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**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

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**20<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**HANSARD**

**Wednesday, March 12, 2025**

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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

**This is an unedited transcript.**

**Please send corrections to Hansard Editor: [kate\\_covello@ntassembly.ca](mailto:kate_covello@ntassembly.ca)**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Nahendeh)

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Unedited Hansard

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**
**Wednesday, March 12, 2025**
**Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Jay Macdonald, Hon. Vince McKay, Mr. Nerysoo, Mr. McNeely, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, 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 or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

**SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):**

Please be seated. Ministers' statements.  
Minister of Justice.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 117-20(1):  
BOBBI HAMILTON AWARD

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to announce the establishment of the Bobbi Hamilton Memorial Award for Outstanding Community Achievement. The Department of Justice is establishing this award to recognize individuals who demonstrate the principles that Bobbi embraced in her daily life.

Bobbi Hamilton was a dedicated and respected community justice coordinator in Hay River for 15 years during which time she worked with hundreds of youths and adults in the community justice program. Sadly, Bobbi passed in November last year. She leaves a legacy of championing restorative justice, helping others, and making her community a better place to live.

Bobbi said that what she loved most about her job as a community justice coordinator was helping others make positive choices, and she had a knack for it. All it takes is one person to help somebody change the course of their life, and Bobbi was that one person for many of the clients she worked with. She shared a story about a youth who was in trouble with the law and making their way through the community justice program's restorative justice process. The youth successfully completed the program, but they kept coming back to Bobbi's office, not because they were in trouble again but just to talk or hang out and do homework. The youth eventually went on to university but continued to visit Bobbi years later. I don't think that was unusual for Bobbi. That is the kind of person she was. The first time you met her, you would swear you had been friends for years.

Outside of work, Bobbi was a tireless volunteer in her community and dedicated time to her church, minor and old-timer hockey, youth sporting events, and wherever else she was needed. She cared deeply about her community, and we cared deeply for her. It is no surprise that the Department of Justice chose to name the award for Outstanding Community Achievement after Bobbi Hamilton. The award is open to individuals working in the areas of restorative justice and survivor supports, and those who make contributions to community safety. Considerations include:

- Years of service;
- Work promoting peaceful conflict resolution and healing between offenders, victims, families and the community; and,
- Leadership in community justice and collaboration with community partners, and organizations.

The Bobbi Hamilton Award for Outstanding Community Achievement will be open for nominations for next year. It will be awarded at the Annual Community Justice Symposium, and the winner will be offered the opportunity to attend the National Restorative Justice Symposium that takes place in a different location across Canada each year.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice is excited to honour Bobbi Hamilton's legacy with this award and recognize others who exemplify her dedication and commitment to community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Ministers' statements. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 118-20(1):  
CELEBRATING RENDEZ-VOUS DE LA  
FRANCOPHONIE

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Monsieur le President, [Translation] **INSERT\*** [Translation Ends] Merci.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister for Education, Culture and Employment. Ministers' statements.

Before we go on to the next one, I forgot to thank Bertha Catholique for the opening prayer, so I'd like to thank her for doing that in her language.

Oral -- oh, got you all excited. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 595-20(1): RESPITE CARE AND SUPPORTS FOR SENIORS WITH DEMENTIA

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, today I want to pick up the ball on advocacy that was ongoing in the last two assemblies around reestablishing an adult day program for seniors with dementia. Many seniors at some stage of Alzheimer's or dementia want to continue living at home supported by a partner or family members, and we should be respectful of our elders' wishes. It also makes economic sense to support families to continue caring for their loved ones at home. It costs the territory much more to move elders into a long-term care facility. But many of us know firsthand how hard it is to care for a family member with dementia. I know of a woman who could not leave her husband alone even for a short time as he gets lost even in their own home. A senior with dementia may be physically capable but need constant supervision in case they start operating an appliance or a vehicle in an unsafe way because they're confused. Constant supervision and reminders are exhausting. Caregivers need real respite, and a few hours a week of home care cannot give them that.

Now up until 2016, Avens here in Yellowknife operated an adult day program. It was a supervised program that seniors with dementia could attend in a group setting, and it opened up freedom for the spouse or caregiver to be able to leave the house and do errands, socialize with friends, or simply put their feet up in their own home and have a cup of tea. When that program closed, the health authority attempted unsuccessfully through an RFP process to have another third party operate the adult day program. While organizations such as the Yellowknife Seniors' Society have been working and advocating to find a way for the program to resume, the budget that was laid out in the RFP was totally unrealistic compared to the actual costs of safely running the program. But perhaps now there is a new opportunity to make this work.

The health authority has just opened up a brand new long-term care facility in the Liwego'ati Building with trained staff, including recreation therapists running day programs for the residents. Now, could day programs be opened up to drop-in clients as well to allow seniors living at home to join the programs? Even just a few times per week. That could be a huge help for the caregivers and families who are struggling to manage at home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 596-20(1): JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, Jordan's Principle is a federal program that distributes billions of dollars nationwide annually to raise the standard of living for First Nations children. There is no funding cap. The program is on demand and available to First Nations' families, their service providers, and their community governments, so long as the application provided to Indigenous Services Canada identifies the needs of First Nations children which are not currently met or up to the standard enjoyed by their non-Indigenous peers. Therefore, every year a large portion of what the federal government distributes to northern First Nations children through Jordan's Principle goes to our territory's schools. Here in Yellowknife, school boards receive millions of dollars to support First Nations youth. For example, last year YK1 received more money from Jordan's Principle than it did from taxpayers, to the tune of more than \$6 million of their annual budget.

