it is their position that "accept" means that the patient has been conveyed to a designated facility and that it is up to the facility to safeguard the patient as a duty of care. They go on to emphasize that often RCMP personnel have been required to remain at the facility as the patient is not deemed to be "accepted" until they have been fully assessed. In their submission, the RCMP stress that this is a medical situation, and the involvement of the police should end with the conveyance to a designated facility.

Similarly, the RCMP also note that the term "other authorized persons" listed in numerous sections of the Act requires review as there is no definition of "other authorized persons". In response to this uncertainty and need for clarification, the Department suggests that

consideration should be given to the establishment of an ongoing territorial working group to ensure legislation, mandates and processes align in administering the Mental Health Act and providing services for mental health crisis emergency response in communities. Committee therefore presents the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 16: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories establish an ongoing territorial working group with involvement from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and health staff/professionals to ensure legislation, mandates and processes align in administering the Mental Health Act and providing services for mental health crisis emergency response in communities.

Recommendation 17: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories evaluate whether the definition of the acceptance of a patient after conveyance can be moved to the Mental Health Act's regulations.

It was brought forward to Committee by the Department that there are challenges for health and social services professionals who are not authorized to complete forms under the Act in reporting mental health crises to the RCMP. Committee was informed that in some cases, despite the summary of concerns of persons meeting the criteria for involuntary assessment under the Act, the RCMP's assessment overrides the health and social services professionals' concerns.

It is suggested by the Department that this issue could be addressed by reviewing the definition for "health professional" under the Act to better determine if the list can be further expanded – whether it be in the legislation or its regulations. This review may require the evaluation of the scope of practice of various health and social services professions to determine if it is within their scope to issue a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment. In particular, it was noted that there is no guidance or process for a Community Mental Health Nurse or other health professionals to fill out forms. There may also be a lack of awareness or support for registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses to issues forms under the Act and this leaves a gap in facilitating emergency mental health care in communities. It was suggested by the Department to Committee that a jurisdictional review to evaluate how other health and social services professionals are able to complete forms under their legislation, may also be of value. The Association of Psychologists in the NWT

suggested that there may be some confusion over the terms "Health Professionals" and "Medical Practitioner", which may be helpful in clarifying. It was also suggested by the Department that a review of the current Standard Operating Procedures and scope of the Community Mental Health Nurse and/or other Registered Nurse roles be conducted in relation to the implementation of the Mental Health Act.

Noting the above, Committee presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 18: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories review the definition of "health professional" within the Mental Health Act to determine if the list can be further expanded where appropriate.

Responsible custody, transfer, and detainment of patients

In their written submission, the RCMP note that Section 23(1) of the Act does not specify who is responsible for the transport of the patient to a designated facility or to another health facility. They also note that when "authorized persons" is not described within the Act, it tends to default to the police. The RCMP also brought forward to Committee that Section 10(3)(a) of the Act does not state who the patient should be delivered to, and they suggest that there could be a provision whereby peace officers turn over the patient to a specific person to take over custody. They provide an example that other provinces have an Institution Safety Officer who takes over custody of the patient.

The Department was also made aware that it is unclear whether or not a peace officer remains with an involuntary patient who has been apprehended and is being conveyed/transferred to a designated facility. Moreover, no one is specified as responsible for the "care" of the patient while they are being conveyed, only until they have arrived at a designated facility. Committee notes that this responsibility could be given to the peace officer, but also understands the importance of not overburdening the police with more responsibilities. Committee therefore finds it important to use the word "supervise" in replacing the word "care" in relation to the duration of the conveyance of the patient to a designated facility and the role of the peace officer under the Act, as to balance the responsibility to the patient and the ongoing duties of peace officers.

Related to the comments by the RCMP, it was brought forward by the Department that the transportation of patients under the Act from the

Inuvik Regional Hospital to Stanton Territorial Hospital and/or a facility in Edmonton is reasonably common and unreasonably complex. It was suggested that a dedicated flow diagram be created to help explain the processes for the transport of patients under the Act - both for in and out of the territory.

Committee notes this feedback and presents the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 19: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review provisions related to the apprehension, conveyance, and transfer of patients under the Mental Health Act, including consulting with Royal Canadian Mounted Police and medical staff to have agreement on proper protocols and the development of a flow diagram for the transport of patients under the Mental Health Act in and out of territory.

Recommendation 20: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review provisions of the Mental Health Act and its regulations related to the apprehension, conveyance, and transfer of patients to specify the responsibility of peace officers in these processes.

In their written submission, the RCMP mentioned to Committee that there is no clearly defined role for who enforces lack of compliance if there is an Absent Without Leave (AWOL) person during Short Term Leave. They highlighted that Section 47(2)(a) and 52(1) of the Act place the responsibility for compliance on the police, and suggest that health professionals should be the first consideration. They continue by saying that decisions to release patients rest with health professionals, while the consequences of non-compliance defaults to the police.

It was also brought forward by the Department that processes related to Short Term Leave are administratively burdensome, often requiring multiple passes to allow involuntary patients to leave the facility for short periods of time for walks, smoke breaks, etcetera. It was highlighted by the Department that provisions related to Short Term Leave were created to allow leave from the facility for up to 30 days, but do not account for shorter leaves of absence that most, if not all, patients should have for daily fresh air breaks, errands, to attend appointments, etcetera.

Committee presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 21: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the

Government of the Northwest Territories review provisions related to Short Term Leave in the Mental Health Act, especially related to the enforcement of a lack of compliance and streamlining administration so that Short Term Leave is less burdensome on staff, and that the review of these provisions be done with the lens of reviewing similar provisions in other jurisdictions.

In their written submission, the RCMP note that Section 52(1.2) of the Act was written without their consultation. They note that the default in the circumstances of temporary detainment of patients under the Act, is the incarceration of patients in jail cells, even though in most cases they have committed no crime, and this is strictly a medical situation. The RCMP emphasize that this Section should be either repealed or reworded to emphasize that this should only occur if there are criminal circumstances associated to a particular situation. They also highlight that there may be medical alternatives to control unruly or intoxicated patients awaiting conveyance.

It was also brought forward to the Department that there is a lack of safe and appropriate space to hold clients during waiting periods for conveyance to a designated facility, especially from rural and remote communities.

Committee hears their feedback, and presents the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 22: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 52(1.2) of the Mental Health Act, Section 7 of the Apprehension, Conveyance and Transfer Regulations, and other sections of the Mental Health Act related to the temporary detention of patients, and bring forward changes to the Mental Health Act that provide solutions to issues related to the temporary detention of patients. This review should be completed in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, designated facilities, and relevant staff.

Committee believes it is a significant issue that there is no youth psychiatric unit in the NWT. The lack of a designated unit may relate to staff and institutional capacity issues; however, it has concerning impacts on the quality of youth patient care. It was also brought forward by the Department during this statutory review that there are concerns about the safety of pediatric psychiatric patients both under the Act and not under the Act at Stanton, as well as the suitability of the Pediatric Unit at Stanton to provide care to psychiatric patients under the Act.

Committee believes that not having a suitable youth psychiatric unit in the NWT is a serious problem, and therefore presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 23: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create a strategy to analyze and close the gap in pediatric psychiatric care in the Northwest Territories.

Oversight of the Mental Health Act

During their presentation to Committee, the MHARB suggested that there should be an authority with a specific oversight role for the Mental Health Act. The Department also noted to Committee that this suggestion warrants further review, and added to it by mentioning that a larger oversight role could allow for more comprehensive reporting to identify trends and outcomes, identify gaps in the healthcare system, and inform future service delivery improvements. The MHARB also requested statistics and data that may inform whether the number of applications they receive seems reasonable, which correlated with the Department's recognized need to substantiate data that could help inform MHARB's annual reports to the Minister of Health and Social Services. Committee notes that this information could be part of the role of the body charged with oversight of the Act.

Therefore, Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 24: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend the Mental Health Act to specify an authority who is responsible for oversight of the Mental Health Act, while also allowing flexibility to the Minister of Health and Social Services to designate such responsibility.

The Department informed Committee that there is overall concern about the role of the "Director of the Designated Facility", and specifically what roles can and cannot be delegated or shared. The current processes and roles may cause delays in the review of forms and is administratively burdensome. Committee believes it is important to clarify and streamline their role to prevent burnout, and presents their recommendation as follows:

Recommendation 25: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories significantly reduce the administrative burden on the Director of Designated Facilities as defined in the Mental Health Act through legislative amendments and regulatory change.

Patient rights

In their written submission, the Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA), notes that while unusual, Section 9.1 of the Act is "good from a rights perspective". They highlight that many patients are discharged prematurely, and a case could be made for giving families more of a say in the timing of discharge and perhaps a substitute decision-maker could be given the same right to ask for a second opinion. They provide insight that there may also be a downside to this section at the system level, where there is already a trend of too few psychiatric beds.

The CPA also commented that Section 28(2) of the Act seems unnecessarily restrictive. Currently, the provision requires a second medical opinion before administering emergency treatment, and they go on to note that in an emergency, even the time required to contact a second physician could result in a bad outcome. The CPA suggests to Committee that they review this provision as it could be problematic, and at the least consider the word "readily" be inserted before "available". Committee hears their concerns, and presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 26: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories consider amending Section 9.1 and Section 28(2) of the Mental Health Act after evaluating their capacity and operational effectiveness.

The Department told Committee that postage of information about patient rights under the Act as a permanent part of the individual space may not be appropriate, particularly for the Pediatric Unit rooms that are designated for psychiatric admission at Stanton as they are adaptive spaces that may be utilized for acute medical treatment as needed. The Department also informed Committee that it is unclear whether patients are being informed of their rights to retain and instruct counsel without delay, and whether their access to counsel is being facilitated. It was suggested that it is critical that patients know their rights upon admission – and in particular, that it is communicated to the patient that should they wish to be discharged and there are any immediate safety concerns, they may be held involuntarily for further assessment. The Department suggests that further education and awareness is needed for staff who are responsible for providing patients with information about their rights under the Act.

A suggestion was brought to Committee by the Department to establish an independent rights advisor, as patients may be too upset at their doctors or physicians to fully understand their

rights under the Act. The Department described that the explanation of rights often falls onto the responsibility of nurses to provide, and issues arise when high turnover of staff causes issues in ability to adequately provide this information. The Department also notes that there have been operational challenges in cases where patients on a voluntary hold are then placed on an involuntary hold if they want to or try to leave – which can create a false narrative for patients who may not understand that the Act balances addressing acute mental health needs with the safety of themselves as patients, and of others.

To help with the explanation of rights to patients and to help monitor change in patient status and potential interventions, it is suggested to review and amend Form 1 – Notification of Patient Rights and Other Information to simplify language and layout, and consider including information on how to access advocacy and/or legal supports. A suggestion by the Department was to create a separate form specific to patient rights, as depicted in Alberta and British Columbia's mental health care legislation. It was also noted that when reviewing Form 1, attention be made to including the ability to monitor change in patient status and potential interventions. They also suggested to make it standard that the patient is given a copy of the patient rights poster along with Form 1.

Committee presents the following three recommendations related to patient rights:

Recommendation 27: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide additional education materials and training support to staff responsible for providing patients with information about their rights under the Mental Health Act.

Recommendation 28: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories explore the possibility of an independent rights advisor or neutral party that vocalizes and reviews patient rights under the Mental Health Act with the patient, including whether this responsibility can be added to the cultural advisor role.

Recommendation 29: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review, amend and simplify Form 1 – Notification of Patient Rights and Other Information using an operational lens and a lens of persons with lived experience while also evaluating the benefits of creating a separate form specific to patient rights, as depicted in Alberta and British Columbia's mental health care legislation.

Community Treatment Plans

In relation to Section 37(6)(d), the Canadian Psychiatric Association raised that the use of the word "willing" is very problematic. The CPA noted that in Ontario, the wording is "is able to comply". The word "willing" could suggest to clinicians that the person is consenting and that if they do not agree then they are not eligible for Assisted Community Treatment. They highlighted to Committee that if this is the intention of this Section, then the Assisted Community Treatment has a very limited function. Committee recommends the following:

Recommendation 30: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 37(6)(d) of the Mental Health Act and in particular, the use of the word "willing" within this section.

The Department brought forward to Committee the issue of administrative burdens related to the required coordination of assessments prior to the expiry of a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment or Renewal Certificate, as well as the assessments and appointments required under the Assisted Community Treatment Certificate are needlessly cumbersome and often results in more appointments than is necessary. It was noted that this issue could be addressed through reviewing current process and assessment requirements in the Act and its regulations to allow for better coordination of timelines and requirements, streamlining information and the duplication of administrative tasks. Therefore, Committee proposes this recommendation to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), in an effort to streamline administration of the Act:

Recommendation 31: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend the requirement of assessment and appointments for patients under Assisted Community Treatment and Short Term Leave prior to the expiry of a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment or a Renewal Certificate to ensure better coordination, streamline information, and reduce the number of forms and administrative tasks.

The Department raised the issue that a patient, under the NWT's Mental Health Act, must be involuntary admitted in order to be eligible for Assisted Community Treatment (ACT). Furthermore, this restriction has been causing confusion for patients and their families, and distress to staff. The Department informed Committee that the issue may be that Assisted

Community Treatment, as stated in the NWT's Mental Health Act, is sometimes being equated with Community Treatment Orders, as seen in legislation in southern jurisdictions. In comparison, Community Treatment Orders (as depicted in southern jurisdictions) are designed for individuals, who may or may not be admitted under the Act, but allows for reasonable treatment to be provided without the consent of the person when it is considered less restrictive than keeping the person in hospital. Community Treatment Orders are typically used for individuals who are frequently re-admitted.

The Department made Committee aware that there are challenges in administering Assisted Community Treatment in the NWT as there is not enough operational guidance for staff to confidently manage care for patients on ACT. It was highlighted by the Department that most small communities in the NWT do not have the required services to manage clients who would benefit from ACT and therefore ACT has not been effectively utilized. The issue of ACT plans and forms located on Electronic Medical Records was also brought forward, stating that current information is not available for community staff and practitioners, including processes to flag changes in medications or other aspects of the plan.

The Department informed Committee that changes to provisions regarding Assisted Community Treatment are necessary so that ACT is available to those who are not or are no longer involuntary patients under the Act, similar to Community Treatment Orders as shown in southern legislation. It was recommended to Committee by the Department that a review of provisions is necessary to align ACT to the Community Treatment Order model, including removing the requirement that a patient be involuntary. Notably, this review should be conducted using a northern lens, and should consider the differences on the impacts of services in small communities, the rural/remote and northern context, and operational requirements inevitably placed on the only designated facility with a dedicated psychiatric unit (Stanton). Committee recognizes the importance of properly implementing community treatment, and that making changes to Assisted Community Treatment provisions is an important step in making a greater commitment to culturally safe and decolonized practices in health care. Changes to Assisted Community Treatment provisions may aid in making the Mental Health Act less administratively burdensome to acute care and community services.

Committee recognizes all these elements at play, and presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 32: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and amend provisions in the Mental Health Act related to Assisted Community Treatment to expand Assisted Community Treatment to align with Community Treatment Orders as seen in other jurisdictions, including:

- Removing the requirement that a person be an involuntary patient to qualify for Assisted Community Treatment;
- Ensuring that care is decentralized from an institutional setting, and;
- That there is a greater commitment to culturally safe and decolonized practices in health care.

