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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	1441
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	1441
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 81-20(1): A WAY HOME: GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY	1441
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 82-20(1): GENERAL RATE APPLICATION	1442
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 83-20(1): 2024 CANADA 55+ GAMES	1443
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	1444
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 410-20(1): WOMEN IN POLITICS EVENT	1444
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 411-20(1): SAHTU WINTER ROAD PROJECT PLANNING	1444
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 412-20(1): COMMUNITY FIREFIGHTER TRAINING FUNDING	1445
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 413-20(1): PROJECT COST OVERRUN.....	1445
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 414-20(1): COST OF LIVING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES	1446
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 415-20(1): COMMUNICATION ISSUES REGARDING LOCALIZED INFLATION OF LIQUOR COSTS	1446
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 416-20(1): MEZI COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN WHATI.....	1446
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 417-20(1): PUBLIC HOUSING AND BARRIERS TOWARDS INCREASING HOMEOWNERSHIP	1447
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 418-20(1): HOUSING POLICIES AND SERVICE LEVELS FOR INDIGENOUS FAMILIES	1448
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 419-20(1): ODE TO CABINET AT HALLOWE'EN.....	1448
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 420-20(1): CAROLE BERMAN'S DONATION.....	1449
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	1449
ORAL QUESTIONS	1450
QUESTION 399-20(1): DIAGNOSTIC RATES FOR AUTISM	1450
QUESTION 400-20(1): LOCALIZED INCREASED LIQUOR PRICES FOR INUVIK	1451
QUESTION 401-20(1): COST OF FIREFIGHTER TRAINING FOR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	1451
QUESTION 402-20(1): CAPACITY ISSUES AT MEZI SCHOOL IN WHATI.....	1452
QUESTION 403-20(1): MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REGARDING FUNDING	1453
QUESTION 404-20(1): DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN	1454
QUESTION 405-20(1): WINTER ROAD SEASON PLANNING	1454
QUESTION 406-20(1): YELLOWKNIFE HOMELESSNESS PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT	1455
QUESTION 407-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROJECT COST OVERRUNS.....	1456
QUESTION 408-20(1): HOUSING ARREARS FORGIVENESS AND REPAIRS FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES	1458
QUESTION 409-20(1): SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	1459
QUESTION 410-20(1): CLIMATE CHANGE DRAFT ACTION PLANS	1460
QUESTION 411-20(1): PLANNING FOR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER GRID	1461
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	1463
WRITTEN QUESTION 9-20(1): STAFFING OF DOCTOR AND SPECIALIST POSITIONS WITHIN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY	1463
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY (REVERSION).....	1463
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 218-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CORONER SERVICE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 219-20(1): NWT RCMP POLICING PRIORITIES 2024-2027	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 220-20(1): TERRITORIAL POLICE SERVICE AGREEMENT – RCMP ANNUAL REPORT (2023-2024) ...	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 221-20(1): IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE AND CLOSE OUT ON THE REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF GNWT PROCUREMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES, OCTOBER 2024	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 222-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HYDRO CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 223-20(1): PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 15: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHMENT ACT	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 224-20(1): STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL 15: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHMENT ACT	1464
TABLED DOCUMENT 225-20(1): TERMS OF REFERENCE – ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION 2025.....	1465
MOTIONS.....	1465
MOTION 44-20(1): PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF THE NTHSSA, CARRIED	1465
RECORDED VOTE	1473

FIRST READING OF BILLS	1473
BILL 15: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHMENT ACT.....	1473
SECOND READING OF BILLS	1473
BILL 15: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHMENT ACT.....	1473
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	1474
COMMITTEE MOTION 51-20(1): CONCURRENCE OF TABLED DOCUMENT 193-20(1), NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CAPITAL	
ESTIMATES 2025-2026, CARRIED	1476
RECORDED VOTE	1489
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	1491
THIRD READING OF BILLS	1492
BILL 15: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FUND ESTABLISHMENT ACT.....	1492
RECORDED VOTE	1494
ORDERS OF THE DAY	1494

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, October 31, 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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Thank you. Please be seated. I'd like to thank Joe Otokiak for doing the opening prayer.

Colleagues, before we get going, I'd like to recognize a very special person in the House today, my better half. I know she's turning red. But I want you guys to be on your best behaviour today, because if you don't then I'm going to have to deal with it later when I get home. So welcome to the House, my dear. Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 81-20(1):
A WAY HOME: GOVERNMENT OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, homelessness is a complex issue that touches all aspects of society and all NWT communities. Every jurisdiction across the country is facing this issue, amplified in recent years by the pandemic, the rising cost of living, illicit drugs, and climate-related emergencies. What causes people to lose their housing and the cascading effect on their lives and the communities where they live are varied. This is why A Way Home, the Government of the Northwest Territories Homelessness Strategy, is a whole-of-government approach that requires partnership and collaboration with all stakeholders in order to be successful. To ensure we maintain this comprehensive and collaborative approach, implementation of the strategy is led by the Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs under a newly formed governance and service integration division. In addition to A Way Home, the new division will also be responsible for service integration efforts across the territory, antipoverty and food security initiatives, as well

as strengthening our relationship and support with non-governmental organization partners.

This division will focus on increasing transitional and supportive housing options across the territory and beginning to close this specific gap in the housing continuum. We know that stable housing is foundational for people to address other challenges in their lives. We also know that moving from shelters straight into independent housing is often not possible and can create additional challenges for some people. By increasing transitional and supportive housing options, we can ensure people have access to on-site wraparound supports and person-centered services that are critical to helping people create the stability to be successful tenants and reach their own goals. This is where efforts towards service integration come into play.

Over the course of this Legislative Assembly, we will establish four service integration teams across the territory - three teams focused on homelessness, and one team focused on family preservation. These teams will streamline access for residents and ensure services are provided in a timely, agile, and culturally safe manner, and that there are supports to keep people housed and prevent homelessness rather than only responding to crisis. These teams have already been established in Yellowknife and Fort Simpson, with plans to launch in Inuvik this December.

Non-government organizations play a critical role in the service delivery continuum, and we are committed to strengthening these relationships, ensuring that NGOs remain resilient and provide sustainable services. As such, EIA has established an NGO support position within the division to better understand NGOs' needs, to reduce barriers they face in interacting with government processes and systems, and address the recommendations outlined in the strengthening the non-profit and charitable sector final report.

Mr. Speaker, addressing homelessness in the territory is not an easy or quick task. Homelessness is a complex issue with many moving, ever-changing parts, and solutions will require effective partnerships and

collaboration. However, the GNWT's recent experience working with various partners to find solutions for Yellowknife residents staying at the encampment on 51st Street clearly demonstrated that collective problem solving and working together towards common goals is not only possible but strengthens us as a system and provides a space for us to learn from one another and build the trusting, mutually respectful relationships between service providers and with the people we serve that are required to do this kind of work. Collaborative experiences such as these make me hopeful that, together, we can address homelessness across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 82-20(1):
GENERAL RATE APPLICATION

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, when the public utility board, or PUB, accepted the terms of sale from the Hay River utility franchise to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, or NTPC, earlier this year, it set a deadline of October 30th for the filing of a general rate application, or GRA, by all Northwest Territories' utility companies. On Wednesday afternoon, NTPC filed a GRA, and so over the next several months, the PUB will review the application to ultimately determine whether the costs that NTPC has presented are reasonable and reflect the true cost to deliver electricity.

The GRA process is managed by the PUB. It is designed to be inclusive and has opportunities for Indigenous and community governments and members of the public to participate in several different ways, both formally and informally. The PUB will provide information about how to participate as the process advances.

Regulated utilities have limited flexibility in how rates are set. Rates are set by the PUB to ensure that rates align with policy direction and, in general, follow the principle of cost causation, meaning that whoever is benefiting from electricity generation and infrastructure pays for the cost of that generation and the cost of the associated transmission and distribution infrastructure.

The structure of the electricity systems across the Northwest Territories is very challenging. The Northwest Territories electrical system is primarily an isolated non-integrated system, meaning it is not connected to the North American grid. Since we are not connected to

the continental grid, unlike other jurisdictions that can share electricity, in the NWT we are on our own.

NTPC operates two separate hydroelectric grids that are also not connected. Since the two hydro systems are not connected, they cannot back each other up and, consequently, the hydro systems rely on diesel generation for backup.

Diesel generation on the hydro systems is typically only required under two conditions. The first is when there is low water on the Snare system, and the second is when the hydro unit is down for maintenance. Both of those conditions are occurring today, and this has a material impact on costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

NTPC also operates 21 separate community grids primarily powered by diesel generators. However, over the last few years, NTPC has reduced diesel generating by increasing natural gas generation in Inuvik and increased use of renewables from utility-owned infrastructure but also power purchase agreements with Indigenous governments.

As more renewables are added to the system, the NTPC needs to be cautious about the impact on rates and system stability. When renewables are added to a community that already has sufficient generation and is experiencing little or no growth, there can be upward pressure on rates. Those additional assets must be maintained, adding additional costs to the system. Finding the balance between a sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy system is a challenge; it is a challenge we are embracing.

As we all know, the Northwest Territories is experiencing little to no major growth in industrial sectors such as mineral resource production, and this has impacts on NTPC.

While other jurisdictions across North America that are connected to the continental grid are worried about their ability to keep pace with growing demand, over the last decade in the Northwest Territories, electricity sales have declined or remained flat just about every year. Without increased sales from industrial activity, there will be pressure on rates to keep up with general inflation. Recognizing all these challenges, the Government of the Northwest Territories has made significant investments in the electricity sector over the last two years to help keep rates low.

In my May 2024 Budget Address, I announced that the GNWT would make a \$30 million contribution to help offset the impact of increased generation costs in the North Slave

due to extreme low water on the Snare system, which came on top of a \$15.2 million contribution by the previous government in 2023. The contributions acknowledge that low water was a matter beyond the control of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, and the resulting dependence on diesel could have had an unacceptable impact on electricity rates. The price of diesel has increased by approximately 40 percent since electricity rates were last set, and this increase has impacted every community as diesel provides either primary or backup power. This government has also made an additional \$38 million contribution to the Inuvik wind project to reflect the higher-than-expected cost of the project and to ensure that those costs do not lead to an increase on rates. Despite these investments, NTPC is still facing many of the same cost pressures as other Canadian utilities.

Many of these utilities have applied for rate increases because of similar inflationary cost pressures as to what we are seeing here in the Northwest Territories. The GRA is seeking a rate increase that is the same across all three rate zones:

- the Snare
- the Taltson, and
- the Thermal Zone.

While this is not the normal approach, NTPC has laid out its rationale in the application. It will be up to the PUB to determine if the approach is reasonable. The NTPC's GRA seeks a rate increase equivalent to 17.7 percent over 2022-2023 rates. This is in addition to a 7.1 interim rate increase that was already approved by the PUB in July 2024 resulting in an overall increase of 24.8 percent. NTPC is forecasting the rate increases will be phased in over the next year, but the timing and final rate increase will ultimately be determined by the PUB after the public rate review process is concluded.

There are four primary categories, again, driving the need for rate increases:

- Extraordinary events, such as extreme low water in the Snare River system;
- Fuel prices;
- Capital projects, such as the Taltson overhaul; and,
- Normal operations, which includes inflationary pressures while sales remain flat.

NTPC is working very hard to keep rates as low as possible while providing reliable service and investing in new and refurbished assets such as hydro units, local power plants, transmission lines, and power poles. Many of its assets are beyond their serviceable life and require investment now and in the coming years to avoid risks associated with catastrophic failure. While progress has been made in upgrading the required electricity infrastructure, there is still work to be done and costs to be incurred.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT will continue to help offset higher residential electricity rates across the Northwest Territories through the territorial power support program. This program ensures that all NWT households can, with modest energy saving efforts, pay the same power rate as Yellowknife. The GNWT subsidizes the difference between local rates and Yellowknife rates up to 1000 kilowatt hours in the winter and up to 600 kilowatt hours the rest of the year. This program represents a cost to the GNWT of several million dollars annually.

NTPC will continue to work with the GNWT and the private sector to increase its industrial customer base and as well as identify operating efficiencies and cost-saving opportunities within the corporation to help stabilize the cost of electricity moving forward while ensuring our grid remains reliable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for NWT Power Corp. Ministers' statements. Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 83-20(1):
2024 CANADA 55+ GAMES

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the participants who represented Team NT at the 2024 Canada 55+ Games. They were held in Quebec City from August 27th to 30th, 2024. The Canada 55+ Games provide an opportunity for Team NT to engage and compete with other athletes from across Canada. In addition to being an athletic competition, these games also provide an opportunity for participants to engage in other forms of competition and social activities with their peers.

Mr. Speaker, sports, recreation, and active living play a crucial role in promoting healthy individuals; a stronger, more connected community by addressing physical, mental, social, and an economic aspect of well-being. The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to support all residents, including seniors, by providing assistance to attend events like this in Canada 55+.

In August, Team NT was represented by 58 participants from five communities across the territories. Representation included three participants from Fort Simpson, 13 from Fort Smith, 8 from Hay River, 1 from Inuvik, and 36 from Yellowknife.

Team NT participants competed in various events, including ice hockey, pickle ball, table tennis, Scrabble, swimming, curling, cribbage, bowling, bridge, tennis, golf, 8-ball, and track and field. In total, Team NT brought home 14 medals, including five gold, four silver, and five bronze.

I would like to give special recognition to Wayne Guy of Yellowknife who won three medals in track and field including gold in long jump, a silver in the 50-meter race, another silver in the 100-meter race. I would also like to recognize Mike Pickles of Yellowknife who won gold and bronze in table tennis. And Joan and Dennis Bevington, a couple from Fort Smith, who brought home a bronze in tennis.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the various sports organizations who played such an important role in selecting and managing the teams who represented the territory. I would also like to extend a special gratitude to Team NT coordinator, Joan Hirons, for her outstanding efforts in organizing and supporting the team throughout the Games.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the many volunteers and sponsors for their time and dedication in supporting this event. Whether you are a volunteer, an organizer, or someone who helped Team NT in any way, please know that your contribution to the team is greatly appreciated. I truly hope that everyone who participated in this event enjoyed themselves. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 410-20(1): WOMEN IN POLITICS EVENT

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the staff for fixing my microphone.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak today about an event here held in the Great Hall last night. Equal Voice NWT chapter had its first event - a meet-and-greet. Spearheaded by the City of Yellowknife Mayor Rebecca Alty, over 50 women and nonbinary folks, and a few

men -- thank you to the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake -- gathered to meet and learn more about running for public office.

Mr. Speaker, a diversity of backgrounds, genders, and experience is a strength in every elected leadership role. School boards, municipal councils, the House of Commons, and, of course, this House. I am grateful to the previous Members for Yellowknife Centre and Range Lake who, as a part of the 18th Assembly's special committee on increasing the representation of women in the Legislative Assembly, decided to hold a series of workshops they called Women on the Ballot. Over several months of Sundays in early 2019, both I and many other women came together to learn more about how to run or support a campaign from many subject-experts and people who had already walked the walk. I was honoured to volunteer on a campaign of one of those women in 2019. After that experience, I realized that with some hard work and dedication, it could be a possibility for anyone, including me.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in paying it forward. I do not gatekeep. I want to make sure that folks of all underrepresented demographics have the tools and encouragement they need to run for office and assist those who they support. I'm thrilled by last night's turnout and keen interests from so many Northerners, including some as far away as from Ulukhaktok. It was lovely to see folks from the gender equity unit of the GNWT attend as well. Hopefully, we can increase networking opportunities as a result.

I would like to thank Her Worship Mayor Alty for pulling the chapter together, and I look forward to supporting many events, including possible future campaign schools into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 411-20(1): SAHTU WINTER ROAD PROJECT PLANNING

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, critical to ensuring project fruition is planning. Mr. Speaker, as we recall, the announcement for the summer 2024 sailing season was cancelled. This placed projects on hold for deliveries. Now that the Sahtu region is preparing for the winter road season, planning to ensure deliveries is a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I am told by a trucking company that some 700 truckloads are destined for the communities. Preparations and planning are

underway, with the Department of Infrastructure, to put more resources to ensure road construction and maintenance road stability. I'm confident on those discussions between the departments right away and the contractors. Think about it this way, Mr. Speaker: 700 trucks in 700 trucks out with tire chains.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the high volumes of traffic, public safety is paramount. Again, I'm confident the Department of Infrastructure has mentioned in their preparations in addition to adding additions to patrol staffing, signage, etcetera.

Mr. Speaker, during our last spring sitting and February Hansard, the Minister of Housing NWT highlighted the housing allocation for the Sahtu region is 20 units. This is a large volume of materials.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of a one-window season approach to the Sahtu mobilization, planning is fundamental to ensure homes on the ground for 2025 summer construction season, a unique approach to community economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, as you can see project planning is essential for the Sahtu region and the Sahtu region cannot afford additional costs associated with nondeliveries or delays of any nature. We can only look at the Tulita health centre building materials that is being air transported and fuel products. Later, I will have questions for the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 412-20(1):
COMMUNITY FIREFIGHTER TRAINING
FUNDING

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again, it's that time of year to start cranking up our heaters and plugging in our vehicles as the temperatures increasingly drop overnight. Yes, we are all accustomed to winter seasons, but what many of us are unprepared for is a winter season in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

Keeping homes warm is increasingly becoming a struggle for too many -- far too many Northerners who can't afford the rising costs of heating fuel. And this can only get worse as economic opportunities dry up. An unsurprising consequence of this drop in a standard of living is the sad fact that our communities will see a rise in house fires. Just ask our firefighters what happens when more homeowners resort to

leaving multiple space heaters running, open up their ovens, or tap into their neighbour's electricity. Even worse, couple these factors with our deepening housing crisis where many housing units are over capacity, and the result is a recipe for disaster.

This exponential increase in risk puts enormous pressure on fire departments across the North. But, unfortunately, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs has been more interested in downloading the responsibility of services onto communities without ensuring that these communities have the resources to train and certify firefighters. The consequences are major gaps in training and qualifications for firefighters, exacerbated by the fact that without agreements with training institutions and certifying bodies, training firefighters is far more expensive.

How can communities train the firefighters they need to protect their communities when it costs thousands of dollars to do so without the legislation, certifying bodies, or agreements in place? The Fire Prevention Act makes it clear that the Office of the Fire Marshal is responsible for programs relating to fire and para-medicine, including training, but it's not clear how much of these funds go directly into the delivery of training programs. This is unacceptable to our fire departments in every community in the Northwest Territories who regularly make clear they do not have the resources to train, equip, or ensure a minimum level of qualification for their first responders.

Lutsulke, for example, has gone years without a fire truck and when they had a severe fire, the truck pulled up and the water pressure on the hose failed. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister has experience with this file and I know he cares about this, and I know he'll do the right thing when I put questions to him about properly funding our fire departments.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 413-20(1):
PROJECT COST OVERRUN

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on this Halloween Day, I'm a little bit spooked. I'm scared of a big beast that's out of control and wreaking havoc across GNWT departments. Mr. Speaker, what I'm afraid of is major capital projects cost overruns.

Like any NWT resident, I am concerned by the Auditor general report on Stanton Hospital published this week. Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion is a lot of money in any case but, most

importantly, it is a huge departure from what was originally estimated. Over the last few years, we have seen major cost overruns in many of our large-scale projects. The non-profit Open NWT maintains a list of contracts awarded by the GNWT that end up costing more than 30 percent of their original estimated price. Mr. Speaker, there are more than 2,000 items on that list.

The Inuvik wind turbine project, which my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake loves so much, that was supposed to cost around \$40 million ballooned to an estimated \$70 million last year. And the Taltson repair project that was supposed to cost \$70 million is now estimated at almost \$100 million.

Mr. Speaker, while these individual projects are all concerning in their own right, what concerns me most is the trend I am seeing that when we plan a major capital project, we do not seem to be able to accurately project what the cost is going to be. This fundamentally impacts our ability to make informed decisions. Mr. Speaker, it is not yet clear to me what exactly the specific problem is. Is it our budgeting? Is it project management? I would guess the answer involves a combination of issues. What is clear to me is that we have a systemic problem that we need to gain control of. We need to review this problem not only on a project-by-project basis, but we also need to turn a lens on our systems to determine why is this happening to so many of our projects. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 414-20(1):
COST OF LIVING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The municipal funding gap has been an issue for our communities for quite some time. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs conducted a review of its policies in 2014 which reveals significant disparity between funding levels across community governments. Mr. Speaker, ten years later, they are now working to fix this.

