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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

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Please send corrections to Hansard Editor: kate_covello@ntassembly.ca

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 7, 2025****Members Present**

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

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON): I'd like to thank Ms. Elias for the prayer and reflections this morning. Ministers' statements. Minister for Health and Social Services.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 89-20(1):
NWT PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKER
BILATERAL AGREEMENT (HSS)**

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is committed to enabling seniors to age in place with dignity as close to home as possible. With an aging population and an increase in the complexity of health care needs, the demand for personal support workers is growing.

Mr. Speaker, personal support workers are essential to the Northwest Territories health and social services system, especially in more remote communities. They are professional care providers equipped with the training and expertise needed to work in critical programs like home and community care, long-term care, extended care, and supportive living. Today, I am happy to announce that Health Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories have amended their Aging with Dignity Bilateral Agreement to include a focus on recruitment and retention measures for personal support workers in the Northwest Territories.

This amendment will provide an additional \$5.3 million over five years, from 2024 to 2029, to strengthen and support the growth of the personal support workers workforce here in the territory. This funding will allow us to support these workers in two critical ways:

- By hiring an educator within each health and social services Authority to provide ongoing training and support; and,

- By enhancing education programs offered by Aurora College so that we can increase the number of qualified workers and meet labour market demands across the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, as the only provider of a standardized and structured personal support worker certificate program in the territory, the Aurora College plays a key role in training personal support workers who can use their expertise to help residents age in place and remain in their home communities while delivering quality care based on best practices.

By enabling more training and support, we are working collaboratively to improve the recruitment and retention of personal support workers and provide the high-quality and culturally-sensitive care that residents of the Northwest Territories need and deserve. These efforts not only strengthen our health care workforce; they safeguard the quality of care for vulnerable people, promoting a more resilient and equitable health care system for Northerners, including Indigenous and underserved populations across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, as a proud graduate of Aurora College's nursing program myself, I see the immense value in teaching and training Northerners to care for their fellow community members.

I would like to thank the health and social services authority and the Aurora College for their ongoing efforts to support personal support workers in the Northwest Territories. This agreement represents a significant investment in the health and wellness of Northerners now and for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 451-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm always -- it's always a pleasure to go first, and I'm always ready when you call upon me to give my Member's statement because I've got lots to say.

Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, or I should say a few weeks ago, a former colleague of mine, Michael Miltenberger, wrote in the Northern News Services, and he talked about a very interesting thing. We did chat about, before his special article went out, guest article that is, and we chatted about is it time to have a good conversation about naming the Northwest Territories or renaming it a name that should mean something.

Mr. Speaker, a name can mean a lot of things and, of course, it is, as we all know for facts, it's a bunch of letters. Wherever you write your letters, wherever they're from. But a name is also about the meaning of what it represents, and that's really true, the genius of what a name is.

Now, the Northwest Territories has come upon its name based on colonial reasons and, in many cases, some would define it as a placeholder position. But no longer do we represent the Northwest Territories in its truest sense as it was defined. In other words, that land over there, somewhere in the North, on the west side. Now that was true to a time, again from the colonial overseers that governed this land that is, but many places have had the courage to reflect, say to themselves, should we have a name more reflective of who we represent and the people we represent in the sense of what it means to them.

Mr. Speaker, it was many years ago, as was pointed out by my good colleague, our mutual friend, the wonderful and most elegant Jeannie Marie Jewell who broke ranks with the times and said I want my riding named with a name that means something. And, therefore that riding had been renamed from the colonial name to Thebacha as we know it today. I think that was a bold step by certainly a bold leader.

Mr. Speaker, we've had the challenge before, in the '90s, where they said maybe we should talk about the Northwest Territories and give it a more meaningful name. Now, of course, I'll say it was my personal favorite because it almost is my name, which is the starring name that shot through the roof, was Bob. Now, I would never suggest we name the Northwest

Territories Bob, and, of course, we got exactly what the person was probably intending, trying to be funny and hence it derailed a very important subject.

There have been many names suggested, such as Denendeh, Nahendeh, Utialuvik -- if I said it right -- but maybe more importantly, Mr. Speaker, as I finish as the time ticks away, is this is a conversation we should open and embrace and welcome some food for thought -- or thought for food from Northerners. Please write in and give us your thoughts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 452-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE PROGRAM

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, the NWT has been sustained since time immemorial on the traditional economies of First Peoples who harvested the fur, fish, timber, and other natural resources that our land is rich in. But as our economy has grown, so has the needs of our labour market, and immigration has become an important part of our story. This is how the Northwest Territories has built a diverse community that it boasts today, because of this welcoming nature of our people that has encouraged migration from every corner of the world. From France to the Philippines, Lebanon to India, these people come to partake in fur trading, mining, commerce, contracting, health care, and more. Indeed, the North has always had a need for hardworking skilled labour, unique from the rest of Canada, which is why it was so shocking that the NWT Nomination Program collapsed in recent months.

Last year, the program began to strain under the weight of so many applicants, first closing temporarily last July and now this year shutting down at the 11th hour thanks to a massive cut in available permits from the federal government despite a huge backlog of applicants who were expecting to submit their paperwork that very night. Now I am hearing from business owners in my riding, who are telling me their plans to expand, have had to be put on hold while concern continues to pour in from frontline workers that departments can't find employees who can support our services. Community leaders and constituents are reaching out almost daily in growing fears as the date of work permit expirations creep closer and closer without any certainty that their paperwork will be processed in time. Collectively, they describe these circumstances as nothing short of chaos.

Mr. Speaker, our government did not build this program up for it to come crashing down overnight. The federal government must recognize that this is not the right way to treat families who want to live here in the NWT. Their human rights and rights as workers must be upheld. I am calling on our Minister to take action, and I know she is passionate about the subject as well, but to take action and ensure that this program will not only be back up and running but will be expanded to meet our growing needs. Let's stand up for northern businesses and show the Prime Minister this program has been a success and prove to local businesses that our priority is their growth and give hope to new Canadians that they are respected members of our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 453-20(1):
INSURANCE RATES

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to echo some of the comments of my colleague from Frame Lake from our last sitting in the fall of 2024 and some from his predecessor from the last Assembly. Extreme jumps in home insurance costs are a serious issue for many constituents, and I'm left wondering what the GNWT can do to help mitigate these rates from rising out of sight.

The Minister of MACA noted last fall that the GNWT is part of a federal working group that's looking at ways to address problems with obtaining insurance coverage due to flooding, at the very least, and that NWT Association of Communities is also part of this group. This might be a good first step, but now folks who already have insurance are receiving renewals that are skyrocketing their costs and impacting family budgets.

Mr. Speaker, when such renewal came to my mailbox a few weeks ago, my family's home insurance went up by 82 percent compared to last year. After careful review, it's entirely due to the fact that my home is located in the Northwest Territories. I did not take out a claim against my insurance when we evacuated in 2023, Mr. Speaker. I'm highly fortunate that my spouse's family lives in Alberta, and we could stay with them for the duration. There's no other reason for this cost except our location.

I'm lucky, Mr. Speaker. My family's costs are relatively low, and we can still afford this jump; however, I'm concerned for homeowners who might not be so lucky and folks in my riding who are tenants, and there are many, whose

landlords might be increasing rental rates to partially recoup costs. In recent weeks, a local friend of mine had a conversation that leads me to believe that 50 percent home insurance jumps are the norm right now.

Mr. Speaker, I tried to read the Insurance Act the other night, and that was a mistake. It's very dense. But from what I can glean, we really don't have many regulatory powers surrounding the insurance industry. What I hope we do have is a Cabinet who will advocate on behalf of Northerners in the face of yet another cost of living pressure. Sometimes it feels like we can never catch a break. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 454-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRES CLOSURE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] **INSERT*** [Translation Ends] Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

Aurora College recently announced that in June that they will be closing 19 community learning centres across the territory, including centres in the Deh Cho riding. Mr. Speaker, these centres offer many programs from basic literacy classes to courses at a grade 12 level. They provide adult learners with the space to complete high school credits, a place where instructors give in-person support, help people develop career plans, and help them make decisions about pursuing post-secondary education.

Community learning centres also put jobs in smaller communities, Mr. Speaker. They support residents who live far away from Aurora College's main campuses. Their location in small communities is in keeping with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action highlighting 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.

Mr. Speaker, these closures unfairly target Indigenous communities and will make education less accessible for Indigenous learners. Online learning does not work for

everyone. Our people need more learning opportunities at home and in our own communities. According to the college, enrolments are dropping and there is an insufficient demand, but the 2022-2023 annual report shows that there were 489 students registered in their either part-time or full-time studies in small communities.

I understand the government doesn't make decisions for Aurora College, but the GNWT currently provides nearly 80 percent of the college's revenue. Small communities are not where you make cuts to education, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 455-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRES CLOSURE

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, [Translation] **INSERT*** [Translation Ends]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the upcoming closure of all community learning centres across the territory in June. We have heard that Aurora College is ending in-person adult education programs that learning centres provide to Tlicho communities like Whati.

Mr. Speaker, Aurora College received almost \$46 million in grants and contributions from the Government of the Northwest Territories in 2024. We should be doing more for small communities, not less. There was no consultation about these closures. Our people would not have agreed. The community learning centres work closely with schools in the communities and gives adults a place to earn high school credits. At the very least, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment should have consulted with residents to evaluate each learning centre on an individual basis. We have not been told what alternatives will be put in place for the services that were provided.

Mr. Speaker, if Aurora College is unable or unwilling to provide services to non-post secondary adult learners, perhaps the funding should go to the school boards. There's 33 communities, and each one have school boards. They are the experts in elementary and secondary education. They have facilities, and they employ teachers. More partnership should be explored between the education authorities and the learning centres so that there are more

opportunities for learners in the Tlicho region and other regions as well. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 456-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRES CLOSURE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly didn't plan it out, but it looks like we're having a bit of a theme day today. I, too, am rising to speak about the closure of the community learning centres, and some concerns I have about the relationship between the Minister and the board and the president of Aurora College.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as my fellow colleagues have already articulated, and I don't need to repeat today, we heard the news about what's happening. What really concerns me is that this news dropped and there was no plan associated with it. The college didn't articulate that, you know, this is a change that's being made, but here's how things are going to be done going forward or the department coming forward and saying, you know, we've spoken with the college, we've worked with the college, this is going to be a change but we do have a plan going forward for how we're going to fill this a gap, for how we're going to ensure the people in the communities are supported in getting the upgrading that they need in order to participate in post-secondary education. So it's really concerning.

I saw in the news the GNWT said they will be examining alternatives, but this is really something, if you're going to drop news like this, you want to see that the government and the board are aligned, that they're talking. As the Member from Monfwi pointed out, the board receives a significant amount of funding from the GNWT. There has to be alignment between the funder and the implementer of programming on what is being done with that money.

Mr. Speaker, we've also seen recently in the news the board speaking about their doubts about the polytechnic transition, about the work that's being done there. And so, you know, there was concern in Inuvik being raised by their town council what's going on with the campus there. There seems to be a lot of increasing disparity between what the Minister is saying the goals of Aurora College are and what Aurora College is doing and what the board is saying, and it concerns me that there

is such a lack of alignment between the funder and the organization which implements the programming.

So what is going on here, Mr. Speaker? Aurora College has got to be a significant piece of our workforce development. We've set workforce development as one of our goals in the mandate. We've got to get control of this.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, we still do not have a mandate for the college. It's been seven months since the mandate expires. I know that the mandate does say that it continues until the next one is done. So I'll have questions for the Minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 457-20(1):
SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELLING
SERVICES

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The smaller communities are struggling with the lack of resources that are available to them in order to better their lifestyles. We have individuals who have expressed interest in abstaining from the use of alcohol and/or drugs, but they have to leave their communities to get counselling services to start the process. Most of the residents do not want to confide in someone that they do not know.

Mr. Speaker, the wealth of resources is within the community where the individual lives mainly because everyone knows each other, and they know where to seek help at a moment's notice. We have the greatest resource people from our communities. They see our struggles and are willing to assist where needed. There are parents, elders, who seem helpless because their children or grandchildren are stuck in a cycle of substance abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I've stated this before, back in the early 1990s, it took a couple from Fort McPherson to look at their present lifestyle and took measures to improve it because it was having a negative impact on the people that they loved. From there, other parents followed their example and took the steps to better their lives. Today I'm proud of their intentions for their immediate families, and now they are concerned citizens who want the best for the community as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, if we can provide funding to the communities who want a healthy community, then we should be targeting those communities. There are resource people who would be happy to serve as counsellors or

mentors in trying to help our community members who are striving for a better, healthier lifestyle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 458-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRES CLOSURE

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to previous engagements I will be leaving afterwards but I, too, will be joining the theme day on the learning centre closures. I wouldn't be doing my job, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't voice the concerns that I heard recently from constituents in the Sahtu. We are going to see, and layoff slips have been awarded, to nine positions, and the loss of training opportunities by this government and also the closure of these facilities is going to be a loss to the education foundation of each community.

There's projects in the horizon. How do we readiness our workforce in providing opportunity specific to take, for example, the \$15 million capital commitment by the community of Fort Good Hope on building a manufacturing building that would produce homes. And as we know, we have a home crisis, a housing crisis, so here's a solution but we need to train our shortfall in trades.