Similar to the above, it was noted to Committee by the Department that the exact requirement for providing housing and other supports under provisions related to Assisted Community Treatment is not immediately clear and can be confusing. Questions were raised about whether these supports were required to be available for patients prior to their eligibility for ACT, what is considered adequate, and concerns about patients who have unstable housing and income. Committee believes it is crucial for staff and patients to feel prepared when operationalizing ACT, and therefore Committee proposes the following:

Recommendation 33: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review Section 40(1)(b) of the Mental Health Act to ensure clear information on the extent to which housing and income supports are available to patients under Assisted Community Treatment.

An issue brought forward to the Department is that the nonadherence to the required monitoring and treatment under ACT would typically lead to the apprehension and conveyance of the patient to the closest designated facility for patients who reside in small communities. There are concerns by the Department that this may lead to an overuse of emergency transportation services which may impact the available resources in the communities for other emergencies, could be costly, and may not reflect principles of recovery-oriented care. While Committee understands that there needs to be a balance between protecting the patient and potential harm to themselves or others, Committee also recognizes the need to ensure that the patients are made aware of non-compliance, and that

external stakeholders are equipped to adequately provide this information:

Recommendation 34: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure external stakeholders involved in community care understand their obligations to support the operationalization of Assisted Community Treatment under the Mental Health Act, including increasing awareness of obligations to ensure efforts are made to inform patients of non-compliance and the consequences of non-compliance.

Staffing capacity, resources, and programs available

In his written submission to Committee, Raymond Pidzamecky, registered social worker, highlights that there is research that shows the most effective models for intervention, which are multisystemic in nature. Mr. Pidzamecky encourages the GNWT to create a multi-departmental team for children, adolescents, and families that include membership from at least health, social services, education, and justice. Committee understands that the GNWT is currently developing models of integrated service delivery to create multi-departmental responses to complex matters. Committee is interested in knowing the results of the development of these models, and is also researching healthcare sustainability and accountability in NWT's healthcare system.

The Department made Committee aware of burnout of some staff members related to the operations of the Mental Health Act. Committee would like to ensure that GNWT staff, including staff in smaller communities, feel supported so that there is proper and meaningful action for patients under the Act, including for actioning certificates such as Assisted Community Treatment. Committee notes that there is a need for more community mental health services to be provided in partnership with Indigenous Governments and non-government organizations for additional supports necessary for meaningfully providing Assisted Community Treatment. Committee brings forward the following recommendation, in an effort to increase supports to small communities in the NWT:

Recommendation 35: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish more supports and funding to action Assisted Community Treatment as defined in the Mental Health Act in small communities across the Northwest Territories.

The Department brought to Committee's attention that there is a lack of guidance for families and caregivers to apply for Orders under the Act, and there was a suggestion to explore the addition of a public facing navigator role to help explain processes related to the Mental Health Act. This navigator role would involve reviewing, and revising public facing resources and guides to the Mental Health Act and assisting families in applying for Orders under the Act. It was suggested by the Department that this position could be housed at the Office of the Client Experience or within the Mental Health Act Review Board Officer Manager role. Committee agrees that this type of support is greatly needed for patients and their families, and proposes the following:

Recommendation 36: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish the addition of a public facing navigator role for Mental Health Act processes.

Additional feedback the Department provided to Committee was that more clarity is required around the psychiatrist's role during hearings. There seems to be uncertainty about whether they are to be a hospital representative, or a general witness. They highlighted that there is worry that at times, the psychiatrist is being asked legal questions which is beyond their scope. Committee believes it is important to determine their role so to better streamline the hearing process:

Recommendation 37: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review the role of the psychiatrist during hearings under the Mental Health Act and provide information about their role to the Mental Health Act Review Board, psychiatrists and other staff to ensure there is a clear understanding of their role.

Assessment, admission, renewals, and discharging

It was brought forward by the Department that in some cases, involuntary patients that are disagreeable to care are being discharged from the facility. The Department highlighted that the Act currently requires attending medical practitioners to conduct ongoing assessments of involuntary patients to determine whether they continue to meet the criteria for involuntary admission. If the patient is not meeting the criteria, the physician must cancel the certificate of involuntary admission and any renewal certificate, allowing the patient to be discharged.

Committee notes this concern, and finds it important to ensure that patients are not being discharged too early. Therefore, Committee puts forward the following recommendation:

Recommendation 38: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create internal processes to mitigate concerns regarding discharging mental health patients under the Mental Health Act too early by working with physicians.

It was noted that by the Department during their briefing to Committee that currently, there is an inability to cancel a Certificate of Involuntary Assessment. Related to this issue, there may be struggles with access to an immediate assessment by a medical practitioner in small communities, and this may result in a medevac to have that assessment – even if the patient's condition has improved. It was suggested that this goes against the principles of the Act and person-centered care to hold and transport a person unnecessarily based on legislative requirements.

Committee presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 39: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories improve on the ability to cancel certificates on involuntary assessment issued under the Mental Health Act through policies, procedures and legislative change.

Streamlining forms

It was raised by the Department that there is overall concern about the number and complexity of forms, as well as duplication across forms. There are also concerns that when forms are not filled out correctly, they are considered to be invalid. More specifically, there was a comment of discrepancy between Form 23 – Community Treatment Plan and the requirements for the form set out in Section 19 of the Forms Regulations. It was stated that currently, Form 23 requires the patient or the substitute decision maker to initial Part 3 (Patient Agreement), while the entire Form 23 does not require a patient signature where there is a substitute decision maker place. Moreover, Section 19 of the Forms Regulations requires acknowledgement from the patient that they understand the requirements or obligations set out in Part 3 of Form 23, yet the Form does not require their signature.

Another example of reviewing consistency between Forms and Regulations includes Form 22 – Assisted Community Treatment

Certificate, which currently indicates that the signature of both the patient and a substitute decision maker (if applicable) are required. However, as per Section 17(2) of the Forms Regulations, where there is a substitute decision maker in place, the Form is only required to be signed by the substitute decision maker.

It was brought forward that formatting changes also need to occur to the Forms, including adding the form name to the page number location, and ensuring forms have room for a 3-hole punch when filing.

There were also comments of difficulties and delays in retrieving signatures from substitute decision makers. It was suggested to allow for the substitute decision maker to consent verbally, instead of relying on faxes or other means to obtain signatures – especially if this is in the best interest of the patient. There is also an issue of forms that cannot be sent electronically. An example was provided for Form 10 – Summary Statement Respecting Apprehension or Conveyance which must physically accompany the client to the designated facility.

In the first recommendation of this report, Committee has recommended the GNWT streamline elements of the Act that are deemed administratively burdensome, including reviewing and amending all forms under the Act to ensure they are appropriate, efficient and reduce unnecessary make-work for staff, patients, and families. It was also suggested by the Department that staff are educated on secure file transfer, and internal procedures to address concerns about form completion. Committee also puts forth the following recommendation, related to technological change:

Recommendation 40: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories embrace technological change by implementing procedures for Forms under the Mental Health Act to be signed electronically or verbally, as well as implementing secure file transfer processes for Forms under the Mental Health Act.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Social Development's statutory review of the Mental Health Act.

Recommendation 41: The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Mackenzie Delta, that Committee Report 16-20(1) be received and adopted by the Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Mackenzie Delta, that, pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to Committee Report 16-20(1), including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. And Committee's Report 16-20(1) has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees.
Member from Great Slave.

COMMITTEE REPORT 17-20(1):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES
AND PRIVILEGES REPORT ON THE
REVIEW OF THE RULES OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that pursuant to Rule 6.1(2)(n), Committee Report 17-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report on the Review of the

Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

MS. REID: Standing Committee on Procedure And Privileges Report On The Review The Rules Of The Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges (Committee) is pleased to report on its review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (the Rules).

In 2024, Committee received two letters from Speaker Shane Thompson requesting a review of many of the Rules; these letters are attached as Appendix A.

In April 2024, the Speaker requested that Committee review the following matters:

- Terminology of Prayer;
- Timelines for Acknowledgements;
- The Speaker's ability to deliver Members' Statements;
- Provisions to allow the Clerk to produce a consolidation of the Rules;
- Time limits on Replies to Commissioner's Address;
- Restrictions on when a Reply to Commissioner's Address can be given;
- Professional Behaviour in the Chamber via Chapter Three of the Rules;
- Amendments to Motions;
- Motions Location on the Daily Orders;
- Timelines for Returns to Oral Questions;
- Number of supplementary questions in Oral Questions;
- Guidelines for Oral Questions;
- Follow-up Information to Oral Questions;

- Petitions;
- Sitting Hours; and
- Points of Information or Clarification in Committee of the Whole.

In July 2024, the Speaker requested that Committee review the following matters in addition to the matters currently under review:

- Predictability of Sitting Hours;
- Ministers' Statements in Committee of the Whole; and
- Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery.

Further to this, during Committee of the Whole on June 6, 2024, the House adopted a Committee Motion that directed Committee to review and consider the current conventions in the titling of bills and if those conventions should be expanded.

Committee has considered these matters and is prepared to report on nearly all of them.

Prayer

Concern has been raised more than once over the associations that come with the word "Prayer". The word has very different meaning and connotations for different individuals. Committee considered several more inclusive terms and agreed that changing the references to Prayer in the Rules to "Prayer or Reflection" would be the most appropriate course of action. Therefore, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Chapter Four be amended by adding the words "or Reflection" after each instance of the word "Prayer".

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.4(2) be amended by adding the words "or Reflection" after the word "prayer".

Acknowledgments

The current rule states that acknowledgments must be filed with the Speaker's office no later than one hour before the start of the sitting day. However, one hour does not allow for adequate time to ensure the acknowledgement meets the guidelines, format the document and provide copies to interpreters. Committee recommends:

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.8(2) be amended by deleting the words "one hour" and inserting the words "24 hours".

Furthermore, Committee was satisfied that the guidelines currently outlined in the Rules for acknowledgments were appropriate and did see an uptake in the usage of acknowledgments in the Spring 2024 sitting.

Speaker's Member's Statements

In the 20th Assembly, the Speaker has commenced a practice of delivering Members' Statements from the Speaker's Chair.

After a jurisdictional scan and a deep look at the Rules, there is nothing that appears to preclude the Speaker from delivering a Member's statement from his Chair. As such, Committee does not see a need for any changes to the Rules for this matter. Committee is supportive of the Speakers participation in Members Statements during House Business.

Consolidation of Rules

Currently, the practice is that all changes to the Rules must occur in the House by way of motion. However, the Speaker asked Committee to examine whether a provision should exist that allows the Clerk to produce a consolidation of the Rules, and the ability to correct spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors, without requiring those changes to be made through the House.

Committee agrees that this measure will save the time of the House and reduce administrative burdens on Members and staff. Committee sees the process of the Clerk providing a copy of a consolidation of the Rules to Caucus as an information item as sufficient notice for Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the Clerk be granted authority to produce consolidations of the Rules to correct spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors alongside non-controversial changes within the Rules, without requiring those changes to be made by way of motion in the House.

Time Limit on Replies to Commissioner's Address

Replies to the Commissioner's Address have no time limit in the Rules, which is dissimilar to other Replies to Addresses such as the Reply to the Budget Address. However, Committee does not feel a time limit is required considering every Member may only use this provision once per session.

Restrictions on When Replies to Commissioner's Address Can Be Given

In practice, many Members wait until the last sitting day before dissolution to use their one opportunity for a reply to the Commissioner's Address, either to use the opportunity as a farewell or to announce whether they intend to run in the next Territorial General Election. However, this is not the intention of this item on the daily orders. Further, the last day(s) of an Assembly typically deal with large amounts of legislation needing to pass through the House at the end of an Assembly. As such, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.2(2) be amended by inserting the words "or the final sitting day prior to the dissolution of a Legislative Assembly" after the word "prorogation".

Professional Behaviour in the Chamber

The Speaker, at the request of the Government House Leader, referred the matter of professional behaviour in the Chamber for Committee to examine. In particular, the question put to Committee was whether or not Chapter Three of the Rules on Order and Debate provides sufficient guidance for expected conduct in the Chamber supportive of a respectful Legislative Assembly culture.

After careful consideration by Committee, it was agreed that the provisions in Chapter Three of the Rules do provide adequate guidance for Members' decorum in the Chamber, and that any grey area behaviour is a matter for the Speaker to decide upon.

Committee did however call on all Members, on both sides of the House, to be engaged during question period, prepared with questions and responses, and show the public the importance of public policy debate in the chamber.

Motions Location on Daily Orders

The daily orders are different on Tuesdays to allow for business of Standing Committees to occur earlier in a day's proceedings. This way, the important work of Committees is more accessible to members of the media and public and does not get buried under the many other items of business in the daily orders. Viewership is highest in the first few hours of a sitting day.

Considering motions often deal with pressing public issues, Committee agreed that a day where motions can be dealt with earlier on the daily orders would be appropriate.

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the following rule be added to Chapter Four:

4.1 (5) the daily orders of business in the Assembly on Thursdays shall be:

1. Prayer
 2. Ministers' Statements
 3. Members' Statements
 4. Motions
 5. Returns to Oral Questions
 6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
 7. Acknowledgements
 8. Oral Questions
 9. Written Questions
 10. Returns to Written Questions
 - 11.Replies to Commissioner's Address
 - 12.Petitions
 - 13.Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
 - 14.Reports of Standing and Special Committees
 - 15.Tabling of Documents
 - 16.Notices of Motion
 - 17.Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
 - 18.First Reading of Bills
 - 19.Second Reading of Bills
 - 20.Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - 21.Report of Committee of the Whole
 - 22.Third Reading of Bills
 - 23.Orders of the Day
- Returns to Oral Questions

In the Rules, there is no specified timeline for a Minister who takes a question on notice to provide a return. In order to align the Rules surrounding Returns to Oral Questions with the Rules surrounding Returns to Written Questions, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 7: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(2)(b) be amended by adding the words "within 21 calendar days, or on the first day of the next Sitting if 21 calendar days lapse between Sittings;" after the words "Return to Oral Questions".

Oral Questions

During Oral Questions, Members are allowed one question and three supplementary questions. However, some questions require background and some answers require substantial context. This has led to a pattern where Members are often being reminded to be as short and brief as possible in their questions so that all Members have an opportunity to pose a question that day.

In an effort to keep questions and answers focused while also allowing Members time for additional rounds of questions during Oral Questions, Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 8: The Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(4) be amended by replacing the word “three” with “two”.

Amendments to Motions

Committee reviewed the current process for moving amendments to motions on the floor of the House. While there has been feedback that the process can be administrative in nature, it also ensures that important principles are upheld, such as all Members having the opportunity to be informed and aware of what exactly is being put forward, alongside an opportunity to speak to what is put forward.

The concept of introducing a separate, more expedited process for friendly amendments to motions was considered at length by Committee. However Committee could not come to an agreement on the definition of a friendly amendment. For example, if the mover of a motion concurs with an amendment to their motion, but is unaware that by concurring with that amendment to their motion, they would lose the support of their colleagues, would they still consider it a friendly amendment after the fact? As such, Committee agreed that the current process for amendments to motions, while at times administrative, is the most fair and thorough way to change a motion on the floor before the House.