These funds are vital for our schools, Mr. Speaker, to hire crucial support staff. However, last month, CBC reported 60 percent of support assistants were paid -- or sorry, and last month CBC reported 60 percent of support assistants were paid for through Jordan's Principle funding. And this can include everything from classroom assistants to speech-language pathologists. Recently, however, Mr. Speaker, Indigenous Services Canada has been struggling with such a massive backlog of Jordan's Principle applications the resulting delays have become so severe to schools across Canada that they're now cutting services due to that uncertainty. Now to make matters worse, the federal government is narrowing the eligibility criteria for Jordan's Principle applications, including the eligibility for school-related applications.

These changes will likely have a serious impact on education in the North, especially if assistant positions are reduced or cut entirely. I know that the Minister is aware of these changes but working families need to know that once the impact on our schools become clear, we will as a government advocate to prevent these cuts from taking place. If those efforts are not successful, then the Minister has no choice but to adjust school funding to compensate appropriately otherwise this will be yet another devastating blow to education for Indigenous children in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 597-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMIC  
ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGIES

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. GNWT strategies for federal engagements. I want to discuss today the Northwest Territories economic strategy and preparedness.

Mr. Speaker, in February, the Premier announced the new position of senior envoy to the Government of Canada with a presence in both Yellowknife and Ottawa. I believe this position will strengthen our engagements and relationships, but there must be clear objectives.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that the Government of the Northwest Territories needs and depends largely on federal funding to advance its infrastructure agenda. We have heard that the federal Arctic foreign policy would lead to increased defence spending and access to capital. The Premier recently called for strategic investment writing in the media that the territory is key to securing Canada's critical minerals future and that the federal government needs to ensure northern development is a national priority. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT should use this envoy position to effectively engage the federal government in an aggressive way.

We must also strengthen position, relationships, on federal engagements on staffing and conventions to access funds for sovereignty, Arctic security, NATO defence obligations, while developing the potential of our critical minerals' potential and reducing the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, the country's resources and security are in the global spotlight right now. It is time to ensure sustainable economic growth and strengthen Arctic sovereignty, but we also

need a clear picture in this Assembly of how we will do that going forward. I cannot emphasize enough the crucial developments of building relationships with our federal counterparts particularly during the tariff calamity. Later I will have questions for the Premier. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 598-20(1):  
ELDER ABUSE

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about elder abuse. Mr. Speaker, too often elders are mistreated by the people responsible for their care. Rates of elder abuse increased during the pandemic. There were national reports of residents in care who had not been bathed in weeks, lack of pain treatment, and little or no turning of patients, and people going hungry. Now, there's an urgent need to improve the lives of elders in the healthcare system and at home across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, elders are our teachers. They carry traditional knowledge that we need to learn from. We must care for them. Some of our elders are living from feast to famine, surviving off their pension only to find themselves abandoned once it's gone. Mr. Speaker, I've heard about people pressuring elders for pension cheque money. It's like they are trapped, and their money belongs to others. There's no one to offer a helping hand or shovel snow, do the shopping, or simply sit and eat with them.

Mr. Speaker, in communities some people are speaking out, and in my riding fear of speaking out keeps people from addressing these problems. Drugs have made their way into our communities, and users are taking advantage of the elders. Mr. Speaker, the Dene Nation has a campaign for the prevention of abuse and family violence, but I want to know how the Department of Health and Social Services will support our communities to ensure elders are safe, respected, and cared for. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 599-20(1):  
2025 MARINE TRANSPORTATION  
SERVICES SEASON

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, spring is around the corner. The sun

is shining, and we all know that means things will soon start to melt. Mr. Speaker, that also means that communities around the North are busy getting ready for their yearly orders, for their barging orders again. Mr. Speaker, we're looking at construction materials, equipment, household items, vehicles, and, of course importantly, most importantly, the annual retail restocking in the coastal communities.

Mr. Speaker, given the disaster we looked at last year in Norman Wells and with the low water, I would hope that right now the department's looking at cutoff dates so to ensure that construction companies and Indigenous governments and, indeed, just residents in the communities can know, and it's communicated to them, those dates they can get their orders in, Mr. Speaker, and ensure that they get their materials in a timely fashion. I know, Mr. Speaker, that we'd be looking at -- I would hope that we're monitoring the water levels this year, we're looking at the trucking routes, considering road bans, and all the things that are important to this important shipping season, Mr. Speaker. So I will have some questions for the Minister of Infrastructure on what we're doing this year to prep for hopefully a much more successful barging season. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 600-20(1):  
DELIVERY OF HEALTHCARE IN TLICHO  
COMMUNITIES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Delivery of health care in the Tlicho region. Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss how primary healthcare reform will impact small communities.

Most small communities have no permanent doctors. One report noted that NWT is funded for 80.7 full-time equivalent doctors but as of September 2024, there were only 50 physicians registered, not including locums. According to the territorial medical director, health managers are asking whether residents in small communities are getting the same care they could expect if they were in Yellowknife or Inuvik or down south.

Mr. Speaker, the main issues for small communities are continuation of care, limited access, and a shortage of doctors, nurses, and technicians.

