



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, November 1, 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 10:01 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Please be seated. I'd like to thank Marc Casaway for doing the blessing today.

Ministers' statements. Minister for Housing NWT.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 84-20(1):
ILLEGAL ACTIVITY AND EVICTIONS IN
PUBLIC HOUSING**

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, residents have noticed a significant increase in illegal activities across the territory and within public housing. In particular, there has been an increase in drug use and sales. I am concerned that this behaviour is a risk to public safety, especially to elders and children in our communities. Local housing organizations are actively looking for ways to address and report drug use and sales in public housing by working with the RCMP, the rental office, and residents.

Proving illegal activity can be challenging. Witnesses may be too frightened to formally complain for fear of retaliation. I am calling on Members of the Legislative Assembly and residents to report illegal activity in public housing so that local housing organizations can address the issues and help keep residents safe. Housing NWT has limited options to address illegal activity, but that is slowly changing. Last year, local housing organizations met with the RCMP and have built a relationship that allows the RCMP to share information that can support expedited rental office hearings. As a result, the Inuvik Housing Authority has been successful in obtaining expedited rental office hearings due to illegal activity in public housing units.

But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT does not evict tenants on a whim. Evictions are the last action in a long process

seeking to address non-compliance with a tenancy agreement. At each stage of the eviction process, Housing NWT staff work collaboratively with tenants to recommend appropriate support services. If a tenant takes corrective action to follow their tenancy agreement, they can avoid eviction. If the agreed-upon actions are adhered to, the local housing organization may amend the application to the rental officer and continue to work with the tenant.

Mr. Speaker, people on waiting lists for public housing deserve fair treatment. Allowing tenants who continue to cause disturbances to stay in public housing after the rental officer has ruled that the tenancy should end is unfair to other people who are waiting to access public housing.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the rental officer issued 63 eviction orders to public housing tenants. 18 tenants were evicted. Of those evictions, three were evicted under section 46 of the Residential Tenancies Act for illegal activities, and 13 of the evictions were due to disturbances.

As I mentioned earlier, illegal activity can be hard for local housing organizations to prove, but they often go hand-in-hand with repeated disturbances, which could lead to eviction. So far, this fiscal year, there have been seven evictions from public housing. Two of those evictions were due to illegal activity, and three were due to disturbances.

Mr. Speaker, the 20th Legislative Assembly is committed to keeping residents and communities safe. We will continue to do this with the support of the RCMP, local housing organizations, the rental office, and communities. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Minister for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 85-20(1):
WORKER'S SAFETY AND COMPENSATION
COMMISSION ASSESSMENT RATES 2025**

HON. VINCE McKAY: Mr. Speaker, the Workers' Protection Fund provides no-fault insurance coverage for employers and benefits and care for workers in events of workplace injury.

All employers share the cost of this compensation system by making payments based on their assessable payroll, which is the amount of earnings they report for each worker, and the group rate for their industry. Each year's assessment rate must generate enough revenue to cover all current and future costs associated with workplace injuries occurring in the assessment year, including health care, rehabilitation, and wage replacement benefits.

Effective January 1, 2025, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission will introduce two distinct years' maximum insurable remuneration, or YMIR values, for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. YMIR is the maximum amount of salary or wages for which a worker is fully covered by the WSCC in the event of a workplace injury and sets a dollar limit on the amount of payroll that employers report per worker.

The decision to have separate YMIRs is based on changes to the average weekly earnings of each territory and the WSCC's goal is to ensure that a minimum of 70 percent of the NWT and Nunavut workforces have their earnings totally covered in the event of an injury. Employers will receive notification next month of their individual industry group rate for 2025, along with the YMIR value for each territory for the upcoming year.

I am pleased to announce that through strong stewardship of this fund, the WSCC can maintain the average employer assessment rate for 2025 at \$2.40 per \$100 of assessable payroll, and the amount has not changed since 2020.

The WSCC will continue to monitor workplace safety trends to better determine where support and resources are needed to help workers in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 421-20(1):
FIRE INSURANCE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about the lessons learned from the 2023 wildfires regarding insurance. On May 27th, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs discussed the importance of having insurance and ensuring residents are aware that proof of insurance or prior refusal is required to be eligible for the disaster assistance program. I have questions about what exactly residents need to provide to show they have been refused coverage, Mr. Speaker. How can residents demonstrate uninsurability especially have homes have been destroyed by fire. The Minister said, I quote, fire insurance is usually included in general insurance for residents and businesses and all homeowners, tenants, business owners, and organizations should check their insurance coverage with their provider.

But, Mr. Speaker, many residents do not qualify for insurance or cannot afford it. Home and fire insurability are major concerns in this territory now, and I know it's affecting a lot of residents in my riding. Insurance costs are skyrocketing and has become a big cost of living issue quickly, as if we needed another one. I would like to know what mitigation efforts the government can undertake to help reduce the cost of insurance.

The insurance corporation of British Columbia is a provincial Crown corporation in British Columbia that provides vehicle insurance. I am curious to investigate what we can do here in the territory. Could we establish a public insurance model for fire insurance or partner with another program to help reduce costs for residents?

We are waiting on the after action review of the 2023 wildfire emergency response. But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what this government plans to do about our insurance affordability problem. I will have questions for the Minister of MACA at the appropriate time.

And Mr. Speaker, while I have a few seconds left for my statement today, I just wanted to make a special acknowledgement of one of our staff, Cynthia James. I wanted to congratulate her on her retirement and thank her for her work. You know, I've worked with her very closely as chair of SCOGO for the past year and just really appreciate the perspective that she brought to the table and the wisdom that she was able to share with me and has helped me grow into the role and wish her all the best going forward. So thank you very much, Cynthia.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 422-20(1):
REMEMBRANCE DAY

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my constituency assistant has many wonderful talents, and I am thankful every day for his support. Today I would like to read a slightly edited opinion piece that he wrote for Lucky Mall in 2020.

I never knew my maternal grandfather. A veteran of the second world war, he did not give up his life open the field of honour but he never really came back either. Like many other Canadians who returned from the front as heros, he kept an indelible memory of the horror that he encountered. At a time when post-traumatic stress disorder did not exist, he served his country as a military nurse before being enturned for a few years upon his return to Canada. He died in a psychiatric hospital. War kills, but even when you escape it, it still leaves a lasting mark on your mind. Both among the military and the civilian population, those who have experienced this terrible human tragedy are sometimes lastingly affected by it. You never really come out of war completely unscathed.

Mental health issues are a reality for many veterans who have participated in the missions of Bosnia, Afghanistan, Syria, and beyond. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs in 2019, there were nearly 25,000 veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and more than 33,000 struggling with mental health issues. And that's just those who had the courage to ask for help.

Trauma is a vector for other public health issues, including drug and alcohol abuse. When we fight the opioid crisis, we are also fighting for the well-being of our veterans.

Furthermore, as our country continues to welcome refugees from armed conflict zones, it's important to remember that some of them will also need psychological support. We must show compassion to all those who have experienced such trauma and do everything possible to ensure that care is available.

On Remembrance Day, let us remember all those who died defending our freedom but also those who are alive and continue to relive the horror. We do not forget, and our hearts are with you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 423-20(1):
RISING COSTS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sahtu heating fuel emergency. Facing \$50,000 for one heating season is terrifying. This, Mr. Speaker, is the sentiment of my riding according to the recent Cabin Radio article and conversations I've had with numerous constituents. Today will bring our last fall sitting to a close and, again, I must raise the alarm bells regarding the issue of increased fuel prices in Norman Wells. I'm grateful to my colleagues who have voiced support towards the issue, many of whom realize it's just a matter of time before similar situations arise in their own ridings, and to the Minister of Finance for ongoing conversations with Imperial Oil and federal counterparts. However, there is a still a ways to go to bring relief to this situation.

Mr. Speaker, emergencies aren't anew to this territory in recent years. We have dealt with COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires, and floods. In these instances, the government has adapted, innovated, and found ways to offer support. Innovation could or should not be a stranger, and it is needed now in Norman Wells. Currently, the cost of air freighting fuel in is approximately \$5 million. This cost needs to be offset to help the Sahtu residents. Apart from declaring a state of emergency which could freeze prices, what can be done? How can we divert funding to offset these costs, Mr. Speaker? Are there options to pull from the carbon tax revenues or funding from devolution royalties for example?

Mr. Speaker, I'm worried about the outcome for my constituents if there is no further intervention or government support offered. I do not want to return to this House and having to speak about widespread devastation in my riding because no one could afford home heating oil. I want to ensure that the Premier and Cabinet grasps the severity of what this could mean in the hardships of winter pressures coming. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. And mahsi, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I implore the Premier to work with his Cabinet colleagues to introduce support for the people in my riding who will inevitably suffer in the coming cold months. And, Mr. Speaker, I assure residents I have every confidence. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 424-20(1):
REMEMBRANCE DAY

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, these days we face a challenging global landscape with tense conflicts and political developments around the world. However, while the future may be uncertain, what we can be certain of is our country is safer thanks to the unimaginable sacrifices generations before us made to preserve the values of freedom and democracy during conflicts stretching back centuries.

Every year we wear these poppies over our hearts to remember the sacrifices of our armed service members, all of whom came back from world wars drastically changed mentally and physically, and tragically, too many paid the ultimate price. This tradition began immediately after the first world war as society came to terms with the scale of lives lost and the realization that war still stubbornly persisted into modernity and, if it anything, technological advancements made wars even more destructive.

While Remembrance Day has different names across the world and is celebrated on different dates, the spirit remains the same, a spirit of both profound grief and gratitude for those who gave everything in the line of duty. In many of these countries, they too remember the enormous contribution Canadian soldiers had on their own liberation from tyranny because we were not just fighting for ourselves but for nations around the world. We should share in our pride that Canada and Indigenous nations have always been home to so many young men and women who were ready to rise to the occasion when the world needed them.

So let's reflect once more on what it took to stand here today as democratically-elected representatives of the people doing our best to serve all our constituents no matter their identity or their ability and strive to support the veterans who bless us today with their presence. We will remember them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 425-20(1):
CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we won't be meeting again now until

after Christmas, but I wanted to ensure everyone certainly the work will continue. Mr. Speaker, I've decided to put together a little wish list for Premier Santa and the Members of his workshop that I'd like to see accomplished and hopefully when we get back in February, we'll be discussing a positive change to those items.

The list, Mr. Speaker, would be way too long, and I wouldn't have time in my Member's statement to say them all, but I will highlight a couple, Mr. Speaker:

- First of all, I wish for relief for the people of Norman Wells with the issue they're having with the cost of living and their crisis with fuel, as my colleague from the Sahtu has mentioned;
- Mr. Speaker, a solid plan to ensure we stand by our commitment, again, to prioritize housing for all the residents in the Northwest Territories;
- That we continue to provide action to support and curtail the ongoing drug crisis that many of our communities are facing, Mr. Speaker;
- That we see meaningful action to deal with the issue facing and our continuing health care crisis, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleagues for this week. It's been a trying couple of weeks, obviously, in this House. I'd like to thank them for their hard work, their dedication, and their passion as we work through the issues, we work through the capital budget and other things that we've had to do this session.