So all in all, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to engaging with the Cabinet colleagues and Minister of education specifically on a solution to address this and aside from the direction given by the board of directors and the staff of the Aurora College. So I look forward to that deliberation. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I will have no questions due to my appointment.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 459-20(1):
CONDITION OF HOUSING IN INUVIK

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about the ongoing drug issue in our territory. And I know my colleagues have mentioned it several times since this House has been elected, as well as the Premier alluded to it in his address.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak specifically to Inuvik and to one issue. We have one apartment building up there. It's quite a large apartment building -- it's three floors, I think it has somewhere around 60 units -- and every week I get at least, at minimal two, sometimes

every day, e-mails, texts, phone calls, often videos, not only of the drug activity going on in that building, Mr. Speaker, but also the deplorable conditions in that building and how residents are having to live in there. And I bring this building up, Mr. Speaker, because it's a three-storey building, and two of those floors are leased out to the housing corporation and we provide units in there. And a lot of the constituents that send me those e-mails are being sent from residents living in there; they're living in the housing units.

I know the Minister is alive to this. I'm sure she gets just as many e-mails and texts as I get, but I guess today what I'll be looking for is what can we do, what can the NWT Housing Corp do, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that those residents in there are safe? There are families in there. There are elders in that building. I know -- I've been through the building; I know some of the conditions they're facing. The RCMP, to their credit, have been doing an amazing job, you know, the best they can up there. I know they're busy. They've made several busts in that building, which is good. Unfortunately, you know, a week later we see the same activity back in the same units in there again. And, again, I get those updates. And the tenants are sharing those updates with the RCMP as well, which is very helpful. So I'll have questions today, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of housing on what the housing corp specifically is doing to combat some of this and to certainly combat the conditions in that building. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 460-20(1):
DETON'CHO RENEWABLE ENERGY
PROJECT

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to close out the week by pointing to a spark of inspiration that we can hopefully all get energized about, if folks will excuse the bad pun.

This week Det'on Cho, which is the economic development corporation of the Yellowknives Dene, presented their plan to pursue a major renewable energy project that could supply much needed clean power to N'dilo, Dettah, Yellowknife, and emerging critical minerals operations in the region. We are well aware of how unreliable our Snare hydro system has become. While Yellowknife has typically met about 95 percent of our electricity needs with hydro power, over the past five years we've experienced drought conditions, likely related to climate change, and as a result the Jackfish

diesel backup generators have been much more than backup. They've been burning diesel more than half the time. And that reliance on diesel not only makes climate change worse and it impacts air quality, it's caused costs to skyrocket both in higher power rates for residents and tens of millions of dollars that this government has had to fork out each year in diesel subsidies. Meanwhile, we have the economy to worry about. Diamond mine closures on the horizon and critical minerals companies with opportunities but not enough clean power to assure investors that this is a promising place to pursue. And instead of sitting back and looking to the GNWT to fix the situation, instead of looking to the government for answers, as is so often our default, this Indigenous development corporation has taken the initiative to find a practical solution. Instead of being paralyzed with fear and anxiety about all that we lack, Det'on Cho saw the infrastructure gap as an opportunity, and they're moving to fill it. It's an opportunity for economic development in a diverse range of sectors, from the building and operation of the power installation itself, to the opening of critical minerals opportunities, the potential for storage or data centres, further electrification of transportation, and more. These are the kinds of opportunities that we've been told for more than 20 years that the Taltson expansion would open up, if only we could just wait for those billions of dollars to fall from the federal heavens.

I want to commend Det'on Cho for not waiting, for taking this initiative, and showing ways that we could be practical, nimble, and cost effective in charting our renewable energy future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 461-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR FUNERAL COSTS

MR. EDJERICON: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A fundamental aspect of a funeral respecting and honouring the deceased, the sanctity and reverence for a loved one's soul comes from when families in my communities gather to say good-bye. Recently, my community have come to me to place their concerns with the fact that caskets have been reused multiple times, disrespecting the deceased and causing anguish to the family during a time that they should be focusing on grieving together.

Just two years ago, my communities had a choice: To purchase caskets from Inuvik, Hay River, and Fort Smith. Today, there is no

market but the monopoly the GNWT is enforcing, and the consequences of this monopoly is a lack of cultural sensitivity.

The lack of open market not only just disregards Indigenous culture and traditions but has led to very high costs for communities. Indigenous communities like my own in Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh experience funerals and celebration at a large gathering so that they may grieve collectively and follow their traditions together as a community. It takes a lot of resources and planning to organize these funerals appropriately. And so without an open market, the cost of the casket, transportation, and all the services that go along with these ceremonies can be extremely high. My community members can get support from their bands and from the *ministry directives. I know it goes a long way to get help with financial support from the GNWT, but the high cost and lack of choices due to this enforcement often limits how far they can get help. And there's still big gaps in the health and social services policy. Mr. Speaker, I would have questions for the Minister of health at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 462-20(1):
CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF MARIE LOU
PINEDA LEGUERRIER

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Good morning, colleagues. On October 3rd, 2024, God called home one of his angels Marie Lou Pineda Leguerrier. She passed away at her home in Fort Smith surrounded by her husband, family, and friends. Marie was born on April 17th, 1957, in the Philippines.

I first met her at the Northern Lights Special Care Home in Fort Smith when I went to visit some of the residents and some of her colleagues. I observed this lady walking fast but once she got to where she needed to be, especially with the elders, she became so patient and worked only at their speed and ability. She treated them with the utmost respect, compassion, and empathy. When I spoke to the residents about her, they talked about how caring she was and how she made it a point to get know their family, not just them. They would tell me she was their advocate and stood up for them.

About seven years ago, I got to meet her again. This time through Grace. Grace spoke very highly of her and considered her one of her best friends.

As I got to know her, she had an amazing career. She was a chemical engineer by trade and worked at an asphalt company in the Philippines. In 1987, she went to work in Hong Kong as a domestic worker for a couple of years. Then she moved to Edmonton but a short period later, she moved to Inuvik, NWT, to become one of the supervisors at Grollier Hall.

This is where Marie met her future husband Yves. She tells a cool story of how they met. She overheard Yves talking to a new co-worker about the need for some good winter boots, but the person didn't have any. So Yves gave him the boots. This was the start of their relationship. After the Grollier Hall shut down, she moved to Fort Smith, NWT, and married Yves in 1997.

Marie learned to bake, cook, make jam and jelly and can vegetables by cooking with her mother-in-law, as well as borrowing books from the library and later using the internet. She would give most of her baking to others, especially the residents and colleagues at Northern Lights Special Care. She loved to travel the world, and the last trip she took off her bucket list was the East Coast of Canada in July 2024 with a few of her close friends. Even though she was very weak, she endured and loved her last vacation.

They had a Celebration of Life at Northern Lights. A good friend of her, Gladys Rehm, did an amazing job celebrating her life. I have added it to my Celebration of Life and would like it deemed as read and printed in Hansard. Marie is going to be missed by us all, especially her husband Yves. They would like to thank everybody for their support during this difficult time.

Marie Lourdes Pineda Leguerrier

Born April 17, 1957 in Iloilo city, Phillipines to Isidro Pineda and Brigida Corsiga. She has two brothers and two sisters. Her primary education was at a Catholic school and secondary at San Jose College.

She attended the University of San Agustin and got a degree in Chemical Engineering. She worked in asphalt and cement and then as a soil analyst in Hong Kong and a nanny as well.

She immigrated to Canada in 1989 and her first home was in Inuvik NT working as a Supervisor at Grollier Hall.

It was in Inuvik in 1991 she met Yves. They met in a bar. Yup a bar. She was there with her friends, and she overheard a guy (Yves) at the next table. He was talking to a guy who had come from the south and was not equipped with

proper footwear for our northern winters. Yves said to him "I have a pair of winter boot you can have". Marie observed the kindness of this guy to just to give someone boots so they wouldn't be cold. She thought to herself, he must be a nice guy. That was the beginning of their story together.

Marie moved with Yves to Fort Smith in 1996.

She became a Canadian citizen in July of that same year.

Marie and Yves were married April 19, 1997, with Wade Johnson as best man and Angela Marsh as maid of honor.

Marie took the Care Aide course at the Arctic College and started her career working at the Fort Smith hospital and then moving over to Northern Lights Special Care Home.

She cared for dozens if not a couple hundred Elders over her 25 years. Marie did not see skin color, she treated them all with the utmost respect, compassion, empathy, and the very best care. She got to know the families, who was related to whom. She laughed with them, cried with them, and mourned them when they passed on and even than thinking "what more could we have done for them". She was generous with kind and encouraging words sprinkled with humour. She shared her love of cooking and baking, often bringing in a special dish for an Elder she knew they liked. The staff also benefited from her delicious food.

At work there was an understanding amongst the Aides "SHE DA BOSS" in a Good way. She had this walk/run and with her long legs we literally had to run to keep up to her. But with the Elders she was so patient and worked only to their speed and abilities. She advocated for the Elders and challenged a few of the "bosses" of the day to "do the right thing for the Elders". She also gave freely of her time outside of work hours. Volunteering at Northern Lights for special occasions or shopping for items the Elders needed.

She orientated dozens of Care Aides including myself. If they didn't get it, it wasn't because she didn't teach them. She had a no-nonsense way of getting things done. Tasks and Elder care were done in unison and to the highest standard. Except beds, she detested making beds, saying "there are more important things to do". Some of us would make deals with her. We would make her beds and she would trade us a task.

She also didn't believe in ironing uniforms or anything else. We would tease her as she came on shift pulling at her top to "straighten it out a bit". Saying to her "Marie, 25 cents for every

time you come to work with a wrinkled uniform" she would just laugh and say, "here's 10 bucks for the week".

Now her handwriting was something else. It was a true mystery to figure out. Many times, having to ask her "what does this say"? After a while we could decipher it though. We teased her saying "you write like a doctor". She wrote like she walked..... just fast.

When she wasn't at work Marie enjoyed cooking her special philippino dishes or baking some of her regulars like breads, pop overs and cinnamon buns (she made the best ones). She enjoyed experimenting with new recipes and making jam from her fruit trees. Her favorite foods were her country foods and chocolate (with a huge supply on hand at home and at work).

She always made time for her friends. She gathered weekly with her philippino friends for a meal. Then they would watch their favorite Korean dramas together. Marie had friends all over the world. She got calls texts and Facetime calls from so many over the past couple months which she really appreciated.

A small group of us coworkers came together as friends. We called ourselves The Northern Lights Nutcakes and later shortened to just Nutcakes. We had the best times together gathering at one of our homes. Laughing, storytelling, dancing eating and often strategizing work situations to help improve our Elders care. We always ended each one praying together. We took several smaller trips together including Hay River, Yellowknife (to visit one of our previous NL Elders) and Canmore. Our most recent trip was to Nova Scotia for 2 weeks this past July. We experienced so many places and things together and things just fell into place for us throughout the trip. Yves said he was glad we went 'cause that was her "Bucket List" trip.

Marie was a good listener and thought a long time before answering. She loved a good joke, video, or story, adding her own little quip to it. She also enjoyed reading, gardening and online shopping for the latest kitchen gadgets or shoes.

Oh, my goodness how she loved her shoes. I found this out one day at work. Yves had called telling her their hot water heater was leaking and was flooding into the house. Marie ran out the door to check out the situation. She came back and I asked her how it was. She said, "Well it flooded the hardwood floors somewhat, but all my shoes are okay". She was worried about her shoes stored under the bed.... Not the floors. Yes, Marie had quite a collection. I later

found out it was because as a kid they often did without shoes.

Marie travelled extensively over the years both with Yves and her sisters. She said she road a camel and an elephant adding the camel is way more stubborn. We laughed and noted we are sometimes like camels. Yes, she could be stubborn but lived by her morals and values and advocating for those less fortunate or could not speak for themselves.

Yves was the love of her life. They spent their time together doing things like snowshoeing, skidooing, fishing, quading, boating, berry picking, gardening, travelling, and spending time at their cabin. She and Yves would make Christmas cakes and deliver them to Elders at the home and around town. Apparently with lots of brandy in them.

Yves has been by her side including her battle with cancer, doing whatever he could to make her journey as easy as possible. Many trips to Edmonton and Yellowknife and then setting up their home to accommodate Marie's wish to be at home until the end. He welcomed her sisters and her friends into their home daily for the last 2 months. We are so thankful for this.

Marie was in her own home, listening to the familiar sounds and smells of the cooking she loved from her homeland. There was much laughter, storytelling, praying and dancing, yes even dancing. There were tears and heartfelt conversations as well. Often comfortable silence was all that was needed. We are truly thankful for this sacred time together.

Her sisters Ping and Cora were her best friends. Their nickname for Marie was "Ni Ning". Marie being the oldest and the matriarch of the family was highly respected. She spent time with them, going to the beach, fruit picking, travelling and bird hunting. I did not know she could handle a gun, good thing I stayed on the good side of her. Her sisters came to visit as often as they could. When they heard Marie was palliative they flew here as soon as they could. For the past 2 months they took care of cooking, cleaning, hosting friends of Marie's and of course her every need. They wanted to make her last weeks' worry-free. Marie appreciated everything they did for her. Knowing that they would be with her till the end brought her great comfort.

Marie always considered her nieces and nephews like her own children. Children and grandkids of her friends and coworkers were always a source of joy for her. Keeping up with their lives, celebrating their achievements and welcoming new babies (she loved to pinch their cheeks). Always quick to connect with the little

ones and watching them grow up in the community. Attending many graduations celebrating their success. Giving little ones advice like "you help your Mommy" or "be kind to your brothers and sisters". As they grew, telling them things like "you are so smart" or "you are very kind" or "you can do anything if you work hard at it". Praying for them when they needed it or upon request. She was an Aunty to many children in this sense including my granddaughters.

Marie was strong in her faith and never waivered in her belief that the Lord would take care of her. She had the longest prayer list, and her rosary was never far from her. It was this faith that brought her 5 extra years of being here with us. For that we are truly thankful.

She walked in a good way on this earth.