Historically, Mr. Speaker, Tlicho region had its own hospital and staff, the Faraud Hospital in Behchoko, which operated from 1936 until its

closure in 1974. Today most Tlicho people travel to Yellowknife for health care.

Mr. Speaker, community health centres are meant to provide accessible primary care services to small communities. Having hundreds of people from Tlicho region use primary care in Yellowknife is not helping the system. The Tlicho community services agency manages health, wellness, and education services in Behchoko, Gameti, Wekweeti, and Whati. With more resources, Mr. Speaker, more nurses and doctors, could be sent out to communities. Imagine being able to get a simple blood test done in a community health centre.

Mr. Speaker NTHSSA is in the process of gathering information to better understand how to reform primary care. They need to put small communities first. I will have question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 601-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LITERACY  
COUNCIL PROGRAMS, CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell a story today about some excitement, some sadness, and hopefully opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I was speaking with the NWT Literacy Council about their Skills 4 Success. So here's some of the excitement. They have created a program, they work with four Tlicho communities, they work in your riding, Mr. Speaker, in Fort Simpson and even in the -- Mr. Nerysoo's running of the Fort McPherson, in Aklavik, in those ridings. Mr. Speaker, at least seven community -- they work out of seven community learning centres. They create -- they have agreements with some college staff. They create educational and work experience opportunities, and they get results, Mr. Speaker, because they have people in literacy programs that teach them skills, on-the-land training, resume writing, and even on the job experience. And some of these people, I'll say in Fort Simpson it says, everyone got a job. Guess what? In Fort McPherson, you got it, everyone that took the program got a job, Mr. Speaker. What's being attacked here?

Now the sadness as we now tremble down to the next part of the plot. We have Aurora College butchering away and throwing away CLCs because if you read the 2025 and 2028



mandate, they have nothing for literacy, nothing for adult literacy. Shame. So who's on attack? But don't worry. There's an opportunity. Education's on attack. Oh, I will tell you more. And thank you for asking, Mr. Speaker.

Well, just before I get to that, I'll tell you there is a program in Yellowknife. It's called literacy outreach. It's in Yellowknife. It's in Fort Smith. And believe it or not, it's in Inuvik. And it's helping Northerners get literacy all through the community learning centres.

So here's your opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I promise, and I know everyone here's at the edge of their seats waiting what's next, what's next. I think even the Member for -- Member Nerysoo is crying over there, he can't wait with excitement. The NWT Literacy Council wants to be the partner. They say themselves they can help save community learning. They can help educate adults, young people who have given up on school where there's no opportunity or chance to get back into the education system who can become productive citizens. Mr. Speaker, don't let this story end like a tragedy. Mr. Speaker, today is an opportunity. We have the NWT Literacy Council who will come to help save Northerners. Let's give them that chance, Mr. Speaker. And I'll have questions later today for the honourable Minister of education. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 602-20(1):  
JAMES WILLIAMS, REGIONAL 2024 TOM  
LONGBOAT AWARD RECIPIENT

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, the Tom Longboat Award was established in 1951 to recognize Indigenous athletes for their outstanding contributions to sport in Canada. The awards have been given out every year since its inauguration. It remains the longest standing and one of the most prestigious awards for Indigenous athletes in the country. Each province and territory is given the opportunity to name one man and one woman recipient of the regional Tom Longboat Award.

I would like to congratulate both James Williams and Shakita Jensen for receiving this year's award. It is a great honour to see both received this recognition. Today, I would like to recognize one of the award winners, Mr. James Williams. As part of the awards, they were able to bring a family member to the ceremony. He had the pleasure to share the evening with his son Jimmy where he received the award at the National Indigenous Sports Awards Gala, hosted by Aboriginal Sports Circle Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

I first met James in Fort Simpson at a ball tournament where he was a little bitty baby in his mom's arms. He was always involved in sports. I can tell you this young man has lived in Fort Simpson, Inuvik, and now in Yellowknife. As well, he has lived in southern Canada for a bit of time playing hockey. He is still active in sports, most notably hockey and Arctic sports at a very high level. It is amazing that even at the young age of 32, he still competes in Arctic sports internationally against younger athletes and is still being successful.

As you are aware, Arctic sports is about competing against yourself and helping others regardless of the territory, providence, state, or country you represent. In the true meaning of sport, I have witnessed this young man help other competitors achieve their best. As well, he is very big on giving back to the sports world. I noticed that he won the award by a Facebook post. He did a great job and I would like to share it here with you here today. Unfortunately, with limited time, I would like it deemed as read and printed in the Hansard.

James Williams Post:

What an honour to be a part of such an amazing event. Today I had the pleasure to share a night with my son Jimmy at the national Indigenous Sports Awards Gala, hosted by Aboriginal Sports Circle Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

The Northwest Territories was represented well with myself and Shakita Jensen being awarded with Regional Tom Longboat Awards for our respected sports, and Jacob Klengenber awarded with the national Indigenous Coaching Award.

Meeting new people and seeing familiar faces again all evening was a great time spent. I can't thank Indigenous Sports Circle NWT enough for everything they do for not only myself as an athlete, but for the youth across the Territory. Continuing to provide opportunities to promote, pass along, and demonstrate our cultural games. Also giving them other opportunities to excel in other sports on many platforms across the nation.