The department is rolling out a three-year phase plan, and the changes in allocation are expected to be implemented in the next fiscal year. But I'm worried the government's plan will not work. By their own admission, our smallest communities will be most impacted and will receive less funding through this allocation - small communities with populations of less than 500 people. Well, Mr. Speaker,

nearly half of the communities in the territory are small communities with under 500 people.

Earlier this week, the Minister of MACA said communities can charge fees to make up the shortfall in their funding. But I know residents who cannot afford service fees with the increasingly high cost of living in small communities. These small communities are most vulnerable and need all the help they can get. Mr. Speaker, taking money away from them and diverting it to larger centres is not the answer. Large municipalities have options when it comes to operating essential services that small communities like Tsiigehtchic and Aklavik do not have. I will have questions for the Minister of MACA at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 415-20(1):
COMMUNICATION ISSUES REGARDING
LOCALIZED INFLATION OF LIQUOR COSTS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I learned that the price of bottled beer in Inuvik went up by 28 percent, the price of canned coolers in Inuvik went up 20 percent, and liquor went up 6 percent, Mr. Speaker. This is a significant increase for those purchasing recreational alcohol from the liquor store or those who attend the bars and restaurants in Inuvik. The prices obviously will also go up there as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, where was the communication on this? I learned this from Facebook, and I learned it from constituents reaching out to me saying what's happening. It's concerning, Mr. Speaker, because it's only happening in Inuvik. And, again, you know, how did this happen? And I think, you know, typically, when we have significant increases like this, that, you know, we would get a heads up and certainly we would be able to relay that through a communications effort and in this case, from what I could see, there was no communications put out whatsoever and now, once again, the residents are the ones that are bearing the brunt of this cost, Mr. Speaker. So I will have questions for the Minister of Finance today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 416-20(1):
MEZI COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN WHATI

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about the condition of the Mezi Community School in Whati. It is one of the older schools in our region.

So, Mr. Speaker, this school is no longer adequate to meet the needs of the community, and I would like to see something done about that. The Mezi School in Whati was originally built to serve elementary school children. It was not built to accommodate high school students however that is what it is doing now. So the school is even home to Aurora College programming which is taking up needed classroom space. Currently, the school is already too small to accommodate the number of students attending. The population of Whati has increased over the years which means there are even more students that will need to attend Mezi School.

Mr. Speaker, a safe, modern, and proper learning environment is essential for our students. Schools are also central pieces of infrastructure for community activities. Everyone benefits from having a healthy and adequate school. This school -- Mr. Speaker, this school is in dire need of retrofitting, and the cost of this work will continue to increase the longer this is put off. I would like to draw this to the attention of the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and I will have questions later on today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Colleagues, I would like to recognize the presence of Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty, a Member of the Assembly from 2005 to 2021, former Minister, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in the 18th Assembly, personal confidante, friend and advisor. Welcome to the House, Mr. Jackson.

As well sometimes we get some special guests that come back that used to work for us and come back to be here today. So Danalee Mager, her daughter Poppy, come to see her son Ben who is one of our pages. So welcome back home, young lady. We can't wait to have you come back, and we miss you. Thank you.

Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 417-20(1):
PUBLIC HOUSING AND BARRIERS
TOWARDS INCREASING
HOMEOWNERSHIP

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about public housing in the NWT. For the past 30 years, the federal government has been trying to get

people across the country to move out of public housing and, at the same time, they've been reducing funding with the expectation that they're plan will work, that the need for public housing will disappear. There have been a long list of programs designed to incentivize homeownership and funds to dramatically increase market housing.

But this approach, this theory of how things are supposed to work, simply hasn't worked in the NWT. A big reason is that most of our communities do not have functioning housing markets. It cost many times more to build a new home in a small community than a homeowner could ever resell the house for. So the moment it's built, a home becomes more of a liability than an asset.

Another reality is that the median personal income of people in our small communities is significantly lower than the cost of just maintaining and living in a home, never mind the cost of acquiring that home in the first place.

It's a myth that there's a huge number of people currently in public housing who will be just fine on their own, if someone, maybe just Indigenous governments, just built them a home. In a case study in one small community, about 40 percent of households could afford to maintain their own homes. We absolutely need more homeownership opportunities, but there are real limits on how many people can afford to take on the cost of homeownership.

A 2019 survey showed that almost a quarter of NWT households are in core need, meaning the household income is below the core need threshold. So that's over 3500 households. Currently, we have about 2400 households in NWT public housing. We also have a waiting list of almost 900 people. So those numbers show us that a large part of our NWT population will continue to depend on public housing for the foreseeable future, and it's important to remember that that is not due to the choices or the personal failings of those public housing residents. It is the system that has made homeownership and wage employment unattainable for such a large part of our population. It's not the fault of those people.

We cannot continue to deny that there's a need to increase the number of public housing units, and denying this reality is only costing us more money. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to just conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So denying this reality is costing us more money as we scramble to deal with increasing homelessness, poor education, poor health, and low employment,

that are all rooted in poor housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 418-20(1):
HOUSING POLICIES AND SERVICE LEVELS
FOR INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, fixing up our housing crisis is the reason why I and many of my colleagues were elected to find solutions to accomplish. I have done some great work with the Minister of Housing NWT already, such as our fund agreement for home inspections, and my constituents are very thankful. Unfortunately, there is just so much work remaining, especially regarding the systematic faults in the GNWT housing policies.

The GNWT housing policies do not work for my communities, and the sprawling administration of our housing system is hard to navigate. This is why I've also been working with the Housing NWT Minister on a case-by-case basis as well to help individual constituents when the policies fail. Sometimes we achieve a lot greater together but now a year into our term, we still have some specific problems to solve.

Our biggest issue is eviction. Some of my constituents in public housing have some arrears that is regrettable. The Minister has made it very clear that a new process for arrears forgiveness is on the way next year. I was really pleased to hear this, but some of my constituents are still facing eviction before they can work their arrears out. It may be their duty to work out with local housing officials, but sometimes there's a lot of confusion and intervention needed to help fund them -- sorry, help them find the solution they need.

For example, one of my constituents in Fort Resolution had their home inspect improperly. Due to some exceptional circumstances, I was told to work with the district authority, but the district authority sent us to the Minister. After all the runaround, now they are being evicted because they did not solve their problem fast enough.

Another constituent in Lutselk'e, she has had a perfectly good private home besides from the fact that her sewage is backed up. We have been working on this since 2022. The previous Minister made promises that remain undeliverable. Replacing her sewage tank and pipes will cost far more than what the Housing NWT can provide her with -- with her support caught up in the policy and regulations. We try

to get her family into public housing, but that only resulted in more confusion. Now, years later, she has to bring 17 buckets of raw sewage out of her bathtub every day, living with a rotting smell in her home that cause her home and many health issues and already resulting in headaches and sickness. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. There are just a few examples of what -- where housing is still failing Indigenous families. This government needs and should to -- oh, sorry, should not be putting people on the streets or into other overcrowded homes when the Assembly is trying to do the opposite. We are struggling with a housing crisis so there are a few vacancies even to send families up through the Jordan Principles. Mr. Speaker, I would have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 419-20(1):
ODE TO CABINET AT HALLOWE'EN

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Spooker, in recognizing it's All Hallows Eve, from time to time, as you know, I attempt to bring a little levity to this House. Mr. Speaker, it's important that we help keep our job interesting and engaging, not to mention laugh at ourselves, as we try to keep grounded. So today, strictly in jest, I've elected to make my All Hallows Eve statement in the theme of Adams Family or, rather, the Simpson Cabinet family. I do apologize in advance for the singing trauma I intend to inflict. It may be a trick, but it may be truly a treat. And, of course, I welcome Members to join in with me during the chorus or the snapping of the fingers. So, Mr. Spooker, shall we begin.

[Musical snapping of fingers and verbal melody]

Our Cabinet's kind of spooky. Their policies are often whooky. Their vision's quite mysterious. The Simpson Cabinet family.

[Musical snapping of fingers and verbal melody]

Most days I dread to see them. Their plans have Members screaming. Their decision can be cryptic. The Simpson Cabinet family.

[Musical snapping of fingers and verbal melody]

The Members are here a' working. We're not here to scare 'em. We're bringing solutions to them. To the Simpson Cabinet family.

[Musical snapping of fingers and verbal melody].

So the budget's leave us a scratching. But beware of their distractions. The Cabinet may be icky because they are the Simpson Cabinet family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Musical snapping of fingers and verbal melody]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Bring little humour. I'll have to thank you very much. It was quite enjoyable. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 420-20(1):
CAROLE BERMAN'S DONATION

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, a resident of Fort Simpson, David Berman, has a family heirloom being donated to the children of Liidli Kue Elementary School. David's mother, Carole Berman, purchased a 1974 Yamaha grand piano nearly 45 years ago. She always enjoyed playing the piano and recounting that her and her four sisters studied music from a very young age in Winnipeg, as her parents believed that creative arts were just as important as academics.

As she matured and started a family of her own, she purchased her prized possession and began teaching piano. This gave her a chance to earn a little money while still looking after her three young children. On top of this, it helped keep her grounded and surrounded with the beauty of music whenever she wanted. Dave and his brothers had very fond memories of waking up in the morning to their mother playing classical music.

Carole played with several different ensembles and symphonies within Edmonton but her real passion was teaching others to play. She spent over 20 years teaching young youth to play the piano, and she spent her life creating music and helping others learn the craft. Once her children were old enough, Carole went back to University of Alberta to earn a law degree. Although she spent the rest of her working career within the law field, she continued to make time to perform and help others learn to play.

When David moved to Fort Simpson in 2022 and began to work at the elementary school, Carole would come to visit him and fell in love with the community and its children. She loved to spend time at the school, and it was because of the children's spirit and joy.

Suddenly and very recently, Carole fell ill with cancer and her plans to retire soon and move to Fort Simpson had to change. She is currently undergoing treatment to help extend her life

and has been told she has not much longer to live. She is now moving to an assisted living home within Calgary to be closer to her other two sons. As she has been assisting her children to find homes for her worldly possessions, she requested that her beloved piano be donated to the children in the North, as she referred to them affectionately.

David began working with the principal and the DDEC to get the piano North. I am happy to say the piano is currently on its way to its new home. She and her family hope that this beautiful instrument will bring joy to the musical hearts of the Fort Simpson children. I am happy to say that I got to know her, whether it was on flights to Fort Simpson or when I met her in the community. She is an amazing individual and with a golden heart. Thank you very much. Thank you, Carole.

Members' statements. Colleagues, before we get into the next part, I'd like to recognize Dottie Tetso, a former resident of Fort Simpson. She moved here just recently. We sadly miss her but welcome to our Assembly.

Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Monfwi.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, I would like to -- no, I'll do it in my language. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the grand chief. He is here in the gallery. And also the lady from Sahtu. I'd like to thank them for visiting us in the gallery. Thank you. [Translation Ends]

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Major Tony Brushett from the Salvation Army, a partner with Housing NWT and with this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also like to recognize Major Tony Brushett, our executive director from the Salvation Army, and also current Yellowknife North resident Dottie Tetso. Thank you very much.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize Grand Chief Jackson

Lafferty. We had the privilege of working together during the 18th Assembly. Mahsi.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Grand Chief Lafferty and Dahti Tsetso in the gallery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize our former colleague and current Grand Chief Mr. Jackson Lafferty as well as Major Tony Brushett with the Salvation Army, who is one of those NGO partners that I spoke about earlier today. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chamber. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake -- or sorry, Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 399-20(1): DIAGNOSTIC RATES FOR AUTISM

MR. HAWKINS: Again, thank you, Mr. Spooker. So Mr. Spooker, yesterday in my Member's statement I talked about autism. And we know that there are professionals, family members are leaving the North because of the lack of ability to either get diagnosed or services for autism, Mr. Speaker. So my questions will be targeted to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Now, the Canadian average says 2 percent of the population has autism, or I should say has been diagnosed. And if you use a standard deviation, that's 900 people in the Northwest Territories. My question is, does the health department know how many people in the NWT region by region are identified as having a diagnosis of autism? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that level of detail here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health and Social Services have an idea as to how many assessments are done on young people to, again, diagnose them as officially having autism? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, that level of detail, you know, if there are -- information at that level of detail, I can get the information for the Member and get back to him on that. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister -- I'll accept the Minister's offer.

Does the Minister know or is aware of what services are provided to people who have autism in the context of physio, speech, etcetera? Does she know -- is she aware of the resources and what is available to those parents? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, autism has a wide range of needs, and so every case would be assessed and identified as to what their needs are and then they would be, you know, referred to those appropriate services within the health authority to do further assessments. However, a lot of the services in those areas, we have a lot of vacancies and so there are -- there might be wait times for those services to be assessed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Properly assessing young people with -- or diagnosing, I'll say it that way, my apologies, properly assessing the diagnosis of autism is a very specialized field, and families have told me they struggle to get a diagnosis and then therefore they do not get the supports and treatments, which early intervention would make the world of difference. Does the Minister know what the average wait time is for diagnosis of autism using a specialist? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I don't have that level of details here in the House, so I will have to get back to the Member with that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 400-20(1):
LOCALIZED INCREASED LIQUOR PRICES
FOR INUVIK

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today I talked about the increase in Inuvik, and I know when I get back next week, Mr. Speaker, as they say, I'm gonna have some 'splainin' to do. So I'd like the Minister to explain why there was an increase in Inuvik and only Inuvik for the liquor increases? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have recently concluded an agreement with the local contractor in Inuvik to extend the contract that we had there. That -- and it's been extended only for the rest of this calendar year. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the pricing system is fairly simple in a way. There's the landed costs of alcohol arriving in the Northwest Territories, there's an NTLCC markup which has not changed. We have an administrative fee NTLCC has not changed. And then there's whatever rate is applied through the commission from our various sales agents. So, again, Mr. Speaker, I can't necessarily speak to, you know, here what that choice might have been on the part of them, but there was recently an extension concluded with the local company in Inuvik. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I assume that with the extension, there was some increases obviously. I know that the liquor in the liquor store is sold by volume and not by -- and the prices are certainly set by the liquor commission, by this government. I guess my question is does the Minister -- obviously if the contract's expired, when is the current RFP scheduled to close?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is right now a request for proposals out. That closes on November the 8th, Mr. Speaker. There's also a separate procurement process in place looking to actually have a new lease for the space where we would be able to sell -- or where a proponent would be able to sell alcohol in the North -- in Inuvik, the hope being that by splitting up the contract a little more it brings on, perhaps, a bit of competition and an opportunity to try to keep some costs a little bit lower, understanding that it's getting more expensive to do just about everything in the North. So hopefully by doing it that way, we're hoping to get a little more competition going. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in typical situations like this, would we not have the RFP concluded and of course awarded prior to the existing contract being finalized? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've also been hearing from residents in Inuvik asking why alcohol prices, liquor prices are going up. Again, at this point, Mr. Speaker, the prices on our end haven't changed. Why there needed to be an extension, I've made that inquiry as well. It does seem like there was a delay -- that the last contract was coming due, there was a delay in getting this one out, so there's now an extension in place and so that there can be sales available for residents in Inuvik. And as I said, the new RFP is now out looking for a permanent proponent. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Minister says the prices on our end haven't changed, we set the prices, so the contract states that the sale of liquor, sale of beer, sale of coolers, sale of liquor in the liquor store, is based on the prices set by the liquor commission, by GNWT. So ipso facto I guess our prices must have changed. Now, whether they changed through negotiation or not, but they would have had to have changed, Mr. Speaker. Has the price, previous to the end of this contract and now the price of the extension, has our price per liter changed, Mr. Speaker?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the only element in that formula that I read out earlier that's changed is the commission that we're paying to the contractor in Inuvik, and that commission that we're paying to the contractor in Inuvik is the negotiations that would go on with any proponent. And that was when we had to extend -- or sought to extend the contract that they had previously. During that negotiation, the commission that they negotiated for themselves went up, and so the prices have gone up. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 401-20(1):
COST OF FIREFIGHTER TRAINING FOR
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, and in

speaking with firefighters in Yellowknife, there is a huge cost to firefighter training in the Northwest Territories because we don't have agreements with certification bodies that exist in larger jurisdictions. Now, Nunavut, a couple of years ago, entered into one of these agreements. Their costs have gone from, you know, \$700 a training session to \$75. This is something our fire marshal can do. Can the Minister commit to lowering the cost of fire training -- of training for firefighters in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm unaware of any costs for the training that they had in Nunavut; however, conveniently, I was actually just speaking to the department this morning regarding fire training and our ability to try to make some changes in it and training that will better serve the communities in the Northwest Territories, larger centres. Conveniently enough, I've been involved in the fire service for 30 years in the territories and larger centres have the benefit of having resources for training and the ability to do more training; however, it comes down to a level of service throughout the communities and we need to look at different ways of doing things for the communities. I've gone through three or four different cycles of training challenges and changes, and I think there's a time now to change and benefit the communities throughout the territories. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I knew this was the right Minister to talk to, not only because it's his portfolio but it's his passion. So after 30 years, I'm glad he's going to bring that energy to the role, Mr. Speaker. What fire service training is currently offered through the Office of the Fire Marshal? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently, right now there isn't a whole bunch of offered training; however, what it is is we do support regional centres to do training and they invite other communities, if they want, and the Department of MACA reimburses the training that they provide. However, some of the smaller communities were offered defensive level training in a program that was done quite some time ago. The department is currently looking at a new way of offering this training to the community. So there is different standards based on the level of service to the community. So there is work to get the training out there for the communities. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister know what the mandatory cost for -- or the mandatory certification for firefighters, how much it costs, and who covers that cost? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently, right now a lot of the communities can apply to MACA to get that cost covered. However, again, depending on the level of service, so for an example the city of Yellowknife was raised -- you know, you'll have a base level of service of having an FP1001 it's called, which is a base level training for career firefighters. In a small community, that would be really excessive for them and that's a very expensive cost, so you'd probably end up with something like a defensive level. So depending on the community is what the cost is going to be. It's hard to actually put down a whole -- an actual pinpointed value to take in the training. It's all depending on what they're taking in for the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister work with or make a commitment to follow up with the Yellowknife fire department and work with them to improve access and costs to training? They're the real experts in this area. They brought these concerns to me and they can speak to this far better than I can. So will the Minister commit to working with our local fire chief here in the capital? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am more than willing to work with the Member and definitely, you know, the interested -- I'm interested in working with the Yellowknife fire department also in order to see what their requests or wants are. But at the end of the day, we have 33 communities to look after and we have to do something that covers them all, and sometimes when we do training in a regional centre, it takes a lot of the budget and it takes away from the smaller centres, so we have to be careful with that. So I will look forward to working with the Member and see what we can do there. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 402-20(1):
CAPACITY ISSUES AT MEZI SCHOOL IN
WHATI

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell

us what is the current demand versus the capacity of the Mezi School? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the capacity of Mezi School is 170, and the current student head count is 142 students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you for that information. So, Mr. Speaker, are projections for the demand for classroom space tracked by the department?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we look at how many students are in all grades. We have enrolment figures that come in from education bodies every year, and we also track that compared to the capacity of each school across the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to looking at the condition of the Mezi School in Whati?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to accept an invitation from the Member to the community, to come see the school, when it works for community leadership, and I very much look forward to that. I can also confirm for the Member that there are currently six small capital projects in the 20-year capital plan for this particular school that will be completed between 2025 and 2030. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to ensuring the school receives the retrofitting that it requires? Thank you?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I committed, there are currently six small capital projects on the books for this school that will be completed between 2025 and 2030. And in addition to that, I can also confirm for the Member that there are currently planning funding approved in addition to the two that we're looking at in capital estimates right now, but for four additional schools in the territory. And those four that are getting large capital planning right now are Deninu School in Fort Resolution, Moose Kerr School in Aklavik, Alexis Arrowmaker School in Wekweeti, and

MJ McPherson school here in Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 403-20(1):
MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REGARDING
FUNDING

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of MACA explain how MACA is communicating with community governments and Indigenous governments through regional superintendents?