Marie passed away in her home surrounded by her family and friends. We loved her and were blessed to have had her in our lives and she will be truly missed. Now she is flying with the Angels and has a place in the Masters Bouquet.

Rest easy my friend.

On behalf of her husband Yves, family and friends, we would like to thank everyone for coming today.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to Budget Address, Day 2 of 7. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 446-20(1): IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I spoke about the Northwest Territories Nominee Program. I know that this has been an area of concern for a lot of my constituents, a lot of people in the community, both business owners and people in it the program who are worried if they're going to get kicked out of the Northwest Territories. I know the Minister's been active on this file. Can she update this House as to what people can expect when the new intake occurs for the NTNP program? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the

Member for providing me with the opportunity to speak to this.

I want to start by acknowledging that this would definitely be a very concerning time for people who are waiting for the opportunity to put their name into a very limited number of nominations that the NWT currently has. Our numbers were cut from 300 to 150 by the federal government. So we did put a pause on the program so that we could get together with some of our stakeholders and partners to reevaluate what this program could look like upon reopening it. And so what I can commit to people is that they will have time to familiarize themselves with what the program will look like before we relaunch it, and we will relaunch it here in the coming weeks. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the workers who are already here and have expiring permits, I think those should be the priority. It makes sense that they're the priority. Will the Minister commit to prioritizing applications based on when work permits are expiring? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is something that we've definitely heard from CDETNO, Chamber of Mines of the Northwest Territories, as well as -- or, sorry, Chamber of Commerce of the NWT and Chamber of Commerce of Yellowknife as well. But I want to be able to deliver the entire program and package to people so they're not getting information piecemeal. They're able to sit down, look at what the entire program will look like on relaunch, and be able to digest that information all at one time. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I think -- I mean, I think that's a reasonable think people are looking for. If they're looking for clarity, they don't have it, they're going to be experiencing anxiety until they do. These are people who are worried about their future. We can kind of give them something. So can the Minister at least give me a very clear date when the full program will be available for the public to see so we can start easing those fears? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, right now, I can commit to the Member and to the public that this program will be reopened in the month of February and that in the, you know, coming week, we'll be able to inform the public as to what that will look like, but that is the

extent of the commitments I can give on timing right now. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 447-20(1):
RENAMING OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I'd like to cite my questions towards my Member's statement today and where I talked about the advancement of a potential conversation of renaming the Northwest Territories. So I'd like to specifically ask the Premier, who also is -- who works with the Council of Leaders.

Mr. Speaker, would the Premier be interested in raising the issue with the Council of Leaders to get their thoughts and opinions on is it time to start having this conversation about naming the Northwest Territories -- or I should say renaming the Northwest Territories to a name that's more reflective of its people? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife Centre. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a Member of the Council of Leaders, I would say that the resources of the GNWT are better spent elsewhere at this time given all of the challenges that we have. That being said, I'll start having some informal conversations with some of the other leaders at the table and go from there. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would say I'm not sure I should say thank you or maybe should start over and say what did that answer actually mean. So what does informal conversations mean? I'm simply asking for can the Premier put it on the agenda for something for folks to consume and consider and maybe get some feedback on it? I'm not looking for a special task force where we line up hundreds of processes and administration. Because if there's no appetite at the Council of Leaders for this kind of conversation, maybe now is not the right now. That said, it may be something for the future. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have an appetite to direct GNWT resources to this. This is the kind of initiative that would take significant consultation, in-person consultation in every community in the Northwest Territories, and so I'm the one who doesn't want to do this. I'll just put that out there. What I mean by having informal conversations with some of the leaders at the

Council of Leaders table is I'll have informal conversations with them, and I'll see. If there's real opposition, then there's no point in putting it through the formal process of going to the secretariat and getting it up to the leaders' table just so we can all say that we don't want to do this. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe then I'll ask this: Can I get some sense as to when the next Council of Leaders meeting is; furthermore -- because Members are really not involved in any of that stuff so we don't really know what happens at that esoteric table of conversations until much later. E that said, can he make sure he informs me when the next Council of Leaders meeting is. Furthermore, can he also let me know when or who he's spoken to about this so I get a sense that at least the conversation is being had, and we can then take it wherever it goes next. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Later this month there is a short phone or video meeting with the Council of Leaders just to prepare for the meeting in June. It's mid-June, I believe. I will report back to the Member directly on the results of any conversations. I don't want to necessarily commit to putting people's names to those conversations unless those people want to have their names shared with the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 448-20(1):
IMPACTS OF ILLICIT DRUG ACTIVITY ON
HOUSING UNITS AND TENANTS IN INUVIK

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a follow-up to my Member's statement this morning on the Nova apartment building in Inuvik, I'd like to ask the Minister has the Minister -- I guess my first question will be has the Minister actually had an opportunity, or her senior staff an opportunity, to visit the Nova Apartments in Inuvik? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I've been in the building. I've had a number of family members live in the building. I understand the concerns coming from the MLA. Good thing to know, though, in the past week we've had the president for Housing NWT visit the building to look at it for herself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, and I thank the Minister for that, and I think it's amazing that the president has been up there, can see for herself what's happening up there. And, Mr. Speaker, this is no way a slight on the property owner or the developer up there. We're happy to have that building in our community.

I guess my next question is, then, so will the Minister commit to looking at putting these -- I know in some units, particularly in Yellowknife, I know in some apartment buildings they have security in there because we're dealing with a building where the door's often wide open, where there's things happening in the building, in the hallways, that shouldn't be. Will the Minister commit to looking at having full-time security in that building to ensure that the residents who are in there are safe? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the president, Housing NWT, visiting the building, what she's proposed to do is meet with the landlords, the leaseholders, and have a discussion about safety and security in the building, amping that up because of all the illegal activities happening within the unit and the concerns from the tenants. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Excellent, that's great news, great to hear. Can the Minister kind of put some timelines around when she anticipates the president and the owners of the building will be meeting to kind of start putting that plan in place and then follow up obviously with what comes from that plan? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the urgency of this concern and considering the activities within the housing -- or the building itself, I've asked the president of Housing NWT to have a discussion over the next month. So hopefully we'll hear something within the next few weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 449-20(1):
HOME INSURANCE COSTS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Finance. Is the Minister familiar with how many insurance companies that provide coverage in the NWT are increasing their

property insurance rates beyond regular average increases prior to the 2023 wildfire season? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can say that to my information there's 150 individual insurers that are licensed under the Insurance Act. As for what each or every one of them may or may not be doing with increasing rates, I don't have that information. The Insurance Act gives me the ability -- or gives the department the ability to regulate but not necessarily to control the commercial side of what these organizations do. That said, Mr. Speaker, we are, as a government, a member of a number of different groups across Canada, and rates are rising across the country so can certainly say that that does appear to accord with what we are hearing as well. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the Minister has kind of predicted what I want to ask next. But are there any policy or legislative labours at our disposal to lessen increases whatsoever across the board in the GNWT, not just in her purview? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And no, unfortunately, there's not. Again, we are the regulating body that ensures about the provision of insurance and how -- you know, how the behaviour of the insurance companies or the brokers might be but not a control over their commercial market and what the commercial market might be doing to prices. That said, Mr. Speaker, we do set the rate for the cost of having your insurance. I mean, there's a tax that's levied on insurance companies. We have kept that rate low. We have a 1 percent only for fire insurance, and we've kept ours at 3 percent on the main premium which is lower than Yukon or Alberta. So doing -- that's a small drop in the bucket, though, to be honest, Mr. Speaker. We have also, in the last couple of years, looked at taking on some of the schools into the GNWT's package which helps them manage their insurance rates. But in terms of residential insurance or small businesses, there's not levers in our hands. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, good news, the Standing Committee on Government Operations is scheduled to review amendments to this Act in the life of this Assembly. Is the Minister willing to review if there could be

amendments to this Act or speak with her colleague at MACA to consider consumer protections going forward? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's early days to know what may or may not be in the review of a piece of legislation and, of course, always happy to consider amendments. I can say that we are members of the Canadian insurance services regulatory organization, meaning the Canadian Council of Insurance Regulators and the General Insurance Statistical Agency. I mention all of those because as this process moves forward, I'll certainly look for the opportunity to see if there's any best practices happening. Again, cost increases are happening everywhere, and it's an issue that's coming up, so if there's opportunity to learn from others or to utilize other practices, I'd be happy to share that information and to put it forward. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 450-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE MANAGEMENT AND
OVERSIGHT

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I noted earlier today, I'm concerned about the continued misalignment between the Minister and the Aurora College board. Mr. Speaker, why aren't the department and the board coordinating and planning something like the CLC closures, polytechnic transition. How does the Minister plan to address this issue of misalignment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I absolutely hear the Member, and I agree that the goal is to have a strategic plan go out where, you know, we're answering all of the questions that we know that residents are going to have about the forward looking of a program and what the future holds. Ultimately, ECE will remain responsible at the end of the day for ensuring that residents have access to quality programs that support education and employment, and so right now, the work that ECE is doing is gaining clarity on, you know, what parts of adult learning and basic education Aurora College will continue to fill so that we can plan from there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, just on the review of the CLCs themselves, I understand that when the facility's master plan was being put together, there was actually quite a bit of a review of the CLCs specifically and that a report was produced talking about everything that was heard during the review of the CLCs. Will the Minister commit to release that report so the public can better understand what's going on, better understand what's behind the decisions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my goal is to always say yes, especially when it comes to transparency. I will note that this report was commissioned by the Department of Infrastructure so I will say yes with a caveat of being able to make sure that there isn't any privacy concerns from the Department of Infrastructure or concerns about any commercial information given that they are the owners of the report. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate that commitment from the Minister. I think that's going to be helpful information for the public to have.

So just on the issue of misalignment, I mean, is the Minister working with the board, working with the college president to improve the relationship to ensure that we have alignment going forward? I understand the Minister may be releasing a mandate for the college soon, or certainly should be. What are we doing to improve this relationship, to ensure that we have alignment on the goals that we're trying to achieve and everybody's pulling in the same direction? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am one who is eager to share my -- even my personal cell phone number with the people that I want to be working closely with. That is something that the chairperson certainly has. We also have a joint mandate agreement and the ability to get together on a regular basis and definitely try to get together on a regular basis or as much as possible.

In regards to the Member's comment about a mandate agreement, that is something that will be released within the coming week, and Members do have an embargoed copy within their inbox today.

And then in addition to the question around, you know, going forward what will happen, there is

a draft communication protocol document between myself and the chairperson of Aurora College that I will continue to pursue to get signed by both parties. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 451-20(1):
CLOSURE OF AURORA COLLEGE
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the ECE minister. Were residents in small communities consulted about the closure of the Aurora College's community learning centres? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't speak to the methodology that Aurora College took in coming to this conclusion and what kind of engagement that they did do. But given that it was very much a shock for the Northwest Territories when this information was released, I would venture to say that many people didn't feel that they felt that they knew that this was coming. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Does the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have a plan to address the need for academic upgrading and basic literacy programming in small communities, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is no concrete plan at this time until we determine some clarity around what (audio) continue to hold. There is an existing MOU and contribution agreement for Aurora College to deliver adult learning and basic education through the community learning centres. So if that is not an MOU that they intend to continue, ultimately ECE will still remain responsible for ensuring that there are education and employment opportunities within small communities, and so that work is yet to come. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell me will the funding that was allocated for community learning centres be reinvested into opportunities for adult

learners in the NWT, for specifically small communities. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So within that MOU that I spoke of, it is a contribution agreement that does go to Aurora College to be able to deliver the adult learning and basic education throughout the CLCs throughout the Northwest Territories, so that funding ultimately would -- any that was not used through the contribution agreement and the MOU with Aurora College would then come back to the department of education, and the department of education would still have the responsibility for ensuring that we're enhancing those opportunities within communities. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 452-20(1):
ADDICTIONS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES
FOR RESIDENTS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Will the department consider funding willing communities to establish a working committee to counsel potential individuals who would like to enter the substance abuse program? At the present time, the interested individuals who want to go for treatment have to seek counselling elsewhere, so they have to leave the community. And the community members know best who need the help, and they know each other. So will the department consider funding potential communities with these committees? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this area where the Member is speaking to has been identified. There were changes put in place to ensure that programs for wellness and recovery addictions can be in one pot of money and be flexible. So within health and social services, we have the Community Wellness and Addiction Recovery Fund which Indigenous -- regional Indigenous governments can apply, and then there's a deadline if there is no uptake in the regional governments and the community Indigenous governments can apply individually as they're -- you know, for their needs of their community. But what I can say is for the Member's riding, the Gwich'in Tribal Council, which would cover two of the communities

through -- well, actually three of the communities that the -- were approved for \$303,033. And then the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation has a multiyear agreement that does also provide programming individually for those communities. There's also an additional pot of funding that Tetlit Gwich'in band council has accessed and their CA is in progress. There is the suicide prevention fund so that can be used to promote wellness and programming within those communities. Again, there has been \$72,000 allocated in this budget for Gwich'in Tribal Council to provide programs and the Tetlit Gwich'in Council, \$71,000 signed for those communities. So all of that money has been allocated to be able to be used in those communities as per the community wishes. So, you know, and then alongside of that health and social services still does provide clinical counsellors. The health and social services still provides if there is a need for out-of-territory treatment, so there is many -- and then if they're NHIB clients, there is medical travel to help assist to support those that are under those NHIB addiction recovery programs. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for all that information. That's real good news to hear that money has been allocated. There's another barrier that, you know, that we have to look at policies and procedures that will go hand in hand with these committees if they're established at the community level. Will the department look at assisting these communities with policies and procedures in order to make this committee work effectively? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as for, you know, I think committees, we do have the regional wellness councils that do help, and there are members from the Member for Mackenzie Delta's riding on the regional wellness council. They do provide feedback. Mental health and addictions have been one that has been highlighted by many of the regions and especially from the Beaufort Delta. This area -- you know, the thing is is that we do collaborate with the communities on the GNWT provided programs. There has been, you know, some work done in the Beaufort Delta on how we provide services within our communities at the community level working with Indigenous governments. But as well as those funds that we give, like all of the money that I had mentioned before that we give to those Indigenous governments, that is on them to decide how they want to use those monies and we don't have any -- like, other than it's used for wellness and recovery and addictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Are there any active committees like that are actively working in to helping their residents of these small communities that we can learn from that are active within the NWT at the present time? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would have to have further conversations with the Member to understand the committees that he's wanting information about. As I mentioned, we have the regional wellness councils that give the input to NTHSSA on how programs work. Those are vital committees. They're members from the local communities. And, again, the direction of how those monies that are flowing to the Indigenous governments would be through their own committees to do that, so. But I'm willing to have more conversations with the Member to figure out how to respond to if there is more work that can be done to support Indigenous and small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 453-20(1):
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND COSTS
RELATED TO FUNERAL PREPARATION

