



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 46

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Pages xx - XX

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

This is an unedited transcript.

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

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker
Hon. Shane Thompson
(Nahendeh)

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland
(Kam Lake)
*Minister of Education, Culture and
Employment*
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and
Investment*

Mr. Richard Edjericon
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Robert Hawkins
(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Lucy Kuptana
(Nunakput)
*Minister responsible for Housing
Northwest Territories*
*Minister responsible for the Status of
Women*

Hon. Jay Macdonald
(Thebacha)
*Minister of Environment and Climate
Change*

Hon. Vince McKay
(Hay River South)
*Minister of Municipal and Community
Affairs*
*Minister responsible for the Workers'
Safety and Compensation
Commission*
*Minister responsible for the Public
Utilities Board*

Mr. Danny McNeely
(Sahtu)

Ms. Shauna Morgan
(Yellowknife North)

Mr. Julian Morse
(Frame Lake)

Mr. George Nerysoo
(Mackenzie Delta)

Ms. Kate Reid
(Great Slave)

Mr. Denny Rodgers
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Hon. Lesa Semmler
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)
Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. R.J. Simpson
(Hay River North)
Premier
Government House Leader
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous
Affairs*
Minister of Justice

Mr. Kieron Testart
(Range Lake)

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek
(Yellowknife South)
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
Minister of Infrastructure
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power
Corporation*

**Mrs. Jane Weyallon
Armstrong**
(Monfwi)

Mrs. Sheryl Yakeleya
(Dehcho)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Mr. Glen Rutland

Deputy Clerks
Mr. Alex Mulooki (acting)
Mr. Harjot Sidhu

Clerk of Journals
Mr. Michael Ball

Committee Clerks
Mr. Paul Mercredi
Mr. Angus Wilson

Law Clerks
Mr. Toby Kruger
Ms. Sandra Mackenzie

Box 10
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
www.ntassembly.ca

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	1
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	1
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 97-20(1): TOURISM 2030	1
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 98-20(1): FEBRUARY-MARCH 2025 CAPITAL DELIVERY STATUS UPDATE.....	1
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	2
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 511-20(1): PINK SHIRT DAY	2
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 512-20(1): YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SKILLS PARTNERSHIP	3
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 513-20(1): TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM.....	3
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 514-20(1): TRADES AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE REGIONS	4
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 515-20(1): IMMIGRATION AND MARRIAGE FRAUD.....	4
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 516-20(1): CHILDCARE AND DAYCARE AVAILABILITY.....	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 517-20(1): DRUG AND MONEY SEIZURES IN DEHCHO REGION.....	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 518-20(1): NUTRITION NORTH SUBSIDY FRAUD	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 519-20(1): WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN AND MANDATE TARGETS.....	6
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 520-20(1): SUPPORT FOR ALZHEIMER AND DEMENTIA VOLUNTEERS.....	7
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 521-20(1): CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR WESLEY MARCELLAIS.....	7
RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS	8
RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 475-20(1): BUDGETING PROCESS FOR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY.....	8
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	8
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 12-20(1): DEERON VITTEKWA – SCHOLASTIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS	9
ORAL QUESTIONS	9
QUESTION 532-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY TO GOVERNMENT OF CANADA	9
QUESTION 533-20(1): NUTRITION NORTH SUBSIDY FRAUD.....	10
QUESTION 534-20(1): WORK VISAS AND TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM.....	10
QUESTION 535-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CRIME REDUCTION UNIT	11
QUESTION 536-20(1): MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUPPORT AND COST OF YELLOWKNIFE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY	12
QUESTION 537-20(1): TRADES AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE REGIONS.....	13
QUESTION 538-20(1): CHILDCARE AND DAYCARE SPACES	14
QUESTION 539-20(1): CLOSURE OF LITERACY OUTREACH CENTRES	14
QUESTION 540-20(1): HEALTHCARE COVERAGE FOR TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS	15
QUESTION 541-20(1): FUNDING FOR INCREASED COSTS FOR YELLOWKNIFE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY	16
QUESTION 542-20(1): LICENCING INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED NURSES IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	16
QUESTION 543-20(1): ELIMINATION OF HOUSING MAINTAINER COURSE.....	17
QUESTION 544-20(1): WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TARGETS IN THE BUSINESS PLANS	18
QUESTION 545-20(1): ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS	19
QUESTION 546-20(1): DRIVER'S LICENSE EXTENSIONS FOR TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS.....	20
QUESTION 547-20(1): SUPPORT FOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS	20
REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS	21
BILL 11: AN ACT TO AMEND THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT	21
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	21
TABLED DOCUMENT 296-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 16-20(1): REPORT ON THE STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT	21
TABLED DOCUMENT 297-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 19-20(1): REPORT ON THE STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE CANNABIS LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION ACT	21
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	22
COMMITTEE MOTION 74-20(1): TABLED DOCUMENT 275-20(1): 2025-2026 MAIN ESTIMATES - DELETE \$5,250,000 FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT – DEPARTMENTAL SUMMARY, PAGE 29, DEFEATED	23
RECORDED VOTE	31

COMMITTEE MOTION 75-20(1): Tabled Document 275-20(1): 2025-2026 Main Estimates - Deferral of Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Carried 31

REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE42

ORDERS OF THE DAY42

Unedited Hansard

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 26, 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 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):

Please be seated. Thank you, Mr. Lafferty, for the opening prayer and reflections.

Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for ITI.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 97-20(1):
TOURISM 2030**

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, picture this: Standing beneath the dancing aurora as the night sky comes alive; gliding across a pristine lake so still it mirrors the world above; or tracking the footsteps of generations before us along an ancient northern trail. This is the magic of the Northwest Territories; Mr. Speaker, a land that captivates the soul and invites adventure-seekers from around the world. Tourism is not just an industry here; it is a gateway to land, culture, and to the wonderful people who call this place home.

Last year, visitors spent over \$129 million experiencing our spectacular, breathtaking landscapes, rich traditions, and the unmatched warmth of northern hospitality. As we turn the page on Tourism 2025, Roadmap to Recovery, it is time to chart our next journey. That's why our government is developing Tourism 2030, an ambitious, forward-looking five-year strategy to drive sustainable growth, expand opportunities, and build a more resilient tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, Tourism 2030 will be shaped by those who know it best: Our guides, operators, Indigenous governments, and communities who bring the NWT experience to life. Through open conversations, online surveys, and in-person engagement, we will identify opportunities and challenges that reflect the unique strengths of the Northwest Territories and its communities.

Tourism in the NWT is more than an economic driver; it is a storyteller. It showcases landscapes, cultures, traditions, and ways of life that are real and deeply impactful. We will continue to champion community-based tourism and authentic Indigenous experience in ensuring that stories are told by the people who live them. By fostering collaboration and supporting local entrepreneurs, we can grow tourism in a way that benefits every region, while offering visitors what they seek: authenticity, immersion, and adventure.

Mr. Speaker, we know that tourism has the power to diversify our economy, especially in remote communities. Our resource sector remains vital, but tourism opens up new possibilities; ones that uniquely align economic opportunity with environmental stewardship and cultural revitalization. Last year, over 600,000 users visited the Spectacular NWT website. Now I want to see these online visitors go beyond the screen and book flights, purchase packages, and experience the magic of the NWT firsthand.

To make Tourism 2030 a success, we are committed to transparency and accountability. We will share findings from public engagement through What We Heard reports, and the final strategy will reflect Northern voices. This is an opportunity to build a tourism industry that strengthens our economy, empowers communities, and secures the NWT's reputation as a world-class destination for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is more than a destination; it is an experience that you carry with you long after you leave. It is where nature, culture, and history intertwine like our winding rivers, shaping stories found nowhere else in the world. Let us seize this opportunity to build a future of tourism together with our spectacular NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 98-20(1):
FEBRUARY-MARCH 2025 CAPITAL
DELIVERY STATUS UPDATE**

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, guided by the Housing NWT capital plan, we are creating more homes for Northerners by working with the Government of Canada, NWT industry partners, and applying innovative approaches to construction. By the close of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, Housing NWT and contractors will have completed the delivery of more than 80 housing units across the territory. This achievement includes 10 units for the transitional housing additions recovery program in Yellowknife and Inuvik, the installation of a biomass heating system for 20 public housing units in Fort Simpson, and major repairs to more than 140 units located throughout the territory. All of these projects result in new public housing units and modernized and repaired units. They also contribute significantly to the NWT economy, with more than 90 percent of contracts awarded to local and territorial businesses. These investments generate new opportunities for Northerners:

- Jobs in communities,
- Prospects for businesses,
- Workforce development; and, most importantly,
- New homes for our residents.

The Housing NWT capital plan includes scalable opportunities ranging from renovation projects for small and emerging local contractors to large multi-million-dollar construction projects for NWT contractors, suppliers, and manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker, as spring approaches, Housing NWT intends to maximize the short northern construction season with construction planned to start on 17 new public housing replacement units located in smaller communities and regional centers.

Housing NWT's capital plan targets not only the quantity of builds and renovations but also promotes innovation in residential construction. For example, this spring in Yellowknife a 50-unit building will break ground followed by rapid assembly of a mass timber structural system, the first in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, in Deline, Housing NWT is working cooperatively with both a contractor, manufacturer from the NWT, and an Indigenous government to pilot a hybrid construction approach. This innovative approach combines the benefits of a manufactured modular service core with on-site construction methods to gain the best attributes of modular and stick-built construction. Housing NWT has received a development grant from the National Research Council of Canada. This

grant will allow Housing NWT to research and collaborate with their team as part of the construction sector digitization and productivity challenge program.

A significant portion of Housing NWT's capital plan is funded through contributions from Canada. We continue to work closely with them to emphasize the needs of the Northwest Territories and advocate for continued housing funding, both for the Northwest Territories' housing program and for others delivering housing across the North. The NWT Housing forum and the recent housing symposium are examples of this coordination and advocacy in practice.

Mr. Speaker, through this coming construction season, Housing NWT will continue to focus on delivering more homes for Northerners by working with Indigenous governments, providing opportunities to industry, implementing innovative approaches to construction, and continued engagement with the Government of Canada. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 511-20(1): PINK SHIRT DAY

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, today is Pink Shirt Day, an annual tradition where we stand against bullying in all of its forms. Back in 2007, two students bought 50 pink shirts after a younger student Chuck McNeill was bullied for wearing a pink polo during the first day of school. As a father of three amazing kids, I can tell you how important this day is for my family. My family has had to deal with bullying in and out of school, and it never gets any easier, but days like today give us all hope as we call out bullies and remind vulnerable kids that -- and even grownups that it gets better.

It's important to remember a couple of things. First, the reasons Chuck McNeill was targeted by bullies are deeply rooted in homophobia and misogyny. The actions of bullies have been influenced by the bigotry of others, and they, in turn, seek to reinforce that bigotry on people whose only crime is being different.

Second, the bigoted attitudes which influence bullies at school are learned from adults. Worse yet, those attitudes are on the rise as evident by the success of far-right political movements

in democracies across the world. What we are seeing played out through daily developments from the United States and its odious president is that bullying on a much grander scale is on the rise, and it only encourages bullies everywhere else to follow along.

Pink Shirt Day is not just about encouraging our children to be kind and polite to each other at school, it's about standing up to the root causes of bullying and the most powerful of bullies because our children are watching, and we want our strength to teach them how to stand up and look out for each other.

So let me be clear, Canada, Canadians, and Northerners will not be bullied or broken by anyone. The North will stay strong and free as it has since time immemorial. Mr. Trump, we aren't afraid of your tariffs, your dictator friends, or the hatred you spew from your bully pulpit. We value diversity, compassion, and equality, and we won't and never rest until the NWT and Canada is free of discrimination. Northerners take care of each other in times of good and bad, and we will stand together against bigotry, hatred, homophobia, racism, and any affronts to our dignity. We share this message and proudly take care to remember it for the days, months, and years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 512-20(1):
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
PARTNERSHIP

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with NWT communities reeling from the news that Aurora College is giving up on community learning centres, I wanted to highlight a successful grassroots literacy and essential skills initiative for young adults that is set to expand. It is a youth employment skills partnership between the NWT Literacy Council and Ilitaqsiniq based in Nunavut and is supported by federal funding. It's designed to help youth aged 16 to 29 gain essential work skills and gain more confidence in their communication and language skills. A brandnew cohort is set to start within the next few months.

This program is designed to break harmful cycles. Some of the participants are referred through the justice system by the wellness court. Staff at the literacy council work closely with the wellness court team to provide wraparound supports for participants, such as mental health supports, even childcare funding is offered. There's a four-week-long classroom

portion followed by a two-week work placement. But even the classroom portion is focused on the practical and experiential. It includes on-the-land activities to build culturally based skills and certificates in things like first aid, WHMIS, driver education, and food safe. Work placement examples include local government, catering companies, electrical contractors, hotels, airlines, or work with trail clearing crews or construction crews. The program provides job-specific clothing and safety gear as well as stipends for the youth attending. It's flexible and shaped around the interests and skills of each cohort.

The best part is that many of the previous youth participants have been able to keep the jobs from their original work placement and have been working there ever since or even moved into higher levels of employment with additional job specific training. Some participants have returned to or entered post-secondary education, such as early learning and childcare or academic upgrading. With the current funding, the plan is to run the program in Yellowknife in the next two years and then offer it in a few other communities in year 3.

Mr. Speaker, this is an example of a model that is working, so let's support nonprofits like the NWT Literacy Council to do more of this, expand it to more communities, and replace the harmful cycles with positive cycles rooted in self-confidence and the pride of being able to support yourself and your family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 513-20(1):
TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to help people who want to make NWT their home. And who can blame them? It's one of the best places on earth as far as I can tell.

Since 2009, our nominee program has supported over 1100 foreign nationals and over 660 of their dependants in accessing permanent residence from the federal government. Since its inception, over 200 different NWT employers have accessed the nominee program to assist them in filling their workforce needs in every region of our territory.

Mr. Speaker, our territory has a tremendous amount of hard-to-fill roles. From a purely economic standpoint, we can't significantly grow our businesses and economy any more than we have without more people, and our

population has been static for a long time. If we want to diversify our economy and create more opportunity for all of us, there simply aren't enough of us to go around.

The great majority of applicants to our nominee program are temporary foreign workers already living in Canada on a work visa. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we're now in a situation where the federally-imposed limits on spaces available to newcomers and all programs for permanent residency, not just the NWT nominee program, means that many folks are losing access to their dreams. Many newcomers have expiring work visas and are waiting on renewals to those visas with IRCC while waiting for our nominee program or other federal streams.

Mr. Speaker, this gray area is called implied status and adds to the stress for people who are following all of the federal rules. Implied status is basically the definition of bureaucratic limbo. This is when Canada tells you you can stay while your file is being processed but, meanwhile, the NWT cancels your driver's licence and health care card. Adding to more frustration, massive position cuts have been announced federally at IRCC, and these kinds of delays to work visa renewal times are likely to increase. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of ECE.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 514-20(1):
TRADES AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE
REGIONS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, trades training: Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting and prosperous initiative in all sectors and more importantly capacity building readiness for our regions and communities.