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So this review of the formula funding has been going on for a while. Before my time, it's been reviewed a few times. In 2014, it was part of the NWTAC who brought in all the community governments, did a review. They had representations from communities across the North as part of their review. That review was done. It was then decided that changes needed to start happening in order to make the funding more fair and equitable. And since August of this year, our regional superintendents have been meeting and offering to meet with community governments to explain the process and how we're starting to implement this. It's not final. It's to get feedback and to find out what the impacts and feelings are from the communities. So the regional superintendents have reached out to the community governments. Last I heard, I think it's 26 of 33 governments have been communicated to. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good news to hear that they've been communicating with the Indigenous governments. Can the Minister say whether MACA and its staff have held any other public meetings to engage the public prior to implementing their new funding policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The funding that goes to the communities is managed by the community governments. So the regional superintendents have been meeting with the community governments that have been receiving the funding. We have not had any public meetings. We send the funding to the community so that's who we've been meeting with. We are planning more engagements. As you are aware, we're

going to meet with the committees here next week to go over it. So it is still an ongoing process. Hopefully, the rest of the communities get reached here soon. So we're still out there communicating and trying to get the information across. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, can the Minister identify which communities were overfunded using the old funding model? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to throw any communities under the bus here, but I will say that we have roughly about six communities -- I think a little bit more -- that are overfunded by -- by over 100 percent they're overfunded. And, again, the goal is not to impact the communities, but the goal is to distribute the funding fairly and equitably based on services provided, equipment being used, infrastructure within the community. So there is a little bit behind it. Again, we're trying to get the information out there, work with the communities, but it is over six communities that are overfunded. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 404-20(1):
DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to see if I'm going to follow in my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake's footsteps of one question.

My question today is for the Minister of ECC. It's really good that we recognize that we're in -- the territory and the world is facing a climate crisis. I am curious, however, about the unfunded actions in the draft climate action plan, specifically those that address changing wildfire conditions, protecting communities, adapting housing assets, transportation, and increasing petroleum storage in our remote communities. Can the Minister explain what work is being done to secure funding for those crucial actions that will keep our residents safe and secure? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. I think it's very clear that climate change has had a significant impact on the Northwest Territories over the last number of years, and certainly the rate at which climate change is happening at three to four times the national average.

The Government of the Northwest Territories Department of ECC is the lead on climate change action in the Northwest Territories, but we certainly can't do this alone. And I think the approach that we've taken as a government are using a coordinated interdepartmental approach so that we're working with all of the departments in addressing these concerns is the one way that we're collaborating and working on finding funding solutions to address these issues. Certainly, our work together in accessing funds through the federal government is key to the success of addressing the funding gaps within some of these items. So some of these items also would fall more directly on the Minister of Infrastructure and have, you know, certainly climate implications but I do have a little bit of information I can happily share with the Member.

So currently, the Department of Infrastructure is having discussions with Transport Canada and is undertaking an assessment there to see what can help to inform the transportation planning study and risks of resilience to the NWT's transportation infrastructure. So I think that's really a key area.

The Department of Infrastructure also is having conversations with Canada on financial supports for a high energy -- high Arctic fuel storage, an increased fuel storage project as part of the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund project, along with Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada. And discussions are ongoing to consider the scope -- the revised scope, as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 405-20(1):
WINTER ROAD SEASON PLANNING

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my questions -- or my statement to the Minister of Housing NWT on ensuring that our products get delivered for home construction and home occupancy, my first question to the Minister: What planning is underway to ensure home materials are in preparation for trucking during this winter road season? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Sahtu. Minister of Infrastructure -- oh, sorry, my fault. Minister of housing.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It must be Halloween because we're -- there's a lot of trip ups today, but that's

okay. Thank you to the Member for the question.

It's important that we prepare for our housing projects over this next little while considering the low water levels. On the Mackenzie has presented many challenges for transportation. What we're planning to do with Housing NWT is work towards the winter road and be prepared for winter road transportation for housing materials and housing modular units. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply.

My next question is the arrivals of materials to the final destination, is the Minister -- will be working with the local LHOs to ensure that the waybills and the product is being delivered? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, again, much of this work is ongoing. We have an infrastructure team within Housing NWT that works on design and also the rollout of housing infrastructure projects within the communities. So a lot of this work is ongoing. There's a lot of internal work and a lot of discussions with local housing associations to make sure that these projects are delivered on time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is that we have a one season annual approach to resupplying our communities, and earlier, we are hit -- we, the Sahtu, is hit with another increase in costs. Now we're going to see our power bills increase by 25 points over and above starting soon after the GRA is in the process. So viewing the additional costs and viewing the wood stove subsidies and the program offered to reduce costs on energy by Arctic Alliance, will the Minister work with my office to see if there's additional trucking loads that could supply wood stoves from southern suppliers to the Sahtu? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Something that Housing NWT does internally is work with communities on the loads going into the communities. I can have this discussion with the MLA, also with Housing NWT, to make sure that these loads going in are full loads and that we're utilizing all resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Housing NWT. Colleagues, before we get to continue with oral questions, we have lots of beautiful guests here. I'm going to turn to the

Premier for -- since it's under his portfolio. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for using your prerogative to allow me to introduce to the House the government service officers from around the Northwest Territories who are here in town for training. These are the people at the frontline of integrated service delivery in the Northwest Territories. So we have with us today:

- George Morin
- Celine Proctor - Fort Good Hope
- Patricia Voudrach - Tuktoyaktuk
- Connie Villeneuve - Jean Marie River
- Tina Apples - Gameti
- Cassandra Paul-Greenland - Aklavik
- Elizabeth Romie - Whati
- Irene Kodakin - Deline
- Sharon Pekok - Hay River Reserve
- Eddy McKay - Fort Resolution
- Kimberly Stewart - Tulita
- Ann Kochon-Orlias - Colville Lake
- Albert Ruben - Paulatuk
- Alayna Krutko - Fort Providence
- Sarah Kallak - Ulukahtok
- Shandel McLeod - Aklavik

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to welcome GSOs here. You guys do an amazing job. We're very fortunate, one of my former members, constituent -- well, I guess you're still my constituent, Connie Villeneuve and her better half -- or not her better half, Jonas Sanques for being here. I'm going to get in trouble now. Welcome. Thank you very much for the work that you do. You guys are a great asset by the government, and you got a good leader there, so thank you very much for being here today.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 406-20(1):
YELLOWKNIFE HOMELESSNESS
PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

The review and recommendations on the city of Yellowknife Street Outreach program has been released this week, and the review noted that the program is currently being operated on a month to month basis on an annual deficit of \$50,000 while the homeless population in Yellowknife is growing. So my question for the Minister is what are the next steps, now that this review has been released and with the recommendations -- what are the next steps for EIA in terms of engaging with the city of Yellowknife and figuring out the best role for the GNWT in supporting the Street Outreach program moving forward? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure the Member can appreciate that we've been busy this week. I haven't had a chance to read the report myself. But I know that staff are reviewing it, and staff from EIA did contribute to the report as well. So after that review is done, I look forward to speaking with the department to figure out what the next steps are going forward. Because as I've said many times in this House, the Street Outreach is a valuable service, and when I'm in Yellowknife, I stay downtown and so I see their work on a regular basis, and I very much appreciate it. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier -- or the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs commit to meeting with the city of Yellowknife on a priority basis to go over the recommendations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to follow up to see what the plan is. We want to build good relationships and partnerships with the city and with the local NGOs. And so I'm sure at the staff level, those conversations are happening, but I will ensure that those conversations do happen if that's not the case. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So one recommendation that came out of the review was to increase the kinds of outreach services that can be offered because 90 percent of the clients, it turns out, are from communities outside Yellowknife, and there's a need to link people with supportive contacts, people, and services from those other communities outside Yellowknife. Is this an area where EIA might be able to help

coordinate and assist the Street Outreach program in making those connections to connect people with the people and resources back home? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so EIA recently took over this file, and so the team is building capacity. I can't really commit the team to, you know, connect people in Yellowknife to services and people in the other 32 communities. That might be a bit much. But that being said, we will work with the population. We are working with the vulnerable population and the NGOs to see how we can best serve their needs and how we can do it in an integrated fashion. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, finally, the review found that one of the groups most eager to help is actually the Yellowknife downtown business community. So does executive and indigenous affairs plan to engage with Yellowknife downtown business owners to see what they might have to offer in terms of ideas and resources? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The engagement has begun. I believe there's a meeting scheduled with the local business community for November 4th. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 407-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES PROJECT COST OVERRUNS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier, I was speaking to the issues of cost overruns in our contracts procurement -- sorry, project management and budgeting. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister agree that cost overruns are not simply an anecdotal problem, but are part of a wider systemic issue in our government? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've rather made a bit of an effort here since the start of the Members' statements to try to figure out the reference that was made. Mr. Speaker, the best I can discern, if we're going to actually speak about data, that this came from Open NWT's data source; it's a reference that goes back to 2004 listing, 2,000 contract that is go back some 20 years. I will note the last three years

have single digits in terms of the count of contracts that have had change orders and would suggest that, perhaps, the situation is not as dire as it used to be in fact.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly speak to the matters that are at hand for this government, and arguably could speak to the last government, but I certainly can't speak to, again, what might have happened in years gone by. So, Mr. Speaker, it's not, in my view, helpful to speak about something that is anecdotal, nor necessarily systemic, because each individual project I certainly can say that I've looked into when there's cost overruns, I've asked questions of individual departments when there's cost overruns, and at every instance there's a number of very specific challenges that often arise. One of the biggest ones of late has been inflation which has been a significant impact across this country in the last few years. Another one has been the price of gas which has been a significant impact over the last few years which impacts upon the supply chain. Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, is the impact of the labour impact which has had a significant impact over the last few years. Beyond that, individually, different contracts, different problems, have arisen. Certainly happy to speak to that. And moreover is simply the fact that the bigger the project, the more likely there is to be some cost overrun but not all the time.

Again, Mr. Speaker, until the wildfires hit, the Taltson overhaul was actually on track, on budget, and then the wildfires hit and here we are. So, again, happy to speak individually but not anecdotally. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for those -- that answer. Mr. Speaker, I think that the Minister is expressing some confidence but I would suggest that we do -- you know, and I've heard that Minister speak to -- and I know that she's committed to continuous improvement so, Mr. Speaker, are we reviewing our project management to look at how we can avoid excessive cost overruns? Are we implementing continuous improvement in our project management, learn from the mistakes that have been made in the past so that we can better manage our projects going forward and try and reduce the number of cost overruns? I do appreciate the Minister noting that reductions have started but let's keep going, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, committed to continuous improvement. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to give a few examples quickly. I know it's question period and the clock is running down,

but, Mr. Speaker, Inuvik wind has come up a few times. That is a problem -- project that's had a number of different problems arise over the course of it. I can say that the Northwest Territories Power Corporation intends to do a review of that, intends to do a lessons learned, to ensure that even if we can explain each individual challenge, each and every one of them we should be looking at to try to ensure we avoid it on the next go around.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, I can also say again we are well aware that when the projects take longer from inception to completion, then you wind up in situations where the initial cost estimate simply doesn't match up the reality 5, 10, 7, 8, years later. Too many things can change. The better we can do to improve our planning processes, the better we will do to ensure that the costs at the end match the budget at the beginning. And I can say that that is ongoing work. That is very much the work that the Department of Finance is committed to, procurement shared services, and the Department of Infrastructure on each of these projects to do those lookbacks. So that's the long answer. The short answer is yes. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, similarly, to project management, are we reviewing how we budget for capital projects and how we might better estimate final costs for these large-scale projects? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges of some projects is on -- when there's federal funding and moving too quickly. That has certainly been a concern. The other problem is not having enough planning time done. So, Mr. Speaker, something folks may have noticed in the last couple of weeks is that there often are planning dollars associated to projects rather than the big dollars associated to the announcement of the project. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't look very exciting in a budget but it means that we're actually putting something out, taking the time to do the design and planning, so that when we do come to the point of saying it's time to go get federal dollars, not going too soon, but going when we know what that project's actually going to cost, because when you get the federal dollars, if a project runs over, they won't cover the extra; it comes down to us. So if we want to keep those 75/25, couldn't agree more, we must plan before we go chasing federal money and before we put our own dollars to it. So that as you will see -- as I said, is a bigger focus in the capital plan now than it was several years ago, and I'm happy to say that we'll continue that focus. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, finally, has the Minister considered establishing targets for improvements? So a certain percentage of projects not going over budget anymore, have they thought about identifying kind of a plan for addressing this issue, setting targets to shoot for, and working to meet them to ensure that we are budgeting appropriately, managing projects well, ensuring that we are keeping projects within budget? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, happy to take that as a suggestion to establish targets. I mean, really, the target is for no project to go significantly over budget, and there's an obligation on all of our project management teams across departments to work to that goal. But, Mr. Speaker, again, always looking for opportunities to continue to do better. There's been a lot of change in the procurement space and the project planning space in the last few years, and again, very happy to take it away and see what more we can do in that regard. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Colleagues, I'd like to recognize a few more honoured guests here today from the Yamoga Land Corp president, Joseph Tobac; Bob Overvold; and the North Slave Metis president, Marc Whitford. Welcome to your Assembly. Thank you very much.

Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

QUESTION 408-20(1):
HOUSING ARREARS FORGIVENESS AND
REPAIRS FOR INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Housing NWT Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Housing NWT has made it clear that she will work with me for the next year on arrears forgiveness. This is a great opportunity to help my community members, especially elders, stay put and age comfortably in their own homes. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister shed some light on this new process for arrears forgiveness that she is promising next year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this forgiveness arrangement has been an ongoing issue for a number of years. Housing NWT and this government's forgive hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars in housing arrears over the last 20, 30 years. We have to work with the clients at this moment. And we're working with a housing forum, which includes Indigenous governments, to review our policies to make these policies workable for the people of the Northwest Territories. Right now many of these policies are almost impossible for many to accomplish, so this is work that we're doing with Housing NWT, and I hope to report this back to this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. If the Minister is willing to review the arrears for some of my constituents next year once the new policies are sorted out, right now, Mr. Speaker, the Housing NWT is still evicting members from my community in public housing. Is there a way we could get this sorted out or put a pause on this for now? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member's asking some tough questions on the floor of the House. But, you know, commitments have to be made, but I -- at this point, I can't make commitments in terms of pausing evictions. Many of the evictions that are happening today are those from illegal activities in public housing units. And that will be my ministerial statement tomorrow. It'll describe some of the work that Housing NWT is doing towards illegal activities.

Much of the evictions that are slated towards rental arrears are slowed down, some are paused. I'm pressing Housing NWT to work with the clients more and have these discussions at a local level. But in terms of illegal activities, that will be a ministerial statement for tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. We have a single mother and cancer survivor who has to carry out 16 buckets of 5-gallon pail of raw sewage out of her bathtub daily. Her family showers at a neighbour's house during the winter months. Housing NWT has a budget of \$193 million and \$32 million in surplus this year. My question to the Minister is why can't Housing NWT provide this family with the full amount needed to repair her sewage system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, another tough question. Thank you to the Member for that. I appreciate it, Rick. But these are some of the things that we have to do, the policies that we have to amend. Talking about this situation in one of the communities, these are tough discussions we have as Housing NWT. And sometimes policies don't fit but policies are rules and guidelines, and we have to look at those and see how we could make things fit for the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, please refer to titles and communities and not names in the House. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: She can call me cousin. If the Minister cannot make exception to policies, can she at least recognize that funding provided for a home -- senior home repair programs is totally inadequate and needs to keep up with the reality of these materials and their transportation to these small communities, essentially rise year by year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I won't do that again. But, again, I commit to the work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 409-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN
WITH DISABILITIES

MR. HAWKINS: All right, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be to the Minister of education regarding autism supports.

Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the inclusion program that they have within the program, an application-based program, but often I hear from working parents, Mr. Speaker, professionals, that they can no longer live here in the territory where they're struggling to take so much time off of work, whether it's for after school -- lack of after school programs, whether it's days off of school, short days, SIP days, you know, you name it. These families are reliant on the goodwill of their employers and their family, Mr. Speaker.

What can the Minister do to help support schools and families to provide further supports for families who deal with children with disabilities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by acknowledging the amount of work that families do to support their children, absolutely, of course. And children with disabilities, their parents are absolute champions and are they're biggest champions for their kids as well. So I just want to acknowledge the amount of work that parents do day in day out.

A few of the things that have been done within the school system in order to increase supports are, for example, working with education bodies to provide training within the school system to education assistants. I've spoken multiple times on the floor of the House in regards to the partnership with Douglas College in order to ensure that we're providing additional tools to the support assistants in classrooms that the Member spoke of earlier in this sitting. I do acknowledge that there is also a desire for additional supports and one of the other things that I do is sit down with the NWTTA, as well as education bodies, to learn from them what kind of additional supports that families are looking for and how we might be able to work together to afford those to the kids that need them. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Working through the the program offered under ECE is called Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation, Mr. Speaker. There are rare, and I mean exceptionally rare, program spaces for summer programs for young people who are dealing with disabilities, and today we're highlighting around autism but, I mean, all disabilities deserve their fair recognition in the sense that we need to find ways to support them all, not one over the other.

Mr. Speaker, two-week slots are rare -- rarer than hen's teeth, Mr. Speaker. So if you're lucky to get one of those, it's only for two weeks out of the eight-week summer, Mr. Speaker. Is there any way to find a way to address that gap that these parents have to struggle with day after day? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, absolutely, the SCIP funding is one of the methods that the department supports families. Another funding amount that is used to support families is ECE does provide \$362,000 annually to the NWT Disabilities Council to support families that do have children with complex needs. In addition, I know that even day home -- people who want to open day homes, and specifically serve children with complex needs, have reached out

to me as MLA and inquired about what types of supports they would receive from the department. And so the department works closely with people who want to pursue this as a career and open up day homes and daycares. And so we do have certainly subsidies but the Department of education does not operate and own the daycares and the day homes. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One parent told me that they have to find a way to help fund the support worker to allow their child to be part of a summer program. So whether you're sending your child to a soccer camp or some other type of initiative like that, parents are paying out of their pocket. Is there any way the department can take this message back -- sorry, the Minister can take the message back to the department and say maybe there's ways we can help support and fund summer jobs programs so we can help expand these opportunities to these families and desperately excitable and engaging young people who want to be part of something, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister go back and see if there's a way to expand opportunities? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am all ears when it comes to suggestions around solutions, so I appreciate the Member's suggestion and will absolutely discuss with the department. And I appreciate that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very quickly, I just want to stress, parents, highly educated professionals, people who have invested their life into the Northwest Territories, see better autism or disability support just across the border. It's called southern Alberta. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to meet with these parents, if I organized a meeting, to hear about their day-to-day struggle and ways to help encourage them to stay North and continue to be great partners in our communities? And not just Yellowknife, by the way, Mr. Speaker. I hear from my good colleague from the great riding of Monfwi about many parents there are struggling there as well so I'm sure they're similar. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have not been known for turning away conversations with people. I absolutely appreciate the opportunity to speak with Northerners about how policies and government decisions impact their lives. I've had the opportunity, with the

Member for Mackenzie Delta, to sit and have similar conversations with people from his riding as well. And so this is certainly something that is not a Yellowknife challenge. It is a challenge that impacts people from absolutely every community from one end to the other, and I'm absolutely all ears and willing to sit down with Northerners. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 410-20(1):
CLIMATE CHANGE DRAFT ACTION PLANS

MS. REID: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to get to a second round of questions around the climate change draft action plan. So the Minister for ECC spoke to the fact that some of the actions I'm interested in are for the Minister of Infrastructure, so I'll ask the Minister of Infrastructure now.

Specifically, I'm interested in the unfunded action items that are talking about transportation planning studies, for petroleum product storage capacity in our remote communities, and completing a climate assessment and planning study to optimize barging operations with MTS. These are all really crucial things. Can the Minister please explain how we are seeking out funding on these crucial items right now? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to transportation planning studies, we are in discussions with Transportation Canada. They are aware of the challenges of the North. We've raised the number of regulatory problems that continue to arise, which do impact costs and impacts opportunity. So we are in contact with them. Again, I can't speak for where or when Transportation Canada might opt to move forward with us, but we have certainly thus far had a good relationship. I'm hopeful that they will see the need to better understand a region of the country that is unique and distinct from a lot of our southern colleagues.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, to petroleum product storage, again, given the isolated nature of the energy grids and given the need to have ongoing fuel storage in these communities for basic electricity and basic heating, we are, again, speaking rather long term to the federal government in this regard.