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under Dene law here in the Northwest Territories, for a long time we've been taking care of our own people including loved ones as they pass. Most recent, up to two and a half years here in the Northwest Territories, you would be able to buy a casket from Fort Smith, Hay River, and Inuvik, and but right now the only funeral home in the Northwest Territories has that market now. So if a loved one passed, you have to go there and buy a casket. But as a carpenter, if somebody comes up to me and asks me to build a casket, we don't question it; we just do it. But now I'm told that you have to go to McKenna -- sorry, the only supplier in the Northwest Territories to buy the casket. So my question to the Minister of Health and Social Services is that if we can look at a policy to amend it so that we could open it up again to go to these suppliers to look at buying caskets based on what community wants and the families want. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear what the Member is saying, and I too have had these conversations as soon as I became the Minister. However, before there was this -- the bereavement pot of money that sits within the health and social services to assist with low income families, you know, to assist with caskets and some funeral costs; however, over the years, this has been sole sourced, you know, and so there were issues coming up about how in procurement that this is not fair. I guess I don't -- I wasn't part of any -- most of those discussions. However, now as the health and social services Minister, this has gone through procurement, and so the program that we currently have that the funding is allocated is procured to a business and that business, whenever somebody needs to access that fund, has to go through that person, that contract that's been approved for these funds. However, we also have heard many of these issues so, you know, these -- this is something that we can always take the feedback and, you know, when looking at this contract when it comes up, you know, we can take a look at it from all the feedback in how we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had an elder that passed just before Christmas and who had worked for the Government of the Northwest Territories for a long time and very well-respected in our community and when a casket was provided, it was provided to the elder in the community, and we learned that that casket was used. And in our culture, people get really offended and upset about that kind of thing. So my question to the Minister is what can we do better so that this does not happen again to -- especially to our elders and loved ones in our community. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can do is I can commit to looking into the delivery of the service to better understand how it's -- you know, how it's operating within our communities just so that there's more clear understanding for myself -- not just for myself, but for residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, also I just want to bring up another issue is that when we have loved ones that have left our communities to go south or to be with family and that and sometimes they pass away and they need to come home, the thing is

that the way the government has their policy set up, they -- because they're out of province, the family would have to go to the chief and council, the Metis council, and look at ways to try to bring the body back to the community. I just want to know if the Minister is open to looking at how we can fix this problem because originally these guys that are -- our members have moved away and they come back, so we want to see what we can do as a government to help out in this -- on a policy directive to look at this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, when a loved one dies, you know, and whether they're in our home, whether they're anywhere, this is a hard and difficult time; however, this program, this is intended to support current eligible NWT residents, you know, and I think if they are NWT residents and they are outside the territory when they pass away, we've had this conversation in the House that people that travel outside the Northwest Territories for any type of recreation, you know, visiting, holidays, business, anything, you know, if you're travelling on business, you're usually covered by your employer but if you're travelling for your own personal, you should be looking at out -- like, for travel insurance, and I mean that is something that we've heard many times happening recently. And so getting that information out to our residents that, you know, it does cost if something happens, you know, while you're outside of the territory. But this program here is intended for Northwest Territories residents. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 454-20(1):
CLOSURE OF AURORA COLLEGE
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has done to consult residents in small communities about the closure of the community learning centre? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, under the Aurora College Act, the Aurora College board of governors is responsible for operational decisions of the

college. So this was not a decision that was made by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, so they wouldn't have done community engagement or consultations with communities for a decision that they did not make. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Now, so will the adult learners in small communities now be expected to attend high school classes in regular K through 12 programming? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, at this point we don't have the clarity we need, based on the plans going forward of Aurora College, to understand what parts of the adult learning and basic education components they plan to continue to fill and which ones and how they plan to roll some of those back. And so without that clarity, we can't put a plan in place going forward. But I can say that some communities have reached out as well to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment because they have plans as to how they'd like to see the community learning centres used. But at this point, the work that's being done by ECE is working with Aurora College to understand their go-forward plan so then we can create a plan as to what the future looks like. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. So does the department have a plan to expand services for academic upgrading and basic programming in small communities to something more developed such as GED certificate programs or partnership with the college to offer more trades programs locally? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have said as well, ECE still remains responsible for ensuring that there is access to enhanced education and employment programming in small communities. So with that in mind, that will be some of the work that happens once we gain that clarity of their go-forward plans from Aurora College. And one of the things that I think is really interesting happening within some communities within the education and employment space is some dev corps are really looking into working with the government in how they can use government existing funding and existing programming to be able to work in partnership to create more education and employment opportunities for communities and by pairing up some of the projects that they're working on. And so there are some different

exciting pieces that don't relate to CLCs that are happening, and I'm more than happy to talk about that with the Member as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 455-20(1):
ROLE OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
AUTHORITY

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are actually for the Minister of Health and Social Services following up on previous questions that I've been asking earlier this week.

With regard to the new public administrator, there's lots of sort of concern and anxiety and worry going around about possible, you know, budget cuts associated with this role. So can the Minister clarify is the public administrator's focus simply on finding cost savings, or is the public administrator also going to be focusing on how to actually improve delivery of primary care in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the role of the public administrator is to -- as the Member has said, is to do both. Not necessarily to come in now and then -- but to make the work plan so that way all of the things that I highlighted yesterday in this House on recruitment and retention, you know, the historic deficit of the NTHSSA has been hanging over the NTHSSA and being able to be strategic in how -- because they've been focusing on just how to manage within that system. So this is support to that to be able to look at how we're providing care in the Northwest Territories, looking internally and working with the executive in the NTHSSA to ensure that, you know, what we're spending on health care, ensuring that the end user is getting access to care. So it's improving the services while also, you know, looking at internally, yes, there might be some things that we are going to be having to change internally because of where we are with our -- you know, with the deficit budget year after year. So we will have to -- the PA will be responsible as the governing council before was responsible to ensure that they look at in building their budgets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I am heartened being able to take away from that that there is a focus on actually improving the patient experience and delivery of care for patients. So given the rumors of impending cuts, can the Minister assure us that we will not see cuts to frontline health care practitioners? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, in all the conversations that I've had with the PA is to look internally to see how we can improve frontline services. And so by improving frontline services, I've -- you know, that is -- that would not be meaning cuts. We are having issues accessing care. We've heard it over the years, you know, this is not something that's new. It's grown over the years. So the priority that -- you know, within the direction and under myself, with the PA, has been to ensure that frontline services are not touched, but how can we improve them and expand them with what we have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, finally, can patients expect to see the closure of any specialist services offered by Stanton Territorial Hospital or regional hospitals, meaning will patients now need to travel out of territory for treatment when they could currently access that within the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister, that's pretty in the weeds for me but I can tell you right now whatever services that we are trying to provide in the Northwest Territories, we only want to improve and enhance. That is why we're also looking at modernizing our medical travel. That doesn't mean that we're going to expand medical travel services so everybody's flying more. It's modernizing it so that way we're looking at it so that when people need to travel, they're travelling, but how can we make sure that they're not needing to travel as much. And so that does not mean to be closing down specialized services. Those specialized services that we have, we want to try to maintain. However, the workforce across Canada is becoming harder and harder to recruit some of those areas of those specialists so, you know, working with Alberta to try and ensure that we can, you know, that we can be working with them to ensure that our programs are, you know, that are more closer to the residents than having to travel. But with saying that, you know, we will continue to manage within the system that we have and the health

care personnel that we have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 456-20(1):
IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, immigration is a hot topic. I got an email whilst we were having that exchange earlier and, you know, the concerns are really -- are a live issue. In this email this individual says, quote: What makes this even more frustrating is the recent news that the NTNP program will reopen soon but with conditions that grant all applications equal opportunities regardless of how long they have lived in the North or how much they've contributed to the community.

Now, I know that the Minister has put a pause on those changes, but the perception out there is that it's still first come/first serve. Can the Minister speak to that today and confirm that that is not the case. Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, whatever program we decide to put in place for the Northwest Territories, we have to have it approved by IRCC. And so at the end of the day, I can't commit either way because I do have to have our tactic going forward and our way that we plan to roll this out approved first by the federal government. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last time the NWT designed this program, did the federal government not accept what we brought forward? Because, Mr. Speaker, it sounds like there's a chance that we'll design something, we'll send it, and Mark Miller will say no and send it back to the Minister for improvement. Like, I just want to understand the process because we're not getting straight answers today and, again, people are worried. People are worried they're going to be deported from the Northwest Territories. And we can't let them -- have them living in that kind of fear. So can the Minister explain what the process is. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how I'm not being very clear right now or how I'm not being -- or how I'm being evasive but that is definitely not my

intent. I started today by saying that I understand that we are dealing with real people's lives and that this is very important. It is very important to the Northwest Territories on many different levels. I have long been committed to the success of this program. And we are seeing great success in the territory in this program. The way that this program works is the federal government tells us exactly how many people we get for our allocation. Next, we have to tell them how we intend to roll this out. They have also told to us how -- what percentage of people have to be from temporary foreign workers within the country. Luckily for the Northwest Territories, 98 percent of our program uses temporary foreign workers. So that's not so different. What we need to determine, though, is how we're going to allocate those 150 allocations, nominations, that we get from within the Northwest Territories. We know that we have far greater people waiting to get their hands on those nominations like the rest of the country. Every jurisdiction is experiencing this right now. There is a great number of demand, and we need to make sure that we are, A, yes, being fair, but also ensuring that there is a very notable benefit to the Northwest Territories in how we choose to roll this out. No matter what program we go forward with, I am very aware that we're not going to make everybody happy and that weighs very heavily on my heart, and that's why we're making sure that we get this as right as possible. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason I'm confused, people are confused, is because we have a date of February, which is a month not a date, and we're unclear on how people will be prioritized. So, again, for people who have lived in the North, who have contributed to the North and whose permits are running out, are those people going to be prioritized? That's what the chamber wants. That's what our residents want. That's what business owners want. Can the Minister commit to that or at least -- at least give clarity that that is the top consideration that is going into this framework? If she can't commit that today, is that at least being part of the calculation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely part of the calculation. I have heard from an equal number of residents, probably to the Member, who have said this needs to be part of it. But to be honest, I've also heard from an equal number of people who have said that's not fair. So we're seeing both sides of it. We're

considering everything, and I'm certainly considering that piece of it. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 457-20(1):
IMPROVING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
AUTHORITY SERVICE DELIVERY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow up on questions asked by my earlier colleague from Yellowknife North which is to the Minister of health.

So if we're not cutting frontline workers which, of course, I'm not in favour of cutting frontline workers, how do we get more with less? In other words, where are the cuts going to come from? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this budget is going to be before the House, there is an allocation that goes directly to NTHSSA. It's NTHSSA has to come up with their budget what's in the -- for what's in here and to build their budget within the allocated amount. So what right now we are looking at is that the direction has been given to -- and it is every year to the governing council is to come up with their budget and present their budget. What I can say is when I do receive that budget for the 2025-2026, I will have that conversation with Cabinet, and then I will -- I've also committed to having that conversation to Regular Members as to see how we're going to move forward within this next year with their budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, you can't take away and still have more. You can't take away and still have the same. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to understand from the Minister is what's the focus. And that isn't just in the budget. We have two health czars working on this particular problem. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell this House what is being considered as reductions within this master plan of reorging health? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have not seen NTHSSA's budget. I have not seen -- they have not presented it yet. It usually comes within -- in this month. I will be having a conversation next week with them. What I can say is that this is what goes on every year, within our -- and so once I do have it -- like, I

can't say whether there's going to be cuts. The PA started in December. You know, we went into mandatory leave. We're here sitting, it's the 7th of February, so they're working on, you know, how -- like, the contract for the PA is over the next two years, so trying to look at what programs that we're working with health sustainability unit to look at the -- we're going to be looking at the programs and services that we provide, what's funded, how it's funded, what level of service are we providing. Those are all the things that we're going to be taking in account. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, not to get ahead of the budget discussion of health, so I'm not going to be specific because that's a debatable item soon, but the contribution is defined already. So I'm worried that direction has been given or direction hasn't been given, and even worse, Mr. Speaker, the health budget, including the territorial budget, will have been approved and cuts come later when the Assembly dims the lights. So, Mr. Speaker, what direction or what is being protected to ensure we're not getting cuts that aren't fully communicated to Members and the public so we can talk about them in advance of them being done? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This kind of conversation on the floor of the House about cuts when we don't even know what the budget being presented is, so this is where I'm at is I'll update the Members once I have a conversation with the NTHSSA. I have yet to receive budgets from the health authorities. And so after I have those conversations, I'll have conversations with my Cabinet colleagues, and I will have conversations with the Members on the other side of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 458-20(1):
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND COSTS
RELATED TO FUNERAL PREPARATION

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to follow up on a couple more questions to the Minister of health. Earlier to my statements and my questions, I just wanted to ask the Minister to see if we could get a cost that's associated to the funeral costs here in the Northwest Territories and that could -- if it's provided to the House. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can get back to the Member on what -- like, what the budget is for that part -- the burial program. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister could also provide the expiry day of these contracts. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my understanding the contract expires April of 2026. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the land claims being settled throughout the North and the regional governments are taking shape, community governments are taking shape, my question to the Minister is come April 1st, 2026, would the Minister take a look at how they could work with regional governments so that they could look at providing the funeral services to their own community members based on their culture and values. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this program is for -- not just for Indigenous governments, it is for low income families to be able to access to assist with funeral costs. So, I mean, I can have more -- you know, I will commit to looking into what the policy is and how it's being provided. You know, and I think if there are ways that Indigenous governments want to support, if there's ways to do that, you know, we can also look at that. I mean, I'll commit to reviewing this policy before it does go back out for RFP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 459-20(1):
CLOSURE OF AURORA COLLEGE
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. And I apologize if -- I believe it was asked; I'm not sure if it was answered. But given that the Aurora College now will be closing down, or intends on closing down, the early learning centres, is the department of education and

culture now going to pivot, pull that funding back in, and then continue those programs through ECE?