Guidelines for Oral Questions

The Speaker put a simple question before Committee: do the guidelines for Oral Questions in the Rules reflect current and best practices across the country?

Committee agreed that the guidelines in the Rules are sufficient and have a good measure of leeway for Members to pose questions in a way that reflects their priorities as a Member. Committee also felt that it is the Speaker's purview to interpret and enforce the guidelines

in the way he deems most appropriate. Committee respects the Speaker's role in ensuring all Members ask meaningful yet respectful questions and did not wish to over step into the Speaker's role.

Follow-up Information to Oral Questions

A large number of Tabled Documents processed through the House and the Office of the Clerk are documents that originate from Ministers that provide follow-up information to oral questions. Committee agreed that these documents should simply be filed with the Clerk and printed in Hansard rather than processed as individual Tabled Documents. Therefore, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 9: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(6) be amended by deleting the words “table that information in the Assembly” and replacing them with the words “file that information with the Clerk”.

Recommendation 10: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(7) be added:

Under the item “Oral Questions”, the Clerk shall inform the Assembly of the follow-ups to oral questions received, deliver copies to the Members who asked the questions, and have the returns printed in Hansard.

Petitions

The Speaker put to Committee whether or not more sites should be approved as a petition platform for Members with the increase in e-petitions seen recently, and how petitions can be made more accessible for residents with disabilities.

Research in how other jurisdictions deal with petitions was not particularly helpful to Committee because most jurisdictions do not allow for websites as approved petition platforms (they either have an e-petition platform built in-house or only accept written submissions). Further, the topic of petition accessibility is fairly new for Legislatures and does not have a large body of research for Committee to review. However, Committee agrees that this topic is important and warrants a response. Committee requires more time to consider this matter fulsomely.

Points of Clarification in Committee of the Whole

In the Speaker's referral, the Speaker asked Committee to consider if there should be an opportunity in Committee of the Whole for Members to seek points of information or

clarification, or other interjections that would allow Members to ask questions of each other more freely.

One avenue Committee considered with this referral was replicating a rule that exists at the Senate of Canada. At the Senate, Rule 6-2 (2) reads as follows:

“A Senator may, with leave of the Senate, speak a second time in a debate for no more than five minutes in order to explain any misunderstanding arising from the original intervention. No new matter shall be introduced while explaining the misunderstanding.”

After further investigation, Committee came to the conclusion that because the rule at the Senate requires leave of the Senate, this would not allow for the dynamic nature of seeking information or clarification in a Committee of the Whole exchange like the referral suggests.

Committee ultimately decided that the back-and-forth style of questions permitted between Members and witnesses within a Member's allotted 10 minutes during Committee of the Whole provides for sufficient opportunities for Members to seek information or clarification.

Sitting Hours

Sitting hours has been an ongoing discussion throughout the first year of the 20th Assembly. Members desire predictability for sitting hours to make appropriate family arrangements, and for the benefit of the Assembly's interpreters (most of whom are Elders).

Committee considered discussions on this topic that occurred at Caucus as well as a jurisdictional scan as to what sitting hours exist in other Legislatures, and what measures are in place to determine their predictability. Every Legislature is unique and it was challenging to compare these measures with other jurisdictions including the amount of business before an Assembly, how far Members have to travel to be present for a sitting, and the dynamics of party politics that are factored into the Rules of other jurisdictions.

Committee did note that some jurisdictions have designated days of the week that will be late sitting nights in their Rules. The expressed desire for predictability that is currently prevalent in this Assembly is evidence to Committee that late sitting nights should be formalized in the Rules.

Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 11: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends rule

2.2(1) be deleted and replaced with the following:

2.2(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the sitting hours of the Assembly shall be as follows:

(a) Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

(b) Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

(c) Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Recommendation 12: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 2.2(2) be amended by replacing the words “At 6:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and at 2:00 p.m. on Fridays” with “At the designated adjournment time of a Sitting day.”

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

The concept of recognizing visitors in the Gallery is an important one in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. The Legislature is informally known as the ‘Place for the People’ and Members tend to be quite connected to their constituents. While there is currently a practice of some visitors to the Gallery being recognized by multiple Members, this is something that does occur in other Legislatures, and Committee agreed that this practice does not cause disorder or take up too much of the House's time to require a rule change.

Minister's Statements in Committee of the Whole

The Rules currently allow for a motion to be moved to refer a Minister's Statement to Committee of the Whole without notice directly after the Minister delivers the statement. However, once the Minister's Statement is considered in Committee of the Whole, Members may speak to the Minister's Statement for up to 10 minutes each and there are no further actions that can be taken. Committee was asked to consider options for how Minister's Statements can be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Committee concluded that a more meaningful activity that could occur in Committee of the Whole with a Minister's Statement is an opportunity to ask the respective Minister questions about their statement. Committee also thought it would be appropriate to ensure Ministers can bring senior officials with them to assist in answering questions in Committee of the Whole. Therefore, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 13: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the following rule be added to Chapter nine:

9.1 (15) When Committee of the Whole is considering a Minister's Statement, questions relating to the content of the statement shall only be directed to the Minister.

Recommendation 14: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the following rule be added to Chapter nine:

9.1 (16) When Committee of the Whole is considering a Minister's Statement, the Minister may have witnesses appear to supply information as required.

Short Titles for Bills

This referral from Committee of the Whole came from the context of a public request for a short title for a Bill. When the Standing Committee on Social Development was reviewing Bill 2: Missing Persons Act in Spring 2024, Members of the public requested that Committee rename the Bill to "Frank's Act" to honour a young individual who went missing and whose case sparked substantial public conversation about the lack of missing persons legislation in the Northwest Territories. While the title of a Bill cannot be changed as per the Rules, in other jurisdictions Bills can have two titles: one longer, descriptive title, and one shorter, often more politicized or simple title. The Standing Committee on Social Development could not action this request from the public to add "Frank's Act" as a second title to the Bill because there are no provisions for a Bill to have two titles in Northwest Territories legislation.

Committee sees merit in the positive potential for certain pieces of legislation to have both a long and a short title to simplify for the public what an Act will do. Given ongoing and evolving regulatory changes around legislation, the Government of the Northwest Territories intends to put forward new legislation that sets out the provisions related to the making of statutes. Committee sees this as an opportunity to take note of what many other jurisdictions offer and allow for legislation to have two titles when appropriate. Committee also notes that ultimately, should this Government bring forward such a Bill, a Standing Committee will have the opportunity to review it in depth and review this matter even further.

Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 15: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories

bring forward legislation that includes provisions for Bills to have both a technical title and a short title.

This concludes the Committees report on its review of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Committee Report 17-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, be received by the Assembly and referred to Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 17-20(1) has been received and adopted by this Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees.
Member from Great Slave.

COMMITTEE REPORT 18-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES INTERIM REPORT ON THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2023 TERRITORIAL GENERAL ELECTION

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges is pleased to provide its Interim Report on the Report of the chief electoral officer on the Administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election.

Introduction

Pursuant to subsection 266(2) of the Elections and Plebiscites Act, the chief electoral officer must report on the administration and event initiatives seen through that office within six months following a territorial general election. The report has any matters the CEO thinks should be brought to the Legislative Assembly's attention. It also includes recommendations on how to improve election administration alongside any suggested amendments to the Act.

The Speaker tabled the CEO's report on May 21st, 2024 in the Legislative Assembly and was subsequently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges for review and response.

Committee sought public feedback on the CEO report from September 2, 2024 to September 27, 2024, receiving two written responses.

On September 27, 2024 committee held a public briefing with the CEO Stephen Dunbar and deputy CEO Charlotte Digness. Mr. Aleks Toiviainen of Vote 16 Canada also provided testimony at the public hearing, speaking specifically to the recommendation from the CEO to lower the Northwest Territories voting age to 16.

Background

Due to the wildfire evacuation of almost 70 percent of the Northwest Territories population, which represented 14 of the 19 electoral districts, the Legislative Assembly passed an Act to postpone polling day for the 2023 general election on August 28th, 2023. This Act moved the previously established September 3rd, 2023, expiration date of the 19th Assembly to November 14th, 2023. The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories ordered the CEO to issue the writs of the election on October 16th within the prescribed 29-day campaign period. On election day, 34 polling locations opened across the territory for the 16 electoral districts. In total, 10,797 votes were cast, representing a 52.54 percent voter turnout.

Committee wishes to thank the CEO and staff of Elections NWT for both the management of the 2023 Territorial General Election and their work on their report. The challenges faced by Election NWT following the evacuation was unprecedented, however the election process occurred as seamlessly as possible due to their hard work and dedication to their roles.

Repeal and Replace the Elections and Plebiscites Act

The current Elections and Plebiscites Act was developed following the 2003 territorial election and first used in the 2007 territorial election. It has been substantially amended five times since: In 2010, 2014 (twice), 2018 and most recently in 2022.

The Elections and Plebiscites Act has not been holistically reviewed since 2007. Given that previous amendments to this Act are often made to address specific issues, the CEO, throughout their report, has noted many inconsistencies, contradictions, or limitations to appropriately and flexibly support the elections processes in the Northwest Territories.

Although the mass evacuation of the Northwest Territories highlighted some obvious vulnerabilities within the current Elections and Plebiscites Act, including a lack of direction and guidance for emergency management situations, this is supplemented by other challenges faced by a lack of modernized legislation. Clarity is required as modern society grapples with more varied uses of social media. This is impactful not only for advertising guidelines or the use of third-party advertisers but also for the growing use of artificial intelligence. A more modern regulatory framework that better reflects the operating reality of our everyday communications should be better reflected in the Elections and Plebiscites Act.

The CEO's report also outlines the need for more concrete guidelines for mobile polling stations, absentee ballots, and special voting opportunities. The need to ensure that more people have access to, and options for, their ability to vote is a concern that both the CEO and committee members agree with. Beyond that, updated guidelines for provision of food during candidate events or the removal of the elimination nomination deposit can be changed to better reflect national best practices in those areas.

The list of suggested amendments is extensive; however, it reflects the nature of how this important piece of legislation is ultimately updated and requires that at a certain point, a more complete update must occur. Addressing specific amendments does not necessarily ensure that more comprehensive legislative or policy goals can be addressed which has led to a lengthy list of clean-up, modernization, and consistency concerns required to be addressed throughout the current Act.

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the Legislative Assembly direct the chief electoral officer to undertake a repeal and replace of the Elections and Plebiscites Act before the end of the 20th Assembly.

Expand Elections NWT Mandate

The CEO's report highlights Elections NWT's capacity and willingness to do more to support all election activity within the Northwest Territories. Expanding the mandate of Elections NWT to include local authorities would allow for greater collaboration and support for logistics, voter list management, a more comprehensive register, improved information sharing, and to refine the capacity to deliver on election activities. Allowing Elections NWT to support local authorities has the potential to better streamline and capture important information

that then feeds into more complete data sets of all communities, regardless of the type of election occurring. It also creates opportunities to reduce duplication of materials and build broader capacity throughout the Northwest Territories for election activities. The CEO's report highlights that they can and wish to play a larger role in all elections, similar to how other election bodies run throughout Canada.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Legislative Assembly direct the chief electoral officer to engage with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities to determine how to better support local authority election activities.

Reduce The Voting Age To 16

Voter turnout in the Northwest Territories remains very low and, as noted in the CEO report, particularly low for voters under the age of 30. Committee wishes to continue their investigation into the request of the CEO to lower the voting age to 16 and will provide a separate report in the 2025 Winter Sitting of the Legislative Assembly on their findings and the response to this recommendation.

Conclusion

Committee again wishes to thank Elections NWT for their hard work, dedication, and support to not only candidates of the election but also the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Committee Report 18-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Interim Report on the Report of the chief electoral officer on the administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election, be received by the Assembly and referred to Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion has passed, has been received, and the report has been received and referred to Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees.
Member from Great Slave -- or no, sorry, Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 19-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE CANNABIS LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION ACT

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 19-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

MR. MORSE: Standing Committee On Government Operations Report On The Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization And Regulation Implementation Act

Introduction and Background

During the 19th Assembly, the mandatory statutory review was assigned to the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) in October 2020; however, due to extenuating circumstances, the review was not completed at dissolution of the Assembly. Committee recognizes the review was delayed for several years and is pleased to provide the report early in the 20th Assembly.

In April 2017, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-45: the Cannabis Act with the objective of keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and youth and profits out of the hands of criminals and organized crime. Following extensive study and debate the Cannabis Act received Royal Assent in June 2018.

Shortly after, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) introduced Bill 6: The Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act (Bill 6) to adopt its own framework for the purchase, sale, classification,

and distribution of cannabis in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Bill 6 received assent in the NWT Legislative Assembly in June 2018. With both the federal and territorial legislation in place, cannabis has been legal for sale by the order of the Governor in Council since October 17, 2018.

On February 26, 2024, Committee commenced the statutory review of territorial cannabis legislation. The Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act enacted two new statutes related to the legalization and regulation of cannabis: the Cannabis Products Act and the Cannabis Smoking Control Act. The legislation also amended the Motor Vehicles Act to provide for prohibitions and enforcement measures related to impaired driving.

Through an initial review and research on the implementation and legalization of Cannabis, Committee ultimately choose to conduct their review using an economic lens focusing their statutory review on the Cannabis Products Act.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Between July 2024 to August 2024, Committee engaged the public. On August 29, 2024, Committee hosted one public meeting in Yellowknife - S̱mbak'è, of which Boreal Cultivation and the Department of Finance presented. A total of 7 people attended Committee's public meeting. Committee was also invited to tour Boreal Cultivation's facility on August 27th.

Committee sought written submissions on the statutory review of the Act and sent out six (6) targeted letters to cannabis retailers across the NWT. Committee received one written submission from ReLeafNT.

These submissions and presentations are included in Appendix A.

Committee appreciates everyone who offered their feedback at public meetings and in written submissions, and categorized public comments received into one theme.

Information related to the theme is included below:

Producer Concerns

Boreal Cultivation Inc., the first licensed cannabis producer in the NWT, highlighted to Committee during their briefing that they feel that the discount currently available to them needs to be fairer, and more aligned with what Business Incentives Policy companies receive for contracts.

As stated by Boreal Cultivation in their presentation to Committee, they receive a reduction in the cannabis markup from the current level of 34% to 24% for all NWT-based producers for cannabis products cultivated in the NWT. They receive a decrease from 34% to 29% for products cultivated in other jurisdictions but purchased and processed at their facility.

The Department of Finance noted to Committee that the Financial Management Board is currently reviewing both the liquor and cannabis reductions applied and will consider options in the Fall of 2024. Moreover, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has confirmed with Committee that the NWT Manufactured Products Policy (NMPP) is currently being reviewed. The Department of Finance made clear in their presentation that the Northern Cannabis Mark-Up Reductions is only available to NWT-approved manufacturers.

On this same note, Boreal Cultivation also brought forward to Committee that under the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment's current definition of manufacturing, they do not qualify as a northern manufacturer. They raised to Committee that while they have been waiting for clarification on this definition, this has left them feeling unrecognized for their work in this field. They continue to raise that due to this lack of recognition, this may equate to them not being able to access additional support through programs such as "Made in the NWT", the NWT Manufacturing Association, and the CanExport program.