There is some opportunity here, Mr. Speaker, ourselves, and it was actually in our own capital

budget here, for doing some work in terms of understanding the metering and dispensing equipment in some of the small communities all around the Northwest Territories. This is really to look at the way that we're managing our fuel systems. It's not quite the same as storage but to highlight it here, Mr. Speaker, we need to get a handle on what we're doing to manage our storage capacity. And so that is an important item that is actually in this capital budget should it get approved. And, Mr. Speaker, with respect to longer term, we are looking to move money under the Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund with Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada because, again, if we can be preventing fuel storage issues by having better adaptation in these small communities, that could very well fall under that funding pot, and we're hopeful that they'll give us the permission to move the money around and allow those projects to continue.

Last but not least, third item on the third question, Mr. Speaker, was with respect to marine transportation services. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a line on where the money might come for work there. I can say that there's a lot happening at MTS right now to try to move themselves to a longer, more sustainable way of delivering their services, and that is, I expect, to come forward shortly as a result of the review that had been underway previously. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 411-20(1):
PLANNING FOR NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES POWER GRID

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the Minister talked about -- Minister responsible for the Power Corporation -- sorry, I had to remember who it was -- talked about the general rate increase of 24 percent, and she mentioned that part of this is because we're not connected to the grid. And due to our limited economic growth, we're squeezing the ratepayers of the Northwest Territories because there's no one else to charge, and because we're isolated, we're on our own. So I'd like to ask the Minister, what is the plan to solve this structural problem? If we never connect to the grid, we're never going to solve this. This is an unsustainable power system, and it's breaking the backs of Northerners at a time when they can't afford to pay a penny more. So what is the Minister -- I would say Minister of Infrastructure's plan, or maybe power corporation, to solve this challenge and connect us to the grid?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need to increase the transmission connections across the Northwest Territories. We need to not have 20 some individual micro grids, not have two disconnected hydro systems north and south of the lake. So, Mr. Speaker, it is certainly our hope that, again, in this capital budget, we are hoping to get to a place where we can connect the communities of Kakisa and Fort Providence into the southern hydro grid, hoping to advance work with the Tlicho government to see the Whati hydro project connected into the northern grid, and also hoping to see within this capital project advancement of the Taltson project which would connect those two grids.

Mr. Speaker, Taltson expansion also includes at phrase 3 looking to go south and to connect us into the grid, in the North American energy grid. Mr. Speaker, it is somewhere between \$700,00 and \$1.2 million per kilometer to send -- to construct this transmission lines. So building our lines south, given the distance we would have to cover to connect, certainly wouldn't solve the problem by itself. If we can interconnect ourselves, we would be able to use surplus energy from the southern Taltson system up to the North and to have redundancy in the North so that communities can move power between them.

And then last but not least, Mr. Speaker, fixing a lot of the power policy systems that we have which would be in concert with the public utilities board so that we can do things like increase our independent power produces in small communities so that they can be selling back, improve net metering so that individual residents can be actually relying on solar but not taking from the grid in a way that it makes it dysfunctional. A whole suite of these kinds of changes can also add to our overall resiliency and change the way that we are delivering electricity in the North. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm interested in pursuing those policy changes because we need to be able to get more renewables into these systems. We need to increase our resiliency. So the Minister spoke about a lot of nice things. We know the timeline of what's in this capital budget. What about those policy changes, when are we going to start working on those? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of those policy changes have been under development for many years. I've not been in this role a whole year yet myself, but I can say that a lot of

research has been done in the Department of Infrastructure, working with colleagues across -- in -- colleagues in the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, other utilities, Indigenous governments, consultations. And Mr. Speaker, I am very much looking forward to an opportunity to start to bring some of those forward I was going to say as soon as possible. I know that people like to have more specific timelines than that but that's, right now, one of the best that I can say. But, again, those -- that effort has been done. Research has been happening. And it's a time for -- it's time to have an opportunity to bring it forward. It does need to go through the process of coming forward from a department, going through Cabinet, and going to colleagues on the other floor -- the other side of this House, but I am confident that we'll be getting there very soon. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these ever-increasing rate increases are putting so much pressure on Northerners, many of them are leaving their communities. Does the Minister believe that the subsidies that are being rolled out to cushion -- cushion these rate increases are sufficient? And how does she know that? Thank you -- what went into the calculation? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the territory is in a situation right now where every resident is, I would say, feeling the pinch of increased prices and some much more than others, particularly in smaller communities and in more remote communities, communities that were already paying -- well, the entire Northwest Territories is paying the highest electricity rates anywhere in Canada, which is a message that I have carried to anyone south of the border that will listen. And small communities are paying the highest rates anywhere of those. The Sahtu is paying, as I understand it, the highest rates of anywhere in the Northwest Territories. So that, again, as I've said, the message that I'm certainly trying to get to anyone who is listening down south, including our colleagues in Ottawa.

As far as subsidies go, Mr. Speaker, we are paying significant amounts directly, as I described earlier, on the major kinds of capital projects that were overdue to get done. The Taltson facility was built in the '60s. It needed an overhaul. The Inuvik wind project was an effort to fundamentally change the delivery of electricity in Inuvik. It's doing so. It has faced some unusual cost increases and so we've stepped in as a government to not let the ratepayers be responsible for that. We're stepping in on the Taltson overhaul to not let the ratepayers be responsible for that. Again, owing to some unusual -- and I'd say really

tying back to the wildfires, some of the unusual things that occurred there.

There's a territorial porous port program, Mr. Speaker. It brings everyone down to Yellowknife's rate. Yellowknife's already paying the highest rates anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker, but it brings us at least down to the Yellowknife rates.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has done things, and I'm surprised no one's asked me about it, the federal government has done things of late to try to lower prices in other jurisdictions that don't have a borrowing limit. I'm under a borrowing limit, Mr. Speaker. I can't take the low interest loan from the federal government and put it to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation because we're under a borrowing limit. It is a challenging situation, Mr. Speaker. But we know that the residents can't face a 25 percent hike. People can't handle that. So the government will continue to find solutions through different supports mechanisms, whether it's a direct contribution, whether it's a subsidy, and we're going to do those calculations and need to give the public utility board the time and the space to do their process. We're going to be watching closely, and we're well aware that residents can't handle 25 percent. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know who's not under a borrowing limit? Private companies like ATCO and other private power producers that operate in southern jurisdictions who could be willing partners in helping solve these challenges. Why are we continuing to support the public corporation that's not lowering costs, that's not transitioning us to clean energy, and is only making things more expensive for Northerners? Have we considered privatization? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if there's a private company out there that thinks they can make money selling power in the territories without a large industrial consumer, I am open to hearing about it. Right now, Naka Power obviously saw themselves chosen against in Hay River and, unfortunately, that led to ten years of litigation. But the decision by the PUB to allow that sale to go forward is what has now led to the filing of the GRA. So, again, individual communities can make their choices about distribution agents. Naka Power is a private corporation. They draw private rates. They make a profit, which is perfectly permitted for the private sector. The power corporation has one shareholder that

does not draw a dividend. The GNWT does not take a dividend off of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. We are quite the opposite, trying to maintain power supply across the Northwest Territories as that shareholder. So, again, Mr. Speaker, we speak to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation a lot about what we can do to increase power consumption, including through increasing incentivising heating use or heat -- electrical heating, an EV corridor, partnerships with the mineral resources sector, anything and everything, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to have anyone come and buy the power to bring the rates down for everybody else. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions. Oral questions.

Written questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 9-20(1): STAFFING OF DOCTOR AND SPECIALIST POSITIONS WITHIN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one written question here for the House.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services with respect to doctor and specialist positions, including their individual current staffing status in the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority.

Furthermore, my detailed questions are targeting the specific position type, and for guidance as an example, such as oncologist or general practitioner, where each of these positions are located, either at Stanton or elsewhere, and lastly, the expectation is to fully understand the position staffing status, whether it is filled, vacant or anticipated to be vacant specific to a date, how long it has been vacant, and why each position is vacant to the best of the department's ability.

Can the Minister provide in a table format the following information:

1. All doctor and specialist positions individually within the NTHSSA, noting which are Northwest Territories-based or locum;
2. Specifically where each position is located based on their normal working

location, which hospital, clinic or otherwise;

3. Each position's current staffing status, whether it is staffed, vacant, scheduled or anticipated to be vacant;
4. If a position is vacant, how long each position has been vacant, and why each position has not been filled; and,
5. For all positions, whether each position is full-time, part-time or otherwise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Written questions. Member from the Sahtu.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm seeking request to go back to number five on the orders of day, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Sahtu. Member from the Sahtu has asked for unanimous consent to go back to item number 5 on the orders of the day. Any nays? Seeing no nays. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. Today I want to recognize the newly elected young member for the president of the Yamoga Land Corporation in Fort Good Hope, Mr. Joseph Tobac. Mahsi.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take a quick second to recognize Bob Overvold. He is maybe retired but he's probably not -- never been as busy as he ever has been in his life considering the consultation work is he truly doing now. So I want to thank him.

And, of course, I wish to recognize -- because I'm on my feet -- Ms. Kyla Kakfwi-Scott who happens to be the Premier's -- one of the office staff and leaders in the principal secretary's office. So thank you very much. Thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the grand chief of the Tlicho region Jackson Lafferty. Good to see you here. Also Bobby Overvold. Good to see you here again. And also Marc Whitford, the North Slave

Metis Alliance president. And also Dottie Tetso and the newly elected Joseph Tobac. Mahsi.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Tina Apples from Gameti and Elizabeth Romie from Whati. And also, I would like to -- earlier I said Scott Tetso. It's Dahti Tsetso. sorry about that. So I like to.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you again there, Mr. Speaker. I too want to recognize Mr. Bob Overvold. Welcome to the Assembly. And Marc Whitford. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I was a little bit nice again. I'm going to go to the Premier one more time.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're just so lucky to have so many dignitaries in the audience today.

I'd also like to recognize the Yamoga Land Corporation president Joseph Tobac who, when I travelled to Fort Good Hope, he was the deputy chief at that time. As well as Bob Overvold who was, at one time, the deputy minister of the department, so I want to welcome him. And, of course, Marc Whitford, president of the North Slave Metis Alliance. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 218-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CORONER
SERVICE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 219-20(1):
NWT RCMP POLICING PRIORITIES 2024-
2027

TABLED DOCUMENT 220-20(1):
TERRITORIAL POLICE SERVICE
AGREEMENT – RCMP ANNUAL REPORT
(2023-2024)

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Northwest Territories Coroner Service 2023 Annual Report; NWT RCMP Policing Priorities 2024-2027; and, Territorial Police Service Agreement - RCMP Annual Report (2023-2024). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Tabling of documents. Minister of Infrastructure.

TABLED DOCUMENT 221-20(1):
IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE AND CLOSE
OUT ON THE REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF
GNWT PROCUREMENT POLICIES AND
PRACTICES, OCTOBER 2024

TABLED DOCUMENT 222-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER
CORPORATION AND NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES HYDRO CORPORATION
ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Implementation Update and Close Out on the Report on the Review of GNWT Procurement Policies and Practices October and Northwest Territories Power Corporation; and, Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation Annual Report 2023-24. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

TABLED DOCUMENT 223-20(1):
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 15:
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS-
LED CONSERVATION FUND
ESTABLISHMENT ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 224-20(1):
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL
15: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION FUND
ESTABLISHMENT ACT

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Plain Language Summary for Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act; and, Statement of Consistency for Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Tabling of Documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 225-20(1):
TERMS OF REFERENCE – ELECTORAL
BOUNDARIES COMMISSION 2025

Colleagues, I wish to table the Terms of Reference for the Electoral Boundary Commission 2025. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Range Lake.

Motions

MOTION 44-20(1):
PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF
THE NTHSSA,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS access to health care and addressing the effects of trauma is a priority for the 20th Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the financial outlook of the Northwest Territories is dire despite the efforts of the Government of the Northwest Territories through its fiscal strategy;

AND WHEREAS sustained shortages of staff have reduced access to health care services in NWT communities and placed increased operational demands on full-time staff leading to burnout;

AND WHEREAS the Auditor general of Canada indicated an emphasis of matter in the 2022-2023 Public Accounts concerning the financial performance of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority;

AND WHEREAS the continued use of agency nurses in the health care system is financially unsustainable;

AND WHEREAS the total consolidated debt of the Government of the Northwest Territories has reached \$1.74 billion in breach of the Fiscal Responsibility Policy;

AND WHEREAS it is more important than ever for the government to improve the financial and operational sustainability of the Northwest Territories health care system.

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 content of our proceedings in relation to this motion to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada for their consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think this motion speaks for itself, but I will add some facts to it.

When the NTHSSA, the health authority, was first established in 2016, it inherited an accumulated deficit of \$51 million. In 2020, that deficit had grown to \$94 million. As of March 31st, 2024, this year, the accumulated deficit stands at \$272.9 million. Mr. Speaker, from that escalation, from the amalgamation of the authorities to now, we are on an ever increasing track of financially unsustainable model of health care delivery in the Northwest Territories to the point where our own public accounts are being noted as -- or this area of spending and deficit are being noted as almost tanking the entire government's fiscal situation. We need to get to grips with this, and I don't think we know how.

We have brought numerous independent third-party reports over the years. We have brought deficit reduction plans, strategies, working groups, committees. Your committees, Mr. Speaker, have looked at this over many years, and it's -- it's a persistent problem that is showing no improvements of slowing down. And not only that, if it wasn't just the value for money for health care, it's the quality of health care that Northerners are -- that Northerners have access to.

And we see the issues with administering health care leading to programs or services shutting down. Perhaps most well-known is the obstetrics and birthing services. I think Inuvik struck -- the Inuvik hospital struggles with this. The Yellowknife hospital struggles with this. Agency nurses are being deployed because we can't obtain the specialized nurses that can do this work. And no one knows why when we ask these questions. And I know there's a problem in Canada, but there's a bigger problem here. And we need to get to the bottom of it. And I think, just as the Premier spoke to when he was telling the House and the public about the new health care sustainability unit, we need someone from outside of the authority to find

the solutions to make things more sustainable. And this motion calls for our auditor, the Auditor general of Canada to do the same thing. And I think -- I agree with the Premier, but I think it's even better to have someone completely outside of the GNWT to do this work. And rather than hire someone and use taxpayer dollars to get yet another review, let's get our auditor, who we don't pay for, but does expectational work, high quality work, and can really give us some recommendations that we can put into practice and start to solve this crisis of health care.

We know it's not getting any better. We know that there's lots of effort that this government's trying, that previous governments have tried. So the motion here is not to scold anyone. It's to bring that expert eyes of the auditor general to bear to solve this problem, because there are so many different -- it's a multifaceted problem, and I don't think -- I think having that resource of the auditor general, with all their expertise, is the right way to go here.

And I look forward to the debate today, and I look forward to continuing to work with our Cabinet colleagues, and Members on this side of the House as well, to solve this problem over the coming years of this government. But I think if we have this help from the auditor general, it's going to be a lot easier. And where my mind goes is, you know, first to the people of the Northwest Territories who need access to medical care, especially as things -- you know, as our economy slows down, as costs continue to increase, as it gets hard -- as climate change continues to create struggles, our health -- as people age, we're going to need more access to health care. We're going to need a stronger more robust health care system to weather the storm of these challenges, and we know it's breaking. So we need to do this for the sake of our residents. We need to get a clear -- clear answers forward from an independent unimpeachable source of expertise. And our workers need this too.

I have many nurses, doctors, allied professionals, who live in the Range Lake riding, and they've been talking to me since the election, and they're not happy with the direction that health care has taken over the years. They're not satisfied that we're doing enough as a government to solve the problem now. And we brought a lot of advocacy to their plight and to try to help the quality of -- the quality of life of workers and make it more attractive, more meaningful, for recruitment and retention in the health care system. But it's just not working. So if we have this -- again, this help, this expertise, that can tell us how we can make the system better, it's going to be a benefit to everyone in the Northwest Territories for generations to come. And this can be the

government that finally, finally, sets health care on the right course for the Northwest Territories. And that's what I hope this motion will achieve, and I ask my colleagues to support it. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Motions. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake -- oh sorry, Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the seconder of this motion, I certainly echo the comments of my colleague from Range Lake. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister's aware of this issue. I know this is a national issue. I know through briefings and dialogues we've had with the Minister that, you know, she is going to be looking at ways we can improve this system, and I certainly appreciate that and I have every confidence in that. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a tool. It's a tool that we have in our toolbox that we can use. As the MLA from Range Lake has said, it's a tool that comes to us without a cost attached to it and can help us create what we need, which is a roadmap. And if this is a tool we have that we can use to help create that roadmap to success, to assist us as government, to move forward and get where we need to be with our health care delivery, then I think, Mr. Speaker, it's only proper that we use that tool. So thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am rising in support of this motion today. In my October 24th statement, I asked the Minister to acknowledge the significant issues in our health care system publicly and put forward to address -- put forward a plan to address these issues. Today I'd like to publicly acknowledge the issues myself.

Mr. Speaker, I have been speaking to health care practitioners for many years now. I certainly spoke to numerous practitioners during the election period. This collection of practitioners have come to represent a concerningly wide breadth of professions and a collective of individuals across our health care service spectrum. To name a few, Mr. Speaker, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, countless different nurses, a number of different doctors working in various roles in our system, people who have worked in management, people who have worked -- and many people who are working on our frontlines. All of these are people whose opinions and perspectives I deeply respect and have listened to with significant concern because they have come to me in desperation and told me that they are on the verge of leaving, or have

already left, their positions in our health care system because of significant issues with how the system is being managed. In particular, the overwhelming message I have heard from practitioners is that they feel their voices are not being heard by decision-makers.

I'm going to share one or two of these voices in the House today in their own words. Both of these are people who have left our system to work elsewhere. I quote:

I remember when the unfolding of the new hospital was happening, and we would have meetings about the changes, and they would tell us that our feedback wasn't welcome because the decisions had already been made. Our supervisor asked once, so what do you guys think? And everyone was silent, staring at them. So I said, does it actually matter? Will telling you what we think impact this change in any way? And this person couldn't answer, and everyone got up and left the meeting. It was such an angry and uncomfortable place to work because people have no control over their environment or their role.

Mr. Speaker, the next voice is from a doctor I met with who illustrated for me, in stark terms, that they felt there was a lack of respect for physicians in our system, that they were seen as a problem to be managed by senior management, that they were entitled, overpaid, not working as hard as they should be. This person was concerned that over time, we're going to hollow out the core of our local physicians and replace them with only locums. Mr. Speaker, this person said to me, with I think a lot of sadness, that Yellowknife is a fabulous place to work. They loved the community. They loved their colleagues. In some ways, they felt we were ahead of many southern jurisdictions and so leaving was not an easy decision for them to make.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that so many practitioners' frustrations with these problems had become so great that it caused them to either leave the system, or move somewhere else or leave a career that they care about entirely, speaks to the seriousness of the issues they are speaking to.

What stands out to me also is the breadth of these voices. We're not talking about a problematic unit or a difficult group of individuals. The issues that I've been hearing about have been coming from widely across the system.

The thing I found so perplexing when considering these issues is how fundamentally simple the problem seems. We clearly need to look at how we're managing the system and

ensure we are doing a better job of including practitioner voices fundamentally in decision-making and work to do whatever we can to improve employee morale in our system. Perhaps this is a simple statement to make, but it seems that implementing this change effectively has proved to be a significant challenge in our system. So I am of the opinion that we need outside help to achieve it.

There are experts in this kind of organizational change, and I think we need to employ this kind of expertise to help us understand how we can make changes to our management systems to address these issues that so many practitioners are asking for. I believe this work will need to go beyond superficial efforts like an occasional town hall meeting or meetings from time to time to talk about how things are going. I think it will involve fundamental changes to how decisions are being made in the system. It may require structural changes within the system to ensure sustainability of the shift. It will necessarily be a significant change to the workplace culture in our health care system. Making this shift and assessing these systemic issues, in my opinion, needs to be a key focus of an audit of the system, if not the main focus.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of reason for hope. I studied making changes such as those I'm speaking to in school and would encourage people to take heart in knowing that making these kind of significant workplace cultural shifts is something that a large number of people have expertise in. It is the focus of their careers, and these kinds of change management and organizational management experts can help us make this change. This is something which absolutely can be done. It has been done in thousands of organizations, and it can be done in ours.