I'd like to say certainly a Merry Christmas to all our staff, to my colleagues here, to the residents of Inuvik and the residents of the entire Northwest Territories, and I look forward to getting home, doing some work in my constituency, and seeing everyone again. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 426-20(1):
CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night we passed a bill to allow the creation of a trust that would provide resources to support Indigenous-led conservation initiatives long into the future. Now, we were all so tired by that time last night that we kept our

comments relatively short, so I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the incredible potential of this initiative not only in terms of conservation and Indigenous self-determination over Indigenous lands but also its economic potential.

We often struggle to find our competitive advantage as a territory in terms of things that can drive our economy. We focus on all our disadvantages, all the things that we don't have, like I was speaking about in my Member's statement on Wednesday. Our territory is a vast 135 million hectares with many remote communities and very little infrastructure. But we can also turn those challenges into an economic advantage. And that's exactly what project finance for permanence has done.

To quote the project's strategic plan, few places on Earth offer the opportunity to build on existing momentum to support local Indigenous-led objectives and achieve globally significant conservation and economic development outcomes. The NWT is one such place.

Now, under Our Land for the Future Agreement, Canada will invest \$300 million to be matched by \$75 million in private funds. So that's a total of \$375 million for the exclusive use of Indigenous governments. It is expected to create over 5,000 jobs, and every dollar in investment will create more than \$4 in economic impact.

Now, this will not be a fly in/fly out workforce. This is something where only our own people are the ones who can do this work. For example, the Indigenous guardians programs which have already taken off and shown to be very successful. Conservation is a sector where we with truly capture all of the socioeconomic benefits, and it goes far beyond wages, to physical health by keeping people active, and cultural health through the everyday practice of culture and traditional knowledge.

Now, Indigenous communities and governments have been working hard for so many years on this initiative to get us to this point where we're signing this momentous agreement, so I commend them on --

MR. SPEAKER: Yellowknife North, your time is up.

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, may I have unanimous consent just to conclude my statement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife North is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Seeing no nays -- we

have a nay. Sorry, Member from Yellowknife North.

Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 427-20(1):
ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Burgundy recently released a letter which some could say was completely unfortunate on their approach. They could have gone about this a little bit differently. The criticism they received was basically targeted at the author. They viewed it as a large business wanting their way, and they attacked them on their pocketbook. But what was ignored is the message within the letter. Here was a bell being rung by an industry partner that underpins our economy and who's saying we have a path for economic opportunity for the next 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, they are saying we could do things. It was profound, their letter, if you actually read the text. 2040, they're saying we could keep things going. But even more exciting, Mr. Speaker, was the statement that said, in fact, the Jay pipe alone represents one of the largest undeveloped kimberlite pipes on the planet. This is a statement that should have been the headlines of every newspaper in the world. They are seeing opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, Burgundy isn't looking for a pass; they're looking for a path forward. Mr. Speaker, they went so far as saying here we're giving some ideas. They throw several easy-to-read headlines such as mine reclamation provisions, and they talk about the cost of holding money back. And what they're really asking for is can we do a progressive return of their deposit. Any situation of asking, if you've done 50 percent of the work why are you holding on the money, as an example. Return some of it. Find a way. They're concerned about valuation, can we speed up the process, all within the GNWT's reach. The Mineral Resource Act, they're not asking to say we don't want to have regulations. They're just saying can we be grandfathered, but more importantly, if you read the message saying MRA regs have been out for years and years to come, we're just looking for some transparency about the hidden unknowns.

Mr. Speaker, under environmental permitting, they're not saying change the system and dump the system. They're just saying they view it conflicted, would the GNWT work as a partner, acknowledge they have challenges, and they want to meet them. I don't hear they don't want to be permitted or regulated; I hear we want to do things differently but progressive. Mr. Speaker, the water management is the same

argument. They want to work with the Northerners to achieve a good end.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately, no one is saying that big business should get a pass. This big business isn't saying they want a pass; they say they want to be a partner in the future. 25 years ahead with the biggest diamond mine pipe should not go ignored. Mr. Speaker, this is a true and genuine opportunity for economic sustainability of the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 428-20(1):
CELL SERVICE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this year I brought the issue up about the cell service in the community of N'dilo. Public safety is a mandate of this government. And in N'dilo, we have completely poor service in the cell towers we have there. So I have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure as to how we can help resolve that issue.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this time to also -- as the session comes to an end, I just want to quickly thank my beautiful darling wife for taking care of the home while we serve as the MLA for the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding. Also, I want to thank my constituents Taylor Pagotto and Warren Delorme who work hard behind the scenes to bring forward all constituent issues and concerns to my attention as the MLA for the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding.

Most importantly, I also want to thank all the translators here today, the Legislative Assembly staff, caterers. And also I want to say thank you to Ms. Cynthia James in her retirement and obviously a big mahsi cho to you.

Finally, and I just want to say Seasons Greetings to all my colleagues and all the residents in the NWT and to my constituents in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding. This is the time of year where we want to take care of each other, watch other our families, and have a safe holiday. And, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 429-20(1):
CORBIN WILSON – BASKETBALL
NATIONALS TOURNAMENT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, last session, I spoke about a startup Basketball Program in Fort Liard. Today, I would like to add to the story.

Corbin Wilson is a 17-year-old Fort Liard student who was selected to play on the Basketball NWT team that travelled to the Nationals tournament held in Toronto in August. This is quite an accomplishment for Corbin who started to play basketball regularly less than a year ago. He was one of a group of boys who began playing on the Fort Liard outside court and with one hoop back in the summer of 2023. The boys evolved into the Fort Liard Warriors, Fort Liard's first organized basketball team in many years, which gained players as the 2023-24 season went on.

As the closest community is Fort Nelson, British Columbia, their first tournaments were played there. The school principal and teachers in Fort Nelson were immensely supportive in encouraging and contributed volunteer coaches when the Warriors had no coaches to travel with them. Corbin displayed excellent playing skills and leadership early on and became the Warriors team captain.

MACA sponsored a regional travel basketball clinic in the fall of 2023 and Fort Liard was fortunate to have a coach come in. Fort Liard's recreation was able to bring the same coach back in the spring of 2024 which further developed the players' skills and prepared them for the annual Wolf Pack Tournament that was held in Fort Simpson.

In May 2024, him and four of his teammates travelled to the basketball NWT nationals and Canadian Summer Games selection camp and Corbin was chosen as the first alternate for the team.

With strong family support, he was able to attend the YK training camp for the whole month of July where he impressed the coaches with his dedication and hard work. He moved from an alternate to a full-fledged team member within a couple of weeks. In the end he was able to fully experience the national tournament in Toronto, truly a life-changing opportunity.

Corbin's family and the community rallied to fundraise for him through activities like Chase the Ace and Jail and Bail, and the hamlet council donated to his considerable costs. Corbin also participated fully in team fundraising activities while at the training camp in Yellowknife.

As Corbin completes his grade 12 this coming year, he will continue to play on the Fort Liard Warriors team and has committed to coaching young youth to help grow the basketball

program. Thank you, Corbin, it is great to see young people pay it back. Thank you very much.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my constituency assistant, Mr. Taylor Pagotto, who is in the gallery with us today. I couldn't let -- I share him with the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, and he mentioned him in his opening statement so I couldn't be remiss not to recognize him for the amazing work he does for the Range Lake riding to help all the constituents out there. Thank you so much, Taylor. You work very hard every day, and we're very lucky to have you. Thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to recognize Taylor Pagotto who I share as a CA with the Member from Range Lake. Also, I just want to say that our CAs that we use in this House, they do a lot of work behind the scenes, the research, and especially taking calls on the weekends and nights from my members in my riding. So I just want to recognize Taylor Pagotto and Warren Delorme. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to take this opportunity to share my recognition of the staff in this House - the interpreters, the pages that have come and gone, and my colleagues here for the Christmas holidays that are coming up, and have a safe season until we meet again here February the 5th, and special congratulations to retirement to Cynthia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, recognition of visitors in the gallery are for people here in the gallery. Please remember this moving forward. Thank you.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize -- we got lots of pages in the house today from the Frame Lake riding. I recognized her earlier this week

but wanted to recognize and thank again Lucy Mackay. We've got Emereigh Moffatt returning, so thank you to her for her service. And also Tika Ristau. So thank you to all three of our Frame Lake pages this week. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, it could never be said enough that our interpreters and translators do an important job, and sometimes I don't know how they keep up with us when we get going but acknowledging one particular translator, Ms. Sarah Cleary, she's a constituent and she's a translator extraordinaire, grateful for her services and her kind friendship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Elise Scott, chief governance officer with WSCC.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a resident of Yellowknife South, also a fellow hockey parent, fellow soccer parent Nicole Sok here today. Thank you.

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

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

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

Oral Questions

QUESTION 412-20(1):
BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY PROCESS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Northwest Territories businesses expect the government to fulfill its commitment to maximize benefits of spending of public dollars in the North for the North. This is why we have the business incentive policy, Mr. Speaker. The Stanton audit states that we cannot prove that the single biggest project in the history of this time achieved this goal.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of ITI. How do we assure northern businesses that the BIP is being used? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Boot Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism, and Investment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, a few things, businesses have to meet the eligibility requirements of BIP and then those businesses, of course, are audited on a biannual basis. And then also we have our vendor performance management policy as well as the -- which was put out in 2023. And then in 2024, the guidelines were put out so that both the staff of the GNWT would understand what is expected and required, and staff do undergo training. And then in future we will be putting out training for contractors as well. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. And, yes, I was aware in 2023 certainly the BIP had had some changes. I attended the workshop in Inuvik when they implemented -- they were talking about implementing goes. So I guess my question is who was watching? And previously, Mr. Speaker, people would fill out the BIP application but how are we now, I guess, being a little more robust in monitoring that and ensuring that those businesses that fill out that form are actually following through on the commitments they make to northern businesses in that form. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the change that was made was specific to start off for construction contracts over \$250,000. And so those contracts, they're really what we are focusing on to start with the vendor performance management policy to ensure that those contractors are meeting their BIP requirements. All of the contracts that are put out by the government then undergo review, along with the contractors, and there are penalties that are applied to contracts where BIP is not followed within that financial bracket. And I'd be more than happy to answer any other questions about enforcement of BIP certification for the Member as well. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And in the past, there has been issues where the following up has kind of taken place halfway through the contract where it puts us in a position oftentimes not to be able to make a change because of the cost associated with that. I guess, can the Minister maybe speak a little more on the penalties and on monitoring these contractors early on in the contract