Committee recognizes this feedback and feels it is important to support the industry – including recognizing Boreal Cultivation as a manufacturer. Committee therefore presents the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories implement the feedback from Boreal Cultivation regarding current discounts for cannabis products and provide changes to the Northwest Territories Manufactured Products Policy and other associated policies that reflects this feedback.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review the Northwest Territories Manufacturer Products Policy in the effort to identify Boreal Cultivation as a local manufacturer.

Boreal Cultivation also notes to Committee in their presentation that they cannot sell their products from their facility, while other jurisdictions do allow for this – which is known as “farmgating”. Furthermore, they raised to Committee that they have been approached by tourism companies to organize tours of their building, claiming that this could be an economic driver for the territory. Also noted by the company is that some jurisdictions are researching into allowing farmgating, while others have already allowed farmgating through changes in their regulations (i.e. Yukon).

In their presentation to Committee, the Department highlighted that farmgating is allowed in BC, Ontario, and Saskatchewan.

Committee understands that farmgating is underway or being implemented in other jurisdictions across Canada, and therefore believes that it is timely for the GNWT to action this recommendation:

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and apply changes to the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act and its regulations to allow for farmgating in the Northwest Territories.

Committee was informed by Boreal Cultivation that the legislation does not allow for producers to provide samples to retailers in the NWT. They reiterate to Committee that by allowing for samples to local retailers, this may help with local delivery time and the freshness of products. They mention that samples to retailers are allowed in the jurisdictions of Ontario, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, Yukon and British Columbia and it gives them the opportunity to advocate for their story and product.

Committee agrees with the benefits of allowing producers to provide samples to retailers in the NWT, and therefore presents the following recommendation:

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and research implications for cannabis retailers to be provided with samples, and consequently make amendments to the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act and its regulations to allow for cannabis producers to provide samples to retailers located in the Northwest Territories.

An additional point raised by Boreal Cultivation focuses on allowing for Special Occasion Permits (SOP) for the sale of cannabis products. As outlined by the company, the regulations related to the Act do not allow for the sale of cannabis, yet they do for alcohol. They stated that they approached the Department of Finance in November 2022 to fill out a SOP, but there was no process in place in the Act’s regulations to allow for an SOP to be filled out for cannabis resale. Boreal Cultivation’s request to Committee was to update the regulations to allow for SOP for cannabis resale.

The Department of Finance stated in their presentation that no jurisdictions currently allow for SOP for the sale of cannabis, but there has been movement in Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba where they are considering allowing special occasion permits.

Boreal Cultivation also highlighted to Committee that the Act does not currently allow for “cannabis lounges”, which are similar to bars where patrons can partake in using cannabis indoors. Committee takes in the above feedback, and presents the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories conducts research on the best processes and practices to allow for special occasion permits for the sale of cannabis.

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories amend the regulations of the Cannabis Legislation and Regulation Implementation Act to allow for the special occasion permits for the sale of cannabis.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act. Committee looks forward to the Government’s response to these recommendations.

Recommendation 7: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 19-20(1),

Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to Committee Report 19-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act, including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 19-20(1) has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees.
Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 20-20(1):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON COMMITTEE'S
INITIATION OF THE 10-YEAR REVIEW OF
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HERITAGE FUND ACT

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on Committee's Initiation of the 10-Year Review of the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report

20-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Committee's Initiation of the 10-year Review of the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

MR. MORSE: Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Committee's Initiation of The Ten-Year Review Of The Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act

Scope Of Review

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) would like to inform the 20th Legislative Assembly and members of the public of Committee's intent to initiate the ten-year statutory review of the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act (the Act) as required by the Act. Committee is in the early stages of its statutory review of the Act and has created a workplan that spans 18 months intending to report back to the House in the Spring 2026 sitting.

Committee will follow Section 10(2) of the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act which outlines the legislated requirements that must be included in the scope of the ten-year review¹. Committee has created strategies to help action the scope and legislative requirements of the ten-year review of the Act, as described in Appendix A. Some of these strategies may include but are not limited to, briefings from national and international sovereign wealth funds, investment managers, the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds, a literature review of academic research on sovereign wealth funds, and a review of investment policies and legislation related to sovereign wealth funds.

Committee's review intends to engage subject matter experts across sovereign wealth funds from other jurisdictions (both nationally and internationally), and other stakeholders who interact with the impact of sovereign wealth funds. Committee has particular interest in examining whether contributions to the fund are sufficient to maximize benefits to residents of the NWT, and how the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund's expenditures can and should

be spent. Committee intends to engage members of the public and non-governmental organizations for their input.

It is Committee's plan to prepare a report that makes recommendations to improve the provisions and operations of the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act, and its ability to provide benefits for residents of the Northwest Territories. This report will describe Committee's observations after their briefings and research with recommendations to ensure the Heritage Fund is managed to its fullest ability and its operations remain sustainable.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 20-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Committee's Initiation of the 10-year Review of the Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. The Committee Report 20-20(1) has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements.

Before we go into oral questions, folks, I've had a number of people bring forth their concerns about lengthy conversations between Members during statements and oral questions, and it's becoming a distraction. So even when people put their hearing -- or their earpieces in, they keep on hearing -- there's been distractions. So if you have the -- required to talk to your colleagues, please do it outside the chambers so we can move forward so we can -- everybody can do their business. Thank you.

Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 373-20(1):
TARGETED AMENDMENTS TO WATERS
REGULATIONS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Member of -- sorry, off to a great start here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ECC.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke in previous sessions about targeted amendments to the waters regs, and I'm just looking for -- the department presented to standing committee recently, and I am looking for an update from the Minister on their progress towards making targeted amendments to the waters regs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. The proposed approach for the waters regulation, the department has been looking at the recommendations from the chamber of mines, the land and water boards of the Mackenzie Valley, as well as some requests from Indigenous governments in how we can work together through your process with the Intergovernmental Council and through the legislative development protocol to advance the amendments to the regulations as well as some targeted amendments that have been identified by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister able to give us any kind of a timeline? I think the idea with the recommendation from all these different entities for targeted amendments is that we get them done quickly, that this could be a quick win for the department and a quick win for regulatory fairness and certainty in the territory. So can the Minister give us a timeline for when they expect the targeted amendments to be concluded? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process to address the targeted amendments will require the participation of the Intergovernmental Council as well as the Intergovernmental Council legislative development protocol. And so the Department of Environment and Climate Change is not able to set that timeline, but we certainly do recognize the urgency of attempting to move this as quickly as possible, and we will continue to work with all parties to advance that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It might have been ambitious to ask for a conclusion timeline. Maybe I could get a timeline on when

this process is going to be established. So it sounds like the department's been looking at it but hasn't actually established a process. Mr. Speaker, I've been asking about this since our first sitting. So has the department actually initiated these conversations knowing that it might take some time? It's time to get the discussions going. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the department is in the very early stages of discussions with the ICGS, and we are hoping to advance that in a timely fashion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary.

Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 374-20(1):

MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBRE LINE BACKUP

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance given my statement today on the redundancy of the fibre optic line travelling up the Mackenzie Valley. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister could give me an update on where they are with the true redundancy plan for this line. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is a part owner on a P3 which is the Mackenzie Valley fibre line that goes up the Mackenzie Valley. And recently, we are now connected in to a project that goes through the Yukon which is creating a loop that goes down into British Columbia. So we are well underway to having a loop that connects all throughout the two territories. And of course then beyond that, there are services that go down into Alberta through our line or through British Columbia through the other line. So once that is all in place, Mr. Speaker, we would have, again, a loop that connects all -- or both of the two territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister, and I certainly applaud the efforts to get the -- from the Yukon government and both ourselves to get that redundant line in. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is the beyond Fort Nelson. So the redundancy line right now goes into Fort Nelson. Is the Minister aware of any negotiations either taking place or planned to take place to ensure that we have access to that line as well so if -- to that line as well. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have what's called an infeasible right of use or the ability to use the line that goes from McGill Lake down into British Columbia. That's that last piece that connects our loop. It ensures that we are using -- we have the ability to use that infrastructure which would otherwise be entirely that of NorthwesTel just as -- as there's agreements with us and the government of the Yukon to use either side of this network or the loop, as I was describing earlier. Mr. Speaker, with respect to what happens after McGill Lake, that piece does belong to NorthwesTel just as we would be looking at other carriers when ours goes down from our side of the loop down into Alberta. So I'd certainly have to go back and confirm the degree to which we're having those discussions and ensure that we maintain an ability to use those lines or that our carriers have the ability to use those lines. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I understand there is the IRU for the line beyond High Level, but I guess my question is if there's a disruption beyond High Level, then do we not -- we won't have the access to go the full loop from Alberta up to Fort Nelson. So is there any conversations taking place to have an IRU, as the Minister mentioned, on that line as well, the Fort Nelson to Alberta line?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe there are still conversations underway right now with the Department of Finance on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories and NorthwesTel. We were also involved just this past summer and into the fall in terms of producing -- or, rather, providing completion of a fibre line all the way up into Tuktoyaktuk, and stemming from those conversations we were -- again, this is part of the -- part of the bigger conversation that's happening with them about how we can maximize the services in the telecommunications space in the Northwest Territories. So, Mr. Speaker, the conversations continue, and I'm more than happy to keep the Member up to date. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 375-20(1):

UPDATES TO DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING
MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, the NWT has no access to -- does not have access to a medical communication system that's vital for diagnostic imaging which requires health care professionals to put scans on disks

and then send it down with patients on appointments on medical travel. Can the Minister speak to what her plan is to resolve this so we can bring our health care system into the modern era. Thank you?

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are currently seeking -- we are working on the procurement process for the new electronic medical records. As I've said in this House many times, our EMR is coming to an end. They will not be supported any longer. But what I will say is that -- you know, the things that the Member is raising, it is -- we are well aware of these issues and that's why the urgency on this RFP going out to ensure that the procurement process rolls out. And then depending on the system that they think that meets the needs will depend on how long that rollout takes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it took years to implement the current EMR system across the Northwest Territories. My concern is that this RFP won't go far enough to correct the issues that nurses and doctors are experiencing. So can the Minister reassure our health care workers that this RFP will address these concerns throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, and I appreciate the Member's bringing this up. And as far back as I think it was 17 years ago is we started rolling out EMR and then up until last year was the final community that received the rollout, and now the program is not able to be supported. So I agree with the Member that this -- the process, and I know the technology has changed. I know that our access to internet throughout the territories is much better than it was 17 years ago, so as I have more details as the procurement process and the rollout of that, I will provide -- you know, I'll offer a briefing to the Members if that's what they choose. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, nurses and doctors have to deal with as many as three systems, not just one. Only -- I think only one of them is electronic. The other two are paper systems. So what is the Minister's -- will these changes phase out paper? Let's just leave it limited on Stanton where a lot -- a great deal of these issues are creating bottlenecks. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to delve

down into which programs. Yes, there are multiple systems and that is the problem, is that none of them inter -- none of them talk to each other. And so when physicians and any practitioner has to access blood work or the appointments or the charting tool, yes, they have to log into multiple different levels. They're -- you know, they have to have -- they can't get other staff to support them because of access to information and all of these different barriers, and those are all of the things that we're looking at. And there's been many -- I think it says we've engaged over 400 individuals in the requirements that we're gathering to do this RFP, to be able to do the thing that the members and the staff -- that they need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Member's willingness to share information with this side of the House, and I'll take her up on that at the appropriate time when it's available.

Mr. Speaker, the diagnostic imaging partner site is in Calgary. So we send our requests to Calgary, they send it up to us, we put it on a disk, it goes back to Edmonton. Can the Minister look to find a new partner in Edmonton so we're -- because the systems in Calgary and Edmonton don't talk to each other either. So we have multiple systems in multiple jurisdictions that aren't talking to each other. So can the Minister explore this, try to find a partner closer to where our patients go in Edmonton, so we can stop this triangle of sadness? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can commit to looking into what the process is and why we're using Calgary and not in Edmonton and all our patients are going to Edmonton. Yes, I'll commit to looking into that process. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 376-20(1):
ONLINE PHYSICIAN BOOKING SERVICE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. People are still calling the phone numbers provided and reaching grave disappointment. They're also even going down to the medical centre to book appointments, but they're told well, call -- call back.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister, really, is focusing around accessibility to doctors. What is stopping the department from creating an online doctor booking appointment platform that all Northerners can access in a timely way? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for that question because that's the same question that I'd asked the department as to why could we do things during COVID and we can't do them now, and it's privacy, and there were exceptions made during the public health emergency that allowed for certain things that wouldn't meet the standards of our privacy. And so we are looking into those options right now as to what tool could be used. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, you can book at least one clinic here in Yellowknife. I looked up in Vancouver -- I said, Vancouver online booking medical appointments, and all of a sudden my Google was flooded with options, Mr. Speaker. So maybe the Minister can explain to the House, but not just to the House, to Northerners, what is the obstruction specifically that's stopping the government from making the system more user friendly for the end user which are the citizens, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as part of this, the whole review of the EMR and accessing services and being able to book appointments, I think all of those are -- we're trying to tie those in all together through this review. And I understand that there might be pieces that we will be able to do sooner than later. You know, the patient portals that people have requested, you know, that's something that we want to be able to use and, you know, so I think that's one of the biggest parts of our whole system, is that it's very piecemealed together, and I acknowledge that, and that's the work that the department is doing right now. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I think people would have a difficult time understanding why this is okay in the context of privacy and security during COVID when we couldn't bridge to non-COVID times. So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister endeavour to see if we could change that -- whatever the obstructing policy is, and I'd like to hear what it is, why it was okay during COVID but not okay today. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I will do is I will get the information so that I'm not saying the wrong thing on the floor and get back to the Members with an answer to that question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Upon that perfect answer I'm anticipating, is the Minister prepared to bring forward some type of initiative to address this problem? Because Northerners are tired of calling phone numbers and no one answers, and then when it does leave a message, no one phones them back, and they have to drive there to get appointments. Can you imagine how difficult it is for someone in the communities? So is the Minister willing to bring a timely initiative once we get an answer on this perplexing question why we can't do things when we really should be able to. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member. I just recently had an update that there is some work around that's going on with the phone system. As I mentioned in this House many times, is the phone system that's in Stanton doesn't allow for what people would normally get to call and be put in queue for the next, it rings, and then you have to wait for someone to answer and then leave a message if it's -- someone's on the phone. There is no other option. So what they're working on right now is a workaround and as soon as I have more details, that workaround is going to work in our phone system, I will advise the Members. This is something that is computer technology, again, that's going on in our system and so, like I said, I'll let the Members know as soon as I have the details.