I also think there is comfort to be found in knowing that, as I said the other day in my statement on system sustainability, leadership and organizational management theory tells us that the best way to be effective in our decision-making is to consider the perspectives of individuals throughout the organization. So I think making the cultural shift I've been speaking to will open us up to a huge wealth of information as to how we can begin solving the various problems we have in this system. I know that wealth of knowledge exists because I've spoken to so many of these people myself, and I've heard their ideas firsthand. This is an incredibly well educated, high capacity, and passionate workforce, Mr. Speaker. This is a formidable resource to have at our fingertips, and we owe it to ourselves and the residents of the NWT to listen to and implement their ideas for how we can best deliver health care effectively in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Member for Range Lake and the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake for bringing this motion forward. I think that, as I've illustrated in my comments today, we have heard from a plethora of voices in our system that changes are needed. They are calling on us desperately to take action. I think this is one of the actions that we can take. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I too want to acknowledge the champion of health care we have here, my good colleague from the Range Lake riding. I know that I share his passion, and that was kind of why what started with the town hall meeting we had this summer which is to hear the voices of the everyday family, the everyday person, struggling with health care challenges. And I reiterate what I said before a few days ago, not at length, but I want to point out that the building was busting at the seams. We were probably borderline on the fire marshal's load capacity of the building. No one counted, by the way, just to make sure. But the truth be told is we'd never seen such a turnout in Yellowknife at any type of meeting like this. It was amazing. And they were respectful, and they were helpful, and they were telling their stories, their journeys, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, the challenge, of course, is this, is that what's next? And even people ask me, you know, and my good colleague Mr. Testart, what's next? We tell you these stories, we tell you these concerns and pains, we need something to change. You know, people would describe it the proverbial train is coming off the track, is it too late? I don't think it's too late. As a matter of fact, I think we don't have -- we couldn't have a better opportunity than now because we're in that point, like we have to collectively start pulling together. So as they say, with tragedy sometimes comes this great opportunity. And here it is, we could turn this around.

Now, again, another example of -- in the sense of a description is, I mean, when things have gotten this way, it wasn't overnight, you know. No one's suggesting chaos and disorder. But what we're suggesting is the fact that it's true, as my other colleague had mentioned, you know, doctors and nurses will tell us they are getting tired of providing advice, skills, professionals who have decades of knowledge, on how to do things better, could make the very difference.

So what is a performance audit, Mr. Speaker? To be crystal clear, both to the Minister, the government, and certainly the media, it's not a witch hunt. It's not in any form. And it shouldn't be contrived or construed in any way it is. It's simply asking are we getting value for money? Is there a better way to do this? Are we doing the things that we should be doing? Can we do them better? That's what it's about. It's about trying to find a path through these challenges. It will be overwhelming. But the auditor general office is free. They have the talent, the skills, the abilities. They have the vision to pull it all together on a song sheet and start focusing on a direction so we can all be singing on the same sheet working towards a better outcome, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need to show our teams, our teams of professionals, be it administrators, be it support workers at the hospital, be it doctors, you know, nurse practitioners, everyone, that we care so much we're going to go through the system and make sure.

The great thing about the auditor general's office, Mr. Speaker, is they're unfettered. We'll point them in a direction and say, we want you to find the best way of what's happening here. They don't show up with a prewritten decision on how we're -- and then say, this is how we're going to get there. In other words, they won't determine the outcome until they see where it takes them. And to them, they -- out of very few people, they don't -- not a lot of people have that skill. And the fact that it's outside, it will be them.

Now, I remember -- I'm getting old, so now I'm starting to say I remember, and -- but I remember, we used to have a great hospital administrator, Dennis Cleaver. He was great, he could -- being the best of people, whether it was doctors, admin people knew -- he knew them, they knew him, and he really understood. That's why I was trying to raise the other day -- and to be frank, changing the head of the system it doesn't do anything. We have to get into the morale, into the functions, into the systems. That's why we need, as I said, a Jane Phillipot type who understands the DNA of how everything comes together like a great conductor. And they'll say things like well, I see that it's working, they're doing the best but it's actually not working to an outcome that actually is effective. And hence that's the type of conversation only these types of experts can have.

Mr. Speaker, as this is a motion, as we know, an important motion, and I feel like this is going to be the health care Assembly. We're just going to keep rallying on health care until we not only see change, if not better, we feel change. But I worry about the risk about how

much money and we can no longer afford to keep doing things the same way as we do them.

Now, I know, again, this is a motion, and I recognize it is a suggestion to the Assembly, and I don't know what Cabinet's going to do. As a matter of fact -- I mean, I don't know if anybody on this side knows what they're going to do. But I'll -- I won't be the first in the sense of just today, but I'll certainly be the first at least this afternoon and say I hope Cabinet is willing to have a free vote on this particular issue. Because this isn't just fixing my riding, my colleague's riding, my regional ridings. This is affecting everybody's ridings. And I would hope that they would want to be partners in this solution by having that little bit of a thumbprint on this motion by saying I supported it, and I was part of the path to a reinvigorated health care system, a renewed health care system, that helps all. Because if we keep going the same way we do, Mr. Speaker -- and I'm going to try to wrap it up here -- you know, we will see cuts that we don't want to have, we will see change that we're forced to make, we will see departments -- not just health, but the ripple effect of this, having to make choices no one wants to make. I don't want to hear the fact that we can't afford a doctor in oncology because we don't have any more money anymore. I don't want to hear those stories. I want to hear that we can provide desperately needed services in the regions. I don't want to hear about the unavailability or the unaffordable of birthing units in Inuvik. This is our chance to be part of that solution before we say it's too late.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, a big fan of Steven Cubby. His saying begin with the end of mine. I think this motion says it. Let's begin hoping we can build a better health care system, and now let's work to achieve that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion. I also want to acknowledge and recognize that this could take a while. This could take about two years, at least, to complete if they do agree, if the auditor -- Office of the Auditor General does agree to conduct an audit. So this will not be a quick fix or an immediate solution. But I think that it is a tool that would be useful in our toolbox in order to improve a system that desperately needs improvement. So I also recognize that an audit -- a performance audit would usually assess performance against the standards and goals and targets that we have established. And one problem is that in our health care system, we seem to have been

struggling in many cases to set those explicit standards or goals or targets. One example being nurse/patient ratios at Stanton hospital, and so it might be hard to assess performance against when we don't know what the goals have been that we're trying to set for ourselves. So I would hope that the Office of the Auditor General might be able to point us to, say, more broadly accepted national standards to help evaluate our performance and look at models of rural health care and primary care used in other remote communities in the country.

I understand that in some ways our system is unique, but we're certainly not the first jurisdiction in the world to have rural health care systems and remote communities. And so I think we do need to look to what other standards are out there and how we stack up.

I would also hope that the Office of the Auditor General could provide some insight into why our health authority and Department of Health and Social Services seems to have had so much trouble in being able to create system plans to really step back and look at the bigger picture, to create the plans and the targets, such as for example, a system workforce plan, and what have been the barriers to actually implementing plans like this. Despite many studies and reports and recommendations produced over the years internally, what have been the barriers preventing those things from coming to light and actually being well utilized and implemented.

With regard to staff retention, one thing I would certainly appreciate is a review of our policies around how and when frontline health care employees can take their annual leave ideally with some indication of how our policies and practices compare to other small health care systems and rurally-based health care systems in the country. We cannot surely be the first ones to confront these challenges of how to ensure staff can get the full leave that they're entitled to when we have limited staff and small systems.

I would also appreciate an evaluation of the extent to which exit interviews are implemented, so when staff do decide to leave, the rate at which we're actually conducting the exit interviews and the extent to which the insights gained through those interviews lead to changes to prevent other staff from leaving where possible. I understand that there will always be cases where people need to leave for personal reasons, family reasons, whatever it is. But if we're seeing patterns of preventable reasons that people are leaving, that those could be used to improve the system to improve staff retention.

Now, we've all been talking this week about how we're establishing a new health care system sustainability unit with the limited resources that we do have, and that has a number of years of work ahead. So my hope is that the work of the Office of the Auditor General could dovetail with that work. It could help raise some flags, identify areas for that unit to focus on, and ideally help to make the work of the new health care system sustainability unit more focused and more efficient because, you know, they have a lot of things to try to sift through and understand, a lot of previous documents and data, and so anything that the Office of the Auditor General could do to help point towards things that really raised a lot of questions or concerns might really make the work of that unit more effective.

So with that, I'll just conclude by saying I do support the motion. I'm hopeful that this can help, even though it won't be an immediate or quick fix, and so we do have to continue working on some of the shorter term solutions as well but this could be one of the more medium term -- medium-term steps that we can take to improve the system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion. This motion will assist in retaining the services of the auditor general. And as my Members have said, we're not engaging in any witch hunt by any means. The performance review audit will give us tools to improve our current system. We're here to serve the people, and if we can be more efficient in the auditor general's review directly going to the recommendations of the audit on being more efficient in our health care delivery.

Similarly to the private sector, accountants really serve the entrepreneur in being cost efficient. On those principles of providing management skills, we need to produce the tools of recognition through an auditor general's report, and in my view, that'll really help our government to design, recognize, where we can pull up our socks and move ahead more efficiently.

Many of our small communities there, Mr. Speaker, depend solely on health care but limited facilities. That dependency is really on the system that we have now. And if there's room for improvements, I'm willing to participate in any way that I can. In recognition of the need for practitioners and trades in that system of health delivery, we can say to the previous statement I made the other day on working with

the department of ECC to promote education. We have beneficiaries in the Sahtu that specialize in nursing and health deliveries. So if we can promote the recruitment and the noble trades position of health care delivery, that was my purpose of initiating that discussion through the statement I made. We need more trades. And in this case, in this motion, will help us recognize that. It also will recognize our weaknesses, and I hope that we as a government will all stand together to help do a review of efficiencies and, more notably, look at the recommendations from the report that's going to be produced. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do support -- I support this motion as well. The health care system in the NWT, especially in small communities, needs major improvements. Mr. Speaker, we want living in the small communities -- we want Cadillac services. We've been living with the Ford Focus services for a long time, you know, like, I mean, in the process -- in the process, our people are not getting the treatment they deserve. Some of our people are getting more sicker or misdiagnosed, you know, and we heard so many stories about medical travel too as well, you know, and the problem that it has on our vulnerables and those living with challenges. We heard of their experience. So we need to improve our services, especially in small communities, because we don't even have a medical doctor. Some patients, they wait long to see medical doctors. I mean, in Tlicho region, we're very fortunate because we have a physician that goes to our community, to our other Tlicho communities, but other communities, they don't have that advantage. So this I do support, and I feel for a lot of people living in the small communities that do get missed, a lot of misdiagnosis. We heard from other people about -- some people they have to pay their own way to Yellowknife to get the Cadillac services, which in small communities we lack that. And by the time they get here, for many it's too late. So for that reason, I do support this motion.

And I do support and encourage for more young, Indigenous to get into the health care field. And I hope that -- I know that will help with the recruitment and retention. Our people will stay in our community to deal with our problems with our issues and language, our culture, is not going to be a barrier. If we bring in outside people, there's going to be challenges for them. So I think we need to start focus on training, educating our young people and promoting

them, you know, to take nurses and all the other professional fields. Thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to also give support to this motion, the performance audit of the management of the Government of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, the last number of years, in the 19th Assembly, there were a lot of issues brought forward in regards to the health system. You know, and my colleagues talked about it a little bit there as well. I got to remind also that when we have a mace here, we talk about the Crown, and we have a treaty, and part of the treaty we have a medicine chest. And the people in our small communities have treaty expect the health care to be a priority for them.

Over the years, I've been bringing issues here to the House on almost every issue you could think of, including medical travel and how it's funded. And to me, that's also another big issue.

My colleagues spoke passionately about the health system and the retentions of the nurses and doctors. And I -- you know, I think this is long overdue. I think it's needed. We should also learn from what happened to me and my community. And for now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to keep it short and sweet, that this motion is something that I'm glad to hear and see and that was brought forward by my colleagues because it hits home when a lot of our members get misdiagnosed, they get sent home to the point some of my colleagues -- I mean, my constituents had babies in the bathtub because they were sent home. And there's no need for that. So this here will look at ways as to how we can improve the system, and I look forward to the recommendations. So, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will support this motion based on the concerns during the election. Many constituents brought forth concerns about the health care within the Northwest Territories, within the smaller communities with lack of staff. We put up with these concerns every day. Every day when I'm back home, even when I'm here, I'm getting calls with the concerns saying that, you know, why is this happening? Why is that happening in our -- in this time of the day when we should be advocating and looking after our residents of

our communities. Our smaller communities are ones that are suffering more and more travelling. We have elders that are travelling to bigger centres and where they don't know the system and are left alone. We have patients who have medical conditions that can't travel alone, but they too are told that they're denied. And we just need some improvements in the health care system for not just my community but for the whole Northwest Territories. So just to let you know that I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion for reasons very well outlined by everyone else. It's really troubling to me that probably two-thirds to three-quarters of the requests and feedback I get back in my office every day are about health-related issues, are about staff who feel completely at the end of their rope, and it's very telling to me that people within the government feel scared to have this feedback to an MLA. I really would encourage Cabinet to support this motion if at all possible; however, they usually abstain. But it's really -- it's really a good tool to have in our toolbox as other people have said. It's good to have an external lens on this issue. I also recognize it will take a long time to get results, but I think those results will be exacting so I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cabinet will be abstaining from this out of respect for the independence of the Office of the Auditor General.

I just wanted to say that I agree with much of what I've heard from the Members. I receive complaints about the health care services as well just like every MLA in here. I do want to temper people's expectations. I've seen a number of OAG audits. It doesn't necessarily result in change. It's not a silver bullet. The OAG can come in, identify some issues, and then leave, and then we are looking at some issues that we're aware of without the necessarily the solutions to get at those issues.

What we proposed here is to create a health -- what we have done is create a health care system sustainability unit, so we can actually work right in the health care system. The staff is embedded in the health care system but still independent, able to bring real time

information to the decision-makers to help actually do that work.

Another thing I want to mention to the Members as well is that the Office of the Auditor General, the way they work with these performance audits is they look at the policies in place, they look at what you say you're going to be doing, and then they look for documentation to confirm that you're doing what you say you're going to be doing, and that documentation needs to be dug up by somebody. And so that is the staff of the health authority. So the staff that are already burdened with a large workload with increasing, you know, complexities of care, now they have to go and chase down a bunch of documents. And while the Office of the Auditor General puts in a significant amount of time on these audits, thousands of hours, territorial health authority staff will also have to put in a significant amount of time that will take them away from the work that they normally do.

I also want to note that, you know, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, it's the primary health care provider in, you know, 27, 28 communities, but we still have the Tlicho Community Services Agency and the Hay River Health and Social Services Agency. So this motion leaves out, you know, a significant part of the health care systems that serve, you know, 5, 6, 7, 8,000 residents in the Northwest Territories. So that's just something else to consider.

With that being said, we're not going to stand in the way of the wishes of the Assembly, but Cabinet will be abstaining. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. To the motion. Member from Range Lake to conclude discussion.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will close discussion. So I was contemplating reading at length from Tabled Document 204-20(1), which is the patient survey that the Member for Yellowknife Centre and I brought forward to the House. I'm not going to do that. The document speaks for itself. But I do encourage everyone, in particular our Cabinet colleagues, to read that document and see in their own words what practitioners, members of the public, said in that survey. I think it's valuable to let them tell their own stories, and we'll continue to hear their -- we'll continue to hear those stories and bring them forward. This motion, and the other things that we're working on as a government, aren't going to change -- or are not going to change things overnight; I completely agree, there is no silver bullet.

But the audit that was just tabled in this House not too long ago was the result of a motion that was passed by the last Assembly. So, you know, it does take a while to get there, but I think we can all -- there are lots of lessons that we know we're going to learn from the Stanton renewal audit, you know, and not just were they following policy. Like, we have a very clear set of this is how we can avoid these things in the future, and I think that's -- that's the value of these things. And it shows that the OAG is listening to this Assembly. They're listening to the concerns of the people of the Northwest Territories. They always do. But we're just escalating that and asking them to prioritize this work because it is important. And with all these efforts that the Premier's office is putting towards health care sustainability, the health Minister, hopefully things do align and we're able to assess whether those things have been working and effective because those are policy changes that will now be part of any performance audit that comes forward.

I did want to say that my honourable friend from Yellowknife Centre mentioned that the town hall we had, and it was a pretty tremendous thing to have standing room only and have all these people engaged. Because sometimes Northerners do feel timid or that they can't speak out because they work for government or because they're worried about who's listening or there will be reprisals or they won't get contracts or whatever it happens to be. And it's a dam shame because this is our democracy, and it only works when we're listening to the people we serve.

So I was really pleased to see that. And during that, I made a commitment to bring forward this motion and that's the -- the people who were assembled wanted something like this. They wanted outside eyes taking a look at this. Because, quite frankly, Northerners are fed up, and things need to change. And it will take time. Everything we do will take time. But this puts us on the right course, and I think it's important that when we make a promise to the public, we keep it. So that's my effort today, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the work of the auditor general. And I thank all my colleagues who have spoke in support of this motion. And I will recognize the commitment of the executive council to prioritize this as well, and we'll have to see -- hopefully everything aligns, and we start to make progress as soon as possible because, like I said, the system is breaking, if not already broken, and we desperately need to fix it. And I will ask for a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, all those in favour, 10. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, 7. Motion has carried.

---Carried

Motions. Colleagues, realizing that we've been almost three hours, we need to give our translators a break. We will have a brief recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

First Reading of Bills

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House 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. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 15 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Second Reading of Bills

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Minister is asking consent to bring forward Bill 15 to the second reading. All those in favour? Sorry, there we go. Oh, those guys wanted to say nay up there. Seeing no nays, you may proceed.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member from Hay River North, that Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act, be read for the second time.

The proposed Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act establishes a non-profit body corporate called the Our Land for the Future Trust. Our Land for the Future Trust will manage the initial \$375 million fund and any future contributions in accordance with the Our Land for the Future agreement. The fund will be used to support Indigenous-led conservation, stewardship, and related economic diversification activities in the Northwest Territories, including the establishment and management of Indigenous protected and conserved areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed. The motion is carried. Bill 15 now has been read for a second time and is referred to the standing committee of the Assembly for further consideration.

---Carried

Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 15 referred directly to Committee of the Whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister is asking for unanimous consent to move the bill to Committee of the Whole. Any nays -- or I guess all in favour? Any nays? They want to see it

there. No nays. It is moved to Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Bill 15, Committee Report 17-20(1), Committee Report 18-20(1), Tabled Document 193-20(1), with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

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): Calling committee to order. I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. I'm going to go to the Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Chair, we wish to deal with Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, to conclude consideration of all departments, and Bill 15. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I do have some closing remarks with respect to the consideration of the capital estimates. Mr. Chair, I would obviously like to support the 2025-2026 Capital Estimates that are still currently under review by this committee. These estimates outline a significant investment of over \$339 million in the Northwest Territories to support essential infrastructure. They advance several key projects across the Northwest Territories, and they provide procurement opportunities for businesses around the Northwest Territories.

These proposed capital estimates, Mr. Chair, they are not flashy nor showy. These estimates advance key projects, including

- The fire centre in Fort Smith which is replacing a facility completely unsuited to support functionality in an increasingly critical area of need;

- Supports the Frank Channel bridge that is past due for a replacement and is a key connector for the Northwest Territories on Tlicho lands; and,
- Support projects that continue to advance the work towards a desperately needed all-season road up the Mackenzie Valley.

These estimates also advance necessary planning work that can include work such as engagement and design for projects such as the long-term care facilities in Fort Simpson and Inuvik. Besides the ongoing pressure to see the Mackenzie Valley Highway advanced, there is money in these estimates to keep two other major projects alive and progressing; namely, the Taltson hydro expansion collaborative project, collaborative with Indigenous governments from the watershed region; and, the Slave Geological Project. Both these projects have significant federal dollars that we want to leverage, not lose, and both are key opportunities to bring large-scale economic growth to the territory.