Quyananni to my family - Mom Pamela Williams for always believing in me in all my sports I have competed in, from Hockey, MMA, Arctic Sports; even still at the age of 32 and competing in our games against 'kids' (18-20's), no matter what you were/are always in my corner. Aurora & Byron Kotokak for your continued support and helping me to be the person I am today. My dad up in Paradise, I felt him here with me accepting my award, I still wanna just call him and hear him say "congratulations, I'm proud of you, and I already knew that", (he always had a

connection somewhere that he'd find stuff out before I did). My uncle Donald Kuptana Jr. For first introducing me to the Northern Games and becoming my coach for the games ever since. Instilling in me that "nothing but Good Things come from playing our games" you and Kyle used to bring me along to demonstrate in the early 2000's, showing the importance of being a good demonstrator and showing proper techniques. My mother-in-law and father-in-law Patrice and Steve O'Hara for all of their love, help, and support throughout the years. Everything you do that helps us with our kiddos, or with Linna and myself, especially if it's when I'm away, it goes along ways.

Finally, my wife and children Linna Williams, Jimmy, Jane, and Honey for allowing me to still continue to do what I do that makes me feel still young and electric. Sacrificing time to train for events and time away for competitions. You changed my life and make myself strive to be a better person every day.

I feel lucky, grateful, and happy to be where I am today, and I have you all to thank. To have every single one of you on my team, is truly a gift.

Again, congratulations James and Shakita for a job well done in representing the Northwest Territories.

Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 603-20(1):  
RECREATION AND SKILLS PROGRAMMING  
IN TU NEDHE-WIILIDEH COMMUNITIES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, my communities of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh are facing challenges on the scale they never experienced before. These challenges include serious increase in criminal activity, drug use, and mental illness, which are affecting especially our youth. As important as it is to provide our youth easier access to addiction support and keep the streets safer through increased RCMP resources, I am afraid that these solutions are only addressing the symptoms and not the cause of the problem. What my communities need to prevent our youth from falling into the trap of addictions in the first place is a proper recreation and skill programming that can enrich their lives and open doors of opportunities for them to pursue their dreams or practice their culture.

Recently, my community have lost recreation coordinator positions which were responsible for providing youth and sports with recreation programming. Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution, in particular, are left with great recreation facilities

but have no funding from MACA to provide maintenance, staffing, and programming. Instead, the First Nations are responsible, and they can't always keep these facilities staff and operating with all these services for the youth.

The youth are looking for safe, healthy, and active programming. My communities are also coming to me with creative proposals to establish local youth advocates who are skilled navigating the services different departments have to offer and resourceful in the opportunities youth can access, not just sports related but opportunities for large cultural revitalization, skill development, and career counselling. We need to reverse the trend of closing services in small communities and empower community leaders because they know what the youth in their communities need.

I look forward to asking the Minister responsible for these services about the ideas later today so I can return to my communities after session and start working with them to bring forward exciting new proposals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 604-20(1):  
EULOGY FOR EVELYN PERRY

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Evelyn Georgina Ross Perry, Tetlit Gwich'in member of our community, was a loving mom, cherished friend, beacon of love in all our loves. Evelyn's warmth and compassion touched everyone she met but it was her role as a \*\* and great \*\* that she truly shined. Evelyn was born on November 16th, 1946 and was the second oldest daughter of the late \*\* Ross and was traditionally and lovingly raised by her grandmother, the late Sarah Peter and great uncle the late Roddy Peter.

She spoke fluently in her Gwich'in language and practiced her Gwich'in culture and was a good cook, a licensed fur seamstress, everything but macrame, she would say, and talented beader and embroiderer. And, of course, good storyteller. Evelyn loved life and had the biggest heart of anyone. She loved karaoke, spending time with her family and many friends. When Evelyn was home, she enjoyed participating in community events and loved the Midway Lake Music Festival where she was her true Gwich'in self. Evelyn was our biggest supporter in faith, culture, and language traditions.

She later went to business school in Toronto. Later on Evelyn taught the Gwich'in language

in the schools around the Delta. For the past 13 years, she was the radio announcer for the Gwich'in language program for CKLB in Yellowknife. She wanted to be closer to her children and grandchildren, so she moved to Edmonton. As the announcer for the Gwich'in language program CKLB Radio not allowed her to broadcast from Edmonton. She always said she would work until she was 80, and she almost made it.

Evelyn lived a full vibrant life and was enjoying life, enjoying living in Edmonton where she had her sister Sarah and nephew Franklin, now deceased, niece Jenna, her son Jace, her daughter Mia nearby, as well as her daughter Georgina, granddaughter Jade, and great granddaughter Violet. She loved it when she had visits with her other granddaughter Joelyn and great granddaughter Adriana. She loved being part of four generations. She was a constant visitor and brought great joy to her auntie Bertha Carruthers and her brother James Thompson. She had many relatives, and she treasured all of them.