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

QUESTION 377-20(1):
ENGAGEMENT REGARDING FORMULA
FUNDING CHALLENGES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain how Municipal and Community Affairs is engaging community governments and Indigenous governments about shared responsibilities and what input they have had on the formula change? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Members are aware, the formula funding that has been reviewed previously, and a few times, has been out there for a while. Since September -- August/September to now, MACA's been out engaging with communities through regional superintendents, also reaching out to communities to engage with them in regards to the new formula funding. So we made every effort. We're continuing to make effort to reach out to the communities to speak about the formula funding. In fact, just previously, on Monday, I met with -- myself and the Department of MACA, we met with SAOs and community leadership throughout the territories through virtual. So the department is reaching out to all the communities, and it's been ongoing for a while. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, yes, thank you for the information. Mr. Speaker, I have an issue with this formula. I would like to know what studies were done to show the formula is adequately meeting the needs of small communities? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point behind this funding is not to run a community fully 100 percent. It is to operate the community's essential services, so your water and sewer, your public works department, you know, and to make sure that the funding is there for those key services. Every community has a right to operate their community the way they want. They can charge fees. They can charge, you know, service fees or recreation fees, that kind of thing. So the whole formula based on their operations is how MACA distributes the funds that we have -- currently have for the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, well it would be nice if they can show us the formula. Can the Minister explain how the department knows or determines what amount of funding is adequate? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm more than happy to -- and actually, I think we're sitting with the committee here soon to explain all this. But it is a pretty detailed formula based on the community's assets. So for an example, if we're calculating the O and M, we're taking the infrastructure, taking the safety and recreation of the community, the administration and the services, and we're calculating it all together to make the formula up. So there is a few steps to

it; it's not just one simple step. And that's all based on what the community's needs are to provide those key services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, this is not good. Well, this is not good for small communities, especially, for example, Wekweeti. It's not really comparable to Yellowknife. Wekweeti relies more on funding because of the high cost of living. It's not just Wekweeti; it's other communities. Even the Sahtu region, we've been getting e-mails about the high cost of living and yet it appears they will be getting less. So can the Minister explain whether there is a different funding formula being used to take into account community size, or is this offset somehow? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the formula -- the funding provided for the formula we all know has been not enough for communities, and it's been an ongoing issue and it will continue to be an issue if it's not a priority. So right now what we're doing is we're taking the hundred -- roughly \$110 million, we're dividing it, and our goal is to equitably divide it amongst the communities for their assets and their actual needs. And it's not ideal obviously. It would be nice to have 100 percent funding for all the communities, but the reality is we have to find a way that distributes this funding equitably and fairly across the territories to all 33 communities. The problem is in previous formulas, we've had some communities that have been overfunded, some over 100 percent, so essentially providing a lot of money to a community that doesn't necessarily need it. I mean, they all need it, but when you have a larger community or another community that can't operate because they're underfunded, there's a problem. And at some point, this has to be fixed in order for new funds to come in instead of throwing money at a problem. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 378-20(1):
HOUSING WAITLIST

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement last week, the Minister of housing stated that the waitlist across the Northwest Territories is 897 applications. I was just wondering how much authority does the board level -- the board at the local housing authority have, and my question

is what is being done to clear the waitlist of nearly 900 applications for public housing programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Mackenzie Delta. Minister for Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the needs for housing in the Northwest Territories is difficult and that 897 families on the waitlist is an almost insurmountable task for the Northwest Territories and for this government. And the Legislative Assembly has made housing its number one priority. Housing NWT is up to the task along with this government, but that requires both federal funding, territorial funding, working with partners like our Indigenous governments, working with NGOs. So, again, it's not insurmountable but we have to make headway. We have been making some headway over the last couple of years, especially with the 19th Assembly, and we continue to do the work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my riding, especially in that community, you see a lot of people that are approaching me and asking me like what is the government doing. Where are all these -- where's the money to allocate housing. How many of those 897 applications include residents in the Mackenzie Delta communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I wouldn't have that exact data at this moment, but I can commit to the Member to provide that to him for Mackenzie Delta riding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for that response; I await the numbers. What is being done to get more public housing units available and accessible on the ground in the communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last number of years, Housing NWT has provided reports, done community housing plans with communities, has provided assessment reports with various contractors, has held NWT Housing forums, has met with Indigenous governments, signed collaborative agreements with Indigenous governments to work together. There's much work being done but the funding is limited again. So this is both a federal issue, a territorial issue, and something that we have to work together in partnership to get things done. But the work continues. Housing NWT has come up with a three-year notional plan that is willing to

present to committee. And this would outline some of the ideas that Housing NWT has over the next number of years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How is Housing NWT addressing the issue of suitability of housing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to quickly look for the waiting list numbers for the Member while he was asking the question.

In terms of suitability for housing, again, this is work that's being done with Housing NWT. Suitability of housing requires many of our units to be modernized and improved. And this is something that I mentioned in the capital plan update last week, the ministerial statement that there's 364 units that were in the plan to be modernized and improved over the next couple of years. So this is an indication that Housing NWT is working, is planning, is looking at data. We also have a territorial housing needs assessment that's being worked on at this moment, that's something, again, that this House will have the information available. So work is being done. It's just information takes a bit of time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 379-20(1):
RCMP OVERSIGHT AND SERVICES

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Justice be willing to explore a formalized relationship with an external oversight agency of the NWT's RCMP, an arrangement such as the one between the Yukon and the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the department has looked at this previously. It was a few years ago, maybe around 2015 I believe. So currently there is an oversight body in the territory, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission. They review investigations into RCMP conduct. As the Member stated earlier, though, those investigations are conducted by other police bodies, whether it's the RCMP or perhaps a municipal police force. The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team is something different. It's not headed by a police force.

It's -- there's a civilian essentially at the head of that, and they work with police forces as well as independent investigators to actually look into the RCMP. And this is only for very serious incidents, not every complaint that might be brought forward.

So we have looked into this previously. The cost is quite a bit. There would be -- from the last discussions we had, the requirement was to have a couple investigators on staff and then as well as a travel budget for them to travel around. So we're looking at hundreds of thousands of dollars for the, you know, zero or one or two cases a year, or three or four or five cases even a year that they might deal with, but the caseload and the cost they don't really align.

What we are doing is making investments in body-worn cameras, and those are beginning to roll out this month starting, I believe, here in Yellowknife and rolling out across the NWT over the next -- over the coming year. And so hopefully that will provide some comfort to individuals as well who want to ensure that the RCMP are held accountable. And of course that's what we all want. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister has assured me that increasing safety of Indigenous women and girls is a priority for him and the commanding officer of G-division. Can the Minister speak to how all parties are moving forward with fulsomely addressing the concerns of the Yellowknife Women's Society report in a meaningful fashion? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that is a priority. In fact, as Minister of Justice I establish the RCMP policing priorities. We go out for input from Indigenous governments and other stakeholders and from that we craft a limited number of policing priorities. One of those is to provide policing services that are responsive to the needs of Indigenous women, girls, families, and children experiencing family intimate partner violence and sexualized violence in the NWT. And there's only four priorities, and so that is one of the four priorities. So it is a priority for myself, and we've made it a priority for the RCMP as well.

The RCMP have been active participants in meetings to address housing and homelessness which have been occurring more frequently here in Yellowknife. They've offered to work with the service providers to improve their working relationship and better understand the needs of the clients. And that's in line with what we are doing as a government, trying to integrate our services and work more

closely and more respectfully with the NGOs as well. And the RCMP, they did have a follow-up meeting with the Yellowknife Women's Society. And so the work is ongoing and will continue to be ongoing. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm specifically interested in the women's society's recommendation that asks for resourcing for Street Outreach here in Yellowknife to be a 24/7 team alleviating pressures on the RCMP. Can the Minister commit for his department to seek funding pots for services across the GNWT, departments across the GNWT that might address this crucial need? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And there's no doubt that the Street Outreach program has been successful. I've spoken with the RCMP about it, and there's definitely a noticeable decrease in the types of calls that they have to respond to because of that team, and so I'm very supportive of that. Right now, the program is undergoing a review by the city of Yellowknife and so once we see the outcomes of that review, we'll have a better idea of what we actually need to do, what type of support they might need from the GNWT, and we can look at what types of funding that could be accessed at that point. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. He'll be happy to know that review is out, and I look forward to hearing more from him.

There are a suite of recommendations in the women's society report that discuss comprehensive review of policing in the NWT. In particular, there's a request for consideration of establishing a Northwest Territories police council with Indigenous co-governance. Can the Minister say as to whether or not he's discussing this recommendation with the Council of Leaders? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Member's correct, the review is out. We are reviewing the review, so that's the work that's happening now.

The Council of Leaders, this is not a topic that has been raised at the Council of Leaders. The agenda there are decided upon by consensus or as close as we can get to consensus, and this has not come up yet. But the new commanding officer is scheduled to meet with the NWT Council of Leaders at the next meeting, so I look forward to seeing what comes of that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 380-20(1):
MEDICAL TRAVEL COORDINATOR
POSITION AND NON-MEDICAL ESCORT
SUPPORT

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very impressed to hear the statement made by the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs on the health care systems sustainability unit, the creation of that unit, which leads me to my first question to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

After a review of federal-funded positions hired in the Sahtu, is a medical travel coordinator position feasible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Sahtu. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of our programs that are federally funded are -- you know, they're allocated as to certain area that is are, you know, priorities of the federal government. And so we have to try and fit the needs of the Northwest Territories into that. However, you know, with the medical travel, you know, what I can do is I can commit to ensuring that we review as part of our process under reviewing medical travel where our staff are located, and where are they located it best meets the needs of the territory and the residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank to the Minister for that commitment there. I look forward to the results of that commitment on the review. Currently, as mentioned in my statement, we have 24 vacant funded vacancies.

My next question there, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister support medical escort assistant to that position as well? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to talk more with the Member as to what role that would be, and the way I'm interpreting it is it would be somebody that we would hire on to travel with people as escorts. But there are many family members that -- and people, residents, that would want their family too. So I guess we would have to review to see if that's what the Member is asking for, but I can commit to having further discussions to understand what that would mean. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement, and earlier as well, there's 24 funded vacancies. Will the Minister

work with the other departments to see if those positions within the respective department will be filled? If not, is there a possibility of transferring that PY funds in the creation of a Sahtu regional medical travel coordinator? Mahsi.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the vacant positions within other departments, you know, health and social services is an enormous department, it is the largest department, and if I -- if I start eating up all of their vacant positions that they may be trying to recruit for or having trouble recruit for, I don't think my colleagues would be too happy with me. But what I can do is, like I mentioned to the Member, is I can commit to looking at what the needs are of the people of the Sahtu. I travelled with the Member. I heard a lot of different scenarios with -- along the lines of medical travel. So that is one thing that I will continue to highlight during our review to ensure that support is in place throughout the territory where it's needed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you to the Minister for looking at filling those two positions, possibly three. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, please use this oral questions to ask questions. Thank you.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 381-20(1):
HEALTHCARE SUSTAINABILITY UNIT AND
POTENTIAL SERVICE CUTS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier around the health care sustainability unit. So the first question is does the Premier view the mandate of the health care sustainability unit as primarily to cut services that are non-core, seen as perhaps unnecessary or too fancy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I don't see the primary mandate of the health care system sustainability unit to be cutting of services. The health care system sustainability unit is going to be tasked -- is tasked with establishing a core services inventory for the insured and non-insured

programs and services and quantifying their financial impact and their operational needs.

It's going to identify inefficiencies, duplications of resources, and unnecessary processes in health care operations, and recommend changes to enhance the overall efficiency.

It's going to establish continuous improvement cycle -- establish a continuous improvement cycle that includes a monitoring and evaluation framework that demonstrates how progress is being made and how it -- how it's being made in a sustainable way and how it will be measured.

It will evaluate the current programs to identify sustainable service levels, and it will work with the department and health authorities to enhance service delivery and develop cost effective health care solutions.

So this unit is -- has been created so we can actually get a handle on the health care system, know what we're doing, know how much it costs, and then figure out how to do it better and more efficient so that we can achieve this Assembly's priority of ensuring basic -- access to basic health care for all residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so there has been a lot of emphasis in the Premier's statements about the unit being focused on figuring out which health programs and services are core. So maybe the Premier could enlighten us as to some examples of services that the Premier would consider to be non-core. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that's the work that this unit is going to do. I'll say the majority of what the health authorities do, the programs and services they deliver, they're necessary. They're not optional. You know, we're not going to send people who need dialysis all down south to the provinces to get their treatment. The types of services that residents need in the territory and that we can reasonably expect to deliver in the territory, we want to continue doing that. But the fact is that there's programming across the department -- or across the authorities that it could be duplicative, it could be inefficient, it could be a remnant of an old federal program that we no longer have the money for and doesn't align with our priorities. So we want to ensure that we get a good view of what's actually happening and making sure that it's efficient and making sure that we're monitoring that it's efficient. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So can the Premier clarify whether the work of the health care sustainability unit will include

workforce planning. So that could include how many clinicians and which kinds of clinicians we'll need to deliver integrated care to all NWT residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So looking at the inventory of programs and services and how those programs and services are operating and what their operational needs are is part of that work, and the number of staff, number of physicians, clinicians you need to do your work falls squarely in that, so that is part of the work. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So finally, can the Premier commit to making the work of the unit public, including ongoing progress reports that we can expect here in -- to be given to Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So without knowing exactly what the unit is going to encounter in their investigations because they're investigating -- they're looking into all of the data that's been collected over the years, all of the reports that have been published, they're hearing from frontline staff, from others within the department and the authorities. I can't say that we'll make everything public but I can definitely commit to providing regular updates to the Members and to the public through this House and other forums over the course of this initiative so that people can see what's happening and hold us accountable if what we're doing is not working. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

QUESTION 382-20(1):
APPROVAL OF NON-MEDICAL ESCORTS
AND REVIEW OF MEDICAL TRAVEL
POLICY

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of health. Who is the authority making the decisions on medical escorts being approved? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: So, Member, are you asking for the health and social services --

MRS. YAKELEYA: -- yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, thank you. Sorry, I thought I heard housing, my fault. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, non-medical escorts are

recommended by the health practitioner and may be approved by the medical travel officer if their request for medical escorts meets the criteria in the respective policy. And so the Northwest Territories -- the Government of the Northwest Territories, we have a policy that lays out what a non-medical escort for when people are travelling for insured services and then there's also -- like, I mean, this is where we can get complicated and then if it was -- it doesn't meet the GNWT, there is an option to -- if they're Indigenous, we could put a request through NIHB but then that would go to NIHB, and we would have to wait for an approval from them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How many non-medical escort requests have been denied for elders requiring assistance in the last year?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I look at what non-medical escorts that have been denied, I don't have that data. I can find out if the department tracks that data as to breaking it down to who was denied or what the reason was denied or -- and when I look at -- when they say denied, it's they don't meet the criteria. So within the medical travel policy, some people may not meet the criteria, or the person who's recommending the non-medical escort may not put in detail and are aware of the policy so that they need to ensure that they document what those reasons are so that the medical travel staff can do the proper approval. But what I will do is I will commit to the Member on this information if we do have that information available. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, before I go back to the Deh Cho, Member from Deh Cho, I'd like to recognize representatives from the Office of the Auditor General in the Assembly today, Andrew Hayes, Sean MacLennan, and Emilie Anne Duval. So welcome to our Assembly. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to review the policy to ensure it is being followed properly? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, yes, the plan is for the review of the medical travel policy and some of these areas that the Members have raised are a part of the review of the policy. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: I don't have any more questions, sorry. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 383-20(1):
SELF-DETERMINATION OF INDIGENOUS
GOVERNMENTS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is consensus in the Northwest Territories for Indigenous governments to govern themselves. And in the selection of the Premier this year, we talked about making it happen within the next 50 years. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier update the Assembly on the progress made this year towards improving self-determination as we approach the end of this first year of this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, that's a big question, what's been, what progress has been made towards self-determination. It's not an easy path, as everyone is well aware, but this government, we've released a mandate that makes very clear that we intend to work with Indigenous governments as partners, not as, you know, vassals of the state. So we've done our best to implement that work. The Council of Leaders meetings have been, I think, more successful every time that we've met. We recently travelled to Ottawa with a number of Indigenous leaders to lobby on shared priorities. And I think that when you do that, you're empowering, from the GNWT's perspective, we are working with the Indigenous governments that so their voice is also heard. They're helping determine the resources that are coming to the territory by going to Ottawa together with them. And just in case I misspoke, we didn't bring Indigenous governments to Ottawa. We went together as the Council of Leaders. So that's one area.