That said, Mr. Chair, this is consensus government and passing of any budget through the House is an opportunity for discussion and negotiation as a Legislative Assembly as a whole.

At the start of this session, MLA colleagues made it very clear they were dissatisfied with the status of ongoing work, direction of policies, and pace of change in health and social services, the health authorities, and the housing authority, from Housing NWT. We've benefitted as a collective from many conversations over the past two weeks. And in the course of those conversations, Mr. Chair, we have committed to renewed leadership within these key areas of priority that were set by the 20th Legislative Assembly.

Those commitments from leadership are coming at a key moment in the life of the Assembly as Ministers are nearing the one-year mark in their roles. It is difficult in the course of brief remarks to summarize an intangible commitment such as this, but I am reaffirming to our MLA colleagues the commitment from their Cabinet colleagues to follow through on these discussions, follow through on the critical need for leadership in these key areas.

I must also acknowledge Members' concerns around resource allocation within these estimates and specifically the question of whether we need to shift our allocation towards more public housing. Mr. Chair, it is extremely challenging to shift already insufficient

resources in a budget that is built from a risk-analysis where almost every project has a substantiation that speaks to the need to address infrastructure that is old or lacking, and where there was strong interconnection between so many of our needs such as between new housing districts and the roads to get to them. As well, these investments in capital projects, whether it's road work or otherwise, provide ongoing opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses across the Northwest Territories. And while it is challenging to meet all of the infrastructure needs of the territory with the limited funding available, I am confident in our ability to continue our work with Members to ensure that our resources are directed in a manner that reflects all of the Legislative Assembly's priorities.

Mr. Chair, as part of the discussions I am referencing and in addition to those discussions around strong leadership and priority direction, we have agreed to the following to support some of those shared discussions and shared priorities:

- Firstly would be the prioritizing and removal of at least 100 derelict housing units from across the Northwest Territories over the life of this government to free up the land and improve communities;
- Conducting a rent scale review of core need income threshold values as well as reviewing the rent for both market and public housing units to ensure market units are competitive and to ensure that rent calculations are updated regularly to minimize hardship on clients and address barriers to homeownership such as income thresholds and outstanding arrears from the housing corporation;
- Also, providing a three-year notional investment plan for housing which details a minimum funding level of \$50 million per year, and that will also outline the operating funds associated to support any new builds;
- Completing a review of core programs and services in the health and social services system to ensure equitable and sustainable delivery of health and social services programming;
- Conduct a review of the leave policies and their implementation for health care professionals; and

- Solve the challenges faced in engagement with employees at all levels in the health and social services system.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. This concludes my remarks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Minister. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring witnesses into the chamber?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Minister, please -- sorry, Members, I will now call the Department of -- departments that have been deferred into the order -- sorry, in the order they are presented in the tabled documents. Members may pose questions but please keep in mind that the activity summaries have been concluded and we are only considering department totals at this time.

The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed to proceed with the details contained in the tabled document? Committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We will begin with Education, Culture and Employment. Please turn to the departmental summary on page 19. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$2,330,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the document of Environment and Climate Change. Please turn to the department summary on page 23.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$25,096,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We will now consider the Department of Finance. Please turn to the departmental summary on page 33.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the

Department of Health and Social Services. Please turn to the departmental summary 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, committee. We will now consider the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Please turn to the departmental summary on page 45.

Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$6,649,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Infrastructure. Please turn to the departmental summary on page 53.

Department of Infrastructure, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$184,875,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We will now consider the Department of Justice. Please turn to the departmental summary on page 62.

Department of Justice, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$1,480,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. Please turn to the departmental summary on page 67.

Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, 2025-2026 Capital Estimates, \$39,923,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. We will now consider Housing Northwest Territories. I will remind committee that Housing Northwest Territories is included in the capital estimate as an information item, and the totals are not voteable. Please turn to the summary found on page 72.

Does the committee agree that you have concluded consideration of this information item?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Agreed? Thank you. Committee, we have now concluded all previously deferred items in Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026.

Committee, we have concluded all previously deferred items on Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates. Does the committee agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 193-20(1), 2025-2026 Capital Estimates? Agreed?

Sorry, I'm going to go to the Premier.

COMMITTEE MOTION 51-20(1):
CONCURRENCE OF TABLED DOCUMENT
193-20(1), NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2025-2026,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Chair, I move that consideration of Tabled Document 193-20(1), Capital Estimates 2025-2026, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 193-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. 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? Sorry, I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know we're -- thank you, Mr. Chair. I know we're in a rush to get to another very important piece of this committee's work, but we do need to -- this is a House of debate, and we should be debating things.

So I never have been a fan of our political process here, and I've never seen a concurrence motion been brought forward by the government House Leader, the Premier, the Finance Minister, any Member of Cabinet before. I think that's significant. And I just spoke to my honourable friend next to me, who has served a number of years more than I have, and neither he can remember a time when such concurrence motion's been brought forward by a Minister.

I think that speaks to the fundamental disagreement that some Members of this House have with how we've approached -- how we are approaching our priorities as a government. This -- the committee of

accountability and oversight issued a report about the capital estimates with a broader mandate to look at how the priorities -- the four priorities of the government being met, particularly around health care and housing, and ultimately found that the response to date from government was lacking. The Finance Minister mentioned this in her closing comments.

What we have been offered in response to those concerns, a commitment to remove derelict units, reviewing rent scales that haven't been looked at in ten years, a three-year notional housing plan worth \$150 million, and I should note notional means un -- like costed but unfunded. So it's just a plan that could show what could happen if it was funded.

I don't think that's what we meant as a committee when we said prioritize health care. We wanted houses built. We look to our sister territory in Nunavut. A third of their capital budget is being spent on housing. I'm sure people will say well, they budget differently. But the point is people in Nunavut understand that their government is prioritizing housing. They're building 350 homes. We are building 150 homes, or doors I should say. We need to do a better job. We need to do a better job on housing. We need to do a better job on health care and a whole bunch of other files, but to narrow it down to those two, the two most pressing issues, the top priorities of this Assembly, is what this committee was trying to urge the government to do. The actions that have been promised are not sufficient enough. We need some deliverables that we can take back home to our ridings that matter to people.

Members recommended things like shift premiums for nurses and health care professionals, minimum contract lengths, 500 homes were kicked around at one point. We were offering tons of ideas to try to get something concrete out there so people know we're making a big bold action. When I talk to health care professionals in my riding, they are used to the talk, they are used to the town halls, the employee engagement surveys, but they're not used to action. And that's what they're saying; that's why they're so deformalized. It's a lot of talk, a lot of strategies, a lot of planning. But they want to see something. And we haven't provided it as a government yet. We're on our one-year mark, and we still haven't provided it.

So we don't make the declaration that we can't support capital lightly. We understand that they're different things, that it is not the same as an operations and maintenance budget. But the point was this was our next opportunity to speak to the -- to speak to finances. And in any other

government, that kind of lack of support would be akin to a confidence motion. And I think Canadians and -- well, Northerners and Canadians are well aware of what the consequences of that are with the situation in Ottawa right now. If the House does not have confidence in government then there's an election, in most places except here.

So when we made that declaration, it was an announcement that we lack confidence in how we're moving, we need to course correct, we desperately need to course correct. Because that's what we're hearing from our constituents. And I am not satisfied that we have done that. I am not satisfied that we are making significant investments in health care or housing. I think we're doing the -- I think we're taking a status quo approach with a commitment to try harder. And I appreciate the effort. I appreciate that we have to do planning, that there's been, you know, units and ADMs assigned, and those resources brought to bear but, again, it's more talk, it's more planning. We need some big commitments upfront, so people know things are going to get better. That's why we're here at the end of the day, to make things better, to fix problems. So it was not -- it was not a -- it's not theater to say we're going to -- we don't support the capital budget. And I think Members may -- I mean, we'll see how the end vote -- how the votes end up today, and I'm sure Members will have things to say. I'm sure some Members will change their tune from that initial report. But I hope we all appreciate the significance of where we're at and how far along this road we've come.

If we're going to make this government work, then we all need to be speaking the same language, and we all need to be prioritizing the same things and understanding how to prioritize the same things. I don't think we're there yet. And saying no to the capital budget is not saying no to all these infrastructure projects which are important. I know they're important. I know they're important in many people's ridings. It's to send a very strong message that we desperately need to course correct or we can't get on with the regular business of supply that governments do. We can't get on with governing until we solve this problem and course correct. That was the point of this message. I know it hasn't been lost on our constituents. I know we've been talking about it at length. But we do need to do better. And we need to deliver something tangible, something real, something that shows people that we are listening to them. I do not believe we've achieved that with the commitments made to our report, and as a result I will not be supporting this budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. To the motion.

Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, you know, these capital budgets are not the same as operational budgets, and I think that that's very important, you know. In other words, this is roads versus this is employee salary. It's not that simple, but in a sense, if you're trying to decide, you know, why this budget matters versus the other one, the timeliness of some of the questions -- my good colleague here next to me, he's right. Like, we don't have a lot of opportunities to say truly hold the feet of -- the government's feet, that is, to the fire with respect to important needs. I mean, the asks or the requests by the Regular Members don't come lightly. It's hard enough getting, you know, all of us together on the same song sheet. We are literally 11 independent parties that occasionally work together, and it takes a lot to, you know, get us all on the same page. If not, it's an impossible task. But what we did see this time around is such unanimity around many of the topics highlighted, again, just recently by my colleague, you know, such as housing as an example. I felt it was very important to be -- to demonstrate solidarity to send the message of housing matters.

I like numbers, so I'm going to throw a couple out here. I won't do them too fast, so they resonate. It was -- it's approximately 352 days since the last territorial election. Where's the housing file? It's approximately 340 days since the Members' speeches in this House about, you know, all the things we're going to do. All we heard about was housing and helping people, you know, even bigger centres wanted to help little centres, little communities or small communities. We wanted to be part of the solution. It's been approximately 329 days since Cabinet was picked. And yet we don't see the government as, you know, a war time mandate with the enthusiasm that we're going to make housing number 1, even though it was so loudly spoken. You know, without a number here in the sense of, you know, it's just over 300 days since the -- we met with the territorial leaders at the Tree of Peace. What was the number one issue everybody talked about? Housing. I feel like saying can I get an amen with the congregation here. It's true, though. It's true.

You know, and I get the interim budget was, in theory, keep the lights on. You know, I get it. I get it. And I supported that. And I think that's a reality. But then when we came in in the May/June budget, you know, where was the system listening to the leaders of this House,

the leaders of the territory, the people of the territory, when everyone's saying housing matters? You would think in any system, you know, once they heard those consolidated echos of passion saying we want to make a difference on housing, they would literally stop the factory floor, you'd hit the button, the red light would go on, and say we're retooling for housing. Why? Because these people, these 19 people were sent to this building to make housing -- like, make a difference in housing. So we tried a couple weeks ago. We sent our letter. And, you know, I mean, it should have been written with invisible ink some days I think, because that's how it feels like the answers get. You know, holding it up, I don't see anything from the Members, let's just keep on.

And then there's the fracturing. Well, you know, there's the implied, whether it's direct or indirect or the pressure, oh my God, what's going to happen if we don't support the budget as given? And what happens if we don't support it as given in a timing? So in other words if you don't support this, well, who knows what's going to happen. Can't tell you. Beware of -- well, just beware.

Mr. Chairman, it's approximately 1,039 days left in this mandate before the next election. And some days I think, man, that's -- I wish it would come sooner. Because, you know, I really thought -- I believed, not thought -- I believed in holding the line because housing mattered. Now, I generally mean this commitment which is, you know, I feel very strongly about saying let's just put 500 houses in the communities. Let's do it. You know, that's somewhere between, you know, 12, 13, or even as high as 15 depending where it is. Why, as a Yellowknife MLA, would you say let's focus in on that first? And I -- I'll be frank about it. Because it's important. And the reason it's important is because people are coming from the regions and the communities because of the housing suitability and accessibility. It's just not there in some of those places. They -- you know, or they get a government house and a modular that rolls into town, the government heats it for two years, and everybody's staring at it. Boy, that's at a sore thumb. Nothing -- you know, the equating -- getting results for people is what hopefully we all ran for. To take pressure off Yellowknife. Yellowknife has a land issue with getting housing.

Now, I'm sure someone's going to say I'm wrong on this and that, but the truth of the matter is access to land is a big issue to get houses built here. We have developers that build big tracks of opportunities, whether small apartments, houses, apartment buildings, row houses. People want to build in Yellowknife. It's land. But housing solves the community

problems. And I would never disagree that more public housing in Yellowknife wouldn't help. My goodness, that is certainly an important thing. But I just that that -- let's -- the other aspect is, Mr. Chairman, and I really want to stress this, if we could focus on an effort to have the greatest impact, I thought that would have an immediate ripple effect on everybody. Help Yellowknife, help the regions, help the communities, help families who are struggling. So, Mr. Chairman, I couldn't agree more. This notional -- let's put it differently. It's hypothetical. It's theoretical. It's well-intended. It would have been a monumental shift in doing business in recognizing the important story the Members are telling on this side of the House had our initiatives been adopted a little more. And that's really what's frustrating when you're on this side of the House. You know, my favorite saying is the government will always be there when they need you. Yeah, well, you know, if they don't need you, well, you're on your own.

Honestly, some of these initiatives didn't do a single thing for me personally in the sense of the riding in Yellowknife Centre. I didn't necessarily see it always helping Yellowknife at large. I saw it as helping the territory as a whole. And to me, the fabric is weaved very tightly together. And I'm -- I want to take only a -- like, a 30 second step off this, which draws the comparison -- although it's not completely on topic, so I want to recognize I'm doing this on purpose, which is when I'm arguing about the importance of what's happening in Fort Smith is I'm not trying to save a jail. And I told that to the people I spoke to on the phone. No, I'm not trying to save an empty jail. I have no interest in that. I have an interest in saving 32 jobs that make a difference in a region. I see this as helping the fabric of the North. I see possibilities for making sure families are sustainable, healthy, and whatnot. And that's why the housing to me mattered in the communities. How do we bolster our territory? You know, someone tried to give a poke at me yesterday saying I'm only doing this because I want to be in Cabinet. That wasn't it. It matters. It matters. And I was kind of offended by that pure suggestion. It matters helping people wherever they are. And if you can go home at night and sometimes remember you helped somebody, my goodness you sleep the best sleep you've had in a long time. And when you know you've done your best and sometimes you don't cross it over the line, well, you know, you still feel darn good. And they see it on your face when you put the effort. I thought some of their suggestions were going to do that.

So, Mr. Chairman, I didn't expect to take eight minutes, and I sincerely apologize, that wasn't the intent. But I am frustrated because, like I

said Members' suggestions, I often deeply feel -- and I'm going to stress, I feel like we write them in invisible ink, and that's what happens to them. You know, and it's just frustrating when you're sitting there trying to help people, not yourself, people, families, make them healthy, make them strong, empower them, help their independence, because we all want good people, you know, and all want good results, Mr. Chairman. So I apologize, a little bit of a rant, but I am frustrated and certainly disappointed.

I won't leave it to a mystery, but I'll let people wonder which way I'm going with this one, which way I'll vote. But I do think a recorded vote on this very matter will be key for Northerners to see if they want to take a point in time to ask who dug in the sand for something that's meaningful. And I feel that this one mattered. And it would have had a monumental achievement recognizable about our efforts and our passion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chairman, when we were elected, we sat down here, all 19 of us, we sat in the conference room out there and we talked about what we wanted to do. Those who wanted to put their names forward for Cabinet talked about what they wanted to do. We talked about a top down approach. My background is corporate. Certainly, you know, I feel that in order for real change to happen, it has to happen from the top down. You have to have that leadership. We can't keep doing the things we've always done and expect a different result. We know that. It's been said many times. And, you know, and that was a conversation everybody said yes, I want to get in there and I am going to make these changes. We know we've had problems. This is -- the last government had problems. You know, they left some problems that we've had to deal with. And that personally is what I wanted to see.

In the first part of our term here, you know, I wasn't necessarily seeing that. And I said, listen, you know, I want -- I don't -- I want it to be driven by us. I want it to be driven by the people that we've elected to govern. I want Cabinet Ministers to take information from the committees that we have, from Members on this side of the House as well, and to take that and implement those changes.

So, Mr. Chair, what tools do we have if we don't feel that that's being done? Well, one of the tools we have in our toolbox is our ability

obviously to vote on budgets. Now, it's not lost on me that in this case we're actually asking for operational change but we're voting on a capital budget. The main estimate budgets, the operations budget, we voted on three months ago. But we weren't happy with where we were so we're to take this opportunity, this is a tool we have to kind of go back and, you know, obviously you -- everyone has heard the report we read. I actually did a Member's statement on that as well that we need to see change before we can support this.

You know, we talk about course correction. We've had -- you know, we talk about real change. We've had, you know, what I think is significant briefings between the report and now, we've had many meetings obviously with Ministers, and we've been given commitments in those meetings, you know, what they want to do to change that. And the question is, I guess, from our side is are we willing now to say fine, has this message been heard, us doing -- you know, us submitting that report, has it been heard, and are you willing to take it now to say, listen, this is the information -- this is how we want you to govern. We want you to take some bold steps and do some bold things and change the course.

Now, we've heard in -- again, through those committee meetings and through those briefings that that is what this government is willing to do. It's going to remain to be said. So as we move forward, you know, we will -- we're one year in; we have three years left to go, we have a lot of work to do. We know that. I mean, I'm not 100 percent satisfied in everything I heard. There were certain things that were said and certain ideas that were brought to me that kind of gave me some, I guess, comfort that perhaps they are listening and perhaps we will get some of this work done. I'm not really interested personally there was -- you know, the capital budget is \$300 million. Again, we're making -- we're asking for operational changes on the capital budget. There are things in that capital budget that are important that we need to move forward as well. I do not disagree housing is one of our main priorities, our top priority, but there are other priorities as well, and there are things in this capital budget that I want to see move forward. So that's not lost on me as well, Mr. Chair.

You know, so the question I ask myself is am I willing to allow Cabinet to follow through on the commitments that they've said they would do, and then of course I will, as I'm sure my colleagues will as well, make sure that we're holding them to account as we move forward. This is not the only time we'll get to vote on a budget in this sitting in this legislature. It's only the second time we've gotten to do it. So am I

willing to do that? And that's the question, Mr. Chair, that I ask myself when I move forward, do I want to see this budget pass so we can get some of these important capital projects moving forward and has my message been heard or our message been heard that, you know what, there are tools in our toolbox we can use to hold this government to account and to make sure that change is being implemented from the top down as we anticipated -- as we all said we do when we sat 19 of us together when we first got elected and continue to do that, Mr. Chair.

So I will be supporting the capital budget as it moves forward. I'm in a position now, and I will be holding this government account as we moved forward when we get these important projects going, and I look forward to the next main estimates as well where I'm hoping we're going to see some changes to both health and housing in that budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. To the motion. Next on my left I have the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, being here, we -- we are not here only for us, you know. We have to keep in mind the people, especially the young children, we are here for the future generations. We have -- every decision that we make here, we have to keep the future generation in mind, the little children, the babies that are not born yet. What kind of life do we want them to live in the future, you know? I know we want something bigger, better for them, that -- and it's not just only to this legislature. It's also -- it also goes for other government as well. For example, Indigenous government. Because that's what we've been hearing a lot from our governments. And, you know, like, it's -- that's what we have to do. And when I was first campaigning in 2021, July 2021, I talked to a lot of elders, and a lot of elders have said you cannot do this alone. If you want things to move forward, you got to cooperate, you got to work together. Only one person cannot do it. This is what I heard from my elders. And some of those elders are no longer with us. Because whatever decision we make, it's going to have an impact on our people, you know, the citizens of the Northwest Territories and our constituents. So we always have to keep them in mind. But it's the elders' advice, some of the elders are no longer with us, it's still with me, and I'm still hearing it from some of the elders out in the communities, you know, when you go visit them. When I go visit them, they talk to you. And so I have to keep that in mind.

And here, I know that housing is going to improve. A lot of things, a lot of social problems,

education outcome. We know that having sufficient housing that will end the homelessness, it will solve the problem. We know that. We know that for a fact. But in my riding, there's the Frank Channel bridge, you know.