Jesus took our dearest mother, sister, auntie, grandmother, and great grandmother, and friend by the hand and led her home on Sunday, January 26th, 2025. Her kindness and wisdom will be remembered by many, and she lived life to the fullest without regrets and showed us the importance of friendship and respect. The Creator has gained a formidable angel. Until we meet again, rest easy with our ancestors and loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add that Evelyn was the interpreter here at the Legislative Assembly, and today her two nieces Karen and Evelyn carry on that tradition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Our condolences go out to the family.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nunakput.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize my nephew James Williams. He's in the gallery today; I don't often get family members here, so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize a hunter and trapper and a painter, a contractor for about 40 years, originally from Fort Chipewyan, Alberta,

lives in Fort Smith, but he's retired and living here in Yellowknife. I would like to welcome \*\* Marie, a well-respected elder and a good friend of mine. Also, I want to recognize James Williams as well in the back. I want to say welcome here as well. Mahsi.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Dave Wasylciw. He is the YK1 board chair here in Yellowknife and a member of the Range Lake constituency. Welcome, Dave.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the beauty of going last as you get to repeat some people. But I'd like to say a big hello to constituent James William; powerhouse of an athlete, powerhouse of a parent, powerhouse of a coach, and powerhouse of a chair, David Wasylciw, who is the chair of the Yellowknife Education District No. 1, so we get to spend some good time together. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Kam Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. It's my turn to embarrass James a little bit. But welcome to the Assembly, James. I greatly appreciate all that you've done for sports and the caribou out there as well. So thank you very much for being here today to allow me the honour of doing your Member's statement. Welcome to our Assembly.

Colleagues, if we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your House. Again, I'd like to thank you very much for giving us the honour to represent the people of the Northwest Territories. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to have people in the gallery. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 636-20(1):  
CLOSURE OF COMMUNITY LEARNING  
CENTRES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK  
WITH THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LITERACY COUNCIL

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today I talked about some challenges through the CLC and community outreach program through literacy. I'm going to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and

Employment that knowing that there's going to be some significant change-ups and noting that the mandate of Aurora College no longer notes -- or maybe never have noted adult literacy, is she willing to engage with partners like the NWT Literacy Council in order to save these programs that are not only needed in the communities but in our larger centres, such as Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Fort Smith. 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, this is most definitely an easy commitment because I've previously made it to the Member for Yellowknife North. Absolutely. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear it because I was speaking to the council and we're concerned about the opportunities. Can the Minister -- would the Minister be willing to lean into the Aurora College to ensure that any of the CLC money that could have gone to these communities could be partnered with, specifically, the NWT Literacy Council because they don't have that perspective. So that last commitment was working together, well, yeah, that's great, but can we look at getting Aurora College to work directly with the literacy council to save the community learning centre projects. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've previously shared with the House, I cannot direct the operations of Aurora College. That would be seen as interference, and I'm prohibited from doing so under the Aurora College's Act. But the commitment that I have made is that, first of all, to acknowledge that this is an issue that needs to be reviewed and that there are other parties within the Northwest Territories who want to be involved in some of this work which is very promising and very good. And so as the Minister of education, I have committed to following up on these programs, following up with communities, and ensuring that at the end of the day we're talking to the partners that want to be involved in this project. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing prohibiting the Minister from inquiring with the board chair and the president and maybe the board overall about saying, here is a partner willing to meet the needs of the

communities, Mr. Speaker, and we would -- and that includes even the larger communities. So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to engage in this conversation especially because this House is the funder. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly always happy to have conversations, always happy to pass along the messages from the House, and certainly very interested in learning what the future of literacy programming looks like in the territory and working very hard on that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 637-20(1):  
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES  
2025 SEASON

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my Member's statement, my first question for the Minister of Infrastructure is around the sailing dates and, importantly, has the department now, given the analysis of what happened last year, are they looking at sailing dates and, as importantly, communicating those dates out to the residents of the communities that will be ordering the goods and services for the barge? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sailing dates and specifically cargo cutoff dates are typically communicated a little later in the spring as we're still waiting to see what the water levels might look like as we get closer into the spring dates.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to say, that we have new director other at MTS, and the director was able to use the opportunity of NWTAC to make some connections and good connections with communities so that when we are able to communicate and as we're able to communicate, we're doing that in an effective way. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that. Yes, and, you know, earlier the better when it comes to getting those dates out for sure. But I appreciate that they're are factors in that.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke in previous Member statements about the need to maybe look at logistically looking at Inuvik and/or Tuk or both kind of ramping them up a little more given that the difficulty we're having getting through the

ramparts and sailing now and to maybe do some of that barging from Inuvik or Tuk all the way up to Fort Good Hope and certainly the coastal communities. Is that something that the marine transportation services are looking at to kind of building up some of that infrastructure this year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are no plans at the moment to significantly modify the infrastructure that's up in the Beaufort Delta region. However, I can say that some of the -- there was a tug and a barge -- barges left up in Inuvik back in 2024 so that they are ready -- more ready and more able to move quickly as soon the waters are navigable. Obviously still hoping that this year's water levels come back and that we're not facing quite the same level of challenges next year but did take those steps to say that we are positioned so that at early parts of the season when, hopefully, things are easier to navigate that we'll be able to do so. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you for that. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. So it's my assumption, then -- and I know one shouldn't assume -- that the majority of the goods and services that are going to be transported into the coastal communities and the Inuvialuit settlement region will, indeed, look to be transported via truck to Inuvik and/or Tuk for those hubs to get that product into the coastal communities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Inuvik Boot Lake, I got a little note given to me, please remember to slow down a little bit for our translators. Please and thank you. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so last year we were able to see successful delivery using -- in some cases coming up and around the top and utilizing Tuktoyaktuk as a delivery starting point as well as relying on the Dempster Highway. Obviously, there are challenges with both of those routes, Mr. Speaker, but we certainly were able to use those over the last couple of years and have always learned lessons to help improve it. So now I don't want to say that that's for sure the only option this year; we are still hopeful. MTS monitors water levels. We work with ECC's hydrology team about water levels, and the word's not final yet that the situation is unnavigable. So, again, for the moment, we're sort of keeping an eye on things. We've made plans to go in whichever direction we need to, and as with the last couple years, we'll be able

to respond once the water levels are more clear. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 638-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMIC  
ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGIES

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my statement, my questions are a follow-up and directed to the Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has said the territory is in discussions with the federal government to push for tangible action like competitive mining incentives and a strong federal partnership. What work is the senior envoy doing to support the economic mandate of the Assembly at these discussions? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt that the focus these days is on the economy, and that's across Canada. You know, because we're facing a threat from an external actor who is really threatening our economic stability and viability of our country. So the economy is going to loom large with the role of the senior envoy. And the purpose of this role is to have a connection with Ottawa so that we can move things along. There's big projects that we can't do ourselves here in the Northwest Territories. Things like the Mackenzie Valley Highway, we'll definitely need federal support for that. The Taltson Hydro Expansion, we'll need federal support for that. And so it's ensuring that we have those touch points with our federal counterparts. There's also things like the North of 60 mineral exploration tax credit that we have been pushing. And that's another thing, that we can't do that, but the federal government can do that, though. You know, there's also the opportunity to meet with industry. Industry is always in and out of Ottawa lobbying, and there's opportunities for the envoy to have those types of meetings with industry and discuss what's going on in the territory, and to support Indigenous governments in their economic -- their pursuit of economic opportunities that involve Ottawa. And so there's a number of Indigenous governments in the territory with great relationships in Ottawa, know how to get into a Minister's office, a federal Minister's office, but we have a number of Indigenous governments that don't have settled claims, don't have that level of capacity or integration with Ottawa, and the envoy will be able to help them as well. And if we help an Indigenous -- if we support an Indigenous

government to advance their economic opportunities and the economy in their region, that helps the entire territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Premier for that clarification.

My second question, can the Premier explain the transparency measures and the process for how the work of the envoy to the Government of Canada will be reported back to the House. Mahsi.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, I'm always here in the House to answer questions, so that's a transparency method that works across government. But the results are going to be -- or sorry, the accountability is going to be in the results. I hope to be able to show this House and show Members that, with the support of the envoy and the entire GNWT, we're actually getting things done. And so I don't have -- you know, I don't have a framework to parse out, you know, what percentage of that success is attributable to this role. But the fact is that, you know, I am here to be held to account for the actions of the government and for my actions as Minister, and so that's always an option for Members. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank to the Premier for the explanation for that previous question.

My last question, can the Premier explain the mandate of the envoy position and specifically say whether this will be a permanent position within the Premier's office or just temporarily support head of the federal election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the idea behind the envoy is to have a dedicated, proactive, and strategic link between the political offices in Ottawa and the political offices here in the Northwest Territories. That's what's often needed to get things moving. And as to whether or not the position is permanent, well nothing in politics is permanent, so I can't speak for the future of the position past this government. And even during the life of this government, we'll see things work. I think too often the government will make a decision and then stick with it whether or not it's working. I'm happy to see how things work and adjust as needed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 639-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BORROWING  
LIMIT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY  
POLICY

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Finance. So on March 3rd, the GNWT received an increase to the federally-imposed debt limit from 1.8 to \$3.1 billion. Can the Minister explain if the extent of such a large increase to the borrowing limit is only to respond to expenditure shocks like climate disaster impacts? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, no, that's not the only reason. The situation we faced over the last several years of climate impacts and fiscal challenges has put us in a situation where the significant sized operating surpluses that we've been managing to create for ourselves, rather than having those available to reinvest or to cushion us, are winding up being used for those purposes and so that means that we then take on more debt to fund operations and to fund our investment and capital. So looking, then, over the next few years and, frankly, seeing, you know, what is happening and what may be coming over the next few years, whether it's climate change or other geopolitical risks, puts us in a situation that to continue to ensure that we have a borrowing room available to us and what that borrowing is likely to be required us to go and seek a borrowing limit increase. Obviously, we were coming up right close to what that borrowing limit would be. The fiscal responsibility policy for us created an internal amount or an internal threshold where if we hit it, we would -- that would trigger our own internal obligation to go and ask. So between those two factors, Mr. Speaker, that's what led to the request. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister consider revising the fiscal responsibility policy so that the Assembly can invest in discrete targeted ways to alleviate some of the social issues we have collectively prioritized? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fiscal responsibility policy puts up some guardrails around how we take on debt and for our debt management. But -- and while that's obviously something I'm happy to talk about that, and it's important to maintain those guardrails, we want to be in a situation where we're utilizing our debt ideally to invest in things that benefit future generations