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, right now Education, Culture and Employment is working with Aurora College to gain clarity on what aspects of adult learning and basic education that's delivered through CLCs is going to continue to be delivered through CLCs and what parts will not be. From there, ECE will be able to determine a go-forward plan because they still do maintain the responsibility at the end of the day of ensuring that there are access to education and access to employment opportunities within communities. So depending on what parts of that Memorandum of Understanding that ECE has with Aurora College continues to be maintained, that will determine what portion of the funding continues to be afforded to Aurora College and what part is no longer afforded to Aurora College. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I apologize, I said early learning. I meant adult learning education. So, yes, so our mandate is to provide that. The buildings are certainly still going to be there. So then just for clarification, then, the intent is, moving forward, once the negotiations or once the discussion happens with Aurora College, that we continue to provide that service and those learning centres will be opened and staffed as they were previous to the college making those decisions. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Member asked the clarifying question because that's not what I said. So I want to be very clear that what that looks like going forward, I cannot say. I cannot say how those opportunities are going to be afforded to communities. I know that, for example, one of our community learning centres is currently being used as classroom space for some high school students in a community that very much needs it and very much needs that that part -- for that community learning centre to continue as that type of space. I can say that some Indigenous governments have reached out to ECE or to Aurora College and have said, hey, we have a different plan for what we want our community learning centre to be. And some post-secondary institutions have also reached out as well. And so I think that we're -- although this has been certainly a shock to the Northwest Territories, I think that we're in a really good position and have an opportunity in front of us

to re-envision what these centres become and what adult learning looks like in communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Minister for that. And she kind of answered a little of my last question which would be has the department now reached out to, certainly in the areas where the Indigenous governments are very much involved in adult learning, have their own programs running through, and has the department now kind of looked to -- and I know the department works with Indigenous governments to expand that given that there's likely going to be a gap here that needs to be filled. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in multiple instances, the department of education hasn't even had to pick up the phone. As soon as the media articles hit the online waves there, the phone started ringing. My phone certainly did and as well as the department as well as Aurora College. So once we have clarity as to kind of what the landscape looks like, then would be the opportune time to start making phone calls and being able to actually have concrete conversations about how Aurora College intends to go forward so that we can have conversations based on known factors. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 460-20(1):

IMPROVING INCOME SUPPORT AND HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMMING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of ECE regarding income support.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that in order -- I have a lot of experience helping constituents with this, but for them to get housing support they have to go to the Yellowknife Housing Authority to get on the housing list first. But unfortunately, most of these people don't actually need the full-fledged housing support through Yellowknife Housing Authority and have no intention because they're not at risk and they're certainly a low priority. But what it does is create an administrative burden for the local authority here, and I have no doubt it creates a local -- administrative burden for all housing authorities. So I'm asking the Minister of ECE would she commit to having

a conversation with housing to ensure that we're being efficient with our time and resources rather than bottlenecking the housing system up by a process, an unnecessary process, embedded into income support that really is unnecessary. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member's in luck. The Minister of housing and I really enjoy working together. We have already had multiple conversations about this and have already provided direction to our departments and look forward to sitting down with the departments, continuing those conversations, and then being able to share the outcomes of those conversations with Members within probably the first or second quarter of this year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Member from Yellowknife Centre -- no, Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 461-20(1):

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker -- and thank you to my colleague. Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the Minister of Finance, have we given up on Restoring Balance, the fiscal sustainability strategy of this government? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: (audio) Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Can the Minister explain her budget, then? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that I'm -- I'll wait a minute.

MR. SPEAKER: Question out of order. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you -- oh, Mr. Speaker, thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, when can this House expect to see the cuts that are promised that will get us to \$150 million in additional surplus that the policy puts up because we aren't seeing it with the estimates that have been coming out to date. I'm not talking specifically about what's in those estimates, but we have not seen those -- the range of cuts that have been promised, that people are concerned about, people want to know what's going on. So if we're still doing the strategy, when are we

actually going to see these reductions? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, only one side of this House is talking about cuts. The government is not talking about widespread rampant cuts. What we have talked about is having a budget that is providing stability. Beyond -- I won't get into the details of it because that's one of the rules of the House the public may not be familiar with, that we don't talk about things that are still going through the processes of the committee that happen on the floor later today. But, Mr. Speaker, Restoring Balance is about just that. It's about restoring balance. It's not about cutting things when we don't need to or when we can't. It's about ensuring that we have financial future. We have achieved some of the goals of that already. In the last budget, we had some reductions that resulted in us having a significant surplus, and that got us through a very difficult year of low water among high fire -- and among other various challenges.

Now, again, we're coming forward and saying we are looking to spend all of what we need to on our capital budget so we don't need to take on debt for that. We're expecting to do the same this year as well. And that's all part of Restoring Balance.

Mr. Speaker, we ultimately would like to see our total debt come down. The net debt is a number that I certainly keep an eye on. But, Mr. Speaker, we need to do that in a methodical way. We are in a time of uncertainty, both in the territories but particularly in Canada and, really, around the world right now. And so with that, Mr. Speaker, we need to maintain balance. We want to restore balance. But we want to do it in a way that is reasonable and responsible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Colleagues, time's up for oral questions. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 278-20(1):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, (2024-2025)

TABLED DOCUMENT 279-20(1):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 2,
2024-2025

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025; Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 2, 2024-2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment -- sorry, Environment and Climate Change.

TABLED DOCUMENT 280-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES STATE OF
THE CONSERVATION NETWORK 2024

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: NWT State of the Conservation Network 2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 281-20(1):
REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER
DISMISSING THE COMPLAINT BY DENEZE
NAKHEK'O (DANIEL RICHARDS) ABOUT
DISCLOSURE OF IDENTIFYING
INFORMATION ABOUT HIM BY THE
HONOURABLE SHANE THOMPSON, MLA
FOR NAHENDEH

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 106(4) of the Legislative Assembly Executive Council Act, as Deputy Speaker, I wish to table the Report of the Northwest Territories Integrity Commissioner Dismissing the Complaint by Deneze Nakehk'o (Daniel Richards) about the Disclosure of Identifying Information about Him by the Honourable Shane Thompson, MLA for Nahendeh. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 17:
MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
STATUTES AMENDMENTS ACT

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 17, Municipal and Community Affairs Statutes Amendments Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to rule 8.2(3), Bill 17 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 18:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE PARTNERSHIP
AND BUSINESS NAMES ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Partnership and Business Names Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Justice. Pursuant to rule 8.2(3), Bill 18 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 275-20(1), Tabled Document 278, and Tabled Document 279, with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee would like to review the Supplemental Appropriation (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025. And Supplemental Appropriation (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025. Mr. Chair, I believe they're Tabled Documents 278 and 279. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. We're going to take a short break and then we'll resume.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Order. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Tabled Document

278-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, February 7, 2025.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 278-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Briefly, Mr. Chair. Briefly, Mr. Chair, I am here to present Tabled Document 278-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025. This document proposes a total increase of \$3.064 million comprised of the following items:

- \$2.551 million of funding to complete Phase 1 of the Prohibition Creek Access Road. This funding is partially offset by revenues received from the Government of Canada;
- \$1.17 million in transfers from the 2024-2025 operations appropriation to this infrastructure appropriation for the purchase of vehicles across multiple departments;
- A decrease of \$832,000 to reflect the changes in project timelines for the NWT courts modernization project;
- A \$250,000 transfer from Finance to Health and Social Services to undertake the MediPatient project; and,
- \$175,000 funding for the professional licensing project with the National Registry of Physicians. This funding is fully offset by revenues received from the Government of Canada.

That concludes opening remarks. I would be happy to answer questions, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left, deputy minister of finance Bill MacKay; and on my right, Mandi Bolstad, the deputy secretary to the financial management board.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments. Is there any general comments? Seeing no further general comments, does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in tabled documents?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will begin on page 5 with the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, policies and strategic planning, not previously authorized, \$83,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing no further questions. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, policy and strategic planning, not previously authorized, \$83,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$83,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Finance on page 6. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, negative \$1,082,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not

previously authorized, negative \$1,082,000. Does the committee agree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, negative \$1,082,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services on page 7.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$250,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$250,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$607,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$607,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$857,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital

investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$857,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Infrastructure on page 8.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, assets management, not previously authorized, \$3,086,000. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister please explain how much of this expenditure for the Prohibition Creek Access Road is offset by the Government of Canada? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is a 75/25 or 75 percent/25 percent cost share project, so \$1.913 million is offset by revenues from the Government of Canada. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we see throughout these appropriations that there's funding in there for vehicles, and I understand that some of this funding has been transferred either from deletions throughout the budget or is offset by some potential from some funding from other sources. I guess my question is just for clarify. Typically when the capital budgets come through, you would think that departments would be budgeting for vehicles and not seeing them come back in an appropriation. I'm wondering if the Minister can kind of give an overview of why vehicles come through an appropriation and not budgeted during capital budget process. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, typically if the vehicle comes in under \$50,000, then we wouldn't necessarily have to see it coming in here.

That's the threshold for having to come in on a capital -- as a capital project or a capital item. So with the cost of vehicles rising, and particularly if they're specialized vehicles like the ambulance in Behchoko that was in one of the earlier items here today, then that does need to come in through an infrastructure budget item. I hope that answers the question. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So are these eight vehicles then being purchased here, are they specialized vehicles or vehicles that just weren't budgeted for in the capital budget and now are coming through in a supplemental? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So these eight items were budgeted originally under the operations budget. This is where seeing going from Fund 1 to Fund 2 is part of just moving that they were -- the amount that we're putting in to the infrastructure operations part -- or the infrastructure budget here is coming off of the operations budget to reflect that. So they're just -- they're moving in terms of the accounting, how they're being accounted -- considered in the accounting. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just, again, clarity, so they were budgeted in operations, they weren't purchased through operations, therefore they brought them through a supplemental?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, again, it's -- perhaps let me see if the deputy minister wants to take a go at sort of explaining this end of it. Thank you.

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

MR. BILL McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So as the Minister mentioned, there's a capital threshold that the OAG sets for -- as \$50,000. So any capital asset that you purchased that's over \$50,000 has to be accounted for in Fund 2 as an infrastructure acquisition. So in this case, the cost of the vehicles turned out to be more

than \$50,000 so they have to move it from the operations budget to the capital budget, so from Fund 1 to Fund 2. So that's -- there's a supplementary appropriation here and then a negative supplementary appropriation on the operations side. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you for that clarification. Nothing further, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Are there any further questions from Members? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$3,086,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, programs and services, not previously authorized, \$120,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, programs and services, not previously authorized, \$120,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investments expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$3,206,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$3,206,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Members, there is a schedule on page 10 that details the impact of capital estimates. This schedule is not a voteable item and is included as information

only. Are there any questions on this schedule? Seeing no further questions.

As this is not a voteable item, we will continue on. Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 278-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025? Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 70-20(1):
CONCURRENCE MOTION - Tabled
DOCUMENT 278-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that consideration of Tabled Document 278-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2024-2025, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 278-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Tabled Document 278-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 3, 2024-2025, will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Tabled Document 279-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, February 7, 2025.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 279-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2,

2024-2025. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, briefly. I am here to present Tabled Document 279-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025. This document proposes a total appropriation increase of \$74.725 million comprised of the following items:

- \$16.9 million to provide funding to address the Marine Transportation Services projected deficit for 2024-2025;
- \$14.7 million to support the increase in road construction and maintenance costs, community support for fuel resupply, and utilities and lease costs;
- \$14.5 million to support health care operations in the NWT; and,
- \$12 million to provide funding to reduce the impact of costs associated with the NTPC proposed rate increases.
- Additionally, we are proposing the following supplementary expenditures, which are supported by federally funded agreements, including:
 - \$5.4 million to provide funding for various health and social services cost share agreements;
 - 2.3 million to provide funding for the Canada-Northwest Territories National School Food Program Agreement 2024 to 2027;
 - \$1.5 million to provide funding for the section 11 conservation agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada; and,
 - \$1 million to provide funding in support of the Northwest Territories Wraparound Service Agreement.

These supplementary estimates also propose an adjustment of \$50 million to the authorized short-term borrowing limit established under the Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2024-2025.