Earlier today, we heard about the project finance for permanence that the government and a number of Indigenous governments have been working on together, and that's a way to advance self-determination. We are working together with Indigenous governments on implementing or creating an action plan to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, so that work is ongoing. So those are a few examples of the work that's happening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Premier. The 1992 Bourque report made it clear that the work towards self-determination and decentralization couldn't be accomplished without constitutional reform. The Bourque report lays out much of the groundwork needed towards more equitable future for Indigenous governing. My question to

the Premier is does is the Premier agree on the relevancy of the recommendation of the Bourque report provides, and does he support revisiting the updating -- revisiting and updating the report's recommendation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I've been furiously trying to find the Bourque report online. It's not that easy to find so I don't have it at my fingertips right now. But from what I've heard in the territory, the path forward is settling land claims. That's what I'm hearing from the Indigenous governments. I am interested in looking at the report. Whenever I hear about constitutional reform, I think that that would take all of our efforts and all of our focus would be on that and we wouldn't be achieving other things that might be more close -- closer in reach for us. So I'll leave it at that, and I'll have a look at the report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Premier. During the previous Assembly, a special committee on reconciliation and Indigenous affairs was struck to study the implementation of UNDRIP.

My question to the Premier, will the Premier commit to striking a similar committee or a comparable working group that can work alongside the Council of Leaders to maximize Indigenous and self-government in the Northwest Territories and to ensure the working group establishes proper consultation and engagement on the subject? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act does require the Government of the Northwest Territories to work with Indigenous governments, and there is a working group actually struck right now that is working on developing that action plan. So that work with Indigenous governments is happening. I'm not sure if the Member's speaking of a group of MLAs, but we're definitely working with the Indigenous governments. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Premier, for your response. Can the Premier commit to providing more transparency around the process of obtaining greater self-government and decentralization of services and provide regular timelines and updates on the work towards these goals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I need a little more specificity in that request. That's a lot of reporting. We will have reporting

through the UNDRIP Implementation Act plan. You know, we have a Member from Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight attending the Council of Leaders meetings. We do share negotiation updates with the Members. But if there's something that we can do, if the Member has something specific in mind, I'm happy to work with him and see what else we can make public. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 384-20(1):
TARGETED AMENDMENTS TO WATERS
REGULATIONS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to follow up a little bit further on the questions I asked earlier. I was wondering if the Minister of ECC would commit to a year for getting this process done, so having target the amendments to the waters regs by the October session of 2025. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. This is a collaborative exercise that we work very closely with the ICGS in how we move this forward. So the department, although we may have the wish to be as timely as possible, we need to consider all of the other participants in the process and ensure that we're communicating and we're collaborating to achieve the best results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Minister doesn't want to preclude anything that happens at the IGC, but I just want to note that, you know, this is something that we've been -- that I've been raising since right at the beginning after we got elected, and we're already a year in. If we commit to 2025, we'll be two years in for a process that was supposed to be targeted and quick. So that's why I'm trying to push the Minister to commit to something. Could the Minister commit to working with the parties to set a date and come back to Members with a timeline that they think is realistic? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I will certainly reach out to the department and ensure that we are having the appropriate conversations with our partners to determine the best path forward, and hopefully that will result in a timeline that I

can return to the Member in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 385-20(1):
FORT SMITH CORRECTIONAL CENTRE
LAYOFF NOTICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was getting phone calls, text messages, yesterday from people in the South Slave, more particularly in -- both in Hay River and Fort Smith, regarding the layoff notice the given to the Fort Smith correctional centre staff. And if I remember correctly, 32 employees work there. The finance Minister did say during Committee of the Whole back in June that they were pausing it with an uncostered plan, unplanned, but they were going to propose something, Mr. Speaker. I e-mailed the Premier last night for an update. I am going to ask the finance Minister, could she explain the initiative -- or sorry, the steps they're taking with respect to these layoff notices to these 32 people in Fort Smith. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can say at this point staff are not being given layoff notices, but we are trying to take a much more proactive approach here. As such, there was an informal initial meeting held in October 25th with some senior members from the Department of Justice, Department of Finance, human resources, in order to start to communicate to staff so that when the time, it does come, that the funding here is for one year, and so if the time is coming up, rather than waiting until formal notices are provided that staff actually have information in advance, they could have choices, they could ask questions in advance, and that way when the clock does start to tick on getting a formal notice, people have the opportunity to make choices well in advance and with lots of time ahead of them. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, my question really isn't being answered in the sense of was this just a friendly conversation that we don't know what we're doing, or what type of notice was specifically given to these 32 employees? What I'm hearing are concern that they were giving specific job action notice. In other words, your job's ending and here's your notice. Maybe the Minister could be very clear on the record to say -- to explain what exactly was told to the employees with respect to their employment. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't present at the meeting so I'm not going to try to quote anyone that was present. Mr. Speaker, whenever there is a situation where individuals or staff are facing a change in their status, we have what are called the staff retention policy guidelines. We have staff retention policy, and we always make every effort to ensure that any employee who is facing a change in their status of employment has that full benefit.

What happens is that under the staff retention policy, a staff member would get a 21-week notice period. That clock starts to run when someone gets their notice. They were not given their notice. Rather -- rather than waiting until someone gets their notice, senior members went and met with individuals ahead of the time when that notice would have to be given so that when they get their notice, they are actually able to make choices about what types of route they may want to take in order to enact under the staff retention policy.

Some individuals are eligible for retirement. Some individuals may be interested in a transfer. But, again, waiting until that clock starts to tick when you get your notice is not the way we're going here. We want to empower our staff and make sure they have all their options available to them. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, so in other words, is the government planning to lay these employees off noting that the official paperwork of layoff notices isn't given but this 21-week articulation of be aware of, well just be aware, and we don't know yet. So I need to understand, was it just a shout out over their bow to say we're not laying you off today but we don't have a plan, which means there may not be a job for you? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Finance Minister has answered the question twice now. So the Member can check Hansard once this is over. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I think I'm having a difficult time, and I'm sure this will be a personal joke back or a shot or whatever, but I'm having a difficult time understanding this little dance between what a real layoff notice is. Can you imagine the employees, the 32 employees there, hearing this message. 21 weeks is 150 -- or sorry, 40 -- 147 days. It's 153 days. In other words, six days difference between the end of March 31st. So those who follow the math quickly, is it's almost 21 weeks

until the end of the budget year. Mr. Speaker, my question specifically to the Minister is can she make it absolutely crystal clear what the plan is in that facility. Because we left here in June that they would find a plan and support for those employees. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of just receiving a notice in the mail, staff went there to personally speak with employees, to let them know what the options are going forward, because there is no more funding for that facility at the end of this fiscal year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions.

Recognizing the time, we've been here for a while, we're going to take a break so the -- our translators can rest, take a break as well. Thank you.

Returns to oral questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 205-20(1):
OPERATING PLANS FOR NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES EDUCATION BODIES FOR
THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR ENDING
JUNE 30, 2025

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Operating Plans for Northwest Territories Education Bodies for the 2024-2025 School Year Ending June 30th, 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

TABLED DOCUMENT 206-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LIQUOR AND
CANNABIS COMMISSION 70TH ANNUAL
REPORT 2023-2024

TABLED DOCUMENT 207-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LIQUOR
LICENSING BOARD 70TH ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: The 70th Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Liquor and Cannabis Commission 2023-2024, and the 70th Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Liquor Licensing Board Enforcement 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 208-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 9-1-1 SERVICE
2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: The Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Service Annual Report 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 209-20(1):
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF
CANADA TO THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY –
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL
RENEWAL PROJECT

Colleagues, I wish to table the Report of the Auditor General of Canada of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly on the Stanton Territorial Hospital Renewal Project.

Tabling of documents. Colleagues, now we'll take a break. Thank you very much.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 43-20(1):
REAPPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, October 31st, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that the Legislative Assembly recommends the reappointment of Ms. Nicole MacNeil of Yellowknife as executive director of the Human Rights Commission during good behaviour for a term of four years as recommended by the board of management;

And furthermore, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of the appointment to the Commissioner.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Notices of motion. Member from Range Lake.

MOTION 44-20(1):
PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, October 31st, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit of all aspects of the management of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority in its delivery of health care services, including medical travel and the recruitment and retention of nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals, and to prioritize this investigation;

And furthermore, that the Speaker formally transmit this motion and the contents of our proceedings in relation to this motion to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada for their consideration.

And Mr. Speaker -- that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Motions

MOTION 43-20(1):
REAPPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION,
CARRIED

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to consider the motion for which notice was given earlier today. Are there any nays? Seeing no nays, Member from Yellowknife Centre, you may proceed.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS Section 23(1) of the Human Rights Act provides that the Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly, shall appoint an executive director of the

Human Rights Commission to carry out the responsibilities set out in the Human Rights Act;

AND WHEREAS the board of management is tasked with recommending an individual to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly is prepared to make a recommendation to the Commissioner;

AND WHEREAS the term of the current executive director of the Human Rights Commission is set to expire.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that the Legislative Assembly recommends the reappointment of Ms. Nicole MacNeil of Yellowknife as executive director of the Human Rights Commission during good behaviour for a term of four years as recommended by the board of management;

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 15:
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-
LED CONSERVATION FUND
ESTABLISHMENT ACT

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, October 31st, 2024 I will present Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-led Conservation Fund Establishment Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 12:
BUSINESS DAY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present to the House Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 12 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading. Minister of Justice.

All right, right on. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. We'll go back to Mr. Premier.

BILL 11:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE MOTOR VEHICLES
ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 11 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 193-20(1) with Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

Before we do that, colleagues, by the authority given to me by the 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.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 193-to(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, Legislative Assembly, health and social services, and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We'll proceed. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 193-20(1). Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Legislative Assembly, October 29th, 2024.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Legislative Assembly. Does the Speaker wish to bring in witness into the chamber?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, I do.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Thank you. Would the Speaker please introduce the witnesses.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my right is Kim Wickens, deputy clerk. On my left is Glen Rutland, clerk.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Agreed. Thank you. Committee, the Legislative Assembly begins on page 16. We will defer the totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 17, with the Office of the Clerk, with information items on page 18. Are there any questions? Seeing none.

Legislative Assembly, Office of the Clerk, infrastructure investment, \$500,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Members. Please return now to Legislative Assembly summary found on page 16.

Legislative Assembly, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$500,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree that the consideration of the Legislative Assembly is now complete? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. And thank you, Mr. Speaker. And 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 Health and Social Services. Does the Minister of Health and Social Services wish to bring witnesses into the chamber? Over to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Joining me today from the Department of Health and Social Services are Chris Clarke McQueen, director of infrastructure planning. And Perry Heath, assistant deputy minister for corporate service and cultural safety.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to detail contained in the tabled documents?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, the Department of Health and Social Services begins on page 38. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with administrative and support services on page 39, information items on page 40. Are there any questions? Seeing none.

Health and social services, administrative and support services, infrastructure investment, \$500,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to health and social services, programs, beginning on page 41 with information items on page 42. Are there any questions? Seeing none.

Health and social services, health and social programs, infrastructure investment, \$33,947,000. Does the committee agree?

Okay, I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I wanted to ask some questions about the wellness and recovery centre plan. So I know that the design work has already been completed, and the project is close to breaking ground. But my hope would be that there could be some opportunities to tweak the design to ensure that it provides services more in line with what we need now in terms of the populations it is intended to serve and the needs that they have. So I want to ask a few questions related to the operational aspects of the building that might have an impact on the capital side, because I think it's best raised before it's too late on this project.

So the one thing I've heard over and over again is that we need a facility where people can stay for more than 12 hours at a time. And currently our system with having the different shelters, the day shelter, other shelter facilities in town, the sobering centre, is that people are constantly having to get up and shuffle from place to place and it doesn't provide somewhere with enough continuity where someone might actually be able to sit and take a breath and think about wellness and recovery and counselling and other opportunities to move forward with their lives.

So in terms of design of this new wellness and recovery centre, is the design adequate to provide somewhere where someone who does not have a home might be able to both stay there overnight and stay there during the day in order to provide that stability for them to make decisions to move forward with their life? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The wellness and recovery centre is -- the process has already been awarded. It's already been started. The plan for this facility, which is 100 percent funded through the feds, was in order to replace the emergency shelter that we currently have in the day -- the day program -- our day use centre that's connected together downtown Yellowknife. The history of that building, I'm sure the Member is very well aware of the problems that happened within -- and the struggles that happened within Yellowknife is that this continuously was being bumped around and moved around because of the access to space. So this is a dedicated space now for this home. And I fully understand where the Member is coming from, that, you know, more robust services. But this facility in its whole is to provide overnight services and

day use services for those members that are currently accessing the services now.

What the Member -- you know, and I'm not going to put words into their mouth, but when you start to expand on those services, those are other services that, you know, may not be the best place to be attached to this facility but to be able to provide them with, you know, spaces elsewhere. So I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to confirm, can the Minister confirm that the answer is no, that there will not be opportunities in this new wellness and recovery centre for someone to both sleep there and stay there during the day to access wellness and recovery services, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, yes, the -- there is an overnight space for -- and there is currently an overnight space emergency shelter, and those users do use the day facility currently and so they would continue to use that space. How the program evolves, you know, once we're in that space and how we operate the program and, you know, once we're in the space, you know, may change and may be able to provide other supports, but at this time right now what we're -- where we are is we're just replacing what we currently have. And, yes, they do stay overnight and then they can, you know, be there during the day. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my understanding from the Minister's response to previous questions is that there would be a capacity of 85 people during the day and an overnight capacity of 31 designated sleeping spaces. Is there any potential within the current design to have more designated sleeping spaces, if there's a capacity of 85 people during the day, to allow more of those people to be able to sleep there if they need to? Because as we know, we are really struggling to find enough sleeping spaces for people in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, I believe that there are actually more sleeping spaces in the

new facility than we currently have and there is a capacity under, you know -- and I think built into it that can be expanded further. For more detail into that, I can turn it over to Mr. Heath if that's okay with you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, please proceed.