versus previous years it's been a little later in the project. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, well the contractor is the one that is making a commitment off the hop on a commitment they are making through a contract and through a bidding process to the government. So they would, I would hope, would know what commitments they're making in their own tendering process right from the hop. That being said, one of the things that we will be implementing coming up here is training for contractors so that they understand the expectation of all contracts, they understand how businesses are registered and comply with BIP, that they understand what penalties will be applied to them. So if BIP commitments are not achieved and -- so sorry, the payment adjustment applies only if BIP commitments are not achieved and is equal to 15 percent of the amount by which a contractor failed to meet their commitment for NWT content and 20 percent of the amount by which the contractor failed to meet its commitments for local content. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that. I'm glad to hear that. Again, my only concern, and my question would be, that it's great that we have penalties in there but if no one is watching, what's the incentive for a company to follow through? So my concern is, again, that not only are we saying it but that we're doing it and that we're following up early on in the contract to ensure that these businesses that say they're going to use local businesses but, maybe for cost saving measures, get halfway through the contract and say I'm going to flip that and buy that product in the south instead. Are we watching that early on in the contract?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this essentially is the point of this policy and this program is, first of all, penalizing financially the companies that aren't adhering to BIP and then at a certain point if companies are being nonresponsive, then they are going to end up with consequences and especially in a place where government contracting is so important to contractors, you know, as the -- my other hat, the MLA for Kam Lake, very much understand that government contracting is very important. If government's not putting out contracts, you better believe that I hear about it. So making sure that we are ensuring that there is benefit to Northerners, it helps everybody, and that is

really what we are trying to do with this policy. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Minister for ITI. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 413-20(1):
ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today, I talked about the Burgundy letter, and if I remember correctly, I think I even read somewhere that the Premier had reached out or had some conversation with them. And if I'm incorrect on that understanding, I would hope that the Premier would clarify. But that said, what has the Premier done in response to the open letter Burgundy has written, I guess the Government of the Northwest Territories, about trying to be a partner in the longer-term solution of our economic viability as a territory? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did receive a letter from Burgundy, and I did meet with the senior executives from Burgundy maybe sometime in October. Also at that meeting were the Minister of ITI and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Was the Minister of Finance there? The Minister of Finance was there as well as well as the Minister of Infrastructure. So we had a number of Ministers there. And when it comes to these types of files, I'm not the lead on the regulations on access to lands, those securities, things like that, but I felt it was important for me to attend because economic development in the territory, creating a strong climate for economic development and for industry is important to me. But ultimately, the leads on those files are the Ministers and I made sure that Burgundy knew that, made sure they had connections into the Ministers. And there were officials at that meeting as well who made commitments to work further with Burgundy. So we are working with them to address their issues. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I'm going to the Premier is, first, he's the head of the government in the context of Cabinet; it also sews over many departments and it's difficult -- I'd be here for weeks and months if not trying to get every Minister through the cycle of asking questions hence I'm trying to point them.

So what type of Cabinet direction is being provided or what could be provided with respect to the concerns raised? I could go through them. I think the Premier's well versed in them or at least aware of them, generally speaking. But I want to emphasize just on one micro statement which is the Jay pipe alone represents one of the largest undeveloped kimberlite pipes on the planet. Mr. Speaker, does that inspire the government to call to action ways to work with Burgundy? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Jay pipe's a good example of the vast resources that we have here in the Northwest Territories. 1.3 million square kilometers, much of it contains a number of diamonds, precious metals, rare Earth elements, critical minerals, timber, wildlife, all sorts of natural resources that the people of the North can benefit from and resources that we should be able to benefit from. And we are doing that by working with industry, working on streamlining our regulations to the extent that we can, understanding we're just one partner in land management in the Northwest Territories. We manage the land collaboratively with the Indigenous governments, and the Government of Canada also has a role. So part of what we need to do is explain to industry what it's like to do work up here. To that end, I've mandated the Ministers of ECC and ITI to work together so that industry will have a single window to come to and so they can hear from the regulators, hear from those we're promoting, development, and help make -- get their way through that process of, you know, right from exploration to mining. So that's just one of the things that we're doing here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, Ekati's been in business approximately 25 years. They're proposing they could be here another 25 to 2040. They hire at least 350 Northerners, according to their letter, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not attracting them. It's trying to find ways to keep them here in the North working and employing as well as the endless contributions to communities and community governments or organizations.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier see the significance of this partner in their economic future? And if he doesn't, does he have another alternative? Because mining cannot easily be replaced with forestry, et cetera, et cetera. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, of course, I see the benefit of having Burgundy here and all of the direct employment that they provide to northerners as well as all

the spinoff employment, all the services provided by contractors across the territory. So yes, we're very committed to continuing to work with industry and making the territory -- continuously improving the territory so that it is a better place to do business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier. Final supplementary, Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I read every word in this letter very closely. I did not see we're big business, we need a big pass. What it says is we see opportunity and we need a partner. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier commit to updating us on progress on all of these initiatives outlined by the Burgundy letter in a way that even Members can see where we can help support this industry to employ Northerners and to help continue to make the territories an economically viable place to live and work. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a great opportunity to offer committee a briefing on what the territory is doing on this file and on regulations in general to help spur development and to continue development in the Northwest Territories. And so I'd like to make that offer to the standing committee. I believe the Member might be the chair. And we'd be happy to provide that update and have that conversation. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 414-20(1):
FIRE INSURANCE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of MACA as mentioned in my statement.

Can the Minister explain what documents residents must show to demonstrate prior refusal for insurance in order to be as eligible for the disaster assistance program? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents who are obtaining insurance must obtain documents from their insurance company to state that what their insurance covers. And I think it's important for all residents that, you know, we all look at our insurance documents. They're pretty thick, and I'm sure probably most of us here have never

read the fine lines of the insurance documents. I know I have after the last couple years. But it's important to go through them and get the information you need out of your insurance documents. If you have documents that are showing that you're refused uncertain coverage, it's important to have those ready. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what is MACA doing to help residents understand the steps that they need to follow in order to have proper insurance documentation? Certainly, I have residents I'd like to get this message out to. So what can I share with them, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the last year we've -- MACA has done a good job promoting the Be Ready campaign which also included making sure that you have insurance available for your assets. We have staff, like the Pathfinders, who work with residents to make sure they have their documents or assist them in getting documents from insurance companies. So it's important that, you know, residents reach out and even just work with Pathfinders that are available to see what they need. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And if the Minister doesn't mind following up with an e-mail or something with some information I can share with residents, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of affordability seems to be one of the most difficult items. Can the Minister describe how residents who can't afford insurance in particular need to document their efforts to obtain eligibility for disaster assistance? Is there something that can be done to help residents who simply can't afford the insurance quotes that they're receiving and are not necessarily being refused? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of affordability is getting to be worse. It's not just -- you know, it used to be hard to get insurance for some folks, and now it's continuing to be harder and harder for most of us to get insurance for certain things. And that just relates to a lot of the disasters that have happened throughout Canada. You know, with the affordability, you know, there's documentation that's needed to show that it's not affordable for them to have insurance. You know, if you can't afford it, make sure you have that documentation so that it can help you in an event of emergency and disaster, the DFAA may be applied if it's not affordable. So when it comes down to the insurance, I know it's tough, but DFAA is really strict on the fact of

affordability is not necessarily a point of coverage. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it seems the Minister is identifying a bit of a gray area here that I think we need to dig further into, and certainly I'll be doing that with research over the coming months preparing for the next session.

Mr. Speaker, has the Minister considered what measurements the government might be able to take to assist residents who are unable to obtain insurance due to affordability considering the federal government doesn't necessarily consider this to be reason enough to make residents eligible for disaster assistance? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The territorial government is on a working group with the federal government that is talking about insurance and affordability, also insurance coverage that is not available. For an example, some flood insurance is not available depending on the type of flood. So there is a working group out there to work on insurance coverage. And to mention to the point of the gray area, there is a lot of confusion about insurance and what can and cannot be covered. So there is a federal working group, and the government is part of it. Also, I believe the NWTAC is also part of that working group. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 415-20(1):
NTPC INDEPENDENT BOARD OF
GOVERNANCE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've all seen the news about the intention of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to apply for a general increase that would lead to a 25 percent hike in electricity costs, which is obviously a huge blow to both the residents and businesses. My constituents, and I'm sure that many of my colleagues' constituents, are very concerned about the governance of the NTPC. So my questions are for the Minister of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

First, what are the Minister's plans to create a truly independent NTPC board instead of a board made up of deputy ministers and ADMs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, member from Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for NWT Power Corp.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is something that is a commitment from the very end of the last government in carrying forward and one that I'm certainly happy to action. One of the first things that we do need to do is make sure we design what an appropriate and professional board and non-deputy minister board is going to look like. So the intention there is to ensure that we are outlining what the criteria will be for an expression of interest. That is right now underway, determining what that should look like -- it is being led by the Department of Infrastructure -- to ensure that we are maintaining regional representation and a degree of expertise in the subject matter area. So that's the first step, and then we'll be going out to begin the recruitment process. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So what is the timeline for implementing those changes? If the Minister can explain. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the expression of interest that should be going out for the public will be ready in 2025, early 2025. That then goes out to seek the expressions of interest. We're hopefully going to be looking to get four to eight new members on. That will help to then transition off several of the existing board members who obviously do have other responsibilities. And we'd be keeping, of course -- I shouldn't say of course, we are looking to keep at least two GNWT members on the board; we are the sole shareholder. But that transition process will begin again once we've hopefully recruited a good slate of four to eight members in 2025. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So how will the Minister ensure that the new NTPC board has the appropriate expertise and experience in both the electricity business and in public energy policy to ensure that we can create a modern, forward-thinking, efficient, and accountable board? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the importance of ensuring that we get now a process as well that's clear and that's well thought out in terms of what we are looking for before the expression of interest goes out, designing a matrices of board composition. This is actually the kind of work that's been

happening slowly over the last few years in the GNWT, is to move a lot more boards towards having a matrices of what competencies are required for success, what kinds of backgrounds, what kinds of education, what kinds of regional representation, to ensure that the board is diverse, which promotes better decision-making, but has the expertise. So that is the time that's taking to make sure that that piece of what is the matrix we're looking for is done clearly because then the expression of interest can flow from it, and then ultimately board selection can flow from that, aligning who's applied back to the skill set we're looking for. So that's literally the work underway right now. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for NTPC. Member from Yellowknife North. Final supplementary.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given the challenges that we often speak about in this House around accountability of independent boards, whether it's education, health, housing, how will the Minister ensure that an independent NTPC board can be held completely accountable to NWT residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I've certainly been present in the House when we've had some discussions of late around challenges in terms of the interplay between independence and accountability as entities and creatures of the GNWT, and, Mr. Speaker, I can say that I've actually recently directed the Department of Infrastructure, who are leading this work, to take that into account expressly indicating that while we want to ensure there's independence obviously with non-GNWT members on this board, I've asked that there be a very express and clear connection back to likely the Minister because that is my role to be responsible here and maintains the line of accountability back here. So that was an expressed direction and should hopefully alleviate any misunderstandings or lack of alignment between the priorities of this House. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for NWT Power Corp. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 416-20(1):
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier spoke a bit the other day about a newly formed governance and service integration division under EIA. So my questions are to the Premier about that. Specifically, he spoke to the fact that the division will focus on