Mr. Speaker, allow us to go where the puck is going to be. This prepares our game position for workforce capitalization and community qualified service providers. Mr. Speaker, we, the GNWT, have the authorities, together with supporting resources, programs, community labour market plans, options for our federal counterparts to support their programs. Mr. Speaker, the tools in our toolbox is fully equipped to design regional and community trades training targets to meet industry, government, and our example, the Fort Good Hope construction centre, to meet product demand and stay compliance with the insurance and national building codes.

Mr. Speaker, one of the economic aspects to the initiative to the current and emerging

economies is creating a disposal economy and providing dignity within our youth society.

Mr. Speaker, the 20th Assembly is in the unique, position with three years left in our mandate, having recognized this demand for skilled workforce we have the ability to allocate resources to support the readiness trades training through partnerships, departmental resources, collaboration, strategies, planning for all essential -- these are all essential principles in the designing to meet that demand while supporting our youth community for career security. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the appropriate Minister. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 515-20(1):
IMMIGRATION AND MARRIAGE FRAUD

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my statement is on immigration and marriage fraud.

Mr. Speaker, Canada is a desirable location for many people seeking a new start and has welcomed many newcomers through different federal programs. Canada's immigration policies fill labour shortages and support family reunification. Recently, it was announced that provincial and territorial nominee program allotments would be decreased.

Mr. Speaker, with this reduction in spots available, I am worried that other means of entry to Canada will be sought. There are cases where people are using marriage fraud to get Canadian citizenship. These are scam marriage applicants used to secure the benefits of citizenship and once acquired, they abandon their spouse after tricking them into marriage. The consequences of these scam marriages are devastating on the sponsoring Canadian citizens being used for this purpose. They are left heartbroken and financially responsible for the applicants for a few years.

The processing of immigration applicants and detection of marriage fraud is a responsibility of the federal government. This is a growing issue that can impact unsuspecting Canadians. I would like people, especially in small communities, to be aware of this issue. With the nominee program being limited, there may be an increase in other avenues being used to gain entry into Canada. We need to protect our residents from online scam phishing and exploitation, and inform them of this issue. It's a crime to marry a Canadian citizen or permanent resident simply to gain entry into Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 516-20(1):
CHILD CARE AND DAYCARE AVAILABILITY

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the agreement education, culture and employment entered into with the federal government to work towards \$10 a day daycare was designed to invest in early childcare for the betterment of all in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories had committed to creating 300 new childcare daycare spaces by 2026, but as of June 2024, only 76 new spaces have been created. A \$50 million investment from Ottawa in 2021 was intended to create the 300 new spaces and reduce childcare fees to \$10 a day within a five-year period, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what we're hearing from early childcare providers is that rather than investing in early childcare, we may be just putting them out of business. It seems, Mr. Speaker, we were not quite fully prepared for this agreement and the conditions that come with it. There seems to be no inflationary factors built into the agreement. With the cost of food rising, Mr. Speaker, some centres may have to cut nutritional programs. The wage grid for full-time equivalencies have not been calculated correctly in some instances. For example, Mr. Speaker, rather than a full-time position for -- two full-time positions for a certain number of children, what I'm being told by the care providers and centres is that it should be more around 2.5. Early childcare centres are now provided funding for employees who often have to stay late when parents may need more time to pick up their children, but yet childcare centres are not permitted to charge a late pickup fee, which parents would be more than willing to pay, Mr. Speaker.

There's a narrative that centre-based childcare has to become on par with day homes. According to the NWT Early Childhood Association, this is not correct. Day home providers are struggling as well and are not included in the wage grid subsidy program.

In the previous year's budget, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment agreed to an additional \$3.5 million to assist early childcare. This money was intended to help all programs in early childcare. Let's give them the money, Mr. Speaker, for wages and some autonomy for the association on how it's spent. Let's include family day homes in the wage grid program and ensure they can continue to operate. Let's remove as many roadblocks as possible, Mr. Speaker. Let's provide as much

assistance as needed to give the tools to these providers to complete the essentials course for both day home and centre providers. Let's ensure that the people that work to ensure that others can work are not left with no choice but to close their doors and leave so many of our hardworking residents with no options for daycare. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 517-20(1):
DRUG AND MONEY SEIZURES IN DEHCHO
REGION

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, making residents and communities safe is a priority of this Assembly. The NWT RCMP seized nearly 5 kilograms of cocaine and over \$360,000 in cash this month. This was the largest drug and money seizure in the Northwest Territories' history. The RCMP estimates the street value of these drugs is almost a million dollars. The three individuals they arrested in Yellowknife are from outside the territory but have ties to the community.

The RCMP are doing important work, but drugs are still making their way into the communities. According to data from the Controlled Drugs and Substance Act investigations, the number of criminal charges laid annually in the territory has doubled since 2020. That's a crime, Mr. Speaker. Last year, the RCMP reported that they seized 1.9 kilograms of cocaine and a semiautomatic handgun in a single search.

Mr. Speaker, these suppliers are criminals who prey on vulnerable people. I have heard reports of drug charges and seizures in Fort Providence where four people from outside the territory were illegally occupying a cabin to allegedly sell crack to the community. Media has reported instances where Deh Cho residents have been coerced into these operations.

Mr. Speaker, we know in order for our communities to combat the drug issues in our community, we have to work together and find solutions from the communities. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice at the appropriate time. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 518-20(1):
NUTRITION NORTH SUBSIDY FRAUD

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Company which runs the stores across the North could be facing a class action lawsuit that was filed in Nunavut. It is alleged the company has been reducing the costs of groceries they sell despite taking tens of millions of dollars in subsidies from the federal Government of Canada through the Nutrition North program. This lawsuit will play out and even malpractice is not proven, but this is another sign that Nutrition North is not working as is intended. There are countless studies which show that the food insecurity has worsened since the program began. Some studies suggest as little as half of every dollar in subsidies paid out is passed on to northern families. We can read these studies, but we can also talk to our constituents because they show us proof that the rising affordable access to food firsthand.

While Nutrition North is a federal and territorial -- our territorial government is an important partner in administering the program. The GNWT's role in Nutrition North is to advocate for communities, identify where they need our -- the needs are, and improving the right feedback. In small communities are still struggling and the courts are become the route. Northerners are looking for change. They must be more either federal, territorial government could do more to improve the outcomes.

With Nutrition North approaching \$2 billion spent since 2011, something needs to change if only half the money is making a difference. My constituents want to know what their government is doing to ensure federal subsidies 100 percent are passed on to them. They want this program to be more effective either through policy fixes or support for local businesses. I look forward to asking the Premier later how he intends to tackle this issue on food security through the GNWT-led initiative on closer corroboration with the Government of Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 519-20(1):
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS
PLAN AND MANDATE TARGETS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year when MLAs were complaining that there were no targets attached to our mandate, we were told it's all going to be in the business plans. But a year later, in many cases I don't see this happening. When I look at our updated business plans, in many cases

I'm not sure I see a clear plan articulated for much of what we're trying to do.

Because it came up during your review of the ECE budget last night in COW, I'm going to focus on targets related to growing the workforce today. But I want to be clear that there are a number of areas where we need to better articulate what we are trying to achieve and would suggest that, at a minimum, we need to set clear targets for each of our priority items.

Mr. Speaker, we are capable of setting targets. Keeping the focus on ECE, part of our ELCC agreement included setting targets for growth of childcare spaces as the member for Boot Lake was talking about today. The target lists out both what we are ultimately trying to achieve and interim goals to keep us on track along the way. 75 spaces per year for a total of 300 spaces by March 31st, 2026. That is a solid goal. It's very specific, so we know exactly what we are working towards.

The reason targets like this are useful is because they tell us and the public what we are trying to achieve and, in some cases, even what problem we are trying to solve. Imagine we set a more nebulous target like we've done for growing post-secondary students for childcare spaces? Imagine if our goal was simply increase childcare spaces. How would staff ever know what they achieved or even when they were done? With a goal like that, you will never know when the work is finished or if you're making meaningful progress towards the goal because there isn't one.

I want to acknowledge that a number of the targets ECE has set for growing the northern workforce are measurable and applaud the department's work to establish these targets. For example, they have set the goal of increasing the number of students accessing SFA by 10 percent over the length of the 20th Assembly. That is a measurable target that we can track the progress of. I would suggest that we bring the rest of our targets up to this standard and; furthermore, ensure that we aren't simply taking a shotgun approach to mandate implementation by throwing a bunch of ideas at it. Let's get clear about what problems we are trying to solve, make plans to address those problems, and set measurable and achievable goals to implement those plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 520-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR ALZHEIMER AND
DEMENTIA VOLUNTEERS

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the Alzheimer's Society is an organization here in the NWT that helps people facing dementia. Their team of navigators, volunteers, staff members, all share a common vision of a world without Alzheimer's or any kind of dementia. The Alzheimer's organization believes that each person living with dementia can thrive, and the society's focus is care today and a cure tomorrow.

Through dementia awareness programs and services, the Alberta-NWT society works relentlessly in their efforts to find a cure while supporting our loved ones. The Yellowknife office supports northern partnerships with our communities by creating a strong support network. However, the extent of this work is much broader through outreach efforts and their work with their trained dementia ambassadors.

The society helps not only people living with Alzheimer's disease, Mr. Speaker. They also work to support others who are facing any types of dementia diagnosis who are navigating through the health system and need to help learning about the connecting to the programs and the services available in their community and throughout the North. Connecting people through their referrals is a key to finding the right supports early in the dementia journey which can make the big difference in the quality a person is living with during the dementia challenges and certainly helps support the care partners.

The Alzheimer's Society offers a host of in-person, online programs, and services designed to support individuals and their needs and the preferences through programs and services that are developed for people living with dementia. This also helps their care partners, health professionals, and even employers and employees navigating through the workforce. The society offers its programs, believe it or not, free of charge thanks to the generous support of their donors and the community fundraising efforts. Many of the important initiatives improve the lives impacted by those impacted by dementia and throughout.

Mr. Speaker, we're all working towards a cure, and it is very important that we support these volunteers who provide this invaluable contribution for their work to our community members. I encourage each member of this Assembly to reach out in our own way to learn more about the Alzheimer's Society. Mr. Speaker, you can connect to the society by easily calling 867-669-9392 or email at

sgillis@alzheimer.ab.ca. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to your support on this cause as well. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 521-20(1):
CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR WESLEY
MARCELLAIS

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, Wesley Marcellais was born on November 23, 1980, to Adilene Marcellais. He was raised by Elsie and Jonas Marcellais. I can tell you that he loved being on the land, especially when he was out hunting thanks to his parents. The family and community witnessed his skill, and they said that he was a true bush man. With the tools and skills that were passed down to him, he loved to travel the South Nahanni and the Liard River especially with his brother Steve by his side. They were inseparable growing up together. The community members would say that they were either looking for some fun or for their next adventure.

As I said before, he loved being out on the land and providing for his family. In his early years, he like to spend time at Swan Point with his family. His love of the land was evident in the fall, especially being on the river and in the forest. Thanks to his love of hunting, he had an amazing knife collection. He could spend hours talking about each knife and showing them off.

Wesley was a man of few words and many talents. A lot of time, you would find him outside working on his next project, creating any type of furniture he wanted or sketching incredible drawings. To say that he was known for his carpentry would be an understatement. All you had to do was visit his mother's house. He was able to use limited material and wood supplies at his disposal to repair and improve things at her house.

Wesley was always down for the next adventure that came his way. He took it with great humour and wit.

His two joys of his life were his daughter Emily Marcellais-Hardisty and his partner Synthea Hope. As well, he had the patience like no others. People loved to watch him interact with each other.

Unfortunately, on January 14th, he passed away with his partner in Jean Marie River. He was a caring, loving, talented and exceptional person. His passing will forever change his family. As the family said, it is not good-bye, but it is see you later. He will be sadly missed.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Returns to Oral Questions

RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 475-20(1): BUDGETING PROCESS FOR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I have a return to oral question asked by the member for Yellowknife Centre on February 10, 2025, regarding the budgeting process for the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority.

The department provides a dollar value and service expectation to each of the three health authorities to develop a detailed budget. The authorities must submit this budget to the department by February 15th of each year concurrent with the main estimates process. The department works with each authority to review their budget aligning details with what was presented to committee. This ensures that the authorities' budgets are ready for final review by the department once the main estimates are approved.

Further, to comply with Financial Administration Act, this work must be completed by April 1st of each year. Once the main estimates in the authorities' budgets are approved, the department then enters into a contribution agreement with each health authority which outlines the dollar value for activities, spending parameters, and reporting requirements such as performance indicators and financial statements.

Lastly, the authorities are required to submit variance reports to the department which facilitates monitoring of expenditures. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of visitors in the gallery today. I'll start with the shorter list but not anywhere less worthy. The NWT Literacy Council is represented by one of my constituents today, Ms. Katie Johnson. She's also an advocate for many other causes which I certainly endorse.

The other group I'd like to recognize is a bevy of ladies, very smart, charming, and hardworking volunteers, and they are as follows: Ms. Martha McLellan, Ms. Sandra Hockes, Ms. Mika Cameron; and, a special thanks goes to Ms. Linda Koe who helped me with my statement today. And I wish to thank each of them personally for coming today and enjoying our session as presented. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too want to welcome some of our guests today. Martha McLellan, she's a Range Lake resident; and, Kathryn Barry Paddock, and also a Range Lake resident. And I'd also like to recognize Mika Cameron. She was an important educator in my life coming up in the Northwest Territories. Thank you for being here today.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize two pages from my riding of the Mackenzie Delta. Elijah Smith and Sandy Dylan are both from Aklavik and attend Moose Kerr School. I'd like to welcome them to the Assembly and congratulate them on a job well done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to thank and recognize Kathryn Barry Paddock, the executive director of the NWT Literacy Council; and Katie Johnson, the program director from the NWT Literacy Council, for coming out today and for the work they do every single day and the passion they bring to their work. Thank you.

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

Colleagues, I'd like to recognize Ben Morin and Elizabeth Money, both -- two-thirds of the team that is going to be working on our reconciliation plan for the Legislative Assembly. Welcome to our Assembly.

If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. You put us here, and we thank you very much for this honour. I hope you enjoy the proceedings. It is always nice to have people in the Assembly -- or the gallery, sorry.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 12-20(1):
DEERON VITTEKWA – SCHOLASTIC
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I acknowledge a very determined young man from Tetlit Zheh, Mr. Deeron Vittrekwa. While bringing up a young family with his spouse Natasha, who just completed her business management program, Mr. Vittrekwa is in his fourth year of a four-year teacher education program at Yukon University. He will serve as a great role model to the younger generation in pursuing a career path.

I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Vittrekwa on receiving an Indigenous language revitalization scholarship, and for his commitment to his educational goals. Congratulations and all the best, Mr. Vittrekwa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 532-20(1):
SENIOR ENVOY TO GOVERNMENT OF
CANADA

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on some of the questions I had asked yesterday to the Premier regarding his special envoy to Ottawa, and one of the concerns, of course, I had was about how much this costs, and I'll wait for that return, of course. That said, I didn't try to come back to the question with respect to process.