I lived in Behchoko almost all my life. And we're being -- we're using bus to travel -- for nine years, I travel on the bus, school bus, from Behchoko to Edzo to get to school. And we're still doing that now. And we're travelling on that Frank Channel bridge which a lot of people are hesitant, they are scared to travel on that bridge, not knowing if it's going to collapse. They fear -- they're fearful of that thinking it's going to collapse. It's just the way that -- because of the condition that it's in. So with that in mind, you know -- so the Frank Channel bridge, it's a lifeline to Yellowknife as well and to all the mining companies. So it really needs to be upgraded, and it should have been done a long time ago. But it's in the capital project right now, so I'm happy about that.

And Whati transmission line, you know, if any of you have been to Whati, you will see a big generator in the center of town. A lot of young people, a lot of young people my age, you know, like, the older generation, they grew up with that big generator right in the center of town; it's very loud, and it's not good. So I'm very glad that, you know, they're doing the transmission line from Whati to Snare hydro which is greatly needed. And with the high cost of living and a lot of people have complained to me that they are spending lot of money paying for their electrical -- electricity. So I heard that, so that's -- you know, that's good.

And the school in Behchoko, the school in Behchoko, it was built -- Chief Jimmy Bruneau School was built in Edzo. It was not the choice of the people. It was the choice of the federal government. So what the federal government wanted to do was to relocate the people to Edzo because there's better -- they're going to build more, they're going to give us more, better services, they're going to do underground water, everything. That was their intention. And I do -- right now, I do sympathize with a lot of other communities, remote communities, where this is what the federal government did to them. And, you know, they have no choice because they make their living over there in some of the small northern communities and I'm so glad that Tlicho people did not, you know, follow the federal government request to relocate to Edzo.

So the new school that's being proposed right now, it's going to be built in Behchoko, and I'm happy about that. And I even have a little grandson, you know, and I don't think I want him to travel from Behchoko to Edzo to attend junior

high and high school. Like, I would like for him -- and there's a lot of other ones too -- and I think -- because when -- once you miss the bus too -- this is another thing too is that once you miss the bus, the school bus, you're out all day. And that's how I know that a lot of our young people fail. I blame some of the education outcome on that. Because we had a lot of poor attendance, and it still is because a lot of our young people are going to school in Edzo. At the beginning of school year, we have lots, but as the year goes on our attendance drops. So I do support that, the school. Because all these job -- all these programs, these projects, capital projects, it's going to create jobs. It's going to create more training opportunity. And here, we're -- we're hearing about it from a lot of other people where we're lacking trades. And this is a good opportunity for Tlicho -- hopefully education will, you know, partner with Tlicho government to provide more programs, trades programs, bring the training to the people to the community instead of our young people going out. Because of the housing crisis, there's a lot of our young people don't want to leave. They don't want to leave our community because they don't want to reapply for housing and be on the housing waitlist. And I have some young people that are on the housing waitlist for, like, five years, and it is a shame, and we do need more houses, you know. And I know that it's something that we're not going to stop talking about, you know, and then it is one of our mandate so we're going to make sure that this government, you know, live to the mandate that we all work together to create it.

So with that in mind, that, you know -- I mean, there's lots of things that we need in our communities. You know, we -- I know that this -- the government -- not just this government but the previous one too, we send a lot of people out for treatment program. So the government is spending thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars, you know, to deal with the substance abuse, with the drugs issues. And right now, a lot of our communities are facing -- you know, are having issues. You know, we have a lot of issues in small communities related to drug issues. And drug dealers, that's a breeding ground for them because they know that a lot of our young people -- not a lot of our young people, but living in the small communities there's not too many opportunities. Unemployment rate is high. So it's like there's no hope. So it's a breeding ground for drug dealers, you know, and victimizing our vulnerable young people, especially the children. The children are experimenting with these hardcore drugs now. So that has to stop. So the thing that I don't like is that what we need -- not only in Inuvik and

Yellowknife, we need more of a transitional aftercare program where -- because they spend all the money sending out our people across Canada for a treatment program. Now they need to do something about those -- you know, how can we accommodate these young people coming back? Because we all know someone in our life that has an issue with drugs or alcohol but it's not the alcohol anymore; it's a drug issue, illicit drugs that's taking over many of the small communities. So I do have issues with that. We need that.

And we need more independent living unit for many of our elders in small communities, transitional housing. And I talked to a lot of young people -- a lot of unhoused people in my region, especially in Behchoko, where they are tired of being homeless. You know, they are tired of being homeless. They want a house. They call -- you know, they want a house so that they don't have to worry about where they're going to sleep tonight or tomorrow or anything like that. So -- and education and disability -- program for children with disability and all that. So with that in mind, I will support this budget. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as we all know, the committee of Regular Members brought forward a letter at the start of this session explaining our concerns about the health care crisis and the housing crisis, stating that we need to see significant steps to improve both before we can support the capital budget.

So on health care, we are still in a crisis, but I also understand that the path forward requires more operational changes than capital-related changes. There are steps being taken such as the establishment of the health care system sustainability unit which we certainly need to continue to monitor closely to ensure we actually gain some momentum in addressing these urgent problems.

Where I still do not see a path forward is with regard to the housing crisis. Currently, we seem to be stuck in an outdated way of thinking about what our vision is for public housing in the NWT. As I mentioned in my Member's statement earlier today, the philosophy certainly of the federal government for decades has been that the government just needs to get out of public housing, just kind of ease our way out, and then the market will solve all of our housing problems. But this completely ignores the realities in small nonmarket communities.

All the evidence we have of where our communities' economies are at and incomes in these small nonmarket communities, all this evidence leads us to the conclusion that a significant portion of our population will continue to depend on public housing to meet their basic shelter needs. And so our public housing stock needs to be larger than it currently is to allow our population to meet their basic shelter needs.

As we know, basic shelter is the most foundational aspect of any of the priorities we've set in this Assembly. Without basic shelter, people cannot pursue their education, they cannot stay healthy, they cannot keep a job, and we cannot grow our economy.

I feel like we've been wishing away the need for more public housing. Just hoping or waiting until something or someone else takes care of it, that maybe the Indigenous governments will build enough private housing in each community that those who currently reside in public housing will be able to move out, and that'll free up enough public housing for all the people who need it, even though there's 900 people who are on the waiting list who apparently need it. We just have no evidence to believe that that is actually possible or going to happen. And in fact, all of our evidence leads us to a different conclusion, which is we need more public housing stock. I mean, we've been failing to allocate enough money so far even to take care of all of our existing assets in terms of our public housing stock let alone allocating money to expand our public housing stock. And we continually look to the federal government for a hail Mary. If we look to our neighboring territory, if we look at the Nunavut 3000 strategy, we see that it is, indeed, possible for a territory to increase its public housing stock and to devote its own territorial money, resources, to actually doing that, to making it happen.

But why is this important for my riding, for YK North? First, I mean, somewhere between one-third to a half of the public housing waiting list is in Yellowknife, so it's not only demand in small nonmarket communities, but rising homelessness across the territory also has huge impacts on my riding, and all of Yellowknife, and I hear about that every day from constituents. Most of the people who have ended up homeless on the streets of Yellowknife are not originally from here. The latest survey from the review of Street Outreach found that 90 percent of the people who were using the Street Outreach services who are on the streets of Yellowknife are not from Yellowknife. They've ended up here. Why?

A lot of that reason is because of lack of adequate housing in their home communities. So perhaps more than any other issue housing, and specifically public housing, links all communities in this territory with the ripple effects of chronic underinvestment and it costs all communities, including Yellowknife.

So for these reasons, I feel I have no choice today but to vote against the capital budget. And I don't take that vote lightly. I understand that the ideal way to achieve these kinds of policy changes I'm talking about is not to vote against the capital budget, but the status quo way of doing things doesn't seem to be accomplishing those policy changes either.

I want to be clear that I have full confidence in the finance Minister. I have full confidence in the Premier and in Members of Cabinet. I still have a lot to learn about the best ways to create effective change as a Regular MLA. But I also think there needs to be a lot of adjustments to our status quo way of doing things, way of working in this building, for us to successfully achieve our priorities. I don't want to suggest that we just open the flood gates to endless spending, and I know many people fear that if we start spending more on public housing, it will be a black hole of spending that will never be enough.

I am by nature, I would say, a fiscal conservative. My instinct is always to help us reign in spending, to be more efficient, to find savings. I would like to have more of a role in that. I do think we need to shift where we spend. I would like to see more opportunities for Regular MLAs to be part of those tough conversations about tradeoffs, priorities, shifting spending, to be part of those conversations much earlier on to talk about the kinds of things we would like to shift spending away from so that we can responsibly increase our funding for housing, and specifically public housing. So I'll leave it there for now, Mr. Chair, but I wanted to explain the way I plan to vote on this budget. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll make my presentation short and to the point and move on. Yes, there's many challenges that we inherited as the 20th Assembly, carryovers, dead carryovers, misled projects, cost increases. That is for the reason why we set the -- or the Minister of Finance gave a fiscal sustainability strategy, a strategy to recognize that and balance the books. And when I look at the budget, it doesn't really 100 percent accommodate and satisfy everybody. Yes, we try, we negotiate, and we come up with the best

capital plan we think is best in balancing our books and servicing the need. The need, I must emphasize, in my region alone, the only remotest area, and the largest one of this territory, and yet the most impoverished one. If I shared my wish list, I'll need more than ten minutes.

Right off the get-go, we were left with no water. That put an emphasis on the impoverished side of the community. You can't create jobs if you don't have your building materials shipped to the site. And the list goes on. And I look at the design negotiated capital plan and what's in it for the Sahtu, and the people that put me in this chair, I think to myself, yes, I support this, but I also look at the future years and try to accommodate the need and a balanced fiscal position. So in short there, Mr. Chair, I will be, yes, supporting this capital plan. Mahsi.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In order to be productive in our society today, we have to be healthy. In order to be healthy, we have to have homes. And right now, I don't feel that this government is reaching out to the people of the Northwest Territories saying that we are going to prioritize what you wanted. During our elections, I've heard numerous times, every house I went to, you know, they showed me the condition of their houses. Some people were walking around because they didn't have houses. And that's what they wanted. They have children that's walking with them, they're going to a friend's house, parents. These are just band-aid solutions.

The Indigenous government stated that their main priority was housing. I go back to my community of Fort McPherson and I hear that on a daily basis, that housing is a priority. They should be pouring money into it and when you look at what was proposed, it was an insult.

In order for our students to be productive, they got have a good night's sleep, they have to stay warm, and the education system is failing them. I hear that continuously from staff members that work at the schools, that these students are uneducated. They can't read at the level they're supposed to be reading. You know, I feel sorry for those teachers because they're trying, but yet there's another group of students who's illiterate that's in the grade that's going to come up next year. And the cycle continues until they're pushed through another door, and that door is income support where they're given everything. They're given the opportunity not to work. They're given the opportunity not to go to school to further their education and be

productive residents of their communities. And it's sad to see that because, you know, previous governments, this has been going on for years. I've witnessed people going -- that are adults now that have children that are going to school, and they're in the same situation. They're sending their children to school because they know they'll have free time. That's what these staff members are saying. They're just sending their children to school because they know they'll have a good seven hours of not -- you know, being away. But the ones that are suffering is the students themselves. They're not given the opportunity to get a good education. That education system is not working at all.

And the income, I've always stated, you know, continuously income assistance needs a review. We have to give our residents of our communities a chance at life. We have inadequate health care within our smaller communities. We need to look after our elders. I've often heard that from our people in the communities, our leadership, saying that our elders are our greatest resources, that we have to look after them and yet, as a government, we're not looking after them.

We have criminal activities within the housing units that's not being addressed. The residents of each community knows of these people. Before coming into government, I tried to address that as a resource person in the community. I went to the local housing authority. And the answer they gave me was, you know, in order for them to act on this they have to give them 24 hours notice and by the time they give them 24 hours, they deliver their letter saying that they're going to come search their house, they're moved on to another unit. So we need something in there where we can correct this problem because it's the children of our communities that are hurting.

I know of this one gentleman in my community who was homeless for years, and he slept at different homes within the community and now housing gave him a home, and his home is like a homeless shelter because he knows how it feels for others to be homeless. So he opens his one bedroom house to people that don't have a place to go. He knows the feeling. So some of these -- we always talk about homelessness, well, I've stated this, like maybe about 20 years ago you never saw that in our communities because family members, friends, took them in. You never saw anybody walking out on the streets. But now with all these drugs in our communities, people don't want to be bothered because they're scared because these people are -- they may be a danger to their families. And it's difficult to see this.

I can't go back to my community if I support this capital budget here. I can't go back to my community and say that, you know, everything's going to be okay because it's not. The residents of my constituency put me in this position to look after their well-being, and I have to look after their well-being. So my position is that I will not be supporting this budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just sitting with the words of my colleagues here. And I think that the first thing I want to say is, you know, just an expression of how much I respect and value the positions of my colleagues and the different perspectives that are shared here regardless of whether -- which way you go on this vote in particular or any vote, really. You know, I deeply appreciate, respect, and value our democratic process and the people who put us all here to represent them, and part of that respect is respecting the different voices that are brought to the table. So I appreciate the comments of the previous speakers.

The bottom line for me on this one -- I don't want to repeat too much of what's already been said. Like I said, I appreciate those comments and, you know, we've all got places to get to, families to go home to or call. And, you know, the real sticking point for me on this one, similar to my previous colleagues who kind of spoke to housing, the ultimate sticking point for me was a word, the word notional. The word notional that meant a notional commitment to a plan but wasn't able to fully commit to that not knowing where necessarily the money would come from. And I think the Member for Yellowknife North kind of spoke to being prepared to have the conversation about what we need to do in order to shift our resources towards our priorities as necessary. And as I've been saying through this process, I'm very open to that conversation. Still looking forward to having it. And so I was looking for us, similar to the Member for Yellowknife North, to not be notional about our planning, but to make a plan, commit to it, be willing to fund it with our resources.

Ultimately, when we came together as AOC and drafted the letter that we all ended up, you know, publishing in this House, making public by tabling in this House, I wouldn't have put my name behind that letter if I didn't mean it and I was not prepared to stand by it. I am prepared to stand by it, and I will do so today.

I want to speak briefly to, you know, the conditions of housing in my riding, in

Yellowknife, in the communities, in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Chair, before taking on this role, I served for a number of years as -- on the board of directors of the Yellowknife Housing Authority. I got a good idea as to what the housing issues are in our community, my community. In particular, the most impactful moment I had during my time on the authority was when we went on a tour of some of the housing in Yellowknife. Some of the structures were fairly new, were, you know, exciting to look at, and I was happy about what is being brought forward for residents. But some of the places where people are living in in Yellowknife, the conditions are appalling. They're -- I don't know if I can quite find words for it, but the best way I can illustrate what I felt when touring through those buildings was no child raised in a building like this is being set up to succeed, and it stuck with me. I had absolutely no doubt in my mind whatsoever when I put housing at the top of my list when I ran for election that this is an issue that we need to resolve. You know, very few people write you a message or call you up and say this is the exact reason I voted for you but when you put a platform on the table, you have to assume that it had some role in getting you elected. Housing was at the top. And so I feel a strong obligation to keep it at the top until I feel that we're making substantive progress towards it.

And so for me, what I wanted to see was more than a notional commitment, was for this government to really step up, allocate resources to our housing crisis, as we need to, in order to lift people out of the conditions that I just described. It is very important to me, and it remains important to me. For that reason, I join my colleagues who will not be supporting the capital budget. And, you know, I appreciated the comments from the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. He was kind of mentioning, you know, we're taking a very somewhat operational perspective on the budget through capital budget negotiations but as the Member for Range Lake noted, you know, this is the tool that we have. And so I was prepared to use that tool to put pressure on the government. And I want to be clear, like some previous Members have been clear also, that, you know, I very much appreciate the position -- the very difficult position that the finance Minister's in, I appreciate and respect that perspective. I appreciate the various, you know, concessions and the seriousness with which Cabinet approached the concerns brought forward by Regular Members. I do have confidence that they are taking us seriously. We didn't quite get where I wanted to get to, and that is part of how this system works.

Something that I wanted to -- I always like to kind of come back to this because it's a bit of a passion of mine, but something I did kind of want to note is something that I noted to the clerk the other day during one of our chats that, you know, sometimes things can be really difficult in here. This is not an easy job. It's certainly a job that involves a lot of pressure. It's a job that pits very strong perspectives against one another, between people who I care about, people whose perspectives I respect greatly. But as I said to the clerk, you know, we are having the right conversations here. We're here fighting about the issues that matter to the NWT. We're here fighting about -- fighting is the wrong word, but we're here kind of discussing the major policy issues that this government is facing and the directions that we're going to go with the territory, and that is what is described by practitioners as healthy conflict. It's the right kind of conflict to be having in a building like this. So I want to just kind of highlight that and note that I think that we are having the right conversation, that the conversation we're having right now is the right one. You know, I've landed on the position that I have. I wanted to stand strong in the position that I took, and I will continue to do that. So I think that wraps up my comments on capital budget for today. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go maybe take a moment here, and I'll swap out with the Member from Sahtu to fill in as chair.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Members, we will have the next Member from Great Slave. Go ahead.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's been a year of hearing my colleagues demonstrate the unbelievable need for basic services in small communities. It's been a year of clean-up after major events. It's been a year of heartache and hurt, and so many of us are still raw bundles of nerves trying to find some peace. I've been told that 15 to 20 years ago working here was a bit of a party. The diamond companies were swinging, the trips to Ottawa were fun, ribbon cutting happened, and it sounds like there were a lot more laughs. And that's no longer the case. Fast forward to now, and the honeymoon of the 20th Assembly is long gone. Urgent emergencies still exist. Climate change is hammering us in different ways year after year. My colleague from the Sahtu has detailed his constituents' need to see resources flow while it's still possible in the winter season for capital projects as they clearly can't get it moving in the summer by barge due to low water levels.

Every day in this building, I hear the frustration of Members that we can't adequately help residents with their most basic needs, most notably in housing and health care. We are scrambling to help, and many days it feels like we're stuck on a leaky boat with a tiny cup to bale out water.

I agree with my colleague from Frame Lake who spoke earlier today to the fact that systems of how we budget, plan, and make good decision in the GNWT need to change and adapt to this new reality we find ourselves in. Members have asked for real change in investments in housing and health care. We set out on that path after setting our priorities just a little over nine months ago. Unfortunately, moving at the speed of government, that's the blink of an eye, and that is also a frustration for anyone who has ever been in government and for those who haven't. To make meaningful systemic change takes time, effort, and likely tears.

I want to speak to notional. Notional is something I hoped that Cabinet would drop from their offer, and they haven't. The reality of funding for housing means it can't be anything but notional. Nunavut 3000 started out as notional, and they worked from there. So I still have high hopes. Those high hopes might end like a led balloon, and that's on Cabinet to pull out.

I have a personal touchstone in writing by the writer Paul Ford that I return to again and again. Quote: There is this set of heavy lenses mounted on a steel base. Each lens is 8 feet across. Looking through them, the world is blurry. Turning these lenses is exhausting. It wears out the muscles, it takes all your energy an inch a day each, and maybe you have three whole revolutions to go on before you end up in focus. It'll take a hundred years to get a clear picture of the world. I'll be dead by then. But in the meantime, some focus is better than none. End quote.

I have heard about focus and visions in conversations with Cabinet. I have faith in both of the Ministers in housing and health care holding those portfolios. They have shared some confidential information with Members that have a bold vision in the near term, and it's not my place to speak to that detail. But I have confidence that those heavy lenses are being turned in earnest. I am happy to say that I have good relationships with these Ministers, and they're doing the best they can as quick as they can with the tools they have while also trying to build new tools at the same time. That's the sticking point, it seems, what is possible today and what can be accomplished quickly. To that, I'd say for real and lasting and crucially

meaningful and impactful change, that takes longer than nine months. In this instance, and for the urgency of the issues facing the Sahtu and for what I see as mainly a pared back capital budget, I will be supporting it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member from Great Slave. We will move on to the next Speaker, the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I came in as the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the 19th Assembly and re-elected in the 20th Assembly. When I came to this job, I came with good experience. What I brought to the table is -- as a tradesman in the carpentry. I built a lot of homes throughout the North, worked for PCL, Clark Builders. I did my time in the construction industry. I worked in construction management. And before even Nunavut was here, I worked all over the whole Northwest Territories. And I also sat on the national AFN housing board back in the 1990s, late 1990s. And even at that time, right across Canada we're probably about 120,000 homes short. And here in the Northwest Territories, today we're about 10,000 homes short. And back in the early days with the GNWT government, they had a really good program in place with the Government of Canada and CMHC where they built homeownership programs, they had money for emergency repair programs, money for senior citizen home repair programs, home improvement programs was a big one where they retrofitted homes. And these homes now today are aging out about 40,000 homes. The life cycle of a house is about 50 years before you need a complete retrofit. And it's a big issue here in the North in regards to housing.