increasing transitional and supportive housing options. My question is would he be considering housing options for women and families fleeing domestic violence in those housing options? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And there's been interactions with homelessness and other aspects of life. Someone might be homeless because they have to flee the home that they've been living in. Right now that funding sits with health and social services, but it would only make sense to ensure that the departments are working together and that at least the left hand knows what the right hand is doing. That's one of the things we want to do with this division, is improve the culture of integrated services and cross-departmental coordination. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I can accept that. I just want to draw attention specifically to the need for housing for folks who are fleeing violence. It's great, it's gotten greater since the pandemic, and so I would like to see if the Premier will commit to looking into how this new division will be best supporting those folks through whatever department is holding the pockets of the purse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's good for me to have that very specific information, so I will look into it. I would also like to offer a briefing to the standing committee, the appropriate standing committee, on the new division and how it's going to be -- how it's going to operate and the work that is currently happening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Member from Great Slave. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 417-20(1):
NTHSSA OPERATIONAL CONCERNS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one thing I hear from frontline health care workers time after time again is the poor state of their morale. In fact, this is something the Minister and I talked about yesterday in the hallways here. What is -- what it is is certainly tied to the cohesion of their workplaces and the accountability of their managers. Is the Minister of Health and Social Services receiving proper feedback from her frontline staff and does she have the tools to assess morale in order to work on the improvements they need? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the make-up of the authority for the operations, which are the frontline staff which we hear a lot about from the Members of this House, lies within the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services. They are -- they have a governing council. So within the authority, where the Minister's relationship is is I get to work with the governing council over that authority. And, you know, when these issues are raised, I, you know, will have those conversations, not just with my own -- with the governing council chair but with my own deputy minister to be able to keep reiterating some of the issues that we're hearing in this House. You know, we've heard -- a lot of the issues that are raised in this House on morale are, you know -- have stemmed from, you know, MLAs from Yellowknife. You know, and I appreciate that that's being highlighted. However, you know, the -- there are many, many employees throughout the Northwest Territories that fall under NTHSSA, and they are hardworking employees. And I know the Members do, you know, agree with that. However, you know, there are -- you know, from my end -- like, from the information that I'm getting is a lot of it is that there's -- there's a lot of vacancies, and they have just recently signed their new collective agreement so maybe some of those changes that they negotiated in that collective agreement will help with this. But, again, they have just signed that collective agreement, and I'm hoping that we'll see some changes with employees and in recruitment in that area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to reassure the Minister that it's not just Yellowknife Members who are advocating for our health care workers; it's everyone on this side of the House up and down the Valley. So, Mr. Speaker, it's important as well that health care is not understaffed. The Minister just spoke to this. The staff that we do have are being forced to work long hours, sometimes 12-hour shifts without breaks. How is the Minister going to ensure frontline staff, such as emergency room doctors and nurses, are not overworked and not tired, burnt out, and unable to provide high quality care? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, I appreciate that question because the process for the NTHSSA is, you know, they have the authority; we've been questioned on how the money is being spent in there. We have a deficit. So over the years, in order to deal with some of those issues, has been they are running a

deficit because they're trying to fit in areas where there's not -- you know, where the staffing vacancies are, where there's only a certain amount of staff per unit, there's -- you know, and so there's a process for that. And right now, what the process is is they run a deficit. You know, we've also heard from the other side of the House is we need to figure out this deficit. So that's what we're doing. We've created the health sustainability unit to figure out where all the money is going that we approve in this budget, in the budgets, like, in the operating budget that goes to the health authority that goes to the department, what are those -- all those positions, are they funded? Are they not funded? Why aren't they funded? Where do we need to find that funding? You know, right now, you know, we've heard that we're projecting a \$63,000 deficit for next year's budget, you know, and so we have to figure out all that out. And in order to increase the support for those staff, we need to bring those things forward. They need to come from somewhere. We've heard from from the Minister of Finance that we're reaching our borrowing limit. You know, so we have to start to find that money from within and, you know, and that's the work that we're trying to do with the health sustainability unit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Minister and I absolutely agree that -- but where perhaps we disagree is that there's two issues here. One is the good value for money and financial management of the health care system, and the other is the operational management where frontline workers are not feeling heard. The common thread here is management. How can leaders be held accountable within the health system, and will the Minister commit to implementing manager evaluations and reviewing organizational structures that aren't working? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, as the Member is saying this, right now there is actual leadership training going on within the NTHSSA to support those managers to do the work that the Member is asking for. Why this is only happening now? I can't speak as to what happened in the past or what changes. But we know that our managers are taxed with a lot -- we know our frontline staff is taxed with a lot. How do we support our managers to help, you know, to work with their frontline staff to let their frontline staff feel supported? That's the work that's going on right now. It might not be out there nice and shiny and being able to say this but, you know, I think -- I'm hoping that that will try to help to support those managers to continue to support their frontline staff. And, you know, and I think the time management between them and the recruitment parts of their

jobs is taking effect on their time being able to support their frontline staff. So all those things are being looked at and that was taken away from the town hall that we had, especially because the town hall that we had was at Stanton, and those things have been taken away to try and figure out ways to resolve some of those things internally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I've spoken to many of the participants in that town hall. Many of those staff have mentioned their concerns that they do a lot of work mentoring other staff, helping them with their concerns, and they feel like there's not a transparent, non-biased staff person whose job is to go back and specifically take their feedback and issues with an open mind. Last budget, we asked the Minister to explore the implementation of an office of practitioner experience or some sort of dedicated ombud-like role that staff can bring their concerns to that can get worked on. That's not the role of the current office -- the current patient experience unit. That's more for patients. We need something for practitioners. The Minister committed to look at it. Can she update the House on how far they've come so we can get that unbiased person for our staff to speak to when they have a concern? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a process internally for all staff, you know, and I think that's the tool that they need to use. And from when I speak to the senior staff, they're not hearing. And so if that's an issue, then, you know -- and this is what I recommended to the staff. If they're not getting an answer from their immediate direct supervisor, then they go to the next level. And, you know, and I mean, coming to the -- directly to the Minister's office, a lot of this stuff is operational. A lot of it is staffing, you know, and the things that the Member, like, brings up, they also have a union that is independent and that is there to protect them that they do pay for. So they can also use that tool. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 418-20(1):
CELL SERVICE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 20th Assembly set four

priorities, and the fourth one is safe residents and communities. Mr. Speaker, all communities in the Northwest Territories have fire cell towers that they have access to in the event they need for emergency purposes. Mr. Speaker, my constituents in N'dilo struggle to have cell services for an emergency. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. How can the GNWT infrastructure work with CRTC cell phone providers to provide much needed cell towers in the community of N'dilo for emergency purposes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can speak for the work that's happening within the Department of Finance and that has been underway for sometime. We have advocated and continue to advocate to CRTC, as well as to federal colleagues, in ISED responsible for the broadband fund, that these funding pots need to be available to support telecommunications around the territory, around remote communities, and to better support these access points. So this was an opportunity when we saw some increases in funding. For example, when the broadband line went up to Whati, it was an opportunity for the Tlicho government, a project on their lands. There could be opportunities here for YKDFN, projects on their lands. And we certainly do want to see those opportunities made available with funds that are otherwise available on the table. So we'll continue that advocacy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I brought this issue up in the 19th Assembly, and I'm glad that there's some movement now to look at ways as to how we could deal with this problem. My question, Mr. Speaker, is that can the Minister work with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation to come up with an emergency backup plan for the residents in N'dilo in the event they have to call for an emergency for fire, ambulance, and police protection? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can perhaps start by saying that I'll work with my colleague, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, on this area. It's one that I know is dear to his heart, to ensure that all residents have appropriate access to emergency services, and I'm more than happy to do so. I think he, and also my other colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, similarly share that we want to ensure folks have access to such services. So happy to begin to have that conversation or

perhaps join their conversation so that we are all working towards that common goal and, similarly, to ensure that we are involving the Yellowknives Dene First Nation given that it would be for the benefits on their land. So absolutely, Mr. Speaker, we can move that forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Colleagues, before I turn to the question again, please be very specific to the departments. Don't go multi-departments because I sometimes have a question of where you're asking the question. So Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I did say the Minister of Infrastructure. But anyway, I just want to -- I'm looking forward to work with the Minister and also the Yellowknives Dene First Nation to come up with a plan. But it's really important that we need to address this issue because this issue's been ongoing for a very long time. And I just want to just leave that there, and it's just a comment. So I want to say mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: So thank you. Colleagues, first and foremost, when you ask questions for Infrastructure and you include MACA and health in it, it means -- doesn't matter just because you asked the question for Infrastructure, the Minister for Infrastructure cannot answer the questions for the other ones.

As well, I don't need commentary. If you don't have questions for a third one, please pass it on to the other one. I think I've said this numerous times so I'm going to reissue it again.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 419-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
OPERATIONAL CONCERNS

MR. HAWKINS: All right, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity for a second round. Mr. Speaker, my questions will be directed to the Minister of health for clarify and surety that the House knows where the questions are going.

In previous sessions, I've raised the issue of licensing requirements of nurses who have received training outside of the country. The hours weren't the issue. The gatekeeper of the nursing association is controlling who can be qualified under their rules to practice here. Mr. Speaker, I referred a specific case to a situation where Ontario has approved a license, Alberta's approved a license, but NWT has no

pathway to approve this. So in short, Mr. Speaker, while we have cost of living going up and industry is packing up, we can't risk losing nurses who want to work here. It's that simple. What has the Minister done to help solve or resolve this issue? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last discussion that I had on this was that the CAN was actually working on the solution, and I know that the Minister and I have touched base again to follow up on further discussions to have another updated meeting with them to where this is. I know that they're looking at the same model that -- they're looking to work with BC on the model that they have because of the -- to try and shorten the process of the assessment of the nurses that are -- international nurses that are coming into Canada to be able to come to work in the Northwest Territories. So as for the details of that, I will have to get back to the Member. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will accept the details in writing. Mr. Speaker, the BC model, if I remember correctly, is to further train and assess them at their cost. Is that how it is going to -- is that how the model's intended to roll out under this leadership of this Minister and working with CAN and the NWT Nursing Association, or will there be a bridging support program to help these individuals? Because the last time I was told this person, this family, was instructed to move to Alberta, go get your hours there, then hey, move back. We have to have a reasonable model. So, please, can you elaborate on the BC idea. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, I would appreciate you looking to me instead of the Minister that you're asking the questions. Please and thank you.

Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within this, what I would suggest is is that I will work with my counterpart, Minister of ECE, to get a follow-up and an update on where we are with this as to, you know, with the hours and the practice. The one thing that I would like to say is that, you know, in -- it's just been mentioned in this House that the staff are taxed with supporting other staff, mentoring. You know, we have a nursing program here that's a four-year degree program. They go into the system, they have to be mentored by nurses in the hospital. We are trying to create training for those nurses, those senior nurses, to -- you know, to support

them in their duties as mentoring. So we're trying to build that capacity within the authority right now. As for bringing on new international nurses to do this, that support would have to be built into this. So this would be a new, like added on to the NTHSSA where we are currently. Not necessarily will, you know -- as for more of the details, this is something, again, that I would offer a briefing on standing committee, and I would -- we could send a letter once we've had an update from CAN where they are with this. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say -- at least I know I've been briefed to death on this particular initiative, I'm not speaking for the social development committee, I'll let them make their own decisions -- but that said, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister show some leadership by either, A, eliminating the hours required on qualified nurses, obviously, because they've gone to school, or immediately issue a directive to the nursing -- in writing, in other words, direction that they co-partner with either BC -- sorry, Alberta or Ontario that if nurses qualify there, by defacto they qualify here in the Northwest Territories to practice. Thank you. Two ideas.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not commit to our territory doing what Alberta can do and support or what Ontario can do and support. We are very different than those two provinces. What I do know that in hearing from what's going on in Ontario, they're now having to build in supports within their health system to support their quick transition of allowing international nurses into the system. So now they're having to build in supports for that. That is not something that we can just turn around and do. We already have a taxed health care system and frontline workers that would need to do this. So what I will commit to is getting more information as to where we are ready for this and, again, providing that. You know, whether the Member has been -- is fully aware of this, you know, standing committee may and some of the Members, the other Members, you know, we would love to have more nurses into our system. And how we get there, we need to make sure that Northwest Territories and the frontline staff that are going to be mentoring them can support that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, we have genuine qualified professionals who want to live here in the Northwest Territories. They want to be contributing to the fabric of who we are and

where we're going to be to care for Northerners. Mr. Speaker, they view this, in short, is protectionism without creating opportunities that we're inviting. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to assess and recommend the elimination of those hours required to practice assuming they qualify in all other areas of education and experience? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that has been my direction. It has by been my direction to look at what -- in what circumstances can those hours be limited to reduce those barriers. As I can't commit to it across the board for all staff coming in from different parts of the -- like, you know, international educated nurses come into Canada, I'd have -- like, that's where I have to draw the line because I have to ensure that, you know, the staff that are coming in are going to be supported, are going to be able to just, you know, come in and do the work. We have new graduates that are coming out of Canadian institutes that also need to be supported, so we have to balance that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 420-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY HUMAN
RESOURCES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Committee of the Whole, the Minister of Finance was speaking to how they were going to satisfy the concerns raised by this side of the House. Especially -- and on the subject of health care, the three commitments were 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. Premier's doing that. Conduct a review of the lead policies and their implementation for health care professionals and solve the challenges faced in engagement with employees at all levels of the health and social services system. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services how she plans to do that last one, solve the problems of engagement in all levels of the system. Thank you

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, working with the NTHSSA, you know, I think that's the plan is the new HR, human resource plan, that will include, you know, working -- that's coming up, the

people's plan, that will help to highlight some of those issues. And the ongoing conversations that I have with the governing council of the NTHSSA at this time, you know, those ongoing discussions that happen, the ongoing -- you know, the ongoing discussions that I have with my own senior officials to ensure that there is work going on, you know, so that the frontline staff are hearing this. But, again, you know, these are some of the things that I would -- you know, there's areas that we've heard over and over again that are affecting. Like, we've heard from other Members, you know, like, the physicians. We've heard from, like, within Stanton. And it's those issues that I feel like if the Regular Members need more detail as to what's going on, you know, I can sit here and speak to them in my few little minutes that I have, but I would encourage standing committee to highlight the areas that they really want to dig down deep into and to request those technical briefings, you know, ministerial briefings as to how we're going to be doing this thing. But right now, there is a lot of work going on within the NTHSSA to try and resolve this issue and work with the staff. You know, whether I can answer that all here on the floor today I would take up all the time. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For me, at least, it's not a problem of understanding. As my colleague said moments ago, I'm kind of briefed out. What I do understand is that the workers who are in our health care system providing the service don't feel like their concerns are met. The Minister just spoke to a people plan. Can she elaborate further. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people plan is the -- so we have the human resource plan that is coming to an end. We have the bridging plan that's going to continue on that human resource plan until the new people plan is ready for the -- like, to roll out. And that would be in 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, have workers been engaged in the people -- in the process to develop this plan? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

MR. TESTART: That's interesting because no one I've spoken to has heard about this people plan or that it was -- or that it's going to roll out in 2025. Can the Minister commit to going back to -- hosting a town hall, another town hall, where she can attend and explain this directly to workers? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this work is going on internally within the NTHSSA, and so what I can do is I can have a conversation with the governing council to ensure that they are working with their frontline staff, their management, and so everybody is aware of what's coming down, and if there is input that's needed and if they're not feeling heard, then I will ensure that I inform the governing council to ensure that this is getting done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 421-20(1):
REGULATIONS FOR ESCOOTERS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to return to -- I wouldn't want to say my favorite subject, but it's certainly a subject that's important to me -- e-scooters and the regulations thereof. Mr. Speaker, I e-mailed the Minister a couple months ago about an opportunity. It appeared it wasn't the right opportunity to slide it in some miscellaneous changes and as such, my worry is -- I thought we could do a quick fix by saying e-scooters or e-bikes are similar and will be treated similar as bicycles or motorcycles. There was an opportunity there.

Mr. Speaker, Quebec looks like they're banning them. Other jurisdictions are banning or putting regulations -- I should describe it better like that. That said, Mr. Speaker, what can the Minister of Infrastructure say today about regulating the safety and usage of e-scooters, the one you sit down and/or stand up? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this did certainly come back through my office, and I recall that it was not deemed to be appropriate to put into the miscellaneous statutes bill. Mr. Speaker, there is some work happening on a national scale. So some jurisdictions, larger jurisdictions than ours, are in a better capacity to maybe perhaps do their own thing, but there is also a national level working group that is trying to tackle this issue, and we are relying on them so that as a smaller jurisdiction we can benefit from the work that happens in the larger jurisdictions and not have to necessarily reinvent a proverbial bill. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the answer. Disappointed, but appreciated the answer. Mr. Speaker, there are

more regulations on bicycles and pedestrians than there are on these e-scooters, and they contemplate heavily on the concern and safety of both the riders and the public, Mr. Speaker. Is there any way we can bridge some mechanism by defining e-scooters in a manner of saying that they will be treated such as in a similar way as bicycles? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an e-scooter is not a bicycle and the concern there being that it is much more akin to some other sort of power-assisted type of device and wanting to ensure that we are appropriately defining and in alignment with what's happening in the rest of Canada, what qualifies as a bicycle, what qualifies as an e-mobile device, and what the appropriate types of regulations would be. So there is, as I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, the Canada Council for Motor Transportation Administrators, is a national body that has a working group on exactly how to figure out what qualifies as what so that we don't overregulate, we don't underregulate, and we are taking into consideration the experience of jurisdictions that have had more experience in this space. So not going to move forward without some background information and have good policy that's based on evidence. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, what can the Minister commit to doing in this upcoming summer season? Now, we're months away but now is the time to contemplate any adjustments and changes, Mr. Speaker. And may I remind the Minister I'm saying treat it as, not defined as, in the sense of I'm not redefining the definition of what an e-scooter is. I'm saying treat it in the same manner based on the principles of safety and concerns. There are no lights on these things, speed regulations, no helmets, etcetera, etcetera, Mr. Speaker. What can the Minister commit that we will have ready so we can implement in the new spring/summer season? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I will go -- I've been waiting to see what is happening on a national level. I'm happy to go back to that group and receive from them and push them to see what their recommendations are. If it's possible to put those into a regulatory process, that's a little bit faster. If we're talking about a new piece of legislation, that is obviously not typically a lot faster. So let me go and see what they are recommending on a national level so that we can then look to where we could fit that into our process. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Infrastructure certainly can look to what we could do with our own staff in terms of patrolling it and just making sure that we are maintaining safety as best we

can on the roadways for which we are responsible. Municipal bylaw, of course, would be responsible within the municipality. Thank you.

QUESTION 422-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION
INTO POLYTECHNIQUE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the opportunity to ask one more question -- or maybe more, who knows?

Mr. Speaker, the polytech continues to be a significant concern in Yellowknife and they view it as a territorial institution, not just a Yellowknife issue. But because I live here, I get asked about it regularly by people I see at the grocery store, etcetera.

Mr. Speaker, let's start off first with is it the intent of the government to ensure that the push forward on the initiative of a polytech, and can the Minister elaborate on some timelines as how she sees it rolling out or developing? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. And this is a different set of questions.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the board of governors is currently working on a new set of timelines for the transformation and once those are finalized, those will become public. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the Minister can speak to what the timelines actually mean when they refer to transformation. Because when I tell the public they're transforming, nobody really knows what that means. And definitions and wording mean everything hence can the Minister explain what transforming from the intent of an Aurora College into a polytech means in a manner that the public can appreciate, because a lot of people are really confused by that definition. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the timeline of the transformation has everything from new legislation that would be polytechnic university legislation. It has a new funding formula for Aurora College. And it has things like very program-specific things like, you know, when different programs will become available through the college. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Again, I view this issue as a territorial issue. And I can appreciate the stress of my colleagues outside of Yellowknife that

may view it from their point of view. It is a territorial institution to help grow the North, Mr. Speaker. So I guess maybe my next question is built around a dashboard question.