Mr. Speaker, we all hear the theme over and over again we have to work together. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier was very clear he made the decision, he consulted with Indigenous governments, and furthermore, he consulted with his Cabinet. Maybe he could explain to this House why he didn't feel like working together with this side of the House in some form of discussion about his future plans and what he was trying to achieve. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So just to be clear, I had spoke with Indigenous

governments after the decision was made to let them know what was going on, and I spoke with my Cabinet colleagues because, you know, when we make changes in that hallway where we all work, I want to ensure that Cabinet feels supported as all the staff down that hallway support all of Cabinet in one way or another. So that being said, this was a decision that I made in my office based on the experiences that I had over the past year. So I'm happy to consult with the standing committee on policies, on programs, on legislation. This was one single position out of the entire Government of the Northwest Territories that was reassigned. And so, you know, I always want to hear what the Members have to say, and I take this Member's comments very seriously, and going forward, I will look at our processes to ensure that if there are any changes like this in the future that I will engage Members sooner. That being said, I do have a responsibility to operate my office in a way that I think is efficient, and I will be making the decisions based on my experience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to wave off a second question until the Premier had said the last piece. I was going to concede on maybe his contrition in the sense of he'll communicate better or work better. For the record, Mr. Speaker, we work here too, not just Cabinet, and in theory the Premier's principal secretary should be working with Members and, you know, whatnot. That said, how much is this office going to cost now that he's made this unilateral decision? Because we know how much they're paid because on the -- what's online, the GNWT website. They're paid the highest employee we have. There must be an office cost, support costs. Can the Premier elaborate on this unilateral decision he has made without consulting Members. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There will be no change in the cost of this position. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, can the Premier assure this House that there will be no office setup costs, there will be no staff costs, there will be (audio) sorry, the light went off. Maybe on the government too some days.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier assure that there will be no additional costs to setting up an office because if we're setting up a special envoy that we will now be referring to his excellence or something or other, I mean, are we -- what is this going to cost the Assembly? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We already have an office in Ottawa. There's actually a desk and a chair there already so there may be an increased cost with pens, staples, things like that, but there's not going to be a significant cost implementations for this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 533-20(1):
NUTRITION NORTH SUBSIDY FRAUD

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my Member's statement, I spoke about Nutrition North and as it costs \$2 billion since 2011 and half of that going to the communities throughout the three territories.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The GNWT needs to work closer with the federal government on food insecurities. What action is the Premier taking to assess the Nutrition North shortcoming and to advocate for change in Ottawa? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year Minister Vandal, who was at the time the Minister responsible for Nutrition North, announced that there would be -- they'd be undertaking their five-year review of the program and that that review is expected to be completed this year. And so we are waiting that and are engaging at every opportunity that we can.

As well, we have -- or the Minister last year also announced that there would be a -- let me just find this position -- a ministerial special representative independent of the federal public service appointed to review the Nutrition North program. That independent ministerial special advisor was actually appointed yesterday, and so I look forward to seeing how that individual is going to advance this project, and I'm sure there's going to be opportunities for us to go forward and engage in that process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there is -- there are overhead costs to do business that are unique in the NWT, such as administration and logistics. What is the GNWT doing to make it easier to do businesses in small communities so that Nutrition North subsidies can be more effective? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course logistics are one of the biggest issues

we face here in the Northwest Territories. We've seen issues with climate change relating to supply chain issues with the Mackenzie River, and so when instances like that arise we have responded with supports to impacted communities. We are also looking at continuing to connect communities in the Northwest Territories by road. Of course, there's been a few -- those connections done in the past number of years. And we're talking about the Mackenzie Valley Highway as well which will have impacts on the administration of Nutrition North obviously. But it's an opportunity to lower costs there as well. So we are working on improving our transportation infrastructures and our energy infrastructure as well, all in the hopes of lowering costs and making it easier to do business in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Indigenous communities are opening their own new grocery stores, in particular in Fort Resolution. Will the Premier advocate for these bands to run stores to get Nutrition North subsidies as well while in deliberation with Ottawa? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so, of course, Nutrition North is a federal program and it has its own criteria and it's related to accessibility, road access. That being said, we obviously have higher costs of living in the Northwest Territories, and that's an appropriate thing to bring forward to our discussions with the federal government and the ministerial special adviser, and I think it's important to also highlight Indigenous businesses and how we can better support them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 534-20(1):
WORK VISAS AND TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many folks are panicked because of the goal posts of our nominee program are changing drastically in the last nine months. Available spots, associated timelines, have changed as well.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please explain what her department is telling people who do not meet the increased length of work history requirement with their employer or that have an

impending work visa expiry? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly the department is incredibly compassionate to where people are at right now. The department has been fielding a tremendous amount of phone calls and inquiries about this and has a tremendous amount of empathy for people. Certainly, the department is letting people know what the criteria is, why it has changed for the nominee program, and is also making sure that they're steering perspective applicants to federal sources of information on federal immigration programs trying to be as helpful as possible and also letting people know that over the course of this year we will be working with stakeholders, businesses, communities, to determine what the program will look like in 2026. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they're getting a lot of calls. They're not returning all those calls. But I am worried that more people will find themselves in limbo waiting on work visa renewals and paperwork headaches that are associated with territorial services, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister speak to what work she is conducting with her Cabinet colleagues and federal counterparts to ensure that folks who are classified as implied status are allowed to extend their health care coverage or driver's licenses, for example. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the term implied status has now been changed to maintained status just so that everybody's using the same language. So foreign nationals on maintained status are eligible to extend their health care coverage and NWT driver's licenses, and they would need valid proof that they are on maintained status. Foreign nationals that are looking to extend their health care cards and their NWT driver's license are encouraged to reach out to NWT -- sorry, NTHSSA, as well as the Department of Infrastructure, to confirm the process and documents that they'll be required, but that process is already outlined within those departments. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that our allotment went from 300 to 150

due to federal government decisions around cuts across Canada. So can the Minister speak to more detail with her conversations with her federal counterparts; specifically, how she's advocating for our unique northern context which also applies to the newcomers and businesses that need to grow their workforce. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that when you're in these positions, regardless of what side of the House you sit on, you take these jobs very seriously. You've been given the trust of the people that you serve and also Northerners right across the territory. And so taking every opportunity to tell people about the Northwest Territories and explain to them what our context is is something that I do on a daily basis in this role.

Specifically with immigration, I started my day today by meeting with MP McLeod. We talked about the nominee program and talked about how we are going to, you know, further align and have further conversations with the federal government. I have written letters. I have placed phone calls. I -- and that's at political level. The department is doing the same at the officials' level and having bilateral and multilateral engagements and conversations as well. I know that the business community also met with Minister Miller this summer, and I had the opportunity to take Minister Miller out and even have conversations in the middle of Great Slave Lake about this stuff. So certainly doing the work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 535-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CRIME
REDUCTION UNIT

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT RCMP introduced a new division drug strategy in 2024 focused on better intelligence gathering and placing priority on disruptive techniques. The strategy includes creating a dedicated drug enforcement team in the NWT. Can the Minister of Justice say whether this team has been created and what community they are based in? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the crime reduction unit has been established. They are still staffing up. I'm not sure as of today how many members they have staffed up. But despite -- even if they're not fully

staffed, they have been doing work across the Northwest Territories and, you know, not just in drug investigations, also doing things like working with the post office trying to ensure that we can stop drugs going through the mail and different types of things like that. This is a territorial unit, and it's based here in Yellowknife, but it can be deployed and will be deployed throughout the territory. And they have been doing work throughout the territory already. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Can the Minister commit on whether there have been more human resource allocations at RCMP detachments in my riding as part of this strategy? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't say that the human resource allocations were part of the divisional drug strategy, but there have been increases to the RCMP numbers in the Member's riding. K'atlodeeche First Nation had two positions added, one this year, one last year. The detachment in Fort Providence has also had positions added. And that's in addition to the new crime reduction unit and the emergency response team that are getting staffed up that also work territorially. So there's more assets available in the communities, and there's more territorial assets available to respond to incidents in the communities as well. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Final supplementary. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Will the Minister commit to contacting RCMP detachments in my riding to learn what resources they need to implement this strategy? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I generally don't talk directly to the detachment commanders, but I do speak with the commanding officer and I'm happy to have that conversation with him. I know that, you know, he is very invested in this divisional drug strategy, and he is doing his best to ensure that the resources are available to officers across the territory. And often that includes things like training. Just having the awareness of, you know, when someone might be using drugs if they're driving a vehicle, then that gives you cause to stop that person and then take further action from there. So the resources, a lot of them are training and awareness, and I know that is happening and it's being rolled out. But I will commit to further discussing with the commanding officer about the resourcing, especially in the Member's riding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 536-20(1):
MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
SUPPORT AND COST OF YELLOWKNIFE
DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is something that's been troubling our community for quite some time, and the Yellowknife River water pipeline that's been built since '68 has been in dire need of replacement for a number of years. In 2017, when I served this Assembly previously, it was pegged at \$34.5 million. Last year, it was \$62.7 million. This year it's now \$107 million. Our city cannot afford this pipeline. Our residents deserve safe drinking water. Can I ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs how is he supporting the city of Yellowknife in completing this important public project? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal and Community Affairs distributes \$110 million for all the municipalities. That includes the CPI funding that they receive. The money that they have, MACA doesn't tell them how to spend their money for their projects. It's how they want to utilize it for some of their infrastructure. We all know infrastructure costs have been going up. And that one has too. It's been all over the news, and they have received, I think, about \$28 million of federal funding for some of that project on top of the CPI money that the GNWT provides. They obviously have to do some work on trying to offset the costs of inflation for these projects. But we do not get into the details of how a municipality funds their infrastructure projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the department provide 100 percent of the CPI needs for the city of Yellowknife?

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The funding formula is not 100 percent, and it's never been 100 percent. So it's up to municipalities to raise money through revenues in order to provide further infrastructure issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is one we should be spending -- we should be fulfilling our commitments to communities to 100 percent. But this is an extraordinary cost that's well beyond what the city can afford to pay. Every year it gets more expensive. Will the Minister find a way to work with his Cabinet colleagues, with the city of Yellowknife, with the NWTAC, with the federal government, with everyone who has a cheque book, and get the city the money it needs so we can have safe, clean drinking water for half of our residents in this territory? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, I would like to say yes for every community with that same issue throughout the Northwest Territories, but the reality is that I'm sure, he's well aware, we're all fighting for funds over here on this side of the House for every department, and there's a lot of questions for department of health where they need the money, and I'm also asking for some funds also to try to increase funding to communities. But we'll just see how that goes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 537-20(1):
TRADES AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE
REGIONS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my statement on trades training, my questions are to the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. What is ECE doing to ensure that trades training is tailored to regional and communities' specific labour market needs? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, education, culture and employment, through its regional service centres, engages with communities, the federal government, training program providers, as well as other GNWT departments to discuss their specific community needs. In addition to that, in the Sahtu there are annual career fairs. There's also our small community employment fund that designated community authorities can tap into, and thanks to Regular Members, was increased. And then in addition to that, there's also financial supports that are provided through the community labour market development plans. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that information, that reply. My next question to the Minister is there are federal programs and industry partnerships that could further enhance trades training in the NWT. What steps is ECE taking to maximize these opportunities and create training opportunities in communities? Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I just had a meeting yesterday at an FTP table for the federal labour Ministers' meeting where we did talk about labour market agreements, and we continuously bring that up with the federal government. There's also discussions with Canada Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, Skills Canada, and other groups as well who are really strong advocates in their sector and ones that we try to work with to gain additional funding.

In addition to that, we've submitted two proposals to CanNor that were submitted for recent calls. One of them spoke specifically, that I think the Member will be interested in, to alternative approaches to apprenticeship supervision in small communities. As we know that one of the big challenges we have is the availability of journey persons to supervise apprentices across the NWT, especially in small communities, and so we're waiting on word on those proposals and hope for good news. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I too am hopeful and optimistic on a good news reply.

My third question to the Minister is workforce development also requires tracking results and making improvements as needed. How will ECE measure the success of trades training programs to ensure they work for the residents? Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've heard a little bit from the other side of the House on the importance of tracking results and measuring our successes today, so I appreciate the Member's question. So recently, education, culture and employment released a two-year extension to its apprenticeship, trade, and occupation certification strategy. Part of this strategy does have a performance measurement plan and so at the end of our two-year extension, those performance measures will be released publicly, and we will

be able to track and see how far we've come. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 538-20(1):
CHILDCARE AND DAYCARE SPACES

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spoke in my Member's statement about the agreement that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has with the federal government to create 300 spaces by 2026. So last year I think we had 76. My questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and can she speak to -- it seems that the -- we're a little off track. Can the department provide further information on how they plan to meet those targets of 300 spaces. Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're always working on trying to work with people who are interested in opening up spaces to try and encourage them and support them in that. We currently have five proponents right now that are working with the department to try and open up spaces that are both in and outside of Yellowknife, and I'm very hopeful that they will see great success.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we also do have our infrastructure funding, and I'm also always looking for creative ways to work with my colleagues who are building things in communities and trying to find ways to incorporate childcare in those new builds. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister spoke about the infrastructure funding. Can she maybe elaborate on that, what that funding is specifically used for, if it's strictly for infrastructure projects, any of that to be used for anything like wage subsidies then as well. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So the early childhood infrastructure fund is solely for builds. It can be used to renovate spaces, and it can be used for new builds as well. And we cannot use it for wage subsidies. 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. Mr. Speaker, I spoke in my Member's statement about the discrepancy between day homes and childcare centres and that the day homes -- in my conversations with the NWT Early Childhood Association -- are not included in this wage grid subsidy program. Can the Minister commit to taking a look at changing this so that the day home providers can also access this funding. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, it's thank you to Regular Members who negotiated the additional \$3.5 million for the wage enhancement that was negotiated last year as part of our budget negotiations. And at that time, it was found that home-based early childhood educators currently had higher after tax net income compared to centre-based facility childhood educators, and so the \$3.5 million for wage parity adjustment was used for the wage grid in order to bring up their annual net income so that it was more in line with our JK -- or sorry, junior kindergarten -- sorry, classroom assistants at our junior kindergarten to grade 12 education facilities across the Northwest Territories.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, our day home operators are already receiving more money than traditionally was received by our daycare facility workers in that they received the childcare fee reduction subsidy, the operational funding, and the five-year retention funding. So certainly trying to bring everybody up and starting with those that are currently earning less within the industry. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 539-20(1):
CLOSURE OF LITERACY OUTREACH CENTRES

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first set of questions is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. So the literacy outreach centre here in Yellowknife has been a partnership between Aurora College and inclusion NWT since 1997, and that program even won the Premier's Award in 2023 for its excellent results. So given that enrolment has consistently been high with 39 students in the current winter semester, it came as a shock that Aurora College recently announced it would pull out of the program as part of its closure of the community learning centres, leaving the program to be shut down.