I brought this up in the 19th Assembly and spoke passionately about it, and here in the 20th Assembly I'm doing the same thing again. But when I ran for MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, housing was one of my top priorities. And what I heard was, you know, we got to do something about housing. We need homeownership repairs. Just imagine if we -- if the fire marshal comes into our communities and look at our HAP houses today that's been built back in the, you know, late '80s, it would be concerning. So I'm really concerned that if that ever happened, how are we as a government going to deal with that issue with the housing crisis we already are in?

So I put forward ideas because I brought forward issues on housing to the housing Minister back in the 19th Assembly and the 20th Assembly. When we got together as MLAs when we first got elected in the 20th Assembly, we listened to all the leaders up and down the

Valley that came to Yellowknife, all the MLAs came forward and brought their issues forward, and we came up with four priorities, and housing is number one. And I'm deeply concerned here in the 20th Assembly that we're not putting a lot of money into the efforts of homeownership, affordable homes. And how are we going to meet the demands about 10,000 homes short we need today? So there is a big concern. And I know that when this government -- when we put in the Premier and the Cabinet Ministers, you know, a lot of housing issues were carried over from the last Assembly.

In the last Assembly, I asked the question about austerity and basically it was said that at the time that this issue will be brought forward to the 20th Assembly. Now we're at \$2.29 billion as a government, \$1.6 million in the deficit. We're \$1.6 billion that comes from grants and contribution from the Government of Canada. And that's probably earmarked for Indian, Metis, and Inuit. And it feels like for me, any time I go to government and ask for help, it's like I become a beggar in my homeland and going to the government to ask for help for our people in our small communities. And it's really tough, especially when we have that kind of money that comes from Ottawa, from the Crown. And that's something that I'm hoping that this government and the 20th Assembly will take a look at. But right now the words been thrown around here is notional that was brought in our caucus meeting. And believe me that when we went into a caucus meeting we had, it wasn't -- it was a tough go around because we all had our own views about housing. We brought forward our issues. We had disagreements. And I do apologize to my colleagues, we -- sometimes we step on each other's toes. But at the outcome at the end is that I think what we want to bring forward what we hear from our people in the community. And, you know, the Cabinet is -- we got a good Premier here. We have a good Cabinet. We just got to figure a way as to how we all could work together. And, you know, at the end of the day, we're all on the same ship here. But somehow I don't want to lose sight of what the vision here of the North is is going to be of the 20th Assembly, is that housing is number one. We have to figure a way going forward that we could look at new ways to deliver housing, homeownership repairs, etcetera.

I put forward an initiative because I already knew that every time I went to go see the Minister, I'd knock on the door, they said they got no money or they got policies that says I can't help you. So I put forward an idea that I wanted to do homeownership inspections in my riding, and I figured what the houses -- what

state they're in and figure out what it cost for bringing up that unit to code and do that for all four communities, and then work with the GNWT government because I'm tired of trying to say, okay, well, it's all on you. But no, I got to figure a way how we can work together. And I'm really happy that this Cabinet had approved the monies to put aside to do this work. But I think that it'll go a long way if we continue to build that relationship because at the end of the day is that if a lot of these houses get written off or they burn down or something happens and the fire marshal steps in, shut these units down, we're going to be in big trouble.

So I'm -- I think it's a great idea that we continue to build that relationship. And even if this motion here today is defeated, we have to figure a way that it's going to continue to be in the main estimates so that we don't lose sight in that because, you know, at the end of the day, the people in the small communities throughout the Northwest Territories, really need help, and we were elected to be here for them and trying to look for solutions. So, Mr. Speaker -- I mean, Mr. Chairman, you know, this has been a very sensitive subject for me for a very long time.

As you know, our treaties are there, our treaty rights are recognized in the Canadian Constitution. We have UNDRIP. You know, we have a lot of treaty right issues here that needs to be talked about but I'm hoping maybe through the Council of Leaders we really need to take a look as to how we're going to talk about Constitution reform because sooner or later, all our claims are going to get done, we're going to be in a better position to start looking at self-government and manage some of these affairs that we could look at. And I'm hoping that through the Jim Bourque I'll table probably next session and continue to build on that.

So, Mr. Chairman, at this time I'm in favour of voting against the budget on this one here because it doesn't go far enough. And I'm doing this on behalf of my people. We are in a housing crisis, and the top priority of this government, it's just not meeting it right now. And I'm hoping that we'll continue to work together to make sure that we resolve this issue and look for new ways to provide better homes for the residents of the Northwest Territories. With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. We will pause for a minute.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on my list I have is the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will try not to take the full ten minutes here. Mr. Chair, I wanted to make sure there's some clarity -- I hope there's some clarity around what happens by voting down the capital budget and what message is being, in fact, sent.

Mr. Chair, respectfully, we are saying no to capital projects and to the capital -- when we vote down the capital budget. And contrary to a lot of things often asked about about improving our planning, improving our efficiency, doing better in all of those regards, this does the opposite. We vote down the capital budget, there is no appropriation for capital spending done now. So best case scenario is that we're waiting until February to bring it all back, which means there's no contracting, there's no procurement, no one can plan, can't arrange for supplies to be ready, and certainly can't arrange to have things ready to move as of April 1st as we might not pass the budget, might not pass it until March 31st. That is exactly why several jurisdictions, particularly jurisdictions that are challenged with supplies and remoteness, do split their capital budgets to a fall sitting from the fiscal operating budget that happens in the winter sitting, because if we don't pass it now, can't do all those things so we're left waiting to see what may or may not happen.

So in a jurisdiction, Mr. Chair, where we have heard, many of us in this room, talk about uncertainty as acting as a chill on private investment, Mr. Chair, voting down a capital budget in October is a chill on private investment. We are deciding not to support the private sector in the Northwest Territories on small capital projects, on large capital projects, on projects on which they depend. So this puts projects at risk. Not all of them. Not all of them, Mr. Chair. Some might kick around and some might wait until April, but it certainly undermines planning, it certainly does stop the procurement, it doesn't promote private sector, and it tells everyone that we're prepared to sacrifice every single other project in here for other principled positions. And, Mr. Chair, I don't -- I know that -- I have certainly been in this room now for many years. I've had an MLA colleague on the other side in the last government vote against the capital budget every single time on principle, every time. So that's fair. I don't want to at all be seen to be suggesting that that's not an appropriate stand to take at some times, but let's be clear about what we are voting down if that's the choice that we're making.

Mr. Chair, on that note, again, I want to make sure that I want to be fair. Cabinet sometimes -- one of the hardest things of being

on Cabinet, we have constituents, we have residents, we hear from people. The challenges are not lost on us, and the idea that they are is unfair. But the conversations that we have as a group of 19 Members, in my view, respectfully, go far more and far beyond the idea that we're just not listening or trying hard enough, that the public servants, senior members, right down to the frontlines don't care and aren't trying hard enough, and that somehow by voting down the budget, that changes that.

MR. TESTART: Point of Order.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: All right.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake to the Point of Order.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under Rule or 3.2(3), the Minister is alleging that Members during this debate have attacked the integrity of the public service in handling issues, and I do not recall anyone saying that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance to the Point of Order to respond.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, I am more than happy to retract those comments. I certainly didn't want to leave any impression that Members of this House don't respect the public service. So I apologize, and I take it back.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): You got time. Continue. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I do want to speak to the letter that was sent, much of which was ultimately read into the House.

Mr. Chair, that letter was very lengthy and spoke at many points about wanting to see a plan, see a cultural shift, to see leadership change, then in other respects to see a plan, again, to see more changes in policy, to see changes in procedure, to see action plans, to see ambitious planning, and so on and so forth. That's not all that was there, Mr. Chair. I certainly don't want to leave that impression either. But that is a lot of requests for different plans, different processes, different policies, different approaches to leadership. And, Mr. Chair, it was our effort in engaging in the conversations that we did to respond to that with proposals for leadership change, with proposals for policy change, and with an approach that could lead to the culture shift that would then accomplish all of what's in these letters and what all of us here want to see.

Mr. Chair, there's millions of dollars pouring in to the territory for housing. It is not all coming to the Housing Corporation of the Northwest Territories. Now, that said, the housing corporation in the last several years has been successful in seeing significant, tens of millions of investment, come in. The federal funding cycle does not always align well to our funding cycle, and so I'm not in a position to sit here and say that we can remove the word notional from the \$50 million commitment that we expect to be able to make. I don't want to sit here and pretend that I have an answer for that. I do believe that we'll be in a position to spend \$50 million. And, in fact, I believe the housing corporation will probably be in a position to spend more. But, Mr. Chair, it's not fair or appropriate for me to simply say, no problem, and hope it's fine when I can't actually say exactly where it's going to come from. I do think it will find that money. There's engagement happening not only from the housing corporation but from the Department of Infrastructure and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs with our federal counterparts to see these problems addressed. And some of the offers that we've made and the discussions that we've had around changes in leadership and changes in approach involve creating better systems for engagement with MLAs. One such -- for example, just ways by which we can bring one another together, we're all hearing from residents, and we want to make sure that we're doing that in a way that doesn't bring us to the brink of not passing a capital budget which again -- so, really, at that point, Mr. Chair, I'll wrap up with that.

There are projects throughout this capital budget that go to every single community. There are projects in this capital budget that go to small communities. There's projects in the capital budget that will link communities. Everything from transmission lines in Fort Providence, transmission line in Whati, there are housing projects, planning for long-term care facilities, extension of the Inuvik runway. Mr. Chair, I know we've been dealing with this for the last two weeks. At the same time, the conversation here isn't about all of these projects. I realize there is one other priority that people are concerned about, but we aren't going to advance the issue of meeting housing if we can't bring the supplies up on the road, particularly the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We aren't going to be able to connect those houses if they can't be connected to power systems. They are going to struggle if the municipal funding -- the multiple capital funding that is in here doesn't flow to the municipalities who are responsible for water and sewer systems, who are responsible for the waste management systems. It does all need to fit together.

It's a lean plan, Mr. Chair. I get that it's a lean plan. Everyone's heard me stand in the House and say that we have to already increase the borrowing limit. Times are challenging. But, again, the kinds of shifts that we were hoping to make to bring about these policy changes and to move forward in advance of the main estimates, and our hope was one that would respond adequately and allow us to get to a place in the main estimates that shows some of the outcomes of that policy, the policy shift and culture shift that every one of us Members in this House want to see. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any other comments from Members? Thank you. The motion's in order. To the motion. It's been asked to have a recorded vote. Okay, thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Sorry, it's earlier they had asked for a recorded vote. So I'm going to go back to the motions. To the motion. Question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The results of the recorded vote: 11 in favour. 5 opposed. The motion is carried. Tabled Document 193-20 will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

---Carried

Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act. I will ask the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to introduce the bill.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to discuss Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act.

I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment for receiving a technical briefing on the legislative proposal on October 23rd. Based on the feedback from committee, several amendments were made to the bill before you today.

[editors note: the above statement was corrected on November 1, 2024 through a point of order. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change made the following correction to Hansard: "*Mr. Speaker I rise to make a correction to the Hansard record. Yesterday in my opening remarks on Bill 15 during Committee of the Whole, I said 'Based on the feedback from committee, several amendments were made to the bill before you today.' This sentence is inaccurate and was included in my remarks by error. Thank you.*"]

The NWT Project Finance for Permanence, or PFP, Agreement, which has been renamed the Our Land for the Future Agreement, was negotiated by the partnership of 23 Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Government of Canada, and three private donors. The agreement will provide long-term funding for Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to support Indigenous-led conservation, stewardship, and related economic diversification.

The process was Indigenous-led. Negotiations involved extensive collaborative discussions between the partners with the Indigenous leadership initiative acting as a facilitator. In August of this year, the final draft PFP agreement negotiations were completed.

I have approval, as Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to sign the PFP agreement on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

A signing ceremony will be held on November 14th in Behchoko. Canada is currently seeking approval to sign the agreement. While this agreement has not yet been signed, we will be tabling a copy of the agreement tomorrow for the purposes of transparency and for the ease of reviewing the bill.

The Our Land for the Future Agreement makes no changes to our existing regulatory or decision-making structures in the NWT, nor does it commit the GNWT to establishing new protected areas. The bill before us today would establish the Our Land for the Future Trust as a not-for-profit body corporate for the purposes of holding, investing, and managing funds contributed to the Trust in accordance with the PFP Agreement; Distributing funds to eligible Indigenous partners to carry out core activities in accordance with the Agreement; and,

Supporting the partners in achieving the purpose, vision, and objectives of the agreement.

Establishing a Trust in this way will provide the strongest case to the Canada Revenue Agency that the trust will be able to receive and disburse tax-exempt funds. I look forward to committee of the whole's review of Bill 15. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the chamber?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to my left, I have Mr. Charles Hunter, senior advisor, Executive and Indigenous Affairs. To my far right, I have Ian Rennie, legislative council for the Department of Justice. And to my immediate right, I have Amy Kennedy, assistant deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. As a bill, it was not referred to the standing committee for review. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 15. Any general comments from Members? Seeing none.

Does the committee agree that there are no further general comments? We will proceed to clause-by-clause review of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses.

There are 14 clauses in the bill. Please turn to page 2 of the bill.

Clause 1, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 3, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 4, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 5, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 6, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 7, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 8, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 9, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 10, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 11, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 12, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 13, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 14, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now return to the bill number and title. Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does the committee agree that Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act, is now ready for third reading.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Minister, and to your witnesses. I'm going to ask that our sergeant-at-arms please escort the witnesses out of the chamber. Thank you.

Thank you. What is the will of the committee? I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now rise and report progress. Thank you. Sorry, all those in favour? Opposed? Abstained?

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 193-20(1) and Bill 15 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. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 193-20(1) and Bill 15 and would like to report progress with two motions carried that Bill 15 is ready for third reading and that consideration of Tabled Document 193-20(1) is concluded in the House and concur that those estimates and that the -- and the appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder, please. Member from Sahtu. What was that, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake? You thought it was a good decision? Thank you. Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Thebacha.

Third Reading of Bills

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.4(10) and have the Speaker put Bill 15 on the orders of the day for third reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has asked for unanimous consent to move Bill 15 onto the orders of the day. Any nays? Seeing no nays. You may proceed.

Let's go back to that; somebody wants to go out trick or treating. Okay, let's get going here. Third reading of bills. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I move, second by the honourable Member from Hay River North, that Bill 15, Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to rise in support of this piece of legislation. Bill 15 represents a very important relationship that this government has with First Nations and Indigenous governments across the territory. This bill will establish trust that will allow around half a billion of dollars of money to flow into the Northwest Territories for a whole bunch of purposes around conservation, Indigenous guardian programs, economic development, and the list does go on; it's quite exhaustive. And I think one other thing that's very remarkable is the speed at which the legislation's moved through which shows the strength of our institution that we are able to move quickly when things need to get done. And I commend the Minister for bringing this forward. I commend the Cabinet for bringing this forward and getting it done so quickly. And we've had very patient guests in the gallery, many dignitaries from Indigenous governments who are very passionate about this legislation, and I'm glad we could work through this today as an Assembly and make it worthwhile for your time you've put into our proceedings today. So thank you, again, to the Minister, to the Cabinet. And I will be supporting this legislation.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I also support this bill. First and foremost, because I support self-determination of Indigenous governments. And I support Indigenous governments taking the lead on taking care of their own lands and resources. I know that this bill has followed an unusual process, unusual path, but I also recognize that we're still in the process of charting a new path of co-governance with governments, and there needs to be some give and take on all sides, and I hope we will get to a place where we have better procedures where we can all work together comfortably in this process of co-governance. But I'm proud today that we have done something that can provide a vehicle that will allow Indigenous governments to have the resources they need to move forward with taking care of the land. So I wholeheartedly support this and look forward to where this initiative takes us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this Bill No. 15 in consultation with the leadership that I represent and the dialogue we've had. I'm happy to support it. Mahsi.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too stand up and rise and give support to Bill 15. This is something that is really much needed for our communities. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, this Bill 15 is on the road to looking at a constitutional reform. And I'm hoping that this bill will rise with the Council of Leaders as well as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RODGERS: I won't take much time. Obviously, anybody who knows me and followed my campaign and followed me here, I'm in full support of Indigenous governments and am in full support of reconciliation. This one, Mr. Speaker, is a no-brainer. I commend the Cabinet and the Minister for bringing it forward and has my full support. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long day, so I'm not going to stand and make a long speech about this one but just wanted to also express my support for this. I echo some of the comments made by my colleagues about reconciliation and self-determination which are things that matter to me and I support. Happy to support this. Looking forward to seeing that it brings resources into the territory that we haven't had previously for First Nations to move forward with not just conservation but realizing the benefits of conservation of their land. So happy to support it. I think it is an act of reconciliation by the House, and it's certainly something I that support. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike -- I'm going to use all my 20 minutes. No, no, I'm kidding. It's been a long day. No, I won't be using my 20 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to rise in favour of this initiative. I've spoken to some of the leadership. I certainly like the intent. It was sold to me on the initiative. It's a great investment of new dollars. We should not overlook the fact that this brings not only federal government dollars to empower Indigenous organizations and groups, but peoples and families and help

protect our environment. This is all good stuff, Mr. Speaker.

The one thing of note, though, I would say that this -- it shouldn't go past, and I know we're all pretending it didn't but, you know, I think it's important that we remind ourselves how we went through this process, how we need to work closer together. And, you know, I was never a believer that this wouldn't get to this point in the sense of succeed but, you know, there are -- you know, like all legislation challenges, there's ups and downs. And I would say that I think ILI did their part, and I certainly say the government, you know, could have warmed up with us a little sooner on some of the information and -- but the Members, I think, did their heavy lifting and our due diligence as are required by all, and so I'm glad that we got it through. And I -- from what I understand, this works with your hoped timeframes. And the important part is to stress, as I finish, Mr. Speaker, is, you know, the Assembly needs to be and wants to be partners with these folks as well, and these governments, these peoples, and these initiatives. So it's a lot to all bundle together, but the -- lastly is it's a great thing. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am -- I do support this bill as well. I am pleased. I know that there's a lot of people are going to benefit from it in NWT. I know everyone's going to benefit from it. So I am pleased to see the good working relationship between the Cabinet and Indigenous government which we never had before. So it's -- so we are making progress. So I am quite pleased about that. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Member has asked for a recorded vote. To the Member from Thebacha. To the debate.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that a lot of the tremendous words from my colleagues here in this House have certainly relayed the message of the importance of this initiative and how beneficial it will be to the territory.

I would be remiss if I did not stand up here and thank my colleagues in this House for their tremendous amount of work. I know this was a difficult process that was not the norm. We asked a lot of the Regular Members and

Cabinet to move this forward at the pace in which we did. And for that, I'm truly thankful.

I also would like to recognize the amount of work that went into this initiative from ILI, from the Indigenous governments, from the GNWT, from all of the staff that were involved to get this through today. And I'm -- truly, I stand up here with a lot of pride to be part of this group of Northerners, both in this House and up in the gallery and in the communities and watching around the NWT, to sit here and be able to say that we accomplished this. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member from Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Montwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. Thank you. All those in favour, 17. Those opposed, zero. Abstentions, zero. Bill 15 has passed.

---Carried

Before we get onto this, I would like to actually thank Dahti Tsetso that started two and a half years ago where she sat there and looked at me and went you want me to do what in this timeframe? Thanks to her leadership, the Indigenous governments' leadership, last year's Cabinet, and this year's Cabinet, for getting this done. And I look forward to the success we are moving forward. So thank you very much and, again, thank you.

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 Friday, November 1st, 2024, at 10 a.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
 - Motion 45-20(1), Extended Adjournment of the House to February 5, 2025
17. Notices of Motion for the 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
 - Committee Report 17-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
 - 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

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 Friday, November 1st, 2024, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