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As mentioned, there is 31 designated spaces that are flexible, but the facility also has the ability to -- in the common areas, like the community hall and some of the open spaces, that it provides surge capacity if necessary. The complications around that, though, is the staffing model will have to change accordingly. So you can't say we have a hard 99 or 85 people there because as you increase staff, then you would minimize the amount of people that are there. So there's -- we have to strike a balance around from an operational perspective, but we do have the ability to flex and use spaces for sleeping provided we have appropriate staff to monitor. 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 for that clarification. Another thing I wanted to flag was the fact that with the current design there is to be, like, a small empty parking lot next door sandwiched between the Tree of Peace and this new wellness and recovery centre. And so it's currently an empty parking lot. And it's unlikely that someone will, you know, take on that lot and choose to, you know, build something new in that particular location. So I'm wondering if the department has considered acquiring this lot and using it as, like, an outdoor space that could benefit people using the wellness and recovery centre and whether there's been any coordination or conversations with Tree of Peace in terms of a space that might be able to benefit both facilities and also help, you know, provide safety downtown in that if there is, you know, safe outdoor spaces for people to be and hang out that is connected to the wellness and recovery centre and the Tree of Peace that that could be sort of a really healthy addition to our downtown. Has that been considered in the design or development of this project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I may turn it over to Mr. Heath. Thank you.

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

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that parcel, we have considered it, and we actually reached out to the landowner and went as far as the preliminary environmental assessment on that site. We were engaged in discussions with the city of Yellowknife for around the proposed use for that site. Unfortunately, with the closing of the contract tender, we found ourselves in a situation where we may not have enough budget, available budget, in the project to acquire and develop that space in a manner that meets all the requirements of the city of Yellowknife. We are actively working at it and hoping as we move through the project and we understand the project contingencies and how it moves forward that there's still a possibility that we can form a partnership with the city of Yellowknife potentially and take advantage of that space. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you. That is actually great news to hear that this is being actively worked on and considered. I would urge the department to move forward with this -- you know, to continue to pursue this and, you know, if it's a matter of taking a little bit of extra money, considering bringing this forward in a future capital budget, I can't imagine that, you know, an outdoor space with some seating or something would break the bank in terms of our capital budget. So I would encourage the department to continue to pursue that. I'm running out of time so I'll leave it there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I was just reading some notes there. I just wanted to follow up on a particular area my colleague had just raised a moment ago under the wellness and recovery centre area. Oddly enough, I'm not going to speak specifically to the wellness recovery but sort of how we're going to deal with the broader picture, and she mentioned about sort of space and whatnot for people to stay, whether it's stay overnight or sleep during the day, and we have a perfectly good territorial treatment centre which is, you know, I hate to say it, two blocks over. And is there any consideration about how we're going to deal with the population, and could that provide a solution? The government's been heating that building for two years and, you know, it was a -- it was a place for young people to stay with challenges - let me not understate that, but we don't need to go

into the details of what type of challenges. But it, you know, has a large kitchen facility, support area. It even has classrooms that we can offer supportive programming for people in this kind of nature who might need supportive services. Because I'm not sure this build one centre to solve them all will work. The size is concerning with me, but I said I wasn't going to speak to it specifically. But I do view that it's going to attract a larger population than we're anticipating. So is there any way to see about sort of linking the two? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. At this time, that is not in the budget and in the capital plan. But I think where the project on the wellness and recovery centre, you know, is 100 percent funded and was based -- the proposal to the federal government was based on replacing and providing a fixed home for the services that are going into there. As for the other building, I can turn that over to ADM Mr. Heath if that's okay.

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

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, the department is working collaboratively with the NTHSSA and the Department of Infrastructure in finding a way to bring that facility back online for a program use that was similar to its original intent. We have a lot of work to do on that and there's some technical complications around that facility that we're working through, but we're planning for future use in the facility. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. And I thank both the Minister and the deputy minister for that. Is it -- or assistant deputy minister, although the last time I kept calling someone a higher title, they got the job so maybe it's good luck.

So more specifically, Mr. Chairman, can the assistant deputy minister or the Minister enlighten me as to two parts: The first part being the specific date on when the wellness recovery centre will open but, furthermore, what purpose are they working towards initiating a revised service at the TTC. In other words, is it compatible, does it work together, does it work in tandem, what's their objective now that it's been raised that this is something they're working on? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if I -- the first part of the question is the occupancy date for the wellness and recovery centre would be late 2026. If -- and then for the TTC building, as the Member has referred to, I will put -- bring that over to -- pass that over to the ADM to respond to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Sorry. I thought the ADM was going to answer.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Oh, sorry. My apologies.

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned in my previous comment, it is a program that was similar to there before I tied to the use. There are some technical complications with that building I won't get into. It's not necessarily in this budget. But we're really working hard to keep the program in line with the original scope which was linked to use. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll tell you what, I won't belabour this point on the TTC, but I would like maybe just one clarification which is when can we anticipate some type of idea or plan, proposal, of this particular initiative and that probably would be enough specific to the TTC. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Give that to the ADM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately we don't have concrete timelines right now. We're working as diligently as we can. There's been tons of interest in this building from other NGOs and sectors around this and we've recently, you know, trying really hard to move as fast as we can, but right now I can't commit to the timelines unfortunately. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would appreciate any committee update you can provide on that. And I can appreciate that

these are just plans, not initiated yet but probably sort of bigger picture scoping of the issue at this particular time, and that's fine. Is there any way they could provide a monthly cost as to what the current day shelter costs the government in its current form, in its current location, where the old visitors centre is.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. I would have to get back to the Member for that.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, I'll accept that. If the Minister could also elaborate in a manner of, say, staffing capacity, things along that, contractual obligations, whether it's janitorial, whether it's support services, so I'm just looking at an overall cost of, yes, it costs X dollars, but this is what it takes to run it. If we could get sort of that compendium of information, I'll just leave it as a block rather than trying to tie up three or four more minutes of trying to make sure I hit every I and cross every T. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, thank you. At this time, you know, the plan is to take the money from there where it currently is, which is the operations budget, in the operations budget and then we can move that to the new. But I can commit to making sure we have the numbers as best as we can to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions from the Members? Okay. Seeing none, continuing on.

I'm going to continue with health and social services, health and social services programs, infrastructure investments, \$33,947,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to the long-term and continuing care services, beginning on page 43 with information items on page 44. Are there any questions? I'll go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, first, kind of a preliminary question. What is our current total number of occupied long-term care beds in Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Fort Smith, and what is the current waitlist in each of those communities? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Current long-term care beds we have are 204. And then we have a number of residents residing in long-term care beds, 182. And people on the waitlist, 35 currently.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd asked about those three communities specifically, so if the Minister could just break out that information in Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Fort Smith, please.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. So long-term care beds in Hay River currently are 23. There's 23 beds used, and there are 6 people on the waitlist. Deh Cho, 17, and 17 people in the beds and 2 people on the waitlist. In Fort Smith, there's 26 long-term care beds, and 26 people occupying those beds, and nobody on the waitlist. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Okay, thank you. So by my calculations -- and I'm going to be speaking about a couple of different reports here. So we did a long-term care review in 2015 which kind of initiated the process of planning for these facilities, updated that review in 2020, which found that the 2015 review had overestimated what the demand is going to be. And so based on these new numbers, the first year that they projected demand for was 2024. And I would just note in Hay River, they estimated there was going to be 35, a demand of 35; in Fort Simpson, they estimated there was going to be a demand of 25; in Fort Smith, they estimated there was going to be a demand of 33. So in every case in those three communities, the 2020 review, which was an update of the 2015, still overestimated what the demand was going to be.

So considering that the projections have been shown in multiple cases of reanalysis, one of the reanalyses is by me but, I mean, I'm -- I'm comparing numbers to numbers here. In both of these cases, to have been -- the estimates have been -- shown to be too high. Does the department feel it would be advisable to reassess these numbers and approach prior to moving forward with construction of new facilities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we are currently working on the review of the bed projections. I think there was a commitment that this would be done every five years, and we are currently working on these -- this current, the bed projections. And those numbers are also going to help guide us with the projects that are on here that are in the planning stages, so I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in particular -- well, maybe I'll get into specifics on this one. So I note that there -- can the Minister give us an update as to where they're at with construction of the Hay River facility.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. I will pass that over to the director, Mr. Clarke McQueen.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): The director.

MR. CHRIS CLARKE MCQUEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Currently, we are in the design process, and we have committed to doing community engagement and have gone now twice to Hay River to do design workshop engagements to incorporate the various desires of the community. And we are anticipating -- so we are anticipating that we will have -- the RFP for design services that went out in 2023 should be completed by October -- or should be completed by September of 2025. And then after that, we will be going out for tender for the facility, then we will be going into construction documentation phase, doing the drawings for the building, and then in 2025 going out for tender for construction of the facility.

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

MR. MORSE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So in that process, is it going to be possible for reassessment of the planning for this facility in considering the assessment of the projections that the department is going to be undertaking? So I guess what I'm asking in plain words is are we ensuring that the facility is right size for the demand prior to moving forward with construction?

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, a lot of these projections, you know, when we look at what we have on the waitlist, we use a lot of the data within -- that we have in our system. We initiated intereye, which is a system that will help also. And for more further detail, I can pass it on to the ADM if that's okay with you.

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

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the good news with planning is -- in Hay River is we have a design that's modular in nature. So we were lucky enough to work with the town of Hay River to get a site that's large enough that if we need to add additional beds in the future, we can. But right now we have a plan which is shown in the plan to build 24. We have a design that's incorporating the ability to expand and move forward. The good news is with the bed projections from 2025, all of our new facilities and all the planning will incorporate that knowledge of the bed projections going forward. And our model for building facilities is modular in nature. We can add 12 beds here and an extra 12 beds somewhere else if necessary.

The other thing that's unique about or -- not necessarily unique but that's going on in Hay River is there's an existing facility, Woodland Manor, that's reaching the end of its useful life that at some point in the future we're going to have to make investment in. We're currently investing in critical pieces in that infrastructure to make sure it lasts -- we get the most useful life out of it so we can get the new facility on -- up and running and operating. And then in the future, we'll have the ability in the new site, which just happens to be across the street from the health centre, to add and build a long-term -- more long-term care beds if and when the bed projections materialize. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you. I appreciate that answer, and the modular construction certainly sounds like a good way to go ahead. So just to confirm, though, let's say the bed projections in 2025 come back and say demand is not going to be as high as what was originally projected, are you going to be able to scale construction down to reflect that so that we have right-sized facilities?

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that is part of the process of the planning and within Hay River, like the Member -- like the ADM said, is that we have the older facility. Those people will have to move into the new facility once it's decommissioned as it's at the end of its life. So all of that information will be taken into account.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Before I go to Frame Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, Members, when you speak and when you're finished, can you just say 'thank you' so that we could give -- it's a technical thing so we could move on. So I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that reminder. I guess, finally, I really appreciate the Minister kind of clarifying that the planning process for the two other facilities that are referenced there in Simpson and Smith will have the opportunity to kind of benefit from the 2025 update. So I appreciate that.

So the last question is in the 2015 long-term care program review, the recommendations that it made spoke to funding to private facilities for construction of more units. I know that's something I saw in the -- in this -- that was something that was done in Hay River in the past, but is there a reason the department decided to go in a different direction from funding these existing facilities to expand and just decided to start operating its own facilities? Because the expansion option seems like a good one for communities where demand is growing more slowly than expected. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. I will get the ADM to speak to stuff that happened in 2015. Thanks.

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

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In 2015, at the same time we were doing that work, we were also doing a -- we did what you call a market assessment of our interests in -- for operators to take care and run private facilities in the NWT. And the message was really clear, that our facilities weren't large enough, didn't have the scale to make it profitable for some large organizations from down south to come in and take care of facilities. It just didn't return value for money when they looked at it back in 2015. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any other Members that want to have

questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just following up on my colleague from Frame Lake's questions about the long-term care facilities.

Well, my first question is if we are expecting in 2025 to do an update on bed projections, why would we move forward with planning for, in particular, the long-term care facility being proposed in Fort Smith and Fort Simpson instead of waiting for the updated bed projections? Because the planning would proceed for a specific size of facility. It says the planning is for -- in Fort Smith, a 24-bed facility, and yet we see now that there's actually nobody on the waiting list. So why would we move forward this year and spend \$2 million on a planning study when we -- the evidence we have now says that's probably not the right size or the right direction to go, and we're already going to update the data next year anyway? Why would -- why would we move ahead and not, say, push it back a year until we've gotten those updated bed projections? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will turn that over to the ADM.

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

MR. PERRY HEATH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Infrastructure projects, as you can imagine, take a long time to plan from beginning to the day that we open the doors. One of the key components of the planning study in a long-term care facility is, indeed, the needs assessment. The first piece that we have to clarify about the facility is how many beds are we going to build. So the projections are part and parcel of the planning study. Once we decide, determine, how many beds we need, we go to the operational plan, the functional program. Basically, we say how big the facility is, where is it, where can we locate it to, how it will -- integrate it with all the services and the programs that are in the community. The bed projections are exactly that. They are projections. But they are for multiple years - 10 years, 20 years out. The whole intention of doing the planning study and the whole intent is to have the needs assessment as a part of that, have it incorporated, and part of the justification for the size and location and how the facility will be configured. 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. I guess where I'm getting caught up is that a needs assessment is one thing; a planning study for a specific 24-bed long-term care facility is a big step forward from an initial needs assessment. And so what I would rather see is a budget item come forward for this is -- we're going to do a needs assessment this year, and it's going to include that data that we plan to get next year, but when we're asked for the next capital year to allocate \$2 million to a planning study, that seems much bigger than a needs assessment, and it doesn't seem wise to package together the initial needs assessment with the planning study for the thing we've already decided we need. Is there any way to separate those two and budget this coming year for a needs assessment and not the planning study for the 24-bed facilities in Fort Simpson and Fort Smith? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you may see, the capital budget doesn't have amounts and so a lot of these things will -- you know, they're on here because we need to do the things that the Member is asking. Whether or not it allocates this amount or how far we go, but the planning study -- and to figure out how many bed facilities that is going to be required for that is going to cost an amount. So we need to be able to allocate dollars to be able to do that work. So, you know, it may not be what the Member -- or is saying, but there is an amount that will need to be able to -- so we could spend to do that work. We can't take it off if we don't -- like, we have to do the work. We have to do the planning study. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So given that currently we have nobody on the waiting list in Fort Smith and initially the estimated demand from the previous studies had been that there would be a demand of 33 people by now, it seems that that's pretty far off, and given that we're already moving forward more quickly with the long-term care facility in Hay River, where there's only six people on the waiting list and the plan is to build a 24-bed facility, is it feasible to think that perhaps people in Smith might be able to access a long-term care facility in Hay River if there was -- if we were sort of overbuilding and building extra beds in Hay River that we didn't see an immediate demand for? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear what the Member is saying but, you know, these are -- these are people's homes, this is their end of life, you know, this is where they're going to rest. We don't want to move them -- we want to keep them as close to home as we possibly can. As part of that plan, you know, when we -- the Member says that there's nobody on the waitlist, we currently have, you know, people and family members that are able to care for members and they may be on the projections because they're heavy -- heavy clients for home care and may require in the upcoming years. Age of our residents, you know, within the next 10 to 15 years, we know that builds in the -- like, this type of a process is not going to happen overnight. It's going to be over multiple years. These long-term care facilities have been discussed as far back as I think early into the 18th Assembly where the beds projections have changed significantly, and that's why we do the work that we're doing as to making sure that we're doing the proper planning for these facilities. And, you know, at the end of the day, whether it comes back that, you know, there isn't -- there is a change in these needs, then, you know, we'll reassess the project. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Nothing further at this time, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any other questions from Members? There's one I had is the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is a more general question just about long-term care in general but is -- are any of the long-term care facilities that are either planned or already built going to be able to provide a standard of care which would allow repatriation of out of territory long-term care patients? Because I know that's something that we spend -- I looked back through the mains and, you know, we are spending \$45 million a year on out of territory long-term care. And so by building these long-term care facilities, is there a possibility for -- what I'm really asking here is that is there any way that we're going to be achieving some cost savings? Because I know that the facilities will have their costs to operate, but are we actually building something that's going to allow us to bring people home? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the long-term care facilities, you know -- and I hear where the Member is coming from. We do spend a lot of specialized out of territory based-care for our residents in the Northwest Territories. The thing with that, it's not space in the territory. Like, we don't -- but it's the specialty that they require of care. And long-term care, the levels of care that we provide in our long-term care facilities, you know, depending on where -- you know, if you're in Inuvik, there's only a certain level of care that is able to be provided. In, you know -- and then we have different levels, like in the dementia centre here in Yellowknife, that's a different level of care. But the -- and a lot of the clients that are out of the territory require multiple different specialties that they require. And the staff that we -- you know, we're not saying we don't have the staff, but we don't have the staff capacity to be able to provide all of the needs to many of those clients. Saying that, you know, we will -- we continuously reassess what services and how many people that we could potentially bring back to the territory and what those might look like and what those numbers are, I couldn't answer that here today, because those clients, you know, it's -- although they've been away for a long time, their needs change and so we would have to reassess every client on a case by case to see whether or not our services in the territory could meet their needs. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, appreciate it. And so I just wanted to kind of just to wrap up my comments on the long-term care. I mean, there were some things that really stood out to me, and I dug into this one a fair bit, looked at the 2015 report, and I would just note that, you know, a few of the thing that were pointed out in the report is that if you increase the number of a service, like long-term care, it can ultimately increase the demand for the service, interestingly, and that you can induce demand. And a point that I think is really important to note too is that, you know, the Northwest Territories has people who require long-term care at a much higher rate than other places in Canada and in Canada in general. And that tells me that we are not providing regular health care or keeping people healthy, you know, outside of long-term care and before long-term care, at a level that we need to be in. So just noting that investing in long-term care is important, I don't deny that in any way, but I also want to note that we need to be focusing on providing basic