So can the Minister tell us whether the funding that the Department of ECE has allocated to

literacy outreach centres will be pulled away from Aurora College and reallocated so that these programs might be able to continue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that Aurora College was provided \$350,000 annually to operate literacy outreach programs, as the Member had indicated, and those programs are found in Inuvik, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife. In addition, education, culture and employment was providing \$85,000 to Inclusion NWT to also partner with Aurora College to offer those programs. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't confirm what that will look like going forward, but I can certainly reassure the Member that ECE is looking at options on how literacy programming can continue to be supported. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So has ECE engaged with Inclusion NWT to try to find a way forward for this program given that Aurora College has pulled out of the partnership? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that options are certainly being looked at for how the literacy programming can continue to be supported. I can also confirm that at minimum a three-month contribution agreement will be established to support delivery through the end of June, but I cannot speak beyond June what that will look like as of right now today. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate that there's few details available right now and lots of unknowns, but does ECE plan to reach out to Aurora College and its current staff working at the literacy outreach centre, who have been informed that they will lose their jobs, but to see if an arrangement could be made, for example, to continue using the college's classroom space and to communicate the efforts underway to find a path forward for this program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the existing spaces that are being used by this program are not spaces that are owned by Aurora College, and so certainly that space is not one, for example, that

I could confirm on the floor of this House but I can confirm that -- you know, first of all, thank the Member for her advocacy and our conversations in regards to adult literacy across the territory. But second, let the Member know that we are certainly following up on this one and seeing what can be done. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 540-20(1):
HEALTHCARE COVERAGE FOR
TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM
PARTICIPANTS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, expiry dates of health care cards for temporary foreign workers are tied to their work visa expiry dates. So if a work permit expires, so does a health care card. So how many compassionate extensions of health care cards have been provided since the pause to the nominee program in July of 2024? I realize this is quite a lot of detail, but maybe the Minister could speak to it broadly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that level of detail. I do know that I have had a few come through my desk that -- you know, from MLAs with their constituents that are in this category. And I know that as soon as they have the documentation, as the Minister of ECE has explained, that our office is able to renew those early enough. But what I will say is that as soon as somebody is applying and they have their documentation is to contact health services immediately. And they have a pretty quick turnaround for renewing their health care. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that from the Minister. Can the Minister please let me know if she is working with her colleague at ECE to include that messaging in some of ECE's messaging to folks who are panicking right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will commit my office to connect with Minister Cleveland's office to make sure that there is some kind of instructions on how to ensure that they can

apply for their health care -- or get their health care renewed. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 541-20(1):
FUNDING FOR INCREASED COSTS FOR
YELLOWKNIFE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure if she is able to consider the needs of the city of Yellowknife for clean drinking water as an extraordinary funding request and the GNWT take carriage of the pipeline -- water pipeline replacement? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's not an independent pot of money that sits in the Department of Infrastructure. We do manage infrastructure demands that come from individual departments. So, for example, if MACA were to advance an initiative of some sort, then certainly that could come and we could support the design and the build of it, etcetera, but we don't have an independent set of money, like a federal department might, for individual projects of that nature. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister -- I'm kind of spitballing ideas here. But is the Minister aware of any federal funding pots that this would be eligible for? The city's receiving \$25 million right now. Is there something that the department could help them access more money working with MACA, whoever it needs to be, but could we break down some silos and get the city some money so we can complete this project? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to say that the silos certainly are breaking down, in my view, over the last five years or so, and I've actually been recently working with housing and MACA on other funding opportunities trying to get the federal government, quite frankly, to be more flexible with us. So certainly happy to commit to have that conversation with my colleagues if there is anything that we can do more likely to lobby the federal government as opposed to finding things that are sitting there waiting for us to come take them, but certainly happy to commit that we will do that and go shake the federal bushes. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you to the Minister for that. Can the Minister relay that to the mayor of Yellowknife, just let them know that the tree shaking will begin to commence earnestly to get this project done. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly have a good relationship with the mayor of Yellowknife and, again, I don't want to create false hope that I have great faith that there's an easy pot for us to latch onto in the federal system right now. They, of course, are going through their own political changes, it would seem, in the next few months. But, again, certainly will commit that, at least from the Department of Infrastructure, to the extent that we are aware and do work with federal funding opportunities, again, we'll work with my colleagues here, and between myself and the Minister of MACA, we'll ensure that we keep the mayor of Yellowknife apprised of our efforts. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 542-20(1):
LICENCING INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED
NURSES IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in late November, I received the letter from the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding my concerns about the licensing of nurses here in the North. And basically, the letter comes back and says status quo is the way we go. My question is what's stopping the Minister for providing direction to the association saying we're making it part of our funding agreement that we find an easier way to register foreign nurses who are qualified in Ontario, Alberta, but the gatekeeper process here refuses to let them join the service that we're in dire need of help? 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, there is a lot of work that's going on right now with the joint nursing -- it's CAN, it's the health authorities. They're all working toward right now of trying to figure out who in the Northwest Territories that they can -- like, who is here in the Northwest Territories right now that are potentially, you know, still within that licensing time, what needs

do they have, and so that work is going to go out and to survey those nurses.

As for the overall picture in the -- you know, bringing in international nurses into the Northwest Territories, we are not Ontario and we are not Alberta, and we cannot support those nurses coming into the system. I've talked to my counterparts. I've recently was just in Halifax meeting with other FPTs and territorial and provincial provinces, and the work that they have to do to support the nurses coming in and, you know, and increasing support training, we have to do that right now. And Stanton and Inuvik are the only two hospitals, and then there's Fort Smith and Hay River, and we're trying to support the nurses that are going through the LPN program, the RN program, new grads coming out of the school. We're -- you know, so we -- our nurses have already told us that they cannot do this and work and do their job. So we are looking at options as how we can support the nurses, the international educated nurses that we currently have that are in the Northwest Territories. I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why don't we start with the objective of saying yes, we will find a way as opposed to no we can't do this. Mr. Speaker, Alberta finds a way. Ontario find a way. And even in BC, they have a check-in process where they monitor someone's international skills to ensure they're on par -- on par, sorry. That said, we can make all the excuses in the world why we can't do something. Let's try an unusual one by saying how we are going to commit to doing something. So, Mr. Speaker, I prefer local nurses here. Would the Minister say or find a way to find a solution to this and provide direction and support through her department to the CAN folks, the nurses association, etcetera. Can she try -- let's try to do something as oppose -- (audio).

MR. SPEAKER: (audio). Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this -- since I've been the Minister, I think is the farthest that we've gone forward on trying to making sure that we're looking at a new way of trying to support those international education nurses that are here, that have been going to our MLAs, that have been saying, you know, I've been trained. And it is looking outside the box. It is working with BC. We have CAN right now working with BC trying to look at the system that they're using that they are collaborating with the Yukon right now to assess those skills, and that's what we are doing right now. So all that work is happening right now. So it is live. And when I

do have more fulsome information to be able to share, I will make sure that I share it with all the MLAs. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I heard a long time ago somebody say do or do not; there is no try. So why don't we commit to doing something. We could waive the hours through some form or regulations. It's not as simple as that; I understand that. But that said, we have very smart, capable people. Would the Minister investigate the process opportunity of waiving those hours and restrictions required by the gatekeepers, our northern nursing association, that would allow these people to practice. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are trying. That is what we are doing. We are looking at the different routes. And there are -- you know, and what we're now finding out is that educations in other countries have changed, and so, you know, by going through and doing the assessment, doing the English assessment, and using BC's model, that's what we're trying to work with right now. And so I would not commit to removing hours if that would put, you know, people at risk. I'm not saying that they're going to be at risk, but what I am saying is that we have people in these roles and we have regulatory bodies in place for a reason, and so they are working to try to make this as easy a process as possible so that international educated nurses can work in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 543-20(1):
ELIMINATION OF HOUSING MAINTAINER
COURSE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have further questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. She might get a lot headed her way today before she goes away for a few days out of the House. So this has to do with courses that at least previously have been offered by Aurora College, specifically the housing maintainer course which has played a critical role in NWT communities. Training people to take care of housing repairs and upkeep, especially public housing units. And I had heard that perhaps this course is no longer being offered by Aurora College and that community members who are interested might have to go to Yukon university or a

southern-based institution to gain that skillset. Can the Minister confirm whether or not Aurora College is still offering the housing maintainer course. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Colleagues, before we go to the yes, we don't talk about who isn't -- is in the House or not going to be in the House. So please be reflective of that. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly have oversight over post-secondary in the Northwest Territories, and it's the Aurora College board of governors who has oversight over the operations of the college. But it is my understanding that the program is still being delivered at the college. But I think it's worth noting that not every single program is delivered in every single term at the college. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I apologize for that oversight.

Does the Minister happen to know whether programs such as the housing maintainer program or even the building trades helper program has to be -- is offered only at the campus communities or whether it's being offered in other NWT communities where people live, to be able to take those courses? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the apprenticeship housing maintainer program is delivered at the Thebacha campus in Fort Smith, but it's my understanding that there may have been opportunities in the past for the non-apprenticeship version of that course to be delivered in other communities. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister have a role in at least communicating with the college the importance of offering courses like this in communities to make them more accessible as opposed to requiring people to go to campus communities, or is that outside the Minister's role and solely the purview of the Aurora College board of directors? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this type of feedback is something that I hear from MLAs. I have heard from Indigenous governments over desire for courses to be accessible within communities

and have heard it from residents as well. And certainly when I get feedback like that, I do make sure that I take it to meetings that I do have with the president of Aurora College as well as the chair of Aurora College. And so while I don't direct the operations and don't have -- there is a noninterference clause so I cannot interfere and tell them what to do, I certainly do ensure that I am sharing that feedback. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 544-20(1):
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TARGETS IN
THE BUSINESS PLANS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ECE also. We're just really hammering her today with the knowledge that she's leaving soon. Sorry, us new Members are still getting used to all these rules.

Mr. Speaker, for our mandate item grow and enhance the northern workforce, what specific problem or problems are we trying to address with this high-level goal? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, it's very hard for me not to speak for the next 12 and a half minutes about this question, but I won't. I won't.

So, Mr. Speaker, with this high level -- what is meant by this high-level statement, obviously we want to grow our workforce. We want more people involved in our workforce. We want to enhance our workforce. We -- I will slow down, my apologies.

We want the people who are involved in our workforce to have the opportunity to grow their skills and to take advantage of other opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Minister shared there was quite vague. What I'm trying to get -- what I'm trying to narrow in on is what problem are we trying to solve. What are the issues in our workforce that we're trying to solve? Is it the fact that, you know, employment at the mines has only reached about 40 percent northern over the years? Like, are there specific issues we're trying to address with this goal; do we even know? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're trying to ensure that more residents are graduating from high school, more residents are attending post-secondary, more residents are having meaningful employment within the workforces of the NWT. And I think that that's key. I think it's about growing and enhancing our workforce. I understand from the Member, though, that there's an opportunity to constantly improve the documents that we do put out. And that's why I think it's also important to reflect on the fact that our business plans are living documents and, based on the feedback from the Member last year, continue to make improvements, and these are conversations that will continue to shape documents next year.

There are some good measurables in the document as well, though, and have the Member to thank for that, along with his colleagues for some of their feedback. But increasing the number of employed income assistance clients, the number of students accessing our career education advisers, the number of SNAP students, the number of students accessing student financial assistance. There are some great numbers in there that are measurable. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I guess to get to the point of my statement, why are some of ECE's targets on this item so vague? There are items that are very specific, like the 10 percent one I listed in my statement. But, for example, our post-secondary education goal is simply to maintain or grow. It doesn't say how much, it doesn't say when. Can we get a commitment from the Minister for these items in the growing and enhancing our northern workforce goals in the business plans that we will get achievable, measurable goals, attached to those items in the business plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member certainly has my commitment to treat this living document just as such, a living document that continues to grow and continues to get better every year. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 545-20(1):
ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDCARE
PROVIDERS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following up on my Member's statement, I did mention in there that I know the Minister's aware that childcare providers are required to complete the essentials course in order to be a childcare provider either in a day home or in a centre.

Mr. Speaker, oftentimes, you know, providers may have English as a second language or may require some assistance. Does the department provide assistance, or what assistance does the department provide to the individuals who are taking these courses? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment can certainly provide supports to people who need it. The example the Member used, for example, where people have English as a second language, the supports afforded are certainly determined on a case-by-case basis, and people who require supports can email earlylearning@gov.nt.ca. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yeah, I would hope that that support is offered through the department to ensure that these providers can get the help they need to get these courses as quickly as possible and including the certification process.

Mr. Speaker, and the Minister mentioned the \$3.5 million that was added to the budget last year for the wage subsidy. Can the Minister confirm that that funding will again -- once again be continued through the funding this fiscal year. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So when we did receive that funding within education, culture and employment, it was indicated that it would need to be a go-forward funding, not just a one-off funding. 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 thank you for that. That is, indeed, excellent news.

I guess I would ask if the Minister can commit to giving us a kind of a costed plan on how the department intends to reach the 300 spaces by 2026 that was intended when the agreement was signed with the federal government. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not going to be one size fits all for what that looks like across the territory. The 300 spaces are certainly clear across the Northwest Territories. For example, we are repurposing modular classrooms into ELCC spaces. We are looking at, you know, how I can work with some of my colleagues on some of their infrastructure builds in order to use minimal funds to pull some spaces out of there. Some of them, of course, will of course end up being day homes, and so in people's homes. And so it's not a matter of 300 daycare spaces in this type of facility. We are really looking at the whole gambit of how we get to these 300 spaces and support the needs of Northerners as far as childcare. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 546-20(1):
DRIVER'S LICENSE EXTENSIONS FOR
TERRITORIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM
PARTICIPANTS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Infrastructure.

Very similarly to the Minister of Health and Social Services just earlier, will the Minister please work with her colleague at ECE to make sure that folks with expiring work visas can have an extension on their driver's licenses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe at least one, if not two or three, such requests have already come in, and we certainly will do our best to make sure we're coordinating with all colleagues here for folks -- to the best of our ability that there's not a delay or that there's an ability to be a bit flexible where feasible. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 547-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR APPRENTICESHIP
PROGRAMS

MR. HAWKINS: All right, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and it's regarding the trade and occupation wage subsidy program.

Mr. Speaker, employers who -- tradespeople, that is, can hire trades apprentice up to 3200 hours, and they can help through a subsidy program for a max of \$9 per hour, I believe for a male apprentice, and up to \$16 an hour for a female apprentice. All excellent. My question starts with when was the last time this program subsidy has been reviewed, if the Minister is aware of that. Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, at my fingertips right here, I couldn't share with the Member the history on when that was increased. But I do believe that there was work done on this in the 19th Assembly. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, we often talk about not getting enough tradespeople into the program of -- into the system. Often I hear from employers who are tradespeople saying they can't afford to hire a tradesperson. It's not the subsidy program that's the problem. It's actually the bridge to the solution. In other words, they can't make enough money on the first and second year of the trades -- the apprentice and hence, you know, they don't want to take someone on because they're struggling in the management.