These supplementary estimates will ensure the Government of the Northwest Territories is in compliance with the Financial Management Act by reflecting the borrowing limit for debt less than 365 days for the 2024-2025 fiscal year at

\$750 million. The request is the result of increased fiscal pressures, including unforeseen expenditures, as a result of low-water and other climate change impacts, as well as continued operational pressures within the health care systems.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be happy to answer questions that Members may have, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Please, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Back again, Mr. Chair, we have on my left deputy minister of finance Bill MacKay, and on my right Mandi Bolstad, the deputy secretary to the financial management board.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments on the Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures). I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The supplementary appropriations are rarely a subject of significant debate in the House because they are -- you know, they're required to address money that's already been spent. But I think given the uncertain times we're in, given that there's a push for fiscal sustainability and fiscal discipline especially so we have resources to invest in the right priorities, I think it's appropriate to kind of take a look -- a deep -- a more careful look at how money's being spent. And there's some -- everything in here is very important. I'll be clear on that. And no one would question things like Metis health benefits and chemotherapy drugs and things like that. But when you see the cost overruns of these things, they're significant, and you have to wonder is there a way we could have planned for this more prudently so these wouldn't be such -- you know, wouldn't be significant amounts of money, and also is there a way to apply more fiscal discipline to the management decisions around how some of these funds are being spent. And, you know, we shouldn't be the -- we shouldn't be in a situation where

because, typically, we don't have many questions and it is almost like a rubber stamping exercise to approve supplementary estimates that you could just do whatever you need to and they're going to get approved anyway even if you go a bit over. So I think in this case in particular, I certainly will be having more questions as we go through the document. But until we have -- until we start to see some progress on balanced budgets, we do need to take a closer eye here.

My question for the Minister is what is the impact of this on the supplementary reserve that's established by the main estimates? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, we do have a supplementary reserve that we set at \$35 million and, obviously, this one alone would certainly put us over that. We do -- sorry, Mr. Chair, I'm just trying to see where -- anyways, it is obviously going to put us over that we -- oh, there we are. Thank you.

So, Mr. Chair, the net impact here, we are going to end up at a total impact of \$64,717 million in this case, obviously significantly beyond a \$35 million target that we would have set. And, yes, I guess that's the answer to start, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And this is the Supplementary Appropriation No. 2, the impact -- I mean, I have the numbers here. But the impact of Supplementary Appropriation No. 1 which we already proved was 160 -- a little over \$160 million. So the net impact of all this -- and members of the public can find this on the back of the document but it's \$188 million -- just over \$188 million in the red. So is this -- why -- I mean, and these costs, some of them are certainly things you can't control due to fire and things like that but some -- again, some of these costs I think reflect -- could reflect something else. They could reflect, you know, controls -- or sustainability controls, let's call them, that aren't being applied or aren't being followed but, you know, it seems like this government either has a message that's spend no money, like a flat out freeze, which we see time to time, or it's spend as normal. So there's got to be a more balanced way that can get these supplementary estimates under control. So is there -- and not counting new revenue. I always want to see new revenue, but is there a way that the Minister can think of, or the

Minister's working on, to find a way to limit supplementary appropriations to the reserve for example, or some other mechanism, that would better align expenditures to -- or better align the operations of the GNWT to the main estimates, especially around health. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I appreciate that question. So first just -- I know there's been sort of chatter, if you will, around the idea of a freeze. So we did put out that there would be some -- we wanted departments to engage in fiscal restraint which is not the same necessarily as a freeze and that was -- is likely to probably arise in the discussions over the course of today. But the idea is as we come to the idea of the fiscal year, we are saying -- you know, departments do have budgets. If they are under a certain amount then they can -- you know, for example, if there's an unfunded position and there is funding there, they may be able to utilize funding if it's not restricted. We're saying, look, don't utilize funding. It's not going to lapse. You're not losing your budgets, which sometimes is a narrative that gets out there that people can just use this money that -- before it gets used up, and we're trying to impose more of a rigor around, you know, ensuring that money is, in fact, being used for what this Assembly is approving it for, so for ones, but there's certainly not a freeze per se. As far as mechanisms, so that is -- for starters, that's why we impose the \$35 million as a target for the supplementary reserve fully anticipating that we are likely to go over that in the course of any given year because a lot happens in the course of a year that you cannot budget for or that you don't necessarily know what the actual costs may be. The vehicles that we saw were an example of that -- sorry, in the last -- in the infrastructure supplementary appropriation that we just dealt with. So that is one part of it.

Another part, Mr. Chair, is the processes that take place at the financial management board table where you have a process whereby every department who wants to come and says, look, I need a supplementary estimate, has to go through a process of analysis. It includes determining whether or not it's even appropriate, whether it falls within the definition of something that could reasonably have been considered an unforeseen expense. Departments are often turned away and told, no, you're going to have to come back through the budgeting process, the usual process, because what you're asking for isn't unexpected, didn't arise unexpectedly, isn't urgent or essential at this moment. So there certainly are times where they get turned away.

So, again, there's that analysis that takes place there.

Last, but not least, Mr. Chair, with respect to health specifically, again, you know, there's significant -- this is frankly one of the most significant fiscal challenges that we are facing. It's such an essential area of services that we provide to the public, and it is 30 percent of our budget, and there are continuous cost overages and significant supplementary estimates here.

So work happening there is two-fold. We do have the health system sustainability unit that's resting within the executive and Indigenous affairs, as well as the public administrator who is doing significant work to try to determine what those right sizing of budgets are, and the two of them will, I'm confident, be coming forward with some suggestions and proposals of how to better budget in a way that provides the services without ending up, for example, here in the cost overage. Thank you

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When is the last time the supplementary reserve was not exceeded from what it was initially budgeted at in the mains? Like, is there any time in -- that the officials probably -- because I don't expect the Minister to know this. But is there any time that it hasn't -- that it's been kept to what we've -- what the ledge has voted it at? So right now it's \$35 million. Has there ever been a time when supplementary expenditures have been kept underneath the limit that's set by the main estimates? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, madam -- sorry, not Madam Chair; I'm so used to the last government. Sorry, Mr. Chair. No, I mean those of us sitting here haven't necessarily occupied these positions, any of us, for, you know, ten years of history, but to the best of all of our knowledge, it does -- we do tend to typically go over. Again, I will be frank, Mr. Chair, I have often asked why we put it at 35, and I'm promptly reminded that raising it doesn't necessarily create the kind of fiscal barriers that we are discussing now. So I'm happy to go back and ask the department if they can look back in time. But, again, our knowledge right now is it's certainly not in the last sort of five or six years.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. No, I appreciate the offer from the Minister but I don't -- I think the point is made. This is -- and it's not like -- I get it if it was like, well, we went to \$40 million and we budgeted for \$35 million, or \$38 million or \$50 million or even \$60 million, but it's \$188 million, and we're suppose -- we budgeted \$35, right, so like this is -- I think -- you got to think of what the average reader who is looking at these documents sees and thinks about our financial process. And, again, when they hear we've got to belt tighten because we can't -- our expenditures are exceeding our revenues and they see us blowing past our supplementary reserve, maybe it's time to rethink how we budget that supplementary reserve so these don't look like shocks. Because it's fine to say all the smart people in this room understand this process, and it's -- and we have all the in-camera meetings at committee which, again, the public doesn't get to see to really tease this information out, so we need to do a better job of explaining this. And we also, quite frankly, need a plan to cover expenditures. We'll have more discussions as we go on through this process, but this is not a blank cheque for supplementary appropriations, not this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments? Okay, seeing no further general comments.

Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled documents? Committee? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will begin on page 3 with the Legislative Assembly. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, operations expenditures, Office of the Clerk, not previously authorized, \$20,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, operations expenditures, Office of the Clerk, not previously authorized, \$20,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, operations expenditures, total Legislative Assembly not previously authorized, \$20,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now turn to page 4 for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, education, not previously authorized, \$4,138,000. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North. No, sorry, yes, Yellowknife North, and I'm going to come back over here. I seen her hand go up first. Sorry about that, I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering whether the Minister can explain why the \$1.869 million increase to the school funding framework. I'm hoping that perhaps it's related to increased attendance in schools and therefore increased transfers according to the school funding formula, but maybe the Minister can explain. Thank you very much.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is, indeed, relating to the school funding framework requirements and -- so, yes, there's an increase in this case -- yes, I'm definitely not going to be the right Minister to necessarily get into explaining exactly how that calculation gets made. But there is -- the good news is that yes, indeed, it does tend to be impacted by determination of attendance or a determinance of the number of students that are attending, and it gets adjusted in the year because our fiscal year and their school year don't necessarily quite align. But in this case, we did -- yes -- sorry, an enrolment. I keep saying attendance. It's enrolment, not attendance, but with the enrolment numbers up now, we are able to adjust through the year. It's actually a good example of why a supp does come through, because of the timing of it. But yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's certainly promising, and I would just like to perhaps follow up afterwards with the Minister of education to better understand higher enrolment numbers and what this means for the territory, but I'll leave that here for now. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Asked and answered so I'll cede my time.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Any further general comments from Members? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, education, not previously authorized, \$4,138,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, labour development and standards, not previously authorized, \$338,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, labour development and standards, not previously authorized, \$338,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, language and culture, not previously authorized, \$272,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, language and culture, not previously authorized, \$272,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$4,748,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Turning to page 5 for the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, environmental management monitoring and climate change, not previously authorized, \$776,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, environment and management monitoring and climate change, not previously authorized, \$776,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, policy and strategic planning, not previously authorized, negative \$83,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, policy and strategic planning, not previously authorized, negative \$83,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, wildfire and forest management, not previously authorized, \$1,502,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, wildfire and forest management, not previously authorized, \$1,502,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$2,195,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Please turn to page 6 for Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$1,279,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$1,279,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$1,279,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Please turn to page 7 for Department of Finance.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$11,950,000. Are there any questions? Okay, I'm going to go to Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so I'm not going to say we shouldn't be spending money to lower the cost of living for Northerners, but it seems like this is kind of an endless cycle we're trapped in with the rate of -- the high cost of power in the Northwest Territories. So my first question is how much -- what's the total amount of money we provide for subsidies to consumers for their utility costs? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in this supplementary appropriation is reflecting something that came out just at the end of last year in response to the GRA that we were required to file by the PUB where we've proposed to put in \$48 million over four years, so \$12 million for this year, and that's what this supp amount is.

In addition to that, Mr. Chair, we also provide the territorial power support program which subsidizes all of the communities that are thermal communities, so communities that are running on diesel generators, so throughout the Beaufort Delta communities, Mackenzie Delta communities, Sahtu, Deh Cho. They are brought down to the Yellowknife rate, and that sub-territorial rate subsidy comes at around \$7.1 million.

Mr. Chair, there's also, of course -- we certainly would support the costs of power and utilities within public housing units. I don't have that number handy.

I think that's it, Mr. Chair. I don't necessarily have a mathematical line-up of all those details, but I do think that's it. If I'm missing something, I'll follow up in due course. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. My -- I have \$80 million in my head on, like, a general kind of subsidy. I don't know if it wraps up everything in that, but that's my recollection from perhaps the main estimates. But does that number sound accurate at all? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, so, Mr. Chair, I heard subsidies directed to the consumer, so that's the numbers I was sort of running through. There's also, of course, supports that the government provides to keep the cost of energy infrastructure reduced. So, for example, the Inuvik wind project, wind and battery project, and the Taltson upgrade project collectively were also -- came in at around \$80 million and by subsidizing -- so, yes, we're subsidizing in that case the infrastructure by doing so, otherwise that would then have to be paid by the ratepayers according to the public utilities principles. So by avoiding having that cost passed down, I suppose that's also indirectly subsidizing consumers.

Similarly, there was the cost of diesel over the last couple of years, which I believe was at around \$30 million. That should be in the mains. It may be, indeed, what was recently seen that is part of sort of every nine to ten years or so when there's a low water cycle, we do find that the territorial government does tend to step in and provide supports. Again, otherwise that higher cost of burning diesel does get passed down to the ratepayers on the user pay principle. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So how much -- is there a calculation for -- this \$12 million, like how much we're saving taxpayers from the general -- or consumers -- sorry, consumers, not taxpayers because we're not saving taxpayers. We're spending their money. But how -- and I'm okay with that if we're getting to a public good and, in this case, we're taking the pain off the utility bills. So how much are we saving the average household with this? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair -- and it is -- it's ratepayers. I often get it wrong, but -- so the ratepayers who often are the same taxpayers -- and I mentioned this yesterday in saying that you are taking tax dollars then essentially turning it back over so that people are keeping their costs lower.

The \$12 million that we are proposing will be -- would go towards the cost of power. Now, the final amount that it's going to be depends upon what the public utilities board decides to do. They're the ones that actually set the rates, and the requirement for a GRA was issued somewhat earlier than what the Northwest Territories Power Corporation was anticipating. So that process had to happen fairly quickly. We -- they went in -- NTPC went in proposing a rate increase to energy costs at 24.8 percent. Energy costs are only one part of your utilities bill. There's a fixed cost portion as well. So it's not the entirety of the utility bill that would be proposed to go up, only the portion that is the energy portion. The 24.8 percent, also there is a reduction there because there was already a rate increase back in July. That would come off of that proposal and -- but this -- with another \$12 million brings down -- brings from 24.8 down to 15 but, again, it actually comes down a little further when we consider that there was a 7 percent rate increase already in July.