Can the Minister request that Aurora College develop a dashboard on their website to communicate the steps of the transition, be it the elements of what it means, how they process it, and that way the public has been idea. Because, frankly, Mr. Speaker, Northerners think this initiative's dead every time it goes away, and they don't know what's happening or don't see it and certainly don't feel it. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Aurora College transformation has a very detailed website. The one thing I will note is that the dates associated with the timeline need to be updated. But it does have a website that outlines everything that needs to happen. It has GANT charts. It has timelines with all the details of all the different steps, who is responsible for those steps. Three of the remaining transformation outlines include the GNWT. Those would be things like the legislation that I was referring to. And then there are some that are definitely under the purview of Aurora College. So that does exist already and certainly will be something that will be updated with new timelines as soon as that information is available. This website will also contain things like the updated mandate document, both here on the transformation site that is on the GNWT's website and also on Aurora College's website as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 423-20(1):
CARBON TAX

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the Members of the youth -- NWT youth climate change council inquired about the carbon tax annual report and I -- or brought this to my attention. I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance, in the carbon tax annual report there is a \$14 million surplus for 2023-2024. In the past previous years, the surplus has been -- surplus or deficits have been within \$1.6 million. Can the Minister explain the discrepancy in this year's report? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: From Range Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, although I've

reviewed the report, I'm not in the immediate position here today to get into details. There could be a number of different things that could occur in the course of a year. I mean, anything from low water, changes in fuel usage, the wildfires, these can all impact and influence in terms of where fuel usage is coming in, the types of fuel usage that's being -- that's coming in and being charged. High years of fuel usage, such as in a low water year, could well have resulted in that amount. I'd like to -- I'd prefer to be able to break down individually what the different reasons for that could be, and so I would certainly commit to doing so and sharing that also publicly because that certainly is a question that we'd want to have answered clearly. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Can the Minister explain why the program is designed to run with surpluses like this? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not necessarily designed or intended to run with surpluses. It is intended -- our program is intended to align with the parameters that the federal government has imposed on provinces and territories around the carbon taxation and while doing so, doing so in a manner that we can continue to see some benefits here in the territory by not misaligning with the kind of large emitters that we have. So, again, not designed for surpluses but, again, really designed for that kind of compliance mechanism. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we -- when the Standing Committee of Economic Development and Environment met with the youth council, one of the comments that was raised was that young people feel like the implementation of the carbon -- of carbon pricing in the Northwest Territories has left some people behind and that there needs to be more done to transition them into a clean energy future with these additional costs, especially in small communities. How does the Minister plan to respond to those concerns that the tax is creating an undue burden in small communities? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad there's no time on the clock because I can just keep going as long as I'd like, I guess. Mr. Speaker, I have long said that there's a large challenge in the North with respect to the way that the carbon tax parameters are placed upon us by the federal government. The majority of the actual tax revenue does still continue to go back to residents, firstly in the forms of COLO payment, but then secondly in the forms of a number of other subsidies. I spoke to some of them yesterday. There's a territorial power support

program. There are direct contributions that we make to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation and investments that we make to support our power systems. Mr. Speaker, there's also the Arctic Energy Alliance which, of course, supports opportunities for residents and businesses to have greener access to energy efficiency in terms of how they're heating their homes and the kind of different types of appliances they're using. I would note that we have lost significant funding from the federal government for that exact initiative. I have gone to my colleagues and my counterpart in the federal government to seek a reinstatement of that, and I am hoping to get some good news. But we can't bring our power bills down if we're not able to invest in that, Mr. Speaker. So, again, there's -- I'll perhaps stop there. I don't know where the next question might go.

I know that my colleague at ECC also has a climate change youth council, certainly would look forward to hearing directly the kinds of solutions that are coming through there and perhaps bringing our two departments together the next time he has an opportunity to meet with them so that we're all hearing the same message collectively. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And I think the youth council's proving how effective it could be at raising these issues, and I just want to acknowledge the Minister's response to my first question where she committed to provide that information, and I thank for her that, so do the youth council I'm sure.

I think some of these problems, Mr. Speaker, could be solved if this was a revenue neutral tax where there was a clear indication of where all the revenues went instead of just general revenue, which is how it appears in the report. Will the Minister commit to a revenue neutral tax breaking out how the money is spent clearly so there's no questions about surpluses in the future? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was just trying to pull the report out fast enough. I have it in front of me, Mr. Speaker. But, really, at this point, we -- and I've gone through this many a time. We spend far more as a government on -- in terms of our energy, energy supply, energy policy, climate change initiatives, energy efficiency programs, energy and electricity programs, significantly more there than what we take in on this tax. What we don't do in general, not just with this tax but any other form

of tax, any other form of revenue, is pick out a certain type of revenue and sort of earmark it for one thing and one thing only. The reality is if we were to do that with a surplus that does vary year to year, we would not have enough money to do the things that we're doing in all these other spaces. If we said we are only going to -- we're going to use this amount, this is going to be our money for climate change initiatives, it would not meet the needs of what we are finding for climate change initiatives. If we said this is what we're going to use for climate change emergencies, it would not meet the needs. As we're seeing in the last few years, wildfires, floods, the resupply challenges in the Sahtu, all of these are wildfire emergencies. I could even tie in some of what's been happening in projects that are seeing delays. So it's not that -- that little bit alone is not going to be enough to address all of the energy challenges or climate change challenges that we have here.

So, I mean, it's been over \$100 million, if you will, on climate emergencies in the last couple of years. I appreciate the desire is to have a better understanding of this tax and what we're doing with it. Again, I'm definitely going to go back and see if we can explain more where this year's money, why there's a change this year. Happy to do that. I'm happy to sit down and have that conversation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Colleagues, time for oral questions has expired.

Oral questions. Written questions. Member from Tu Nédhé-Wiilideh.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 10-20(1): COMPLAINTS IN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in a health care setting, a patient's complaints can serve as a valuable resource for monitoring and improving patient safety. There are a few options available for Northwest Territories residents to make complaints regarding health care services they receive. Some of these options are:

- Submitting complaints alleging professional misconduct or practice to the professional conduct review committee for the College and Association of Nurses of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- Residents can also submit concerns about a regulated health or social

services professional in writing to the professional licensing office with health and social services.

- There is also an Office of Client Experience with the Department of Health and Social Services that provides centralized intake process for complaints.

Regarding complaints in the health system, can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide:

1. For the last five years, regarding the conduct of regulated health or social services professionals, specifically nurses employed by the Government of the Northwest Territories, the number of total complaints received annually by the department of health from 2019-2024;
2. The number of human resource investigations that occurred as a result of complaints made to either the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority or the College and Association of Nurses concerning the conduct of regulated health or social services professionals for each of the last five years;
3. The number of critical incident investigations conducted in our health system each year over the last five years; and
4. The number of Indigenous investigators involved in conducting investigations in the health system?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh. Written questions. Member from Range Lake.

WRITTEN QUESTION 11-20(1):
GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) is the primary authority responsible for all ground search and rescue (GSAR) in the territory except for national parks and national historical sites which are the responsibility of Parks Canada.

As the primary authority, the GNWT is responsible for overseeing all aspects of GSAR including service delivery, training and preparedness, and prevention activities. The need for responsive ground search and rescue services is especially key in a territory as vast as ours. Therefore, The Government of the

Northwest Territories' Department of Justice commissioned a review of search and rescue in the Northwest Territories during the 19th Assembly.

MNP LLP conducted the review and provided the GNWT with a final report in 2021-2022. To date, there has been no known response to the report or recommendations. The Government has not provided an update on the Northwest Territories SAR system or a response to this report over the last three years. The report was finally tabled in the Legislative Assembly on June 13, 2024.

I have the following questions for the Minister of Justice regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories' response to the report:

1. It is understood the contract for the report was \$95,000. Can the Minister confirm how the contract for this work (review and report) was awarded and what the final cost of the contract was;
2. Can the Department of Justice provide an official response to each recommendation of the report, including comprehensive details on the implementation of each accepted recommendation;
3. Can the Department of Justice provide statistics on the frequency of ground search and rescue operations over the last ten years; and
4. Can the Department of Justice provide the expenses required for ground search and rescue incidents over the last ten years?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Written questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

WRITTEN QUESTION 12-20(1):
COST OF LIVING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my written question is for the Premier is with respect to cost of living impacting all Northerners; and further, what action or actions being taken by this government, and the previous government, covering the last two years prior to Cabinet assuming office in December 2023.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, the cost of living has impacted all residents either directly or indirectly and the government plays a role in helping its citizens in whatever form it can. Lowering taxes, reducing the cost of any

program/service or eliminating certain fees would make the difference to the bottom line of residents of the NWT. The questions are as follows, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier layout the following in detail, covering any and all departments and agencies:

1. What program cost of living reductions are currently being worked on, considered or actioned, which will be directly be seen and or have an impact on the day-to-day lives of our residents?
2. What taxes are being reduced, eliminated, or contemplated in a manner that will aid in the cost-of-living challenges Northerners facing?
3. What service fee are being reduced, eliminated, or contemplated to aid in the cost-of-living challenges Northerners are facing?

And finally, Mr. Speaker,

4. What are the direct cost of living initiatives that are being considered or actioned that will directly support Northerners with respect to reducing the cost of living?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Member from Monfwi.

Replies to the Commissioner's Address

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG'S REPLY

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to respond to the Commissioner's Address to discuss equity for Indigenous people in terms of equal treatment in terms of improving reality. I want to ask whether we deny students in our small communities - especially our Indigenous children -- Indigenous students - the chance at a proper education?

My first Member statement during this Fall Session addressed the legacy of unequal education that began with residential schools and continues to the present day. Inequity begins in early education, Mr. Speaker, and lasts through secondary. We see this with students in the Tlcho region and other regions

as well. More than half -- 53 percent -- of children are considered vulnerable in small communities. We are failing these children. We need to help them succeed. I am here to advocate for Indigenous child equity.

In one of the communities in my riding, 30 students graduated this year. Graduation is something worth celebrating but what does the future hold for these students? How many will go on to post-secondary education? How many of these students will complete post-secondary programs? How many will take upgrading programs before pursuing trades or professional programs? We need to invest in our young people if we want to achieve prosperity. We need to build from within.

Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories, there are Indigenous youth who have significantly fewer resources for education, health, and community services, than those available to non-Indigenous youth. This is a fact. A comparison of Yellowknife and almost any of our small communities confirm this, but it is clear to me that significant disparity exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students when it comes to educational outcomes at all levels of the education system. We have seen this time and again through reports on outcomes. Yet, Indigenous people are still living in poverty. They are living in terrible conditions. Not much has been done even though reports and research support this view.

If Christopher Columbus had not lost his way looking for spices, Mr. Speaker, we might have been better off today. I can speak for those living in small communities, Mr. Speaker. We do not have the luxury of fixing Cadillac problems or even Ford Focus problems. Problems in our communities are like the oldest car imaginable, Old Betsy. We must maintain her and keep going.

The problems our young people face are systemic. They require systems to change. As a result, many Indigenous people are settling their land claims to look after their own affairs. They are getting tired of the treatment they receive from the government.

Mr. Speaker, year after year the gaps remain. It is time for the Government of the Northwest Territories to find solutions to these problems so that our Indigenous young people can prosper and reach their full potential. I have said it before, students must have security when it comes to financial assistance. They must be reassured that the progress we make now will continue, that the government will keep honouring treaties. These are key issues for our Indigenous students. A public commitment

to guarantee continued reconciliation efforts - like the removal of semester limits and increased access to student funding under the basic grant - will help improve education outcomes for Indigenous students.

These commitments should be made in the same spirits as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, particularly Call to Action No. 10 which highlights the need to:

- Provide sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation;
- Improve education attainment levels and success rates; and,
- Respect and honour treaty relationships.

An increase in education funding for Indigenous students would have a huge impact on my community, the Tlicho region, and communities across the territory. During its 2020 review of early childhood to grade 12 education in the Northwest Territories, the auditor general recommended that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment identify what exactly they needed to provide equitable access to quality education for all students and take actions, and that this should include providing additional support for small schools.