Mr. Speaker, is there a way to revisit this particular initiative to take some analysis as to our return on investment. In other words, if we bump the subsidy up, do we think we get more trades apprentices into the program and meet the needs of Northerners? Does the Minister -- could the Minister see an opportunity of doing some type of evaluation like that? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly see the value of trades across the Northwest Territories and want to ensure that we're always looking at more ways to attract people within this field. That's why we also have the SNAP program where we also support wage subsidies for high school students to get involved. And so I have not been contacted by employers who are feeling that this is particularly the area where they're struggling. There are certainly other ideas that have been afforded to me, and I invite all opportunities to chat with anybody about our trades opportunities. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess to my question again, would the Minister be willing to take on some type of evaluation to see if we can get more tradespeople -- sorry, more apprentices into the trades by adjusting or meeting further needs of the employers who end up spending a lot of money and time and energy that they can't get as a return by constantly mentoring. And that's the key to the program, obviously, but it's a financial loss for them for the first two years to get ahead. So I'm asking can she -- would she commit to reviewing this and doing some analysis to see if we can get a better return and more people in the trades and in the communities and the North at large? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, currently in the Northwest Territories -- and I believe I shared this statistic last night -- there's over 330 apprentices in the Northwest Territories; a number I think that we should all be very proud of and continuously working to see that grow. 47 percent of those apprentices are Indigenous NWT residents. And currently right now we're in the middle of a two-year extension to our apprenticeship trade and occupational certification strategy. And so surely at the end of that strategy, we'll be looking for a reset and this is a great time to incorporate some of the work that the Member is talking about. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of Committees on the review of bills. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 11:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act.

Bill 11 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 1st, 2024 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment for review.

The standing committee held a clause-by-clause review of the bill on February 13th, 2025, with the Minister of Infrastructure.

The committee moved to amend three clauses in Bill 11 during the clause-by-clause review. The Minister of Infrastructure concurred with all three amendments.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole as amended and reprinted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Bill 11 stands referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Reports of Committees on the review of bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 296-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 16-20(1): REPORT ON THE
STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE MENTAL
HEALTH ACT

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 16-20(1), Report on the Statutory Review of the Mental Health Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

TABLED DOCUMENT 297-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 19-20(1): REPORT ON THE
STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE CANNABIS
LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION
IMPLEMENTATION ACT

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 19-20(1), Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 12, Tabled Document 275-20(1), with the Member from the Deh Cho in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act; and, Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates, Education, Culture and Employment and Housing Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. We will take a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act. I will ask the Minister of Justice to introduce the bill.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm here today to present Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act. The purpose of Bill 12 is to fix an error that was made in 2017 when amendments to the Interpretation Act resulted in some government offices technically being required to be open on Sundays. This was not the intent of the changes in 2017.

Bill 12 will amend four pieces of legislation to deal with this problem and to ensure Sundays are not interpreted as business days, including

- Subsection 150(5) of the Business Corporations Act;
- Section 59 of the Consumer Protection Act;
- Section 62 of the Judicature Act; and,
- Section 24(2) of the Mechanics Lien Act.

This concludes my opening remarks. I'd be pleased to answer any questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Would the Minister like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: With me today I have Victoria Carmichael, legislative counsel with the Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 12.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The comments are certainly brief.

Madam Chair, Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 30th, 2024, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. On February 10th, 2025, the standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Justice and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill. I thank the committee for their efforts in reviewing this legislation. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 12. We can proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill, committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Okay. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

Clause 1, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Clause 2, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Clause 3, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Clause 4, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): To the bill as a whole, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Does committee agree that Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister, and thanks to your witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witness from the chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and committee, we will resume where we left off.

Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 29 and revenue summary information items on page 30 and 31. We'll invite the Minister to go and -- do have you witnesses?

On page 30 and 31, are there any questions? Member for Yellowknife Centre.

COMMITTEE MOTION 74-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 275-20(1): 2025-2026
MAIN ESTIMATES - DELETE \$5,250,000
FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT -
DEPARTMENTAL SUMMARY, PAGE 29,
DEFEATED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'd like to move a motion. I move that \$5,250,000 be deleted from the 2025-2026 Main Estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'll speak to it at the appropriate time.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): The motion is on the floor. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to introduce the details of why the motion is here and the dollar amounts and the process or purpose.

So, Madam Chair, it's no surprise to my colleagues that -- I should say we were all taken by surprise of the decision by Aurora College to cut the community learning centres. Now, that said, being kept in the dark is one thing but then we find out that they want to keep the money, the over \$7 million appropriated towards this. That said, the program, if I understand it correctly, is intended to run until June, and, again, if I understand that correctly. So what I did was I took one quarter of the year off, and that's the difference of how we get from \$7 million to \$5,250,000. And that's how we get the number.

Madam Chair, now, let's get down to the nuts and bolts.

The issue boils down to is you can't cut a program and keep the money, first of all. And the way it's being speculated right now is, well, don't worry, trust us. I mean, there's no program that I'm aware of we just give people money and just say, figure it out or talk about it. This is called business plans. We're doing budgeting. Money is attached to a purpose. I feel incredibly -- I don't know how to say it even larger than that. Like, enormously uncomfortable of leaving \$5 million -- I should say \$5,250,000 in the hands of "just trust us."

Now, I believe in the principles and purpose of the community learning centres. As a matter of fact, the fact is if they weren't working, I wish we'd heard more. We may have had some fantastic suggestions, some good, some less good. That's the nature of what we do. But that said, I wish we'd had a conversation rather than this outright this is being cut.

Furthermore, there's other considerations that really impact this decision to, again, unilaterally cut. Employment in that community, inspiration in those communities. The fact is it is -- it's a beacon of hope, and that's been torn out from people. I mean, back to the conversation about where was the conversation. Often again, I brought it up today, we talk about trying to work together. Where was the conversation with Members on this side of the House saying we're having a problem and this is our solution.

So without going on too long but it's key, I want community learning centres, I want some solution. And I would tell the government at any moment I would support them bringing back a

costed plan and initiative, and I would certainly vote in favour of that. It's not about just trying to take the money away from the department. That's not what it's about. It's about taking away from money without a purpose, and then it will just be spent. And if anyone tries to tell us it's not being -- it won't be treated as some type of form of slush fund or special project fund or unaccountable fund, we will never see the details of this regardless of how many promises and commitments we get here today. We will hear don't worry, we'll be accountable with the money. Yes, I believe it will be used in the most bureaucratic stewardship way. In other words, I don't believe we'll be buying doughnuts with it. That said, someone will go, well, we have never been able to fund this study, we've never been able to paint the building, we've never been any -- we've never been able to do X, Y, Z, so we're going to use the money that way. The purpose of this money is intended for community learning centres. And if they're not going to use it for community learning centres, I'd say they don't need it.

And the last piece, and I want to go back to what I said earlier about this was, is the fact that I actually support them bringing forward a plan and I will vote in favour of it. Heck, I'll even move a motion for the government if they want, even though I can't move a money bill to increase. But the thing is we need to find a solution, and if they come back and say hey, we've got a \$5 million solution, we've got a \$6 million solution for better education in the communities, opportunities, again, beacons of hope for people. We cannot give up. We must be relentless in this. I'll be voting in favour of those things.

And to tie this back, when our government is -- if I know the round number somewhat correctly, it's about \$3.2 million away from the fiscal wall. Is now a time to be giving away money that isn't directed to a specified purpose, that kind of money?

So, Madam Chair, I do look forward to some feedback from my colleagues. I will respect their positions and directions. If they have questions, I will attempt to offer some thoughts or observations about the way forward at the very end if given an opportunity.

And so I don't forget, of course, I'll be asking for a recorded vote on this particular motion. That way I don't -- that way, we don't miss the opportunity of saying who stands on this particular challenge. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): The motion is on the floor. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I support the motion under consideration by the House -- or by the committee. The Member, I think, has laid out the rationale for it quite eloquently which is we're all very aware that this decision was made unexpectedly. Well, not -- the decision was made unexpectedly but the rationale behind the decision has been known I think to the college, to the Minister, to the department for quite some time. But the timing of it was, of course, surprising to this House and to the department. So when we see something like that, I think it's -- we have to be responsible to what the consequences of that are and, in this case, it's, you know, reducing the total amount of grant that's being provided to Aurora College.

I have grave concerns, that I've already spoken about many times in this chamber, about the progress or lack thereof that Aurora College is making towards its goals. I think we've -- we're overly optimistic on those timelines. I question whether or not we are going to be in a position to actually be arm's length with this institution -- well, it's not even an institution, with this public agency. And until such time as it is let go, we still manage it like a public agency.

So the fact that they could blind side the Minister responsible like this is not good. It is not good for the continued management of the college. It's not good for our collaboration, cooperation, and understanding of how our working together to build a post-secondary future for the Northwest Territories. And we still don't have daylight on a number of issue that are very pressing to my constituents, a proper campus for students in the North Slave, and ultimately an institution that students want to go to. We built an institution for communities, not an institution for students. And this kind of decision just demonstrates that where we are leaving adult learners in communities out in the cold with no plan to replace it. And there's going to be a briefing that we'll all hear about. That's great. But that's well after the fact it was -- the decision was made with no real understanding of what comes next. So until we see that plan, I think this is a very strong message to send that we can't just keep approving or throwing good money after bad. We can't approve plans that don't exist. And we have to be responsible for taxpayer dollars at a time when we are very close to our borrowing limit and, furthermore, when the government has singled one of its key priorities is restoring balance. And \$5 million, when you're \$3 million away from the debt ceiling, is a lot of money.

And, you know, to other things, I just spoke of a water pipeline that's in dire need of replacement. I'm sure the city of Yellowknife would appreciate \$5 million from our capital

budget being allocated to that or for into municipal and community affairs funding formula. \$5 million could go a long way to my colleague in the Sahtu who's been fighting for his winter roads for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, for other things that are needed. For my colleague in Tu Nedhe-Willideh who's been waiting for a school replacement for many years. \$5 million in a small jurisdiction goes a very long way. And if they -- if Aurora College has said we don't need this money, we're closing these centres, then let's put it where it is needed, in other communities for Northerners who need it where there's urgent projects and urgent needs. So I support this, and I hope that the committee does as well so we can move forward and invest these limited dollars in where they're most valuable. And quite frankly, the college has told us we don't need this money, we don't want to do this program anymore, so let's take them on their word and reallocate this money into the higher priority areas of this government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Now I will go to the Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I won't be supporting this motion. I agree that the loss of the community learning centres has been devastating, and I think this motion goes the wrong direction towards righting that wrong. I do think that the department of ECE needs to expedite, or as quickly as possible, untangle the exact amount of funding to take away from the allocation to Aurora College that would have gone to these community learning centres. I know that still has to be worked out because there's some aspects of adult education that the college is continuing to do, but as soon as possible we need to figure out exactly what money that they're not going to be using for community learning centres but then use that money to put into other organizations who can do this absolutely critical work that we've all recognized needs to be done, so whether that's a non-profit, Indigenous governments, other organizations out there who do believe that we need community-based adult learning and have the means to perhaps do it, you know, better or more innovatively than Aurora College has been able to do.

So, I mean, I'm hearing somewhat contradictory messages here. On the one hand, I'm hearing how important the community learning centres and adult learning is, but I'm also hearing of all these other things we could spend that money on instead. And my fear is that as soon as we take this \$5 million -- more than that, I don't have a copy of the motion. I didn't get a copy, but over -- just over \$5 million away from ECE and just away from their general pot, that money's going to quickly find its way to

something else, and it will be a drop in the bucket in the pot of a major infrastructure project like a road, but it makes a huge difference to take that away from education, learning, and literacy. So we need to keep it in the ECE pot and make sure that it's used for literacy and community learning the way it was intended to and just have it be reallocated to another organization that's willing to do. And so I think we need to keep it with ECE in order for them to make that turnaround as short as possible once they figure out who else might be willing to step up and offer these services. So for that reason, I won't be supporting this motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I will go to the Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, although I can appreciate what my colleague from Yellowknife North just said and I also appreciate the intent of this motion, so I've heard my colleagues, the Regular Members' side, especially our -- my colleagues with CLCs in their communities. I want to support their frustration, their constituents' frustration. And in discussion with my colleagues and staff, I understand that this funding can be restored in a sup should the briefing with Aurora College coming up prove fruitful. And in that regard, I am comfortable with supporting this motion which, to my mind, is a protest motion for my colleagues who have CLCs in their communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Next, I have Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, adult education learning, it's in our mandate. It's part of what we provide as a government. For me, this is about lack of consultation before such what I would consider a somewhat radical decision. There are many people and will be many people affected by the closures of the learning centres and, for me, know, the reason I would support this motion is what I would hope is that, you know, if Aurora College decides that it no longer wants to provide this service, then I would suggest that ECE under its mandate use this funding to continue the support for the learning centres and take it in house, in department, if the Aurora College no longer wants to do it. Having said that, Madam Chair, if Aurora College does come back, as my colleague Ms. Reid has said -- if they come back with a plan that does, indeed, look at continuing with the learning centres, then, yeah, I would happily vote for a supplemental appropriation to get this funding back and to ensure this important work is being done. But we haven't seen that plan. And, Madam Chair, I don't even know, I mean, \$5

million is the number, and I understand my colleague from Yellowknife Centre come up with that number. Is that number appropriate? Well, the MOU at this point, I think, sits with the Minister, so the Minister knows what that funding is and if that funding is not the number, then she can certainly give us the amount in that MOU that does signify what the amount is to run these learning centres.

But for now, I think it's an important message to send. It's certainly affected the Members in my riding as it has others. I've heard loud and clear from constituents saying if the college is not going to do it, who is going to do it, and in my opinion, that should be the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. And if so, if they're going to do it, then it stands to reason that the college no longer requires the funding to do it, and we will take it on ourselves. So for those reasons, Madam Chair, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I received a number of communications and a letter from the regional leadership in the Sahtu sharing their frustrations of the announcement made to close the learning centres. And I don't see a need -- I will support this motion. I don't see a need to give money to an operation that's going to shut their doors. But as previous colleagues have said, come back with a plan and we'll reinstate that funding. There's different conventions and different options to appropriate that money there. But ultimately, there was a plan that was drafted to keep the doors open in these learning centres but it wasn't executed. It was drafted by the Aurora College last August. But that plan never went any place. It was only -- it was hidden to provide a demonstration that we only got 21 students, 19 students, so I don't see any value in these learning centres. No, we have talked numerous times on the customer base for trades training. And I'm excited to support and use any avenues available to improve on our skills trades in preparation for the Fort Good Hope construction centre who is going to be taking the initiative to address a crisis we have. We need more homes. This building will build more homes. But certainly it needs skilled tradespeople to be in compliance with the national building codes.

So I'm willing to share this plan that we have researched, and maybe that plan could be resubmitted to reinstate the funds. But as of now, we're not concluded on the budget yet. We're just deferring it with the information at hand which gives us the option to support the motion for withholding the operations of these

community learning centres. So as said there, Madam Chair, I'll be supporting this motion. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Since the 19th Assembly, I've been bringing to this House about the issues of education in our small communities and, in particular in Lutselk'e, where the leadership contacts been saying that they're still waiting to fill positions at the adult education centre. And I brought it here to the House. I raised it on the floor. I was assured that it's going to be looked at the and that position's going to be filled. Here we are now going into the 20th Assembly, a year into the mandate, and yet that position hasn't been filled.