That's a very long answer. But, yes, it does bring it down several percentages, percentage points from that 24.8. Again, I can't give a final number in terms of the dollar because I won't necessarily know until the PUB comes out with their decision. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. So has the rate application been modified with the advent of this \$12 million? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Chair. And I say that only in that I haven't actually -- I don't know if it's been updated. I know the documents were all filed publicly but if it hasn't been, it will. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. So for clarification, so the new rate application in front of the PUB will be a 15 percent increase? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, I think the new rate application will reflect a subsidy of \$12 million over four years, and I -- again, I don't -- I believe it will say that it's then going from 24.8 down to 15. It's from the perspective of the public is where I want to add again that that's only their energy side of their bill, not the total bill, and it doesn't necessarily yet take into account that there was the increase in July. So the GRA reflects that total rate increase but from the perspective of the public, they've already seen a small increase in July, and it is not the whole bill that goes up 25 percent. It's only the energy costs that they pay. We all pay fixed costs on our bills too. I hope that both answers the question and is clear too more broadly. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. I appreciate this is complicated because there's, like, the 7 percent increase that happened has already happened and then that's being compounded into the GRA. But I guess my concern is if it's not -- if it's still like the same, you know, 25 increase but we're doing all these things to lower it but the increase in front of the PUB is still there, that doesn't -- and it doesn't reflect a subsidy, then NTPC is asking for more than it needs, and I would like that not to be the case. So can -- does the Minister confirm that, like what the PUB will be considering is the -- or the rate increase the PUB is considering will fully reflect the \$12 million because if it's not inclusive of this new subsidy, then we're -- you know, we're -- we're -- it's unnecessary because we're already covering the cost in this supplementary appropriation. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, it absolutely will be fully reflected in what goes to the PUB. Again, I just wasn't sure if it's been filed or on the public register or not. And, you know, yeah, I want to let folks know, because I do think it came out that everyone's power rates are going up 25 percent, and that's just not -- that's not going to be the case. That's not even the worst case scenario. That's just simply not how it's going to go down. But I don't know the final dollar value. This \$12 million and the proposed \$12 million over four that's being put forward by the government will have a very direct impact on what the final decision of rates needs to be. The PUB does a proposal -- or looks at rates from the perspective of reasonableness, so they may well say that there's too much sticker shock on this and they don't want to raise it. They may say that there's something in the filing or submissions that doesn't qualify or is not -- that they don't think should be on ratepayers. But beyond all that, I'm quite confident that there would be an increase and that this \$12 million will have a direct impact on keeping people's power rates down below whatever that final value is and will have therefore a direct impact on people's rates, the rates that everyone pays, because if it's -- this is for an average rate across the territory. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: What would be the cost to eliminate the -- like, to mitigate the rate increase? Like, what -- what's the dollar amount of that subsidy that would not -- would kind of not require this rate increase? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I could certainly run that number for the House and for the Member. I don't have that here. It would -- it may, again, bit of me having to sort of tea leaf what the PUB's final rate increase would necessarily be. I don't know that. I can certainly -- once that's done, we could certainly consider coming back. Obviously, that's the rule of the House. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Well, very quickly, this is not -- this is -- we're constantly chasing ourselves here, Mr. Chair, and I think this problem's not going to go away unless we make

some real structural changes to our energy grid. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First I just want to establish can the Minister confirm that the Northwest Territories Power Corporation is expected to have a balanced budget each year, or can they run operating deficits? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, I'm going to send that to the deputy minister who will be able to speak to that.

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

MR. BILL MCKAY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the general approach is that the NTPC will run based on its -- run its operations based on its revenues that it gets from ratepayers but they do have the ability to take on debt, so in a sense, they do spend more than they take in, but that debt is supposed to be allocated towards capital acquisitions only so that's generally how it works. So for their operations, they have to be fully funded by ratepayers.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, now I'm curious given the wording of the deputy minister. He said it's generally operating expenses are not covered by short-term borrowing. But have there been occasions where short-term borrowing is or has been used in the recent past for operating expenditures at the power corporation? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that would only be in a short-term sense. Again, I expect this is going to come up here today. So not as a way of running their operations. I think perhaps the original question was whether they're expected to have a balanced operating budget. And, yes, they're expected to have a balanced operating budget, but they can use debt to take on infrastructure costs. Again, Mr. Chair, I don't necessarily have all this in front of me, and I'm more than happy to follow up with Members if I -- if -- with NTPC, they may well be quite happy

to come and speak to Members about this in more detail. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The problem that we're facing here is we have an arm's length, you know, corporation that is supposed to be sort of balancing its own budget, but then we're asked to essentially subsidize operations to avoid ratepayers having to pay too much. But there are not many levers we have to, for example, ask them to prove that they can't do things differently or find savings in different ways as opposed to charging ratepayers. And I understand that that's the role that the public utilities board is supposed to serve.

I'm just thinking of a parallel here. You know, we have the health authority with costs that are sort of spiralled out of control and it's, you know, again, an arm's length authority, and so we've established a public administrator to look more deeply into how that budget can be balanced and where cost savings can be found, but we don't have a parallel process happening in this case where, you know, we have someone looking more deeply into, you know, do they really need this money to avoid charging ratepayers more or are there other ways that cost savings can be made where the government doesn't have to keep issuing massive subsidies to diesel in order to spare ratepayers.

So I guess my question to the Minister in this case is, is she satisfied that the public utilities board processes are sufficient to reassure the Assembly that there are no other possible internal cost savings that can be found within the power corporation to help us avoid having to, you know, give them these subsidies? And, really, it's been pretty regular of late. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it really is quite literally the role of the public utilities board to conduct the general application, and it is a fairly extensive and detailed process that is undertaken when they have to put in literally every single cost that is incurred, and it is analyzed, and there is a determination as to whether those costs are reasonable or not, and then the PUB sets, again, a reasonable -- a range of reasonableness of what the utility's permitted to make back in terms of their rate of return. That rate of return from the GNWT's side, Mr. Chair,

we haven't taken a dividend in the time that I've been in this chair so, you know, again, that's one of the levers we have, is to not take anything in terms of a rate of return.

Yes, I -- I'm not really sure what else to say. It's literally the job of the PUB, and it's happening imminently here to do a very detailed analysis of every single cost that is involved in setting the rates. So, again, I'm happy to review that process at further length with all Members. It's certainly a complex one. Because the things that go into generating power are complex, so I'd be happy to do that at a later time and run through that and see what they're examining and what they're analyzing. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do think that this is a very conversation to have in more detail with committees. I know that we're not going to sort it all out here on the floor. But I personally am not satisfied that the processes surrounding the public utilities board examination would really have the kind of analysis of the system and the way costs are incurred and that would be able to provide us with some insights or recommendations on, you know, how to run the power corporation more efficiently with better cost savings. I mean, I -- I don't think that can come through those kind of hearings, and so I would love to have further conversations about what might be possible in terms of bringing more insights and analysis to the table as to how we can avoid being put in this position year after year where, you know, it's either these subsidies or ratepayers pay, but I feel like we can do more to try to prevent this need in the first place. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, fundamentally, the costs that go into generating power, whether it's the fuel or whether it's the upkeep, continue to grow, and the sales of power in the Northwest Territories remain flat, and that has been the case for a very long time, long before any -- before this Assembly was composed. So, you know, we can certainly try to increase those to whom we are selling, and in particular, it's, you know, not a handful of residential customers and probably not even converting a handful to electric heating, but to look for industrial customers. So the power corporation is right now -- has for the last two years and for the first time ever but in the last two years attended Roundup to try to speak to the different projects that are coming online

hopefully in the Northwest Territories. That would have a significant impact increasing our transmission system so that we can distribute power to more communities so that more communities are using hydro power. That will start to make a difference, not necessarily a huge one, probably it's more in the form of resiliency, but. So these are -- there are things that can impact the energy system in the Northwest Territories, but it's probably not the -- you know, tinkering on the sides of costs, it's going to be fairly significant changes.

So -- and, again, I -- there's a lot in this space. I certainly will ask my -- ask that we set up a time for MLAs to look at this and to look at what we're doing. There is also the change coming to the board that has been asked, and I'd like to get to speak to about -- to that. I don't know that that changes these fundamentals that sales are flat and costs are high, but there's work underway to try to make that -- to shift that balance a little bit. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions from -- okay, nothing from YK North. Any general comments? I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly a pleasure to get an opportunity to comment on page 7 under the directorate here, assuming we're still on the \$12 million being proposed here.

I'm wondering if the Minister can provide a breakdown as to how that \$12 million came to be as the number. Can they be specific as to where that subsidy will be applied? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't know if I have that level of detail. Let me see if the deputy minister maybe can, and if not, we will look to pull up -- sorry, it's where the \$12 million came from or where it's being applied? It's going to be applied on to -- to the costs -- the ratepayers' costs but it's where it's coming from, I'll see if the deputy minister may have that handy.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Oh I'm sorry, I thought she was referring to the deputy minister would comment before coming back. If I'm incorrect.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): My apologies, I'll go to the deputy minister.

MR. BILL McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So what will happen is there will be a \$12 million transfer to NTPC, and they are to use that for their operations. So their operations are funded by ratepayers, so instead of getting the full cost of those operation -- the full cost of operations from ratepayers, they'll get part of it -- majority of it from ratepayers, but \$12 million of those operating costs will come from the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to Yellowknife North -- sorry, Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if they could -- the Minister, department, or the staff, could elaborate as to how that \$12 million calculation came to be and specifically what areas of shortfall were identified to make that \$12 million as the targeted total. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I certainly do have that -- it's not necessarily in the supplementary estimate documents or background materials; I certainly can get that to Members. I'm just not finding -- I mean, that's what I'm digging back now to before the winter break. So I don't have that coming up quickly. Yes, I'll have to get back to the Member with the breakdown of how we landed on that number. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you for that. I will certainly accept it. Did NTPC suggest with respect to how urgent this particular need is and what documentation have they broken down to say if we don't have this by X date, we will have to consider Y solution? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The urgency of this was due to the timing of the required generate applications, so the deadline for that was the end of October and so there was a desire to get this in as quickly as possible to reflect that timing, and so there's a supplementary estimate here now. This is the earliest time we could put it before the House but wanted to see that it's part of the process of the public utilities board which is underway right now. That was the timing issue. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Is there any current financial urgency or impact that this has not been approved as of yet?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, if -- as I think one of the Members earlier was asking, the public utilities board does need to know that there's been a confirmed approval to provide some form of subsidy to what otherwise wouldn't be costs that would be borne by ratepayers so that it can be considered as part of their process. If it doesn't get approved, it won't be considered as part of that process in my understanding. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Has the PUB or someone else articulated that deadline? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the proposed GRA would be for this fiscal year and so it would have to be -- it would have to be part of the assessment. It has to be part of the assessment, so -- yes, we can't sort of wait until they're done their review or wait until they issue their determination because their determination needs to take into account whether or not there's going to be a process. And the current year is also under consideration -- or the 2024-2025 year is under consideration so therefore it needs to be part of that year. That's why it's part of this final supp. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you for that. Is the Minister saying that, suggesting, or implying, the PUB process is being held up on this point? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, that's not my understanding. So we did file -- or the Northwest Territories Power Corporation did file its rate application in time for October 30th, and by that point were able to

sort of notify or say that there would be a subsidy included. A formal letter then gets issued ultimately from the Department of Finance, from my office, to confirm that the subsidy has been approved. So they're aware that it has been proposed and hopefully coming and not my understanding that it's held up. There's quite a lot that's involved. It's, you know, many hundreds of pages of materials that are filed to describe and to detail what different costs are. We understand that that work is underway. I'm not privy to where they're at or what their timeline is. So I don't think it's being held up. I'm not told that it is, but I am -- it's quite clear that we need to show that it's part of this year in order for it to be applied to that part of the proposed rate increase. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just before I get into my question, I want to clearly state I like, respect, admire the important role NWT Power Corp does and delivers. So the next question isn't specific criticism against them, but it's how did they come up with the \$12 million rather than just going to the magic 8-ball and saying how much do we need, how do you know; you know, those types of things? Like, where is that information on the basis of that dollar amount? Again, that's not about disrespecting them. I mean, to me, it could have been \$18 million. It could be \$6 million. It's the same. We're sitting here saying they just asked for this, so I'm asking where does this number come from.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, I just don't have that in front of me here. There are -- there was considerations that were put in to different options that could be put forward, you know, and certainly the range could be anything from a complete subsidy to no subsidy. Again, I didn't bring that level of detail. You happen to have the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation here, but even -- and so that's where I know there was some fairly detailed considerations done of what different numbers might do to impact different potential rate increases. I just don't have that math in front of me. So, yes, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to go back to Members. I think this was -- I know some materials were sent to my MLA colleagues back in October when this was first coming through. Again, I didn't bring all of that back with me today, didn't anticipate that level of inquiry, which is fine. Again, I'm happy to go back and -- if it wasn't in those original

materials, we'll beef them up so that it's more clear. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, if the Minister is happy to go back to Members, I certainly welcome that. Does that also mean that she would be comfortable if Members deferred the specific line item but approved the overall supp appropriation respecting that we are waiting for that further detail? I'm curious on her thoughts and impacts of that particular decision. We still have several days ahead of us in this session so that line item specifically can come back once we have that clarity. So would she feel comfortable with that approach knowing that it sounds like a lot of questions are still outstanding?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the PUB is already doing their work. The proposal is seeking to bring down the proposed rate increase to a number that is lower than the 24 percent that would, you know, bring the number -- bring the final estimate down. Yes, I guess if the Member wants to check the math and doesn't like the decision that was made to bring it to this number, I'm not in a position to say whether we should defer or not. I obviously prefer to not defer this decision. I would obviously prefer to see that this is done so that the letter can go to the PUB to confirm that will, in fact, be a rate subsidy for the members of the public. Again, I can pull up all the materials that were sent to Members back in October and see what was there and what wasn't. I believe I appeared at that time. I, of course, since appeared again on these supps and just simply did not, based on those meetings, anticipate this level of inquiry. So I'll be in the Member's hands, I guess. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Officially, I am not asking the Minister to be in any of my hands. In truth, I'm saying we have at least 16 days on the clock, so over three weeks, if not four weeks, something to that effect, of this Assembly sitting for the current budget, and I was just asking, basically, given the fact that we still have so many days and so many weeks in advance of this, if this specific line item was delayed, are we concerned about impacts or issues? And this way we can get back to this

particular specific line item to close it off. Thank you -- later. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Members of the accountability and oversight committee schedule the timing of the supplementary estimates reviews, and this one was scheduled for today. The PUB is already reviewing this. The \$12 million was landed on, 12 over four as a number that was deemed reasonable to bring the costs down to a rate level that would, while still impactful, obviously would be one that could be managed. There was numerical consideration given to what those potential outcomes would be. You know, again, Mr. Chair, had I anticipated that that would be the questioning today or had I had that sort of heads up, I would have come with that. I have that detail elsewhere; I just didn't bring it as the Minister of Finance sitting on a supp today. If Members choose to defer this today, Members choose to defer this today, that's part of the process, and I'll then go back, and if it wasn't in the original October materials we'll see what we can do to provide more detail on why we are looking to bring the proposed [inaudible] down by \$12 million over four. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, thank you. Seeing no further questions.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$11,950,000. Does committee agree? Oh, sorry. I had a hand up from a Member I didn't see. Okay, go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to move a motion that we don't have planned, so we need to take time with staff. Essentially, I move that the activity directorate under the finance operational expenditures be deferred until a later date. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, thank you, to the Member from Range Lake. What I'll do is we'll take five minutes; we'll just prepare a motion. We'll take a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

I call committee back to order. I want to go to the Member from Range Lake to his motion.