since those would be the generations that would be ultimately be paying off debts whereas operational expenditures, programs and services of today, ideally are funded by the operational budgets that we have today. So, you know, Mr. Speaker, there's no reason that this Assembly and that the government can't continue to make choices around operations and spending. The fiscal responsibility policy tries to simply put some guardrails around when we take on the debt to do the things that we need to do as a government. But, again, shouldn't create any kind of mental or political barriers to ensuring that we're meeting the responsibilities of the Assembly. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was reminded by a constituent before this session that in the 1990s, the federal government decided to make reductions on the health and social transfer payments. Such a situation doesn't seem impossible now. So, bluntly, the TFF and equalization payments could be on the chopping block in a new government. Can the Minister broadly explain the GNWT's approach to TFF negotiations which are ongoing and upcoming and what she hopes to see. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I obviously have not a whole lot of control over what a new federal government may or may not do to funding levels that support all three territories and to, frankly, 40 percent of Canada's land mass. Certainly, with the current geopolitical climate would certainly hope that Ottawa recognizes the importance of investing in 40 percent of Canada's land mass as a statement about Arctic sovereignty, as a statement about Arctic security. The territorial formula financing approach for us comes up due in 2029, but we are engaging with the other two territories. We want to work together in terms of ensuring that when one of -- that as we all move forward, that we're moving forward understanding, you know, what each one may be asking or how we want to approach this. And what I can say lastly, Mr. Speaker, with respect to what we're doing today, we are re-examining the level of funding that we receive, the kinds of inputs that go into the formula that Ottawa then utilizes to determine the amount, and to really look at whether or not some of the inputs that are there and some of what the, you know, considerations that are given have actually kept pace with the reality of the costs and the needs and the costs of providing for the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories. So that is not an uncomplicated economic analysis and

position to make. That's why we're getting that started now so that we're not waiting until 2029 to get there but we can begin that process and that advocacy today. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 640-20(1):  
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE REFORM IN  
TLICHO COMMUNITIES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the NTHSSA website, the goal of primary healthcare reform is six demonstration projects to test primary health care improvements. Can the Minister say what projects will be completed in the Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is working with the Tlicho government and NTCSA to build capacity for diabetes management, prevention, and awareness programs aimed to help people with diabetes management of their condition, raise community awareness to prevent -- yeah, so diabetes engagement.

So one of the things that they're doing is they're doing this -- they're going to be doing this through workshop cooking classes and cultural programs. It is a piece of the primary care reform that will be in the Tlicho, so on chronic disease management. That is the piece that will be happening in the Tlicho. Right now, I think within the staffing levels that they're having struggles within the Tlicho it hasn't really got off the ground yet, so. But that is what's planned for Tlicho. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you for the information. Primary healthcare reform is intended to include opportunities for public feedback. Can the Minister commit to conducting a detailed public consultation with community health system clients. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we are rolling out primary care in the different areas, as you are aware that we just -- NTHSSA has just released that they will be doing the primary care in Yellowknife consult when -- so patients that are going through the system will be -- they'll be doing a survey with them on their feedback of the services which will help to drive the improved changes. And so as we are rolling out those in the different areas, primary care, those things can be put in place. We would need to

have -- ensure that those programs are rolling out so that they have something to compare to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a family doctor is largely unavailable to most residents. It is foreign to us in small communities. Can the Minister explain how primary health care reform will lead to having more doctors and nurses in small communities? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, primary care reform -- you know, as it's rolling out into the small communities, what we do have actually is a form of primary care in the communities right now. But what we need to be doing is we need to be looking at all of our communities, and that's what the working group is established for small communities and health cabins, to be looking at what are the needs of those communities and how are we going to be able to provide the services that are needed in those small communities, knowing that not every small community is going to have a resident physician. You know, they will -- but maybe there is a different makeup of frontline staff that -- like, especially in Indigenous communities, can we get more local people that are in the communities to train and do certain jobs? That is one area.

Another area is physicians. And, you know, the Tlicho is actually doing this, and some of the other regions now, is they're having appointments with a physician that can't always be in all the communities but can be virtually. And being able to have that connection with a nurse there and then a physician to be able to, you know, walk through some of those conditions. It's opening up our -- we're expanding on how we're utilizing our services and our technology to improve the care in the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 641-20(1):  
REESTABLISHMENT OF YELLOWKNIFE  
ADULT DAY PROGRAM

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

As I spoke about in my Member's statement, organizations such as the Yellowknife Seniors'

Society have been advocating strongly for the adult day program to be re-established in Yellowknife, particularly to support seniors with dementia and their caregivers. So what consultation has the department done specifically with organizations and families supporting seniors with dementia and Alzheimer's to assess the need for such an adult day program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been no consultation done since 2019 review of the adult day program in Yellowknife which included a survey of home care clients and their families in Yellowknife and that the end results showed that there was no need for an adult day program. In 2019, there were preliminary discussions with NGOs about the potential to take on running an adult day program, but there was no interest and there was no feedback provided as to the funding amount. The department has completed the new long-term care standards that includes where available and how adult day activities may be provided within long-term care facilities. They may be provided to long-term care residents in community dwellings, adults who may have positions or cognitive impairments and living with chronic illness. Within the staffing model for long-term care, there are activity aides or recreational therapy positions, but this is geared towards providing supports to the residents that live in long-term care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I -- I think the Minister perhaps anticipated my second question here, but. And I would just point out, you know, that home care clients may be a different audience or different group than specifically people supporting seniors with dementia and Alzheimer's.