You know, right now as it is, when I first heard about the cuts to the small communities on the education learning centres, I had to read it on Cabin Radio and I was a little disappointed that we had -- every time something has to happen, we have to go there and read it. My concern here is that, you know, this issue of restoring balance of this government and right now as it is, you know, we're talking about \$5 million that they brought forward in the -- they're trying to figure out how we could use that money, but right now, they don't need it. But at this point in time, you could always come back and revisit it as mentioned by my colleagues.

Right now as it is, every time I go back to Fort Resolution, I drive by the adult learning centre and they have a teacher there, and she's concerned because her job's only there until June. And what happens after that, you know? It's a good thing that here in N'dilo and Dettah we do use the facilities at the college, but the thing is that we have nothing in our community of Dettah and N'dilo. We have some places where we could probably put them, but we're concerned. Every time a kid graduates from high school, they're about two grades behind. And if they want to go to college or university, we have to go to upgrading. And here we're now in our small community of Lutselk'e, of Fort Resolution, that's what happens. So, Madam Chair, I will support this motion. I just hope that -- again, I just want to say that small communities do matter. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Premier -- sorry, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to start off by pointing out a couple things that I heard from across the floor.

So this motion deletes \$5,250,000 from the main estimates for ECE. It does not speak to Aurora College. It does not speak to deferral. It simply deletes the money. This is not a place this on hold. It's not deferring education, culture and employment's budget until after the briefing with Aurora College next week. It is a deletion.

The other comment in regards to reading about it on Cabin Radio, all of us did receive a public service announcement in the morning before this appeared on Cabin Radio. So I think that that is important to note there.

I do have a very -- let me back up a second. I want to first acknowledge that absolutely this was a shock to Members of this House. It was a shock to the constituents that they served. And I think it's important to recognize that. I think it's important to also recognize that would we have liked to have had a more strategic rollout of this announcement where people are made aware of what the forward working plans of Aurora College are as far as adult education especially in our small communities is, hundred percent. I absolutely agree with Members that they would have liked to have known right up front what the plan is. That meeting is booked with Aurora College for next week where next week Aurora College will come and sit in front of Members and explain to them what their plan is. Aurora College never said we don't want to be a part of this, we're walking away, we're going to have nothing to do with it. And I know there was some comments to that effect on the other side of the House. Aurora College said, how we're doing this isn't working. It isn't serving Northerners to the best of our ability, and we want to rethink that. So they are asking to come forward with a new plan and do it better.

I do appreciate, though, that it is hard to wait that time and this period of limbo to work on that. I think there's a couple of very important pieces that Members do really need to know.

If this money is gone, there is no ability for ECE or Aurora College to do the plans that they are putting together as far as shifting from what is happening right now.

In addition to that, I also think it's worthwhile noting that the money for CLCs is also there to ensure that any impacted employees in small communities are paid during the layoff notice period. That is incredibly important to the people of small communities in this House.

In addition, if Aurora College is, first of all, going to execute their plan in short order, they're going to need funding to do that. They're not planning to do nothing. They're not planning to not use the funding. The job that I have right

now is determining if there are gaps left over within access to education within -- or adult education in small communities. And so if there's a gap that I then need to fill within the department, I won't have the funding to do that either.

I also think it's imperative that I point out that the amount indicated within this motion is about double the amount of the MOU, the memorandum of understanding, for adult learning and basic education between the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Aurora College. So this even goes beyond that. So this motion is going to absolutely have a negative impact on adult learning in small communities and more so than I think the Member even intends.

I think it's clear that I don't support the motion. I hope that Members come to the briefing next week. I believe it's the -- I get off a plane and go pretty much straight to it, which I think -- I'm happy to, I think it's a very important briefing. I very much look forward to sitting with Members and having very important conversation. I think it's incredibly important. There is absolutely no part of me that feels that we don't need to be doing more for adult education, especially in small communities. But by taking money away from small communities, we're not going to get there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the MLA for Kam Lake I think touched on majority of what I wanted to ensure was clear which, namely, is that this is, again, voting to take \$5 million out a budget for a department takes 5 plus million dollars out of the budget for the department. Period. There is no guarantee as to whether or not Aurora College will or will not come back with a plan that any of us find palatable. There is no guarantee that ECE will be able to find other staff since they will not have the \$5 million allocated to this initiative -- that they will have other staff to support developing a plan that any of us find palatable. What we are just doing is taking this money away out of protest.

So I understand -- I understand the idea that there's a protest desire -- and, again, Madam Chair, I think many of us have said that we were also quite frustrated with how this came to pass. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, this motion has come by surprise to everyone in Cabinet. We are not well placed, being surprised, to be able to do any kind of analysis of whether or where money could be found to pay for staff in small communities on notice. We're not, being surprised, well placed to say whether or how we

could find money on the interim to develop an alternative plan. Not well placed to say if there's an opportunity to restrict funding that could allow that work to continue to keep the \$5 million. There are these other tools. There may be these other ways. We didn't know this was coming. So we can scramble to try to get our staff who are sitting back and listening to all of us to give us quick analysis, what can we do, other tools, other things, what can we do. But, Madam Chair, being surprised on the floor like this doesn't give us the ability to utilize the public service to support the desires of the Assembly, to support the small communities and support community learning centres, which all of us have said on many occasions, both one on one with Members as well as here, that this is what we all want.

So Madam Chair, there is a budgeting process that we go through in this building where chair of AOC and myself will sit down where we discuss concerns, we can discuss deletions, we can discuss additions, we can discuss changes, we can discuss policy changes. That has been the process now that I've been a part of for 11 budgets, including this one. It has been often ripe with many different types of topics, including things like this, where there is a dissatisfaction. And ultimately by that process, we come forward and at the end of it all, in the last while, you would see the Minister of Finance stand up and make a number of commitments, changes, both deletions, additions, policy changes, that reflect desires of this Assembly.

So, Madam Chair, I would urge our colleagues, all of colleagues in this House, to consider using that process, one that allows us to have some time to analyze what impacts there are so that we can make changes that are meaningful, so that we can effect programs in a reasonable way, so that we can ensure that our staff are supported to make these changes and that we're not being asked to do them on the fly not knowing necessarily what those impacts are, how they impact people, real people, and -- but actually trying to find a way to really try and find a solution.

So there's a meeting next week that Member from Kam Lake has mentioned with Aurora College. It gives us time from finance to look at, you know, where the money is and what it's actually being spent on for community learning centres and ultimately find a path forward so that communities with community learning centres can use those facilities, get students into them, keep their staff, and see those seeds of success. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): To close the motion on this debate -- oh no, sorry, Mr. Morse. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, am I allowed to ask a couple questions of the Minister during this time?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): No. You can make a statement or speak to the motion. You can speak to the motion.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay, what I was hoping to ask from the Minister is she mentioned that this motion is double the MOU that the -- that ECE has with the college. I would have liked to know that number.

And the other question that I would have liked to have brought to the Minister is what, in fact, is her intention for dealing with this problem that Aurora College created for both us and themselves in the sense that we suddenly found out, you know, as the budget was already printed and hot of the presses that we have a fairly significant pot of money with no intended purpose and no plan behind it.

And so I do sympathize with the intent of the motion in the sense that it sends a clear message that you don't get to just cut things away from the communities without talking to the Minister, talking to MLAs, and discussing what the plan is going to be going forward so we can all understand what's happening. And I think -- I spoke to this in a Member's statement when the news first came out that I really am hoping to see better coordination between the Minister and between the college because it just seems like right now that collaboration that needs to be happening between the two entities that are responsible for the college just doesn't seem to be happening. And I understand that there is decision-making authority with the college, but the Minister needs to be involved in what's going on as well.

And so what I'm hoping for is to see a plan come forward, a plan come forward for what's going to be done with the CLCs -- we haven't seen that -- and a plan for, you know, what is going to happen with this funding. Because right now the college just gets to sit on it as far as we know, and we haven't heard a plan from the Minister that she's pulling a certain amount of funding away, and so we're left not really knowing what's happening with the money.

A couple of Members have noted that, you know, if a plan were to come forward or some of the items that were noted by the Minister for ECE and the Minister for Finance that it is possible to bring sups forward for those things. If we wanted to -- if we wanted to simply support staff through the notice period, if we wanted to

have a fullblown plan for how the CLCs are going to be dealt with. So I think there are opportunities that the department can bring ideas forward to us, bring them forward for debate. We'll discuss them, we can approve the funding at that time. But as of right now, there isn't a plan for what to do with this money.

To the motion itself, I mean, I think the -- I have a few difficulties with it. I would have much preferred that the motion came forward in such a way that deleted this out of the Aurora College line item in the budget. Unfortunately, the motion didn't come forward at that time. It's just come forward as a general cut from the department. So that leaves us in the position where money is being cut from the department but, technically, we have no idea where that cut will be implemented or how. That's not stated in the motion itself. And so it is a general cut to the department that we're doing with the hope that in good faith the Minister will pull this from Aurora College for now and set about creating a plan and coming forward with a supplementary estimate.

The uncertainty that that creates is certainly not the most desirable effect. I would have preferred, I think somewhere along the lines of one of my previous colleagues, that this was simply cut from the Aurora College line item and left in ECE in order to indicate that, you know, some of the Members that spoke, or at least one of the Members that spoke, spoke to taking this money and doing all sorts of other things with it. Well, I don't think that's the intent of everybody here. It certainly wouldn't be my intent. The idea is that this be used for adult learning, literacy, CLC operation, those various things. So to take it away in a general sense and then just say, well, we need to do better things with the money. Well, hold on a sec, that's a very different conversation.

For those reasons, for the uncertainty that this creates and the uncertainty about what the motion actually means, I'm not comfortable supporting it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): I will go to the Member for Yellowknife Centre to close the debate on the motion. Sorry, Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I know that I did express my frustration too before. It would have been nice if there was more notice given to us to close the community learning centres. It's not just me, but my other colleagues have said the same thing too where we asked the college to do more community-based training or offer more community-based program. Because some of our young people are not too eager to

leave, but there's not much in the community. If the community learning centre program was not working, then they should have done more to deliver or to work with the community members or to work with the leaders as to what they can do for us or how we can work together to promote community-based program. So, and I've been advocating and talking about it too. It's not just now. I've been talking about it in the 19th Legislative Assembly. And right now as we speak, there's a lot of instructors in the community working at the -- as an adult educator. Some of them are teachers. Some of them are our own people. And right now, they are left without -- as of June, some of them will be without jobs. Some of them are going to leave our community. And especially our own people, because there's no other jobs for them. It's not only in Tlicho region. It's going to be in other regions as well. So just the way that it happened where no -- no notice given. I don't agree with how it was rolled out to -- especially to the small communities because this is really, really greatly needed in many of the small communities. It's being used by many community members where it's like an outreach for some of them. And so with that in mind, I do support the motion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Madam Chair. With the uncertainty of what Aurora College is going to do within the near future in terms of the community learning centres and what's going to happen with staff, if they do not decide -- if they do not come back with a plan that will meet the needs of the smaller communities, with this motion that we're going to be saying we're going to be using it for other initiatives. I think it's a little bit too early because, you know, we're having consultation with the board of governors and seeing what they say before we even know what they're going to do or they're going to present a plan to us, and taking this money away from the department, not from Aurora College, from the department, and using it elsewhere and hopefully the board of governors will come with a plan and saying that, you know, there are certain, maybe half of the community learning centres are able to keep their doors open for their community members. Because it is important. I've always stated this, the education system, it started with the education system. If our education system was solid, then our graduating students wouldn't have to go to adult education just to get into a trades program of some sort. But it starts from there. Now we're having problems with the Aurora College because they don't have -- they don't have the numbers to support these learning centres, but there are some other -- some community

learning centres that are doing good work out there. I know from my community, at least, they're promoting it -- promoting adult education on the local radio station on a weekly basis, and that's something that's encouraging. But hopefully, maybe if they can amend this motion of some sort to say what -- you know, if the board of governors come back with a plan that meets our needs, meet the needs of the communities, then this money will be going back towards the learning centres.

It's frustrating, you know, having to go back to your community and they ask you questions, and you don't have the concrete answers because I don't think anybody does right now. The board of governors will make it known to us next week what they're going to do. We're going to be given an opportunity to ask them questions and see what their plans are. But it's very frustrating in a small -- a big territory with a small number of population, it's -- we find it very difficult to meet the needs of our communities who are spread out in a wide area. So hopefully we can come up, the board of governors can give us a plan so we can use that money towards adult education because it's really needed. It's something that's needed in the communities. I'm going to keep stating it, that it starts with the education, kindergarten to grade 12, that's what's failing us. It's not adult education that's failing us. It's kindergarten to grade 12. It started -- it's the governments before this one, and it's continuing. It's time to stop it, then maybe we'll have some good, strong leaders coming from the smaller communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go to the Member for Yellowknife Centre to close the debate on this motion.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I heard an opening with potentially a couple Members who are trying to decide which way to go, and I think I can help clarify or aid in their final-final decision. So maybe if someone's leaning towards a yes but sitting on the no side, hopefully this will do it, or someone looking for the reason why it was sort of filtered or created this way, I'm hoping I can do that.

I just want to respond to a couple things. You know, Cabinet's surprised by this motion. I assure you everybody on this House was surprised by this initiative in general, how it was cut. So I have seen a few budgets. I've seen a few potential cuts. I've seen cuts over the years. The sky does not fall regardless of how people try to characterize this. Keep in mind that when a department receives access to its budget, it receives access to its whole budget at once in theory, so it draws down on it appropriately. So

ultimately, it's not as if they're running from a negative deficit from the moment, and some areas and some department -- this is a contribution to an agency, but some areas are allowed to run in deficits anyway.

The how the money could be spent was really just a rhetorical point. That's all it was, which is there is no -- if there's no program but someone's sitting on that money, what do you think's going to happen? And it's not for me to say because I don't know. Nobody knows. That's the problem, nobody really knows. To say we'll use it for planning or study, I mean, you know, we don't need a \$5 million planning or study. You know, so, I mean, every cut I have been seen over the years, I mean has been fought or argued as if people will jump from the buildings. Like, it's characterized as the worst thing that could happen. And you know what? I've never seen catastrophic failures.

As far as -- something to keep in mind, so I think this is very important because a couple Members did highlight this, why on page 29. And I think that's a very, very good observation as opposed to the line item in particular. Because once the page item for information passed, it only then occurred that oh, my goodness, here's a solution to some of its problem. Unfortunately, it's too late to go back. And I say it's too late only because, you know, the government's known for naying unanimous consent for going back on stuff, extending stuff, so it just defeats the purpose.

This is -- now, anybody who's been to a committee meeting has seen internal transfers. This is exactly how they can balance this out. They can do this. They do this all the time. I do mean this when I say a sup will set us free. We see supplementary appropriations constantly come targeted at specific initiatives. They come out of nowhere. The government could even special warrant the money if they felt that any employee was at risk. The moment the legislature closes, when the mace walks out the door, the government has pretty much unfettered access to a special warrant based on operational needs, etcetera, etcetera, so there is no one wouldn't be funded or paid if it was important. So these realities of access to money, it's still there.