COMMITTEE MOTION 71-20(1):
DEFERRAL MOTION – Tabled Document
279-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 2,
2024-2025 – DEFERRAL OF DIRECTORATE,
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

MR. TESTART: I move -- thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that this committee defer further consideration of the directorate activity in the Department of Finance on the Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. To the motion. Members -- the motion's in order. To the motion. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's just not clear to me what the merit or intent of the motion is so can the mover explain to committee why we need to defer this, what is the -- what's the ultimate purpose here?

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was planning to speak to this, which I will do now, I suppose, so if the Member will kindly give me his -- yes, his time.

So the -- during the course of debate on this line item, the Minister offered to -- I think the quote my learned friend has written down, happy to bring it back to Members. So some questions were raised to the Minister around the power rate subsidy. There are a few questions, and her own evidence before the committee or words in the committee where we can work more with Members, you know, we can take some more time to get more information forward. And when those kinds of things happen in -- over the course of debate, if there's an opportunity to wait, I think that's better. We do have time to further consider these estimates and -- yeah, and I think the expectation is that there's a certain amount of preparation for this level of detail when Members ask, and maybe that wasn't clearly communicated in the in-camera portion when we reviewed these supplementary estimates. It would give everyone time to bring all -- the full level of detail to the chamber to properly understand Members' questions and given that we don't have make this decision today, we can defer this until a later date until those questions are resolved because I think it's -- if there are outstanding questions, it's more prudent to wait to approve the expenditure until we have answers. And I think there are some substantive questions here as well, not to

mention that perhaps there's more money we can put into the subsidy and take the edge off consumers, which I would absolutely support if there's room to make those arrangements.

So I think, given all that and given that the Minister herself was saying, you know, she's happy to work with Members on this and provide more information, let's give her the time to do that and to continue this discussion once all the answers are available. So that's the intent of the motion.

Certainly, we don't like to move things that are unprepared but sometimes, through the course of debate, there's an opportunity to just put the brakes on and take a little more time with things. And that's the intention here. It certainly isn't to delay the process. If I don't want to support this, I'll just vote against it, but this is to get more information in the hands of the public and in the hands of Members who ultimately are representing their constituents in this chamber. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to -- well, I guess I can't answer any questions but I'm happy to speak to this further if you give me -- afford me the time to do so. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I guess -- I mean, the Member for Yellowknife Centre was speaking to this a fair bit. I wasn't paying perfectly close attention to what he was asking for, but I guess I'm just trying to understand here, like, what exactly is the information being sought? What's the intention to do something with it? Are we actually going to change something here? You know, I've heard Members raise a lot of concern about the cost of this appropriation to begin with so are we really considering changing anything here, or are we just gathering a bunch of information? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. I'm sorry, amused at the process but I'm happy to continue to answer Members' questions. Thank you for the question.

So I think that the intent here is if there's outstanding questions that Members want answered, that we should, again, put a pause on it. We are spending 12 million -- like, the proposal here is to spend \$12 million of taxpayer money and if we're not completely satisfied that that's a prudent expenditure, we shouldn't approve it. So the idea here is to pause until we can gather all the information.

And if even one Member has concerns, I think we ought to give that Member the benefit of the doubt because, again, this is not the last day of the sitting. This does not have to be approved today. We still have time over the course of this sitting to approve this if it is deferred today, and that is the intention here. So, I mean, I don't think that there's a significant amount of urgency that we need to get this done today anyway. And, unfortunately, we do have to move on to other matters and call the page, so to speak. So it was either approve it today and just wait for more information or I think, again, more prudently, get the information before we approve the money. Because I've always found it uncomfortable when you have these kind of outstanding questions about an expenditure and the Minister commits to getting the information, typically we get it, but in the moment when you're considering it, if you don't have that on hand -- and we do have opportunities to ask these questions in other committees and other processes, but if -- so we have plenty of time to gather that information. If we still don't have it on the floor for the public, that is problematic in my -- in my assessment. So that is -- again, the reason for the deferral is just to give time. There's still plenty of time to debate this. There's plenty of time to approve it. And, again, maybe that number does change but that's up for the Members to decide. And once we have the information available to the House to consider, we can make that determination at this time, either by, you know, the Minister bringing forward an amendment or new supplementary appropriation or a deletion or whatever. But I think until we have that information, we can't make those -- we cannot make those considerations. And, again, if we're going to be prudent stewards of the public purse, we should be able to answer any questions Members have here before we move along with approving expenditures. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any other Members that wish to speak to the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Clearly, we're here at this particular moment because some of the -- the round of questions I had for the Minister and the staff, and essentially what boils down to it is trying to get the essence of what the \$12 million is, what it does. I mean, I know what money does, but what -- how it's targeted in the sense of what it does. I mean, there were a few other questions -- I'm trying to wrap it up as simply as possible for the Member of Frame Lake so he appreciates that. I also sought the advice or thought of the Minister in the sense of the impacts of the delay. I mean, it sounds like a lot

of moving parts are -- a lot of moving things, parts, yes, are happening here. But in the sense of that, time is always of the essence, but there is plenty of time on the clock. We may have, I think, approximately 16 days of session. You don't leave these things for the last minute. That wasn't the intention in any form. So we have at least - at least - 14 days of session days, including a week-break in between. So we have a lot of days over a particular line item to get further clarity. With respect to clarity on -- for one Member or all Members, I would say, similarly as the Member for Range Lake had just pointed out, it's \$12 million. It deserves a little extra scrutiny. We're not talking about \$20, a discretionary thousand dollars or, you know, a hundred thousand. It's \$12 million. Yeah, it's bigger than some community budgets, whole budgets for the year. So it's a lot of money. And, you know, I'm worried and think the specific targeted money needs some more transparency. And that's all I'm asking for, and that's all the intent of the motion is. In the end, I think the Member for Range Lake's right. If you don't like it, vote against it. You like it, vote for it. Yeah, but I think it's a little more than that. It's about coming to the clarity of decisions and the process of compromise. The process here of compromises, let's just wait on this one line item through this process, and we'll get the clarity, and then those still against it can vote against it, and those who can vote for it will. So, ultimately, Mr. Chairman, the issue is not to stop this, but it's rather to have good reflection as to why we're passing \$12 million. Now, in -- as a side note, which is very relevant, Mr. Chairman, my experience with \$12 million personally is obviously zero, but on paper, quite often, and what I found and when it comes to budgeting and budget talks is the smaller the dollar amount, the more energy we put into something. So in other words, we talk about it, tear it apart, demand better accountability, etcetera. But the larger the number is, the less transparency and discussion we get. We just go, Well, we need 12 million bucks. You can't argue with that. But if someone said we needed \$10,000 for an outhouse repair job, we'd be talking about that all day. And it's funny, the mechanism of dialogue of democracy. I've seen that on roads. I've seen that on fence repairs, mobile vehicles, etcetera, etcetera. The smaller the dollar amount, the longer we weigh in on something. So that's all it's asking for, Mr. Chairman, is just a little transparency to help Members fully understand so when the public comes to us, we want to feel our public dollars are going in a robust but an efficient way. And by all means, may be right. Maybe the number is too small. Maybe the number is too high. I don't know. But, I mean, we want to help give cost of living breaks as much as we can to our constituents and all Northerners. I mean, it

matters because this is the day-to-day stuff that upsets people. These are the phone calls we get from people because they have difficulties getting by. So just saying, oh, we just approved \$12 million, and it's only done a little, they'd ask me why we didn't do a little more. So, Mr. Chairman, I don't want to use all the time on my clock for no necessary reason, but I felt it was important to elaborate a little further because I think the Member for Frame Lake had some questions. I wanted him to understand the cornerstones of the issues. And it's not against the 12. I just feel transparency on the detail needs to be there. And maybe the last thing is the Minister was correct. I want to say that she didn't come prepared with that level of detail. Yeah, most of the time this probably is not necessary. And perhaps the Member for Range Lake was right. We should have given them a better head's up as well so -- on this type of level. So sometimes that's how it works. You get emotional and stirred on the floor on an issue. So that will be all, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, thank you. To the motion. Next I have on my list is the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. I just want to ask the Minister, so how many -- okay. NTPC, how many communities do we represent? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that there's a motion on the floor. We're debating the motion. So this is just to the motion, to the Member.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: This \$12 million -- I mean, well, there's the, you know -- this does affect the small communities, people living in the small communities, because majority of us, I think, you know, uses this NTPC power, or it does provide the services to many of the small communities, so this \$12 million. So I just wanted to ask the Minister, so is this -- if we approve this as it is, is it to keep the rate down in small communities? I don't know. Like, I would support it if it is going to help keep the rate down. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, thank you to the Member from Monfwi. Just so we're clear, there's a motion on the floor that was put forward by -- from the Member for Range Lake. We're debating that motion. So I just want to -- we'll come back to that, but I just want to -- I guess we want to move on. Is there any further questions to the motion, this motion on the floor? I want to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: I had a question, Mr. Chair. Certainly, you know, out of respect for my colleagues, I'll support the motion if they want to defer. I certainly know that this \$12 million is used to offset the rates for the outlying communities, one of which that I live in. Certainly I would like to see more of that money in there. We did have an opportunity to review this at the accountability and oversight committee at the time as well to get those details. But, again, if the motion is to defer, I respect my colleague's motions to do that, and we'll get that information back. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. There's a motion on the floor, and you could speak to the motion that was put forward by Member from Range Lake. There's a motion on the floor, so we won't -- we're debating that motion right now. So if there's no further questions to the Member's motion -- okay, I'm going to go to the Member -- sorry, the Minister of Finance to the motion.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, I mean, obviously I appreciate colleagues acknowledging that -- because the public doesn't realize that in this system we go through all of these materials with -- relevant Ministers will appear with colleagues at AOC confidentially to go through so that everyone's prepared, and questions -- I've had everything asked for -- sometimes people don't like to ask their questions because it's much more dramatic to ask them here. Sometimes they ask their questions and gives us the chance to bring materials. And, Mr. Chair, in this case, I did not have this question. I don't disagree that we do argue about the \$5,000 things and not the \$12 million things, and we should argue about the \$12 million things. I appreciate that comment. But just so we're clear, yes, I did not anticipate this because this didn't come up previously. But that said, Mr. Chair, I have been sort of scrambling here with folks online. And I know there was a reasoning for it, and the reasoning in part with the 4 million -- or the \$12 million over four is that puts us to a point in time when we are anticipating that there may well be an opportunity for NTPC to bring on industrial customers which would then -- at a rate that would reduce the requirement for this subsidy to continue. So that's the magic in that math. The details of that, I'd rather share with committee in confidence because some of that is not my commercial information to share. And I'd be happy to do that. That won't necessarily impact what happens on this decision, but I hope that gives at least some understanding as to the rationale underlying it. There can always be other choices, Mr. Chair. That is always the nature of policymaking and decision-making.

But there was a rationale to it, and it was get us to that four-year period. After which point, based on the numbers we're expecting, the subsidy would not be required because a different source of funding would be available. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you for clarification. One more speaker, and then I want to go to the motion. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, given the comments of the Minister therefore I move that committee reports progress. Thank you.

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Report of Committee of the Whole. Member for the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 278-20(1), and I would like to report progress with one motion carried, and that consideration of Tabled Document 278-20(1) is concluded, and that the House concur and those amended. And that any appropriation bill be based thereon be introduced without delay. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Do I have a seconder to the motion? Member from Yellowknife Centre. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Reports of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight will meet at the rise of the House.

Orders of the day for Monday, February 10th, 2025, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 3 of 7)
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 17: Municipal and Community Affairs Statutes Amendment Act
 - Bill 18: An Act to Amend the Partnership and Business Names Act
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 275-20(1): 2025-2026 Main Estimates
 - Tabled Document 279-20(1): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025
22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 10th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

Unedited Hansard