health care too, keeping people healthy, keeping people so that they don't end up in long-term care facilities should be our ultimate goal. So I think when I'm kind of looking at the system and looking at whether, you know, we're right sizing it, whether we're going to be spending money on that, I want to be clear that whatever savings that we can realize, I want us to be using that to keep people healthy, to provide basic health care, you know, similar to what is being talked about in our health care sustainability unit, making sure that we're, you know, right sizing our system, making sure that we are getting adequate service into the communities, adequate service in Yellowknife too. I know I've got lots of constituents who are having a hard time accessing basic primary care. I'm one of them. So we've got lots of work to do.

So I just wanted to get those comments on the record, that long-term care is important to me. I want us to be investing in it where we need to, but we've got to be careful to right size the service because it's expensive to provide, like everything else in health, and ultimately our goal should be keeping people out of long-term care so that they can live healthy lives well into their 80s and 90s and be walking around the community and not in a long-term care facility. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to continue on now. I'll go to the Minister, sorry.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I just -- you know, I want to thank the Member for raising that. And what I wanted to highlight is that the 2015 report did not really -- you know, and I think this is the work that has changed is that the focus has changed into providing preventative care to seniors, so more home support work, more home care, you know, and providing that after-hour care. And for the care that happens outside of the clinic hours, that it's not just Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 5, and that's based on those projections that were from the 2015, is that we did not have these services outside of regular hours. And so when the change in the model and how we support residents to stay at home and remain in their communities longer by increasing those supports, that is exactly what the government has changed and that's why the numbers kind of have decreased. So I just wanted to, like, make sure that that's why -- like, it's not comparing apples to apples with that report in the last projections that we did that changed so significantly. So just so that is the message out there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Minister. I'm going to continue on.

Health and social services, long-term and continuing care services, infrastructure investments, \$27,485,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Members. Please return now to the Department of Health and Social Services summary found on page 38.

Health and social services, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$61,932,000. 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 47-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES– 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 Health and Social Services 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 of the Department of Health and Social Services, 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 chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, Housing Northwest Territories. Does the Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories wish to bring witnesses into the chamber? Minister.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Does the 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 your witnesses.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, with me today, on my left is president of Housing NWT, Eleanor Young. And to my right is the vice-president of finance and infrastructure, Jim Martin. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, Housing Northwest Territories is included in the capital estimates as an information item, and the total is not voteable. We will continue to review these estimates as we have for the previous considered departments; however, we will not vote on the totals. If Members have comments or questions, they can be raised at the appropriate time.

The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed through the detail contained in tabled documents? Committee, agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, Housing Northwest Territories begins on page 72. We will defer the total and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning at page 73, with finance and infrastructure services with information items on page 74. Are there any questions from committee? Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is one item on the list -- the project listing on page 74, biomass projects public housing, and it lists the location as territorial. Could the Minister please give more detail about what locations the biomass projects are projected to go to in public housing? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, vice-president of finance and infrastructure will reply to the question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the vice-president of finance.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we have the -- we have funds set aside for 2025-2026 to continue to advance our biomass system investments. We continue to

advance these investments under our energy management strategy actions. And for 2025-2026, we've identified this allocation as various given the fact that we are currently in the process of completing a biomass feasibility study across the territory, and we're going to wait for those results to determine the most appropriate, effective location for those biomass -- for our next round of biomass investments. 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. So thanks for that. Do we know when that feasibility study will be completed? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vice-president of finance and infrastructure will reply to the question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I'll go to the vice-president of finance.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're expecting to complete that study by the end of this fiscal year. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have one more question of the project listing. On all of the major retrofit listings, they are identified as public housing units save one which is one unit of market housing in Fort Liard. Can the Minister please speak to why that one unit is market housing? Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. President Eleanor Young will describe the Fort Liard market housing retrofit. Thank you.

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

MS. ELEANOR YOUNG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Housing NWT, in addition to roughly 2,600 public housing units, has approximately 180 market housing units that it currently operates. And so much like public housing, as those units need retrofits or repairs, they are built into your capital planning, and so that's why you see a market unit on the list. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. REID: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Nothing else at this time.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to any other Members that want to speak? I'm going to go to the Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You have here 14 public housing major retrofits in Fort Providence. When you say major retrofits, can you explain that?

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Vice-president of finance and infrastructure will describe major retrofit.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, I'll go to finance -- vice-president of finance.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. We refer to a major retrofit as essentially a major renovation of a housing unit, and it's reflected in this plan due to the fact that we consider it to be a major repair, and it's of a capital nature, so it would be essentially a major repair to extend the life of the current housing asset. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: So it's on the unit. Is it, like, something like a -- putting in a new furnace, or is it rebuilding part of the unit? Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A major retrofit for a housing unit would include electrical, plumbing, foundation work, roofing work. It's detailed work to extend the life of the housing unit. But I will ask vice-president of finance and infrastructure to give more of a detailed description of our major retrofit. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, thank you. I'll go to the vice-president of finance.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. For this specific retrofit, we're looking to undertake plumbing, sewer upgrades, and some repairs to the -- the landings as well for health and safety as part of that work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: That's good.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, I just wanted to ask, because we know that we're in a housing crisis, it's all over the North, it's not just my region but it's within all the regions. And I see here for retrofit, in Behchoko, you know, like we have 130 people that are on the waitlist, or maybe it's probably more than that, you know, and there's some families, they've been waiting for the last two, three a years, and -- you know, and they haven't moved up the list. So I'm just wondering why only three units that's being retrofit within this fiscal year when there are still other, like five or six units that are boarded up? What is -- what is the department going to be doing with those boarded up units? Are they going to retrofit those units, or are they going to give it away to the community members? Because it's an eyesore, you know, like, those boarded up units, it is an eyesore. It's not good. And people have been inquiring a lot about those units, and it's still sitting there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Before I go to the Minister, just for clarification, are you speaking for your riding in terms of boarded up units?

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: What's that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Are you speaking for your riding for the boarded up units?

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, I am asking because there's only three units that's -- that's within this fiscal year that's -- it's -- I'm sure it's a major retrofit, you know. It's not replacing an appliance or anything like that, but I'm just asking why only three units that's -- you know, that's being retrofitted, major retrofit, and there's still a lot of other units that are boarded up. What is the department going to do with those boarded up units because it is an eyesore. Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just getting some information from the vice-president. Currently, Behchoko, there is two units being repaired, and 15 units still to be repaired. The plan is that we repair three in Behchoko which would leave 12 units to be repaired once this capital budget is approved. The reason we're not repairing more units is this budget is based on what we have as Housing NWT for capital planning purposes. We look at our budget, we look at -- we provide an analysis of our operating costs, and at the

end of the day we're left with \$11 million for capital planning. So that's what's left over after everything is said and done for Housing NWT. So the need is great throughout the territory but this is the funds that we have left. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. I know the need is great throughout the Northwest Territories and there's 12 units that you just mentioned, but I'm just wondering if the Minister can answer me. Does the department really have any money to do work on these units, or is it just to get people's hope up that, okay, there's actually three units that's going to be retrofitted and hopefully the waiting list will go down? Because from what I heard from the -- in Behchoko is that they're asking people to move out of the unit because they're going to fix up the unit, so they're going to do a retrofit when, in fact, they don't have any money; they don't have the funds to fix up those units. So I'm just wondering if the department, I'm not too sure, if the department has any money to really, like -- to do the actual work on these units. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I asked the vice-president of finance and infrastructure, and he confirmed the funds to retrofit these units for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, within this fiscal year or any other fiscal year, because there was a plan done for 10-year housing plan from 2012 to 2022 of how many houses they were going to retrofit. So that one is over and done with. So I'm just wondering, does the department actually have any funds to do major retrofit when they are -- you know, because the housing is saying they don't have any money to fix up some of these units and other organizations have fixed up a unit because they didn't have any. The Indigenous government fix up some of the units in my riding because housing do not have any -- they don't have the funds to fix up those units and asking people to move out when some of them are in good condition. Now they're sitting empty. And I would like to see some of the people that are on the waitlist to move into those units right now at the moment before freeze up, so it doesn't damage further, and then that's what -- that's how a lot of these units are boarded up, thinking

they're going to do something, they're going to fix it up. To date, there's a lot of them. There's about almost ten units that are boarded up in Behchoko that belongs to the housing. So I just wanted to know, I just -- I'm just asking if there's actually any funds allocated and when are some of these constructions going to start. Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Yes, Mr. Chair, there is funds. It's outlined in the capital plan. There's two houses currently being retrofitted and three planned for next fiscal year. So just to confirm, three for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Well, two houses -- two houses are being retrofitted. Is it currently being retrofitted? Because I know one house was already retrofitted and that was not done by the housing; it was done by the Indigenous government that retrofitted that house because they really needed a client to move in there that was a forest fire victim. Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Housing NWT works with the Tlicho government for housing retrofits and construction in the Tlicho region. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, I'm not sure if there was an agreement made between housing and -- so I just wanted to know if Housing NWT are going to refund the Indigenous government for retrofitting one of their units? Are they going to refund, pay back, because that is our Indigenous government money. That is our future generation's. So I just wanted to know if the Housing NWT will be refunding the Indigenous government for retrofitting one of their units. Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there was a contract with Housing NWT to retrofit the unit, Housing NWT will pay the contract. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Well, that's good to know because she said it, so it's for the record. So I hope there is, you know -- I'm sure there is a contract, there is something in place somewhere. So I'm glad that, you know, she mentioned it.

So, yeah, no, I mean, Whati, you know, they're in housing crisis as well, and I don't see them on the list here. Gameti, and I know Wekweeti only have a few -- few units that belongs to the public housing units, so why they are not on the budget this fiscal year for upcoming fiscal year? Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I noted that Housing NWT only has so much funds, so we have to prioritize the retrofits across the Northwest Territories and this list is the priority list at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on my list is the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is you have a lot of major retrofits in a lot of the communities. How old are the majority of these units that are being renovated? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would have to get a breakdown or an excel spreadsheet to provide that information of how old the units are. But we have over 350 units that are 50 years plus, and we have about 1100 public housing units that are 30 years plus. So the majority of our units are 30 years and older. It just gives you some insight to the age of our housing stock. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In Fort McPherson, you have nine units. When we were in McPherson this spring, you took a tour of one of the units that are over 50 years old and there are more units in that category. Do you know if these are the similar ones that are being renovated in Fort McPherson? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. MLA Nerysoo is describing the older three-bedroom units that came into housing in the early 1970s, and they provided a tour of one of their renovated housing units. I'm not sure myself if these nine units are the units that are in question, so I will ask vice-president Jim Martin to provide some insight to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the vice-president of finance.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The nine units planned for retrofit, they are on -- they do deal with older units. Housing NWT typically plans for retrofits at mid-life of units, of the units, so that would be at least a 25-year mark and more. So in this case here, you know, they're certainly 25 years and older. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Yeah, just a final comment that these units that are around 50 years old that, you know, should be demolished or something. You know, they're just using a band-aid solution every few years to accommodate the community, and it's just not working. They need to find a better solution. It's just more of a comment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Housing NWT realizes that much of its stock is aging, aging stock. Again, the needs across the territory are great. There's been a number of reports of housing needs across the Northwest Territories. And hopefully with the territorial housing needs assessment that's going to be completed over the next six months will provide better data both for Housing NWT and this government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on my list is the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Deline's on the list of repairs there with six units. I'm glad to see that. We've, on our recent trips, heard a number of concerns on the older stock having mold and mildew created as a result of these units. And I'm also glad to see that your tangible capital assets are equal, and it's -- the financing of these expenditures include funding from the CMHC and other various sources. That tells me that you're exhausting other people's money, which is good. How much of that -- just a real general question, how much of

that is coming from the federal government?
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the 2025-2026 Capital Plan, Housing NWT is funding our projects internally. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. McNEELY: So Mr. Chair, maybe the Minister could explain what that statement is on page 72 about funding from CMHC? Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. CMHC and CIRNAC, we had a bilateral agreement signed with CIRNAC in 2020, and those agreements provide us operations and maintenance dollars to maintain the public housing units across the Northwest Territories. It's approximately \$19 million combined, \$18 million combined, something in that range. It's declining year to year. We have the bilateral agreement that will decline -- or will end in 2028, and the CMHC agreement will end in 2038. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. McNEELY: I've got nothing further there, Mr. Chair. That answered my questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to continue on. I don't see any Members.

Seeing no further questions, I remind the committee that the estimates for Housing Northwest Territories are included in the capital estimate as information items only. The committee will not be voting on activity total.

Please return now to the Housing Northwest Territories summary found on page 72. Are there any further questions or comments from committee? I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 48-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1): 2025-2026
CAPITAL ESTIMATES – HOUSING
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES – DEFERRAL
OF DEPARTMENT,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration on the capital estimates for Housing Northwest Territories 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 Housing Northwest Territories, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates is deferred.

---Carried

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do I have a seconder? Member from Nunakput. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All in favour? Opposed? Oh, it's close. Close. Could I have that recorded? No. Abstentions. Motion passed.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, October 30th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act
 - Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, October 30th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