The principle about -- the suggestion about, you know, more roads, more blah, blah, blah, that was just a principle about, you know, money could go elsewhere. I mean, we don't -- to change operational money to capital money is not really on the table here, and I think it wasn't really the issue at large. I mean, the government, don't forget, still has in the range of a \$32 million contingency fund. So it's not as if it doesn't have money to fund within. So

anybody who thinks there isn't money there, there's money there. And as a matter of fact, there's a lot of money there. So there's nothing at risk that the lights won't be on for adult learners.

I'm not singling out this Member, but, my God, I think it's right, the Member from Mackenzie Delta is right, like, the learning centres are kind of like the symptom of what we're not addressing at large. You know, he's right. We don't need any learning centres if we have a quality education that people feel that they're connecting to, like, you know, there's the solution, right? If they're getting the opportunities for good education and to tie that up so they could learn, move forward, absolutely right. But learning centres are a response to things not working.

So when I hear plans, they can be funded within, the department has -- the government has the contingency budget. Employees are not at risk. This, oh, they're paid money. No, there's plenty of money there through options. And, again, I can't stress enough, I mean, you know, there's internal transfers we see all the time. There's no reason the government can't do that and redirect it. They know what the principle and purpose is, and I'm sorry, but "trust us" is not a plan. And it's unfortunate that it had to come this way. I mean, Aurora College can run a deficit. The government -- so, I mean, they don't even need that support if they needed it.

Lastly, Madam Chair, I do want to thank all Members, even though I do want to thank Members who had a different opinion. It doesn't mean I agree, but I do respect it. It's enlightening. And I can't stress this enough, you know, as a young person I remember friendship centres as being a beacon of hope for me, you know, keeping some of us out of trouble. As a matter of fact, it probably saved us in many ways. Well, imagine community learning centres being somewhat similar that you don't have the skills to help support your family or do better. This is what this is. These are lighthouses of hope. They're beacons of hope for people. They're institutions that are key, the jobs are critical to the community. This money can be replaced. All the government would have to do is bring back a plan and say here it is, this is how much we need. So those folks who are leaning towards a no, that's all they have to do. And they can get it. Again, they could special warrant it.

So Madam Chair, there is nothing in danger other than the cold, hard, stark reality of we won't accept we're killing the program but keeping the money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Question has been called. The Member has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): All those opposed, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): All those abstaining. Eight yes, nine no. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Committee, I will now call the department summary. Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditure, total department, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$403,245,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 75-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 275-20(1): 2025-2026
MAIN ESTIMATES - DEFERRAL OF
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND EMPLOYMENT,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the main estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): The motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Question's been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? Motion's carried.

---Carried

Committee, I'll now call a break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates. We will now consider Housing Northwest Territories.

Committee, Housing Northwest Territories is included in the main estimates as information, and the totals are not voteable. We will continue to review that's estimates as we have for the previous considered departments; however, we will not vote on the totals. If Members have comments or questions, they can be raised at the appropriate time. Does the Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Yes, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Madam Chair, to my right is the president of Housing NWT, Dr. Erin Kelly, and to my left is the vice-president of finance and infrastructure, Mr. Jim Martin.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Does committee agree to forego general comments on Housing Northwest Territories?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Seeing no general comments, does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Committee, we will defer the totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with community housing services starting on page 386. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in the Housing NWT business plan, on page 36 of their business plan, there is a discussion around investment in security measures at \$250,000 over three years. I assume that's for the public housing program, which is why I bring it up here. Madam Chair, can we please get a status update on all 11 multifamily dwellings in Yellowknife and what security measures are underway. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The question around security measures with the Yellowknife public housing buildings, there's a number of buildings that are owned by Housing NWT but there's a number of buildings also leased, apartments leased by Housing NWT. So what I suggest is that I would defer this over to the president of Housing NWT, Erin Kelly.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President of Housing NWT.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. In May 2004, Housing NWT undertook security and risk assessments on 35 buildings in Yellowknife. Housing NWT continues to invest approximately \$500,000 in security measures. I don't have the information by building. My colleague Jim may be able to answer that question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Vice-president of Housing NWT.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. So as the president noted, this year we are investing \$500,000 into additional security enhancements, equipment upgrades for a number of our multi-unit buildings here in Yellowknife. And I can just -- there's a number of them. I can just quickly mention some of them here. Grayling Manor -- sorry, just a sec. So Nordic Arms, Grayling Manor, Victoria Suites, Barrier Free, and Aspen Heights. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, no, that's great to hear, and it's increasing. As the Minister knows, there are security concerns in a lot of rental units that are in my riding in Yellowknife at large, and it's good that Housing NWT is working on that particular item. I'm hoping that maybe the department or Housing NWT, I should say, could return with a detailed breakdown for Members at a later time. But I'll leave that there for now.

When it comes to the units that they rent, is there not a removal of security coverage for public housing tenants in private properties that they rent in Yellowknife? Maybe the Minister can clarify. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Madam Chair, if I can get clarification, the units that we lease?

MS. REID: Yes. Yes.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. We do lease a number of properties with Northview here in Yellowknife, and we also lease a number of units in Inuvik with Northview. With the leases here in Yellowknife, there is security provisions for those leases. In terms of the detail of those leases, I will defer that to the vice-president here, Mr. Jim Martin.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Mr. Vice-president Housing NWT.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Housing NWT continues to work very closely with our landlords, and in Yellowknife, that's primarily Northview REIT, and we do have regular meetings with senior management. And over the last few years, we do know that there's been a significant number of investments made in those leased properties for security equipment and other measures. We're also in a partnership with Northview REIT right now to invest in additional security officers basically that work, and some are actually housed in the building, and they do regularly patrol the other leased units to ensure the safety for tenants. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that. So maybe my request to the Minister could be to sort of get a fulsome picture of what the security breakdown looks like for units both owned and leased in Yellowknife. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I guess I have one final question sort of for this section while I still have time on the clock which is it's much more of a larger territorial scope question, but could Housing NWT advise as to how many new units they anticipate to enter their stock by the end of the Assembly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The president Dr. Erin Kelly is going to provide a response to that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President Kelly.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Housing NWT has delivered 59 units to date during the 20th Legislative Assembly with another 88 units in construction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thanks. That's all for now, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. Last fall during the capital budget discussions, there was an agreement to bring forward a \$15 million notional plan for NWT Housing to build new housing units, and that has -- we've been told that that's now become a -- not a notional plan but an actual \$50 million plan. So where can I find the \$50 million plan in this budget? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Talking to committee last fall about the notional plan, it was \$150 million notional plan over a three-year period, and there was discussion back and forth with committee about how housing would -- how they would design this, what the priorities would be, and there was discussion on that plan itself. Today that plan is with Housing NWT. They have presented that plan to a committee of Cabinet. There's still further discussion with that plan. It's now called an incremental plan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Sorry, can the Minister just confirm, an implementation plan? Oh, incremental plan. Okay, can I understand what that means. Because it's gone from -- sorry, I said \$50 million. It was \$150 million, but our understanding was to be \$50 million a year. That sounds incremental to me. Is it not that; is it something else? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Incremental plan meaning that we were looking at units across the Northwest Territories

based on age of the housing units and also the need, utilizing the preliminary results of our territorial housing needs assessment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. So at the beginning of the Assembly -- I think these numbers are correct, but it was going to be -- or a hundred units were funded and were in the works from the 19th Assembly's mandate. When this Assembly started, there were 148 under construction and 364 renovations planned. Are those numbers still accurate? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Martin here will provide you more information related to the commitments with the hundred-unit build. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Vice-president of Housing NWT.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The hundred new public housing units that have been implemented over the last few years, we will be expecting to complete that full delivery by the end of this fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Okay, well, I had other totals there that I was looking for clarification on, but if the Minister doesn't want to answer that, that's fine. I'm going to go back to this incremental plan.

So is it \$50 million -- sorry, is it \$150 million of new spending, or is it \$150 million of total spend -- of current spending that's just being wrapped up into an incremental plan? That's really the crux here. Are we spending more on housing or the same on housing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of NWT Housing.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are planning, and we have to plan, but we have to continue to look for federal funding for this plan. Reached out to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure Canada to talk about funding through the **FERN** pot that was announced last year by the federal government. We continue to advocate for these funds through either PT meetings or FPT meetings, and I have a meeting coming up

tomorrow, an FPT meeting. But in terms of finding the funds, these, we plan, but we, again, need to find the funds for this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: So what is the estimated or projected or desired value of this incremental plan in dollar amount? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The estimated amount is \$50 million.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: So has it gone from \$150 million notional plan to a \$50 million incremental plan, is that correct? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. \$50 million for one year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: So it would still be -- okay. So it would be 150, then, grand total for the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to be clear. There is no funding for this plan yet. We continue to request funding for this plan through the federal government and the different departments. But we do have to work and provide planning and design if -- and be prepared if there was to be anything approved by federal -- different funding pots with the federal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And just to be clear, like, I understand the Minister's intentions here and that there is a -- we're all on the same page that we want to build these homes and we want to invest more, and it's the resourcing question and a dollar question. But don't be afraid to disappoint me, right, because when you say we've got a \$50 million -- like, last year, we negotiated a \$50 million plan. And earlier this year, when we were -- well, I can't say what

we were discussing earlier because it was in-camera but earlier this year, we got different information, and now again we're back to a zero-dollar plan. And what the House has been saying is we would like you to shift resources to invest in more housing, not use what you currently have, which is zero dollars. I get that we want Ottawa to pay for this problem, and they should, but just because they should doesn't mean they will. And if I'm frustrated, it's because we're just not getting a clear answer. If this is not a priority to use our own resources to do, then stop saying you have a plan. Because what you have is a funding request. It's an unfunded plan. So if it's a costed plan, it has our own resources behind it. Even if it's a significant -- even if it's -- if it's what you're currently spending, give us that at least because we need to go back to our ridings with is how we're investing in housing. And, again, a notional plan and an incremental plan, just putting different words in front of the word plan doesn't make it so. It doesn't build a home for someone. And, you know, I'm still -- so I'm concerned about this piece because it's like shadow boxing around what's really going on here, and I just wish we had some clarity, so it wasn't so confusing. Because I feel like in year four we're finally going to be told, yeah, there was no money all along, sorry, guys. Maybe next Assembly. The rate we're going, that's exactly where we're going to end up. So be clear with us. If you don't have money behind this plan -- well, you have been clear. Thank you, Minister. We'll work with you to support this. We'll work with you on any application. But more importantly, when the Assembly -- or sorry, when Members of the Assembly keep saying shift resources towards the housing priority, the expectation is that will happen. And when you tell us, well, we have things in the works, we're planning on things, we assume that's what's happening. And now that's not what we're being told. So, of course, I'll give time for the Minister to respond. But, I guess, the fundamental question is is this government shifting its spending priorities to invest more money into housing? And let's be clear. Is the government going to shift its spending priorities to put \$50 million of housing in per year until the end of this Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Just a reminder to Members to speak to the chair when you're addressing the Minister; we have to speak through me. So Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I want to be clear, there's no money for additional housing units to be built. Nothing has been approved. But housing still has a

responsibility to plan and to plan in place if there's federal funding and if it's approved. The budget today is the budget that you're reviewing and asking questions on. You've had this for how many weeks. We've presented this to committee. We've gone through it. So there was an opportunity then as well. And perhaps President Kelly can provide you more information on what's being done over the next year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President of NWT Housing.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the capital budget provides what Housing NWT and what the GNWT funding is for housing in the Northwest Territories. We are spending our money on those things, the money that we have received.

We also, in this budget, have a supplementary internal resources investment where I think the Member is interested in how are we reinvesting some of the money that we have on the capital side, and they're all -- there are investments in that vein. The challenge is is that there's not enough money to meet the gap that we have to address the public housing gap that we have, and so the planning that we're doing is should we get the money, we would be able to be ready to have shovel-ready projects and be able to move forward with addressing that public housing gap. So yes, the corporation's money is going towards building new units, for sure. And any federal money that we're getting is also doing that, anything that we have left over for internal resources is also going towards that, and then we have this plan for how we would address the public housing gap should we get more money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Members, I just want to remind you we're on the key activity of housing services, and please keep your questions to housing services. Thank you. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: No, thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I certainly appreciate my colleague's hard work although they've pulled a bunch of questions out of what I was planning to ask, so having to switch on the fly here.

I do appreciate the department clarifying that we are currently looking at up to -- well, we're currently looking at kind of -- and I'm assuming they meant kind of approved and moving forward 147 units before the end of the term of this Assembly. What I would ask kind of to build

upon some of the comments that have already been made, you know, we had a good discussion about the \$50 million over three years -- \$150 million, I want to be clear. So I won't -- I won't go into that. But does Housing NWT or does the government in any way track total units being built across the housing spectrum? Because I am curious to know, you know, we've talked a lot in this House, and we've heard from Housing NWT, we've heard from all the different presenters to the Standing Committee on Social Development, that the housing spectrum and the housing continuum, there's a lot more to it than just public housing. So I'm curious if we're tracking total units across the housing spectrum, what's happening in the private market, what are we doing to kind of foster further development in the private market, what are IGs doing. Do we have a good picture of what is being done in the territory for housing right now? Because I know that there's a lot more happening that goes beyond the 147 units that we're building. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. A really good question and something we discussed over the last number of months was a territorial housing needs assessment, and the work that Housing NWT is doing with this territorial housing needs assessment -- because making decisions going forward, this assessment will help with those decisions. And perhaps I could ask the President Kelly to provide more insight to the territorial housing needs assessment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President Kelly, Housing NWT.

DR. ERIN KELLY: (audio) housing needs assessment, the quantitative work is complete. We're just about to finalize contracting for the qualitative work where folks will go and speak with community leaders as well as Indigenous leaders from their perspectives related to housing which will be one way that we can gain some of the information that the Member was asking for.

I would also like to add here that there's a number of agreements that we have with Indigenous governments and working groups, and part of that -- the plan with those is to be able to better understand what Indigenous governments are planning and will be adding to the housing stock as well. We are continuing to work and looking for those opportunities to build those relationships. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly don't want to belabour the point too much but do want to note that, you know, the level to which the department would be able to bring back numbers for committee to review, that would be very appreciated. I know that they probably don't have them off the top of their heads right now. But certainly, you know, one could simply take a drive around Yellowknife, count all the different units that are being built. So I would be curious if the department could kind of put together some information for us because I think it would help us get a better picture. I appreciate them bringing up the needs assessment itself. I know that -- I don't know the exact date, but I believe that the goal to get that done is spring 2025. Can the Minister give us an update on where we're going with that goal and when we can expect to see the needs assessment completed. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. With the territorial housing needs assessment, this is something that we can share with committee. But basically in the initial review -- and there's still much to be done as President Kelly noted -- the 15,000 units within the territory, 2900 are Housing NWT owned units. And of that, based on the initial assessment, 700 more units are required throughout the Northwest Territories, both private and Housing NWT. So this is just the initial assessment with that report that we can share, but President Kelly can provide more information to that, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President, Housing NWT.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one comment that the city of Yellowknife has done their own territorial -- or excuse me, housing needs assessment which will be compiled into the territory-wide housing needs assessment, so there's some information that's already completed with respect to Yellowknife.