But can the Minister explain what is done to consider the feasibility of opening up day programming beyond the live-in long-term care residents at our long-term care facilities and whether other, like drop-in clients could be included in some of that programming. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the department reached out to home care families, those families are a variety of issues that, you know, they're from families that are providing care to young children to members with -- like, with dementia. And I encourage if there were no -- if they're living with people with dementia and



supporting family members that home care is a support. So if they're not accessing that service, I just want to make sure that they know that that's a service that they can be accessing. But currently, the NTHSSA does not have funding for -- for the question providing -- opening up day programming in the long-term residents. So the funding that is in long-term care is for full scale admissions and to being able to provide programming only to those residents that are in there at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Minister could commit to come back to me or come back to this House with some information about how much funding the department had been willing to offer in the RFPs that it had previously put out for an adult day program and examine opportunities for that amount of funding to, you know, be added on perhaps to current programming in long-term care facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as many know how our budget works, that when the NTHSSA or the health authority gets their money dedicated to providing services, whatever that amount was in 2019 or prior to that may -- you know, will be -- has been reallocated to other areas that are supporting long term and community care programming. So if the department has to go back and look at committing to reviewing options, these options would be necessary -- like, if there's options, they're going to need funding, and what we can -- what we are looking at is piloting in the new year programming that could be worked alongside in our long-term care once we've had admissions here for those home care clients and looking at how that would be funded. So that's something that is in the works, in the planning, but it would need to have funds for that approved to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

QUESTION 642-20(1):  
ELDER ABUSE

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. These questions are to the Minister of health. Can the Minister say what specific measures the Department of Health and Social Services is taking to address the issue of elder abuse, particularly in relation to financial exploitation and neglect with our small communities? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, elder abuse is a whole-of-government approach. The Department of Health and Social Services runs a territorial-wide annual elder abuse awareness campaign in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The department also maintains web pages and prints resources with information about elder abuse and available services. Most recently, the 2024 Seniors Information Handbook incorporated a more robust safety and security section covering consumer protection, emergency food and shelter, preventing and reporting crime, which includes frauds, scams, and cybercrime, legal programs and services. The handbook also includes contact information for a wide range of government, not for profit Indigenous governments and organizations and community level programs and services. The department is in the process of drafting material to inform the development of training for service providers to recognize and respond to elder abuse. The department also provides funding to support the NWT Senior's Society for a variety of initiatives including workshops related to empowering seniors, community members to identify and address elder abuse. Older adults experiencing elder abuse may also access other services such as community counselling support, referrals through various help lines, emergency shelters, justice-related services such as community-based victim services and court orders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Can the Minister explain how the department is working with local organizations like the Dene Nation and other organizations for the prevention of abuse and family violence to ensure that elders receive the necessary support such as assistance with daily tasks and companionship. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department commits to looking into the Member -- with the Dene Nation, whatever services that they're providing, we can get back to the Member on if there has been conversations back and forth with the Dene Nation. But the senior handbook does provide a lot of resources to ensure that elders receive necessary supports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, given the increased concerns about drug-related exploitation of elders in our communities, can the Minister say what steps the department is taking to collaborate with law enforcement and social services to ensure elders' safety?

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind all residents NWT family violence supports are available for all residents, and that includes elders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 643-20(1):  
JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE FUNDING IN  
EDUCATION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I talked about Jordan's Principle and the troubling developments that, although there are good reasons to look at the eligibility funding, it was so open beforehand that schools really didn't have to worry about this, and now they may have to. So I know that schools are worried about whether they can continue to provide supports to First Nations students. So I'm wondering what is the Minister's plan if that funding is either -- is diminished in whatever capacity. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I share the Member's huge concerns on this. We ourselves put about \$165 million from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment straight into education bodies. And over the course of the time that Jordan's Principle has been available, schools have been able to put in their own applications looking for support for other areas and have attracted a further \$60 million into our education system, and so we heavily rely on Jordan's Principle within the territory. This week I do have meetings with our education Ministers from our sister territories because these concerns are broadly shared, and we intend to continue to advocate for Jordan's Principle funding for the territories because we know it is just crucially important. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister work with territorial and provincial counterparts to ensure that schools are carved out of any stringent funding applications, because that seems to be the

issue. You know, we've heard the stories, including from the family, the initial family that this money was being used for X-boxes and ballet lessons and things like that, so there's a sense to put some guardrails around it but our schools shouldn't have to suffer for that. So can the Minister commit to advocating for our schools when she does reach out to her territorial and provincial counterparts. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Very concise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. If the funding falls through, however, will the Minister bring forward additional funding, at least for this fiscal year to ensure -- to the next fiscal year, whenever the funding falls through, as a bridge so students and First Nations kids don't lose out on opportunities that this money provides for them. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, right now we're working with education bodies to completely understand, you know, exactly what this entails. So as the Member alluded to in their statement, classroom assistants are a huge component of this but there are other elements that education bodies are having funded through Jordan's Principle, and we don't vet these applications, we don't see them. Applications go from education bodies straight to the federal government.

The other crucial piece around this is the federal government does have guardrails within their policy. Their criteria states that they have to have a professional vet the application of a student, and so the federal government does have guardrails. And I absolutely, as the Member alluded to, will be taking this up with my counterparts because the essence and intent of this legislation is crucially important, not just for the territories but clear across the country. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 644-20(1):  
YOUTH ADVOCACY AND RECREATION IN  
TU NEDHE-WIILIDEH COMMUNITIES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we say that youth are our future. It also takes a community to raise a child.

Mr. Speaker, my communities are looking to establish a youth advocacy position that is urgently, urgently needed, who can connect youth in my communities to the many diverse opportunities that may interest them for sports, culture, education, and counselling. They may require some work between departments but MACA