Equity will mean more community-based education. The auditor general found that the Department of ECE adjusted its funding formula to offset the higher cost of living for schools in small communities and to provide more administrative support to schools. This is good progress, but we must take further steps towards reconciliation by closing educational gaps for Indigenous students. We can do this by increasing the amount of funding students in small communities can access.

But, Mr. Speaker, these needed improvements are not limited to the education systems. We receive the same inequity in health care, the justice systems, community infrastructure, and in fixing homelessness and lowering unemployment rates.

Indigenous children, Mr. Speaker, are overrepresented in the child protection system. Indigenous youth (our future generation) and adults are overrepresented in the correction system. Every child matters. This is not just a saying, Mr. Speaker; it is the truth. We have missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. What are we doing about it? I see inequity in the number of our Indigenous youth that face criminal charges. They suffer the indignity of arrests. These events have the power to alter the course of their lives.

Many of our residents have substance abuse problems. They need treatment, aftercare, and new opportunities after they get out. Suicide rates are rising. Young people are running away or missing from home. There are people selling drugs in our small communities. Our youth are our most vulnerable people; they are victims.

Mr. Speaker, if we do not honour our treaty obligations, if we do not prioritize change, the result will continue to be a crisis in underfunded housing, health care, child protection, and education. The system will seem like it discriminates against us. It will seem like children in small communities will be at a disadvantage from the day they are born. Our people will continue to struggle. I have heard elders say when we speak the truth it does not harm, it heals.

We have heard these themes repeatedly in this House, Mr. Speaker. We have heard about high unemployment rates. We know our communities have aging and failing infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I ask whether there is a basic level or standard for services and infrastructure for our small communities? I ask what equity should look like. Young people should have hope. Change needs to come from within the territory so that our communities are able to help themselves and do not have to rely on outside assistance and other peoples' timelines.

Real equity is achievable, but it means confronting inequity in our communities, and bringing capacity into small communities. I think education is a barrier to build this capacity. We need to start focusing on building capacity from within. Internal growth, Mr. Speaker. We must build capacity into our communities and start focusing on building up our youth. We must give them the same amount of hope that children anywhere have.

Mr. Speaker, I do love and care for our young people. I am advocating for future generations, for meaningful change. We all want things to get better for them.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my constituents. Festive season is approaching. For some, it is going to be difficult. It's not going to be the same. My thoughts and prayers are with the families. And I want to thank all the interpreters here and outside. They are indeed the keeper of our Indigenous language. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Replies to the Commissioner's address.

Colleagues, realizing we've been in this chamber for two hours, we will take a brief break to give the translators a rest. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: We were a little bit longer; I apologize. Member from Thebacha.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a correction to the Hansard record. Yesterday, in my opening remarks to 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 in error. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. A correction will be -- would be noted in the Hansard. Point of privilege, Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege under section 1.7(1)(e) of our rules.

Mr. Speaker, the specific privilege is, for the benefit of the Members is, it says privilege of a Member includes, section (c), freedom of obstruction and intimidation in relation to their duties as an elected representative.

Mr. Speaker, while during the break I was walking to my office, I was confronted by the Member for Yellowknife North. She said, I know you're mad at me. I interjected and I said, I'm not mad. She continued to say, I would never be that petty to nay your consent.

Mr. Speaker, implying that a Member's petty for following the rules of the House in carriage of their duties and using the phrase "petty" is, I feel, a form of intimidation.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, just to tie it up, in December 2023, Senate Speaker Gagne noted hurling insults at Members could be understood as an attempt to intimidate colleagues and unduly constrains them in the extraction or retribution against them in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I find using the phrase "petty" in the duty -- in the carriage of my duties here personally insulting. I didn't -- I would have welcomed a reasonable conversation, but I felt that this is now causing me to second guess my choices in following -- as we follow the rules of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. I will allow some debate on the point of privilege. Do other Members wish

to speak on this? Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to clarify that what I actually said was that I wanted to reassure him that I would never do something petty as naying his request for unanimous consent to conclude his statement. So what I was trying to point out was that I felt that the action was petty, but I was not accusing him or calling him any names in that regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Are there any others who wish to comment on this? Member from Yellowknife Centre, do you wish to conclude?

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, by saying I would never be petty implies I am being petty. And as such, I leave it for the House to make the decision. I think the most honourable thing, and request I'm asking for, is an acknowledgement that that phrase targeted me was inappropriate, and I would accept any apology if given or whatever decision of the House seems appropriate. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Colleagues, I will take this matter under advisement and will provide a ruling later on. Thank you very much.

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 Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 226-20(1):
BUDGET DIALOGUES 2024: WHAT WE
HEAR REPORT, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER
2024

TABLED DOCUMENT 227-20(1):
FALL 2024 ECONOMIC AND FISCAL
UPDATE, OCTOBER 2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Budget Dialogues 2024: What We Heard; and, Fall 2024 Economic and Fiscal Update. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

TABLED DOCUMENT 228-20(1):
HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Housing Northwest Territories Annual Report 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Tabling of documents. Minister for Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 229-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY 2023-2024
ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 230-20(1):
2024-25 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
AUTHORITY BUDGETS BY ACTIVITY

TABLED DOCUMENT 231-20(1):
HAY RIVER HEALTH AND SOCIAL
SERVICES AUTHORITY 2023-24 ANNUAL
REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 232-20(1):
NWT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES 2023-2024 ANNUAL
REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 233-20(1):
TLIHO COMMUNITY SERVICES AGENCY
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL
REPORT 2023-24

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following five documents: Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority 2023-2024 Annual Report; 2024-2025 Health and Social Services Authority Budgets by Activity; Hay River Health and Social Services Authority 2023-2024 Annual Report; NWT Department of Health and Social Services 2023-2024 Annual Report; and, the Tliho Community Services Agency Health and Social Services Annual Report 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 234-20(1):
WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION
COMMISSION NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
AND NUNAVUT ANNUAL REPORT 2023

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission Northwest Territories and Nunavut Annual Report 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. Tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

TABLED DOCUMENT 235-20(1):
DRAFT NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OUR
LAND FOR THE FUTURE AGREEMENT

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Draft Northwest Territories Our Land for the Future Agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 236-20(1):
ADMINISTRATION OF THE NWT ACCESS
TO INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF
PRIVACY ACT ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Administration of the NWT Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act Annual Report 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

TABLED DOCUMENT 237-20(1):
DASHBOARD EXAMPLE FOR ECE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my oral questions, I pointed out my view of what a dashboard should look like. The Minister's correct in the context that she said there was a dashboard on the ECC website. I'm tabling an example of what I would like to see as -- for consideration for her and the Aurora College board so everyone knows exactly where I was coming from. Thank you.

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

Motions

MOTION 45-20(1):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE
HOUSE TO FEBRUARY 5, 2025,
CARRIED

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that notwithstanding Rule 2.1, when the House

adjourns on Friday, November 1st, 2024, it shall be adjourned until Wednesday, February 5, 2025;

AND FURTHER, that any time prior to February 5th, 2025, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 16:
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES), 2025-2026,
DEEMED READ

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House that Bill 16, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2025-2026, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 16 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for a second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 16:
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES), 2025-2026,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 16, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2025-2026, be read the second time.

This bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make appropriations for infrastructure expenditures for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. Abstentions? Motion carried.

---Carried

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

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, committee wishes to consider Committee Report 18-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Interim Report on the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election.

As well, Mr. Chair, the committee would like to consider Committee Report 17-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report by the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. 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 Committee Report 18-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges Interim Report on the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedures and Privilege for any opening comments. Thank you, I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, pursuant to subsection 266(2) of the Elections

and Plebiscites Act, the chief electoral officer must report on the administration and event initiatives seen through that office within six months following a territorial general election.

The Speaker tabled the chief electoral officer's report on May 21, 2024, in the Legislative Assembly and was subsequently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges for review and response. The committee sought public feedback on the chief electoral officer's report from September 2nd, 2024, to September 27th, 2024, receiving two written responses.

On September 27th, 2024, committee held a public briefing with chief electoral officer, Mr. Stephen Dunbar, and deputy chief electoral officer, Ms. Charlotte Digness. Mr. Aleks Toiviainen of Vote 16 Canada also provided testimony at the public hearing,

Speaking specifically to the recommendation from the chief electoral officer to lower the Northwest Territories' voting age to 16.

Committee will continue their investigation into the recommendation of the chief electoral officer to lower the voting age to 16 and will provide a separate report in the 2025 winter sitting of the Legislative Assembly on their findings and the response to this recommendation.

Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 18-20(1). I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just briefly I want to thank the committee on their work and, of course, acknowledge the future work on this particular initiative. That said, under recommendation number 2 I just want to make a quick observation. This is an area I've seen for years, which is an opportunity for the chief electoral officer to engage with others -- other partners. This one specifically notes the NWT Association of Communities. I certainly support that. And I would also say there's a great opportunity to bolster and support the elections office by seeing if we could partner with Indigenous governments. And I want to stress, in both cases I don't believe the elections officer should be controlling their elections in the sense of process wise whereas they can assist them in the organization, the mechanics, the administration, and the CEO of elections could be treated as maybe a deputy officer of those organizations through the support mechanisms and whatnot. It would bring consistency

throughout the process. It would strengthen everybody. As a matter of fact, it would probably lead to better training amongst everyone, and sharing resources and talent probably would help our election system at large and maybe even introduce more people to the possibility of a career.

When you have an election, you know, whether it's in a small community through Indigenous governments, I mean, you know, the start -- it's almost as if the system is there but it's such a restarting of the machinery after it had been quiet and parked off to the side for weeks, months, years, and, you know, we could be tapping in -- and, you know, I'll just say, for example, like, you know, you got the Tlicho election and you have the grand chief election, and you still have a chief returning officer and in no way would I imply and suggest we take that role of that officer away. As a matter of fact, we keep them in -- you know, we support them to be who -- the best they can be. But they tap into the machinery of an elections office, whether it's printing ballots, helping coordinate returning folks. Again, partnership is what I'm suggesting, not assume control in any form. This could then lead into municipal elections; again, supporting the main election officer in every municipality who wants to participate and see where it goes. Again, this is a blending -- it's interesting. We have silos of resources, talent, and opportunity. This is a great chance to, you know, bleed the lines a little bit, find ways to work together, amplify success, you know, strengthen weaknesses and, you know, harmonize our systems. It doesn't take away from the uniqueness of anyone because of course the chief electoral officer of, say, like for example the Gwich'in election that just happened recently, they would still, you know, lead their election but they would have the tools and functions and support teams and administrative teams to support them in their duty. So, again, it's a recommendation. It's just something that I think is we need to spend more time about it. We've been talking about it for years. I would go so far as saying I don't know how we do it, but we empower the CEO of Elections NT to make those connections and say, you know, let's have this discussion where we can do this. That's all I have to say at this particular time. But our people are our best resource so why keep them all separated when we could be working together. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further comments from Members? Okay, seeing no further comments from Members, Member for Great Slave.