Because of the work that we want to do -- some of -- for some, in particular small communities, we need to do quite a bit of qualitative work because the quantitative data is not where we would hope it to be. So we've extended our timelines to ensure that we can get that work done in small communities, and so we're looking at early fall of 2025 for the completion of both aspects of the territorial housing needs assessment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. And just to speak to a specific line item, another kind of part of this in the housing is spectrum and continuum, homeowner entry level and market housing programs, I note there is a reduction from 2024-2025 from -- or sorry, there's an increase. Can the department explain to us what's contained in that increase and what is going to be taking place there.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll defer to vice-president Mr. Jim Martin here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Vice-president, Housing NWT.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. That increase can be primarily explained by a year-end accounting adjustment actually related to a noncash amortization estimate. We work closely with the Office of the Auditor General at the end of the year and did a reassessment of our amortization amounts, and we had to increase that expenditure. But that's what primarily contributes to that change. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, I'm just having to go through -- I think that's -- that's it for kind of business plan related questions from me. I'll ask my specifics on the next pages. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My only question on this activity is on the per unit operating costs, we have 2900 housing units here. What is the operating monthly cost per unit? I know it fluctuates here and differs from community to community depending on items like fuel, for example, but I think historically we were in the neighbourhood of \$1,275 for the operating costs of one unit. Can the Minister explain. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The operating costs for public housing units or housing units in the Northwest Territories is \$21,000 a year. Housing NWT

spends approximately \$30 million a year just in utilities alone. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I mentioned, that's the only question I had on this activity. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Next, I have Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm following up sort of on my colleague from Range Lake, and I'm looking at the annual report from 2023-2024, the annual report as of March 31st, 2024. And it shows in there, I think, that -- if I'm correct that the housing corporation or NWT Housing had 88 -- started the year with a \$40 million surplus, ended with an \$88 million surplus, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering if that funding or any of that funding has been considered as part of the incremental plan that the Minister has spoke to. And if not, what is the plan for -- what's the plan coming in for that surplus and kind of where does it sit now, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. For that detail, I'll just ask President Kelly to provide that information to the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President Kelly.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, any of the surpluses are rolled over and used for capital ongoing. I think it's important to recognize that we have received some large amounts of funding up front from CIRNAC and CMHC, about \$135 million. What happens is that we get that money sometimes before the builds begin, so they end up getting rolled over until we're able to spend them. So our capital carryover is all allocated for capital projects that are underway or to begin next fiscal. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I assume that also includes the \$6 million in interest that the housing corporation also earned from that surplus in there, and that is then carried into the ongoing surplus.

Can the Minister then -- if that's the case and if that surplus coming into 2025 from 2024 has

been allocated, can we get a kind of list of how much of that is work in progress, Madam Chair, if we will call it, and how much of that is new builds, and what portions -- I understand it's all been allocated. Can we get the information as to what it's been allocated for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. We do have an estimated capital carry forward projects at year end, and it just outlines the different builds that are happening throughout the territory, but it also outlines the major retrofits. And we can provide this to the Member if he's interested in the information. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Minister. And we had this conversation last year. Last year, I believe we came in with a \$90 million surplus, and there was some -- a little bit of ambiguity around what that was being spent on. I think at the end of the day, it was determined that \$40 million was basically work in progress, or \$30 million I believe, Madam Chair, and \$60 million had been allocated to units going forward. It seems to me if you look back historically year after year, there's always a significant accumulated surplus with housing corp, and it seems like it's like they -- they're holding on to that money rather than spending it and, you know -- and, you know, I'd be curious to see what the plan is for that full funding and what that money's going to be spent on, Madam Chair, because, again -- and, you know, we had this debate last year, but it seems that the -- it seems like a big number for the surplus, and it doesn't always seem like it's going to be spent in a timely fashion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I'll just reiterate to the Member that we are doing our best with the money that we have. We do have a plan in place. We're rolling out different capital projects across the Northwest Territories. There's no holding back of nothing besides our operating dollars that we need to maintain within housing to meet payroll, our contractors' costs. We are asking that housing look at all builds, look at operations and maintenance, look at modernization and improvements, and advance those. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. And, yeah, just for clarity -- and the Minister may have said this, and I apologize if I didn't pick it up. So none of that surplus, then, is being considered as part of the new plan going forward for the new builds that the Member from Range Lake had discussed earlier? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. As outlined to committee in December, we did have an internal resources document that indicated where all surplus funds would go. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: No further questions at this time, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. To attempt to follow up on my colleague's line of questioning there, I understand that -- and first, is the time going to restart there? The time is ticking away.

I understand that Housing NWT needs to hold on to a minimum amount of internal resources to ensure that it manages payroll and contractor payments. But my understanding is that above and beyond that, Housing NWT has identified net financial assets that are available for reinvestment. Is the Minister able to tell us what was the total net financial assets that were available for reinvestment as of March 31st last year, 2024, and can she update us what the expected amount of net financial assets available for reinvestment might be coming up to this March 31st, 2025. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. As outlined in December with committee, \$38 million of net financial assets was provided in an internal resources document, and it outlined year 1, year 2, year 3 besides the \$10 million that we keep aside for Housing NWT's operating costs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you for that. We can establish that as of last year, there was

\$38.6 million available to be reinvested. Can the Minister confirm whether that has now all been spent and that Housing NWT is back down to the minimum amount that it needs to hold onto just, as we've said before, for payroll and contractors. Has that 38.6 sort of extra net assets that could be reinvested has it been reinvested to date? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. President Kelly will provide more information with that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President Kelly.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So every year that there's internal resources, they're reinvested. And if you look in the information item that's part of this main estimates, there is a 2025-2026 supplementary internal resource investment sheet, and it will show that \$4.772 million will be invested for 2025-2026, and then there's some notes that explain what those will be used for. So there's that plan. And every year, the internal investments are reallocated. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Housing NWT's also identified that -- so I -- so that -- it's identified that it has over 130 vacant housing units that need to be repaired and need funding for that repair. Can the Minister explain how much has been allocated so far to try to repair those 130 vacant units and if more is being allocated this coming fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. With the 130 vacant housing units throughout the Northwest Territories, there's more vacant units but many of them, we don't have the funding for to modernize or improve those units. So with 130 units that are outlined, these are in the works of being updated or upgraded but it depends on funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So if we had \$38.6 million available to reinvest last year, can the Minister tell me how much of that

was reinvested specifically in repairing vacant units? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. For that detail, I'll ask vice-president Mr. Jim Martin. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Vice-president Martin.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. We do have a line item in our main estimates. It's minor modernization and improvement line item. And that \$5 million is dedicated to dealing with preventive maintenance as well as repairs for our units. So that is the money being directed towards ensuring that the units do -- that do require repair are repaired. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister explain -- you know, the \$5 million that's been identified, it sounds like that's not nearly enough to actually do all of the repairs that would be needed. Is that amount limited because we can't find people to do the repairs? Like, is there a cap on how much we can realistically spend because we won't be able to complete the repairs, or has it just been determined that other things are more important than, you know, doing more repairs so we'll put the money somewhere else instead? Can the Minister explain, you know, why, for instance, we can't put more than \$5 million this year into repairs and improvements. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Madam Chair, for that information, I'll ask President Kelly to speak on it.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President Kelly.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there are capacity challenges in many communities, and we have had situations where proposals have gone out, projects have gone out, and we haven't had folks that have been able to -- they haven't been taken up because with the builds, with the distinctions based funding, there's more projects that are happening in more regions and communities and there's still the same number of tradespeople which we, I think can all agree, is not adequate to meet the needs that we have.

But as far as the amount there, there's a balance when creating a budget, and we've heard from other Members interested in new builds and preventative maintenance in programs for owning homes and repairing homes, and so the department looks across those and builds a budget based on what we can achieve and the interests of folks.

When we get additional funds, we look at where the need is, and we use unit condition ratings and other factors to determine where these repairs are done and need, and so that's how those numbers are put into the main estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to switch gears a little bit and point -- so, like, the line item for homeownership entry level and market housing programs.

So I know that are plans to discontinue the homeownership entry level program, and I understand that the goal when this program was started was to allow people to transition towards owning those units, and some people have been in there -- those units for a long time and never have been able to or wanted to transition to homeownership, so it was sort of decided, I guess, enough is enough and we just discontinued the program. But it sounds like there's 51 units that are being disposed of somehow. Can the Minister explain what is actually happening to those 51 units and what's happening to those who currently live in them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. So in the last year's budget, we had the same line item with these HELP units, and we're not disposing of these HELP units. We're actually counselling with the owners of these HELP units to see if they want to purchase these HELP units. But if they feel that they can't afford it or if they want to stay within that HELP unit, we look at turning it into either a market unit or a public housing unit. So they are being counselled. There is advice. Depending on financial situation, depending on the situation within the family, that would depend on them with Housing NWT providing that support in place. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you for explaining that. My understanding from some of the research we had gotten was that there is a

\$556,000 reduction in the budget which is an adjustment related to the planned disposition of the 51 units. Is that understanding incorrect, that -- is there to be a reduction associated with the discontinuation of the HELP program? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Jim Martin here will provide more information with the HELP unit disposition. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Vice-president Martin.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, as part -- a component of Housing NWT's 2025-2026 fiscal sustainability adjustments does include a recognition that we are disposing of homeownership entry level programs through the modes that the Minister mentioned, and the target for 2025-2026 is \$408,000 budget fiscal adjustment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Next, I have Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. If we're still on the page 387, public housing program. From last fiscal year, it went down, but according to the business plan, the mandate commitment says that increased housing availability for all residents by working with partners to address the gap, and the target minimum a 20 client each year and a minimum spending of \$50 million per year from housing, and to achieve this it says \$50 million per year from outside organization on housing. Can the must explain this further. The business plan on page 4.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The business plan here, President Kelly will provide more detail to it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): President Kelly.

DR. ERIN KELLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So we have spent over \$50 million the last two years. Much of that money is coming from the federal government, so that's what we're referring to in the business plan. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yeah, thank you. That's good. The reason why I asked is because in Behchoko alone, you know, I'm glad that, you know, you guys came, that, you know, Housing NWT visited the community. And there's a great need for housing, and we have, like, looking at this, 25 space each year. We have over 130 people on the waitlist and a lot of singles, and it's families, and some elders. So how are we going to achieve this for Behchoko? I know that we cannot solve all this, like you know, to accommodate 130 people, but at least building some houses. And I like what I see now that there's a -- you're partnering, you know, with Tlicho investment corporations and -- you know, I know that some of these can be done through partnership and so I just -- how are we going to do this for Tlicho region, especially in Behchoko when there's -- I mean, all the communities in Tlicho communities need houses. We have some waitlists but not as big as Behchoko alone, over 100 people on the waitlist. And, yeah, so how are we going to take care of that? Is there a plan in place from the Housing NWT to take care of Behchoko housing waitlist? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of NWT Housing.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. An enormous task, considering Behchoko has 135 people on the waitlist -- 135 families on the waitlist. That's why this territorial housing needs assessment is so important, because we look at everything that we have but we also look at the quality of housing that we have. That's why unit condition ratings are so important is we make decisions, planning decisions, based on unit condition ratings and ages of the housing unit. We have over 356 housing units that are 50 years plus in the Northwest Territories. Some in Behchoko, but many in other communities as well. So these decisions -- and this was right back to 2017, there was a housing needs assessment report done then, and it outlined \$1 billion over a 20-year period for housing, so back in 2017. But I'll tell you the 19th Assembly was the first Assembly in 20 years that put any investment into housing, and the 20th Assembly continues to invest into housing. So there has been that restart of investing into housing and community. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Homeownership entry level and market housing program, I see here -- I mean, it's not on this list but it was e-mailed to us for the North Slave -- I mean, for Tlicho region, you know, there's -- since 2007, for Tlicho region,

Behchoko had HELP program, home improvement or home entry level program. There were four in 2007, two in Behchoko and two in Gameti, HELP applications; 12 in Tlicho region; and another one occupied HELP units, there's 27 in Tlicho region. So I would like to ask the Minister how many of these are transfer, the one that's occupied, transferred to the homeowner as a homeowner program?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have that level of detail but I can provide it to the Member. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. Well, I'll send her an email on this after just so that I can get the number of how many in my region are successfully -- or were successfully transferred to homeowner. And you met some of the people, the potential that are still in the HELP program, and they want the unit to be transferred over to them so that they can start doing their own construction, fix up the unit that they have resided in for many years under the HELP program. And so the HELP -- approve HELP application, 12 in Tlicho region, but it doesn't say the year. So I want to ask the Minister -- maybe she might not have the numbers, but I can email her to see how many of these HELP application program are still paying the mortgage within the Tlicho region. There's 12 in Tlicho region.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Honestly, I really appreciate these questions but this level of detail is, like, very down, you know, nitty-gritty detail that we can provide but it would take some work to provide that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. I would like to get that information too as well. Because I know there's a lot of people that are asking, and there's some market rental, and you've seen that. And then a lot of people are living in some of those old units from the '70s and early '80s. They would like to become a homeowner or -- of those units.

So you said -- so you're transferring some of the HELP program to people under the HELP program. So I just wanted to ask the Minister if

they can explain how are they determining the price of these units, especially in the small community where we do not have market to buy and sell the houses just like other -- in a larger regional centre. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Martin here can provide more information on how we determine the price for the HELP units in the Tlicho region. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Vice-president Martin.

MR. JIM MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The valuation for the HELP units is based on net book value. That's the remaining value of the asset for accounting purposes. And that is reflected in the agreement with the client. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you for that information because I talked to some of the clients, and I know that, you know, some of them have lived in the unit for over ten years. Some, they like the agreement that they got from the Housing NWT which means that it was just transferred to them at no cost. So I know a lot of them would like to see that being carried forward. It does -- a lot of those units do need a lot of repair. So I would like to see that respected in Tlicho region and other region as well too. So not at a great cost because there's no market to buy and sell houses in small communities. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Understandably that, especially in small communities, remote communities, housing costs and looking at something that's agreeable both for the client and Housing NWT, we work with the client and try to get the -- try to provide them the best counsel. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Yakeleya): No further questions. I'll call on the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Report of Committee of the Whole. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 12 and Tabled Document 275-20(1) and would like to report progress with one motion carried. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Deh Cho. Can I have a seconder, please? Member from Mackenzie Delta. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion 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): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Government Operations will be meeting at the rise of House.

Orders of the day for Thursday, February 27th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Motions
 - Motion 47-20(1), State of Emergency for Humanitarian Reasons for Norman Wells
5. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 530-20(1), Senior Envoy to Government of Canada
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions

9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
 - Written Question 13-20(1), Physician Staffing
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 Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 12, Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act
23. Orders of the Day

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 27th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Unedited Hansard