COMMITTEE MOTION 52-20(1):
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 – REPEAL AND REPLACE
ELECTIONS AND PLEBISCITE ACT,
CARRIED

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly direct the chief electoral officer to undertake a repeal and replace of the Elections and Plebiscites Act before the end of the 20th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Members may wish to speak to individual motion. Each member can speak to each motion for up to ten minutes.

My apologies. Question has been called -- sorry, to the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration -- I think it's Friday, and everyone wants to get out of here.

I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

COMMITTEE MOTION 53-20(1):
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 – LOCAL AUTHORITY AND
ELECTION ACTIVITIES,
CARRIED

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly direct the chief electoral officer to engage with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities to determine how to better support local authority election activities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion's order. To the motion. To the motion I have is the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

COMMITTEE MOTION N/A-20(1):
MOTION TO AMEND COMMITTEE MOTION
53-20(1),
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to go through everything I said under general comments, and my suggestion for consideration is I'd like to amend the motion by adding -- and I'll read out what I'm going to say is, we add Indigenous governments as well to determine; so in other words, after Northwest Territories Association of Communities, and Indigenous governments to determine blah, blah, blah. So I'm moving that amendment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go -- the Member from Yellowknife Centre raised an amendment. Do the Members have any questions to the amendment? Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's actually just a process question. Do we need to pause to get the amendment in writing or can we just make them on the fly?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Thank you, to the Member from Frame Lake's question, if Members want that in writing, we could -- we're probably going to need about five minutes and then we'll come back. I'll go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I mean, I can't speak for other Members. For myself, I think the amendment is simple and straightforward enough that I don't personally require it in writing. I just that that was a rule. But if we're okay, I'm happy to move forward and speaking to the amendment, I'm supportive of it.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Members, to the motion, do you -- we could speak to the amendment. Do Members want to speak to the amendment and then to the motion. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, Mr. Speaker, first I want to stress an apology. It only occurred to me when I was making my general comments that, you know, this should be a consideration and hence I just saw this as -- when I said I don't know what the right vehicle is and I thought well, why don't I just suggest adding those two words to be inserted -- well, technically three words to be inserted after association of communities.

Mr. Chairman, this is only about opening a conversation and if they are not interested,

that's okay too. So the amendment, whether it passes or fails, I hope it at least takes the conversation a little further that could the chief electoral officer be a partner. And so just for further clarity, I'll read -- I'll read and stress where the change would be.

So the chief electoral officer to engage with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities -- and here it is -- and with Indigenous governments to determine how better to support local authority election activities.

So, again, it's just the stressing about a conversation with them. And as I said, I sort of thought of it on the fly in my general comments that, you know, it might be an opportunity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to ask Members to -- the amendment that was proposed by the Member from Yellowknife Centre, is there anybody -- Members want to speak to it? I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My support to include the amendment. Mahsi.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as a Member of committee that considered this report and that is making the recommendation, I can tell you we did have a robust discussion of the CEO's report where this was -- this idea was brought forward. Just now speaking with a colleague on the committee as well and we couldn't remember why we didn't include this, so I think this is -- I have no -- so I think this is a good motion. It's not saying that the CEO will insert themselves in, you know, sovereign government electoral processes; many Indigenous governments have custom election codes and they're governed through other authorities. But I think, as the Member says, as the mover says, having the conversation's important and we certainly don't want to leave Indigenous governments out of the conversation. So I don't see harm with this, and I will gladly support it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Any other Members want to add to the discussion on the amendment? Question -- I'm going to have to -- we're going to -- motion to amend -- for the amendment change, all those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you. The motion has been amended.

---Carried

To the motion as amended, is there any Members that want to add to that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question's been called. All those in favour to the motion with the amendment? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried as amended.

---Carried

Okay, thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 18-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges Interim Report on the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): All right, thank you. Committee, we have concluded consideration of Committee Report 18-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges Interim Report on the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election.

We will now consider Committee Report 17-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges Report on the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges for any opening comments. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 18-20(1) and Committee Report 17-20(1) and would like to report progress with two motions carried, that the Committee Report 17-20(1) and 18-20(1) 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 to the motion, please. Member from Yellowknife Centre. All those in favour -- or sorry, to the question -- or to the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 16:
APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES), 2025-2026,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha that Bill 16, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2025-2026, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour, please stand -- or sorry, the Member's requested for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. 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.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand. Thank you.

Colleagues, 11 in favour, 6 opposed, zero abstentions. Bill 16 has passed.

---Carried

Mr. Clerk, can you please determine whether the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Gerald Kisoun, is prepared to enter the chamber and assent to the bills.

Assent to Bills

THE COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Gerald W. Kisoun): Please be seated.

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, Premier Simpson, Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly and staff, and visitors in the public gallery. Aqana Inuit, Drin Gwiinzii sha Gwich'in kat.

I wish to acknowledge we are gathered today on Chief Drygeese territory. We are grateful to be on this land and all the lands home to many Indigenous people, including the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Dene, Metis, and Inuit. I am honoured to be here for the first time in this chamber as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

I am looking forward to working with and getting to know the people of the Northwest Territories. I want to thank my family and my friends and the community for their support, and I hope I will make you proud. It is important that we all work together and support our communities and particularly the youth. Listening to the voices of the youth will make our future brighter for the Northwest Territories, and I always believe in acknowledging our future leadership, which is the youth, and I continue to support their endeavours in any way I can.

Now as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following bills:

- Bill 7: Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024
- Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
- Bill 13: Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025
- Bill 14: Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025

- Bill 15: Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act
- Bill 16: Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2025-2026.

Ha'aai Cho, Quyanaqpak, Merci Beaucoup, Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, I'd like to thank the Commissioner, the Honourable Gerry Kisoun, for being here today to provide assent to our legislation. It was an honour to have him join us in chambers today.

Members, before I adjourn our sitting until the new year, I'd like to thank you for a productive sitting. It was short but business-filled sitting.

This House considered and passed the 2025-2026 Capital Estimates. Committee has provided numerous reports on bills and other matters. They have reviewed and we have appointed the executive director for the Human Rights Commission and a new sergeant-at-arms.

I'm looking forward to working with our new sergeant-at-arms, but I want to take this moment to thank our outgoing sergeant-at-arms, Mr. Floyd Powder. Mr. Powder has been with the Legislative Assembly since October of 2022 and has been instrumental in helping us conclude some very important projects and improvements, including the completion of the walking path to the Legislative Assembly building and installation of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls monument. Although he wasn't with the Assembly for a long time, his contributions have made a lasting impact, and I thank him for his commitment and dedication to this institution. I wish Mr. Powder all the best in his upcoming and well-deserved retirement.

While most of us know Floyd for his work here, he is better known for his important work he does outside of this building in supporting and honouring our veterans, especially our Indigenous veterans. Mr. Powder has been deeply involved in the Last Post Fund Indigenous veterans initiative which aims to provide grave markers to Indigenous veterans in unmarked graves. Thanks to this initiative, we now have more than 30 headstones in the Northwest Territories honouring these fallen heroes. Further, we are expecting up to ten more next year.

He is also the Northwest Territories Metis Nation's representative to the Metis Nations Council's Veteran Council and works with the Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones furthering

Indigenous initiatives. Earlier this year, Mr. Powder received the Minister of Veterans Affairs commendation, and next week he will be traveling to Cyprus for Remembrance Day services to commemorate Canada's contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping forces in Cyprus and to honour those who lost their lives and made sacrifices during this mission.

Floyd was one of those who served as a peacekeeper in 1985 and 1986 as a member of the Canadian Airborne Regiment. Please join me in thanking Mr. Powder for his service to this institution, to our country, and to our people.

---Applause

Colleagues, I'd like to recognize the upcoming retirement of a long-serving staff member of the Legislative Assembly. Ms. Cynthia James has announced that she will be retiring early in 2025, which means this was her last sitting. We will miss her presence in the chamber as a table officer, and in committee meetings as committee clerk. To begin, I would like to thank and recognize Ms. James for her work in supporting the people and communities who were impacted by floods, forest fires in recent years, especially Fort Simpson, Deh Cho First Nations, Hay River and Katl'odeeche First Nation. Ms. James was one of the key organizers in fundraising activities to support these communities when they were faced with springtime flooding and forest fires.

Ms. James has been a part of this Legislative Assembly team since 2011 when she started as a Member's secretary. Since then, she has served as the executive assistant to both the Office of the Speaker and Office of the Clerk, and for the last six years served as a committee clerk supporting various committees, including:

- Standing Committee on Social Development;
- Standing Committee on Government Operations;
- Standing Committee on Public Accounts; and,
- Special Committee on Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs.

Working with the Standing Committee on Government Operations and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has given her the opportunity to work closely with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada on the public accounts and performance audit review. I know that she enjoyed this work and that the committee and staff at the Office of the Auditor General appreciated her support.

Without taking away from all of the committee work she's done, I have to say I know Cynthia is honoured to have served the special committee. She's supported the review of important legislation over the years, including the UNDRIP legislation through this committee and did so with great professionalism and pride. Colleagues, please join me in thanking Ms. James for her years of service and wishing her all the best in her upcoming retirement.

---Applause

Folks, we will not sit again in the chamber until after the holiday season, so I would like to take a moment to wish each of you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year. I know the ongoing work of government and committees will continue but as we return to our homes and constituencies, I encourage you to find the time to reconnect with those most important to you. We should enjoy and cherish the time we have with them, our families and closest friends, this season. These people, and the supports they provide, are what makes it possible for us to do our jobs as Members of this Legislative Assembly. Please, let them know how much you appreciate all they do for you.

Colleagues, I know that this time of year can be difficult for some people, and I ask each of you, and all residents of the Northwest Territories, to be kind and supportive. We are the territory of people who value each other and support each other. It is what we do, and the holiday season is an especially important time for us to be there for each other.

If you believe somebody is in need of support, reach out to them. If you are in need of support, reach out to somebody you trust. Colleagues, we are all in this together, and it's time we put our best foot forward to support our friends and families and communities.

Finally, before we adjourn, I would like to take a moment to thank our interpreters and our pages. As an institution, we strive to make the best possible use of our official languages. Our interpreters make it possible for us to do so. They make it possible for us to share our ideas and words with residents in our official languages, and we are honoured that you are able to do this for us.

Colleagues, every sitting day I feel both proud and inspired when I see our pages in this chamber. I've said it many times, but these young people are our future and every day they show us that our future is in good hands.

---Applause

Colleagues, thank you for your time and attention. Finally, Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK (Ms. Cynthia James): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 5th, 2025, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
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
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, Madam. Clerk.
This House stands adjourned until Wednesday,
February 5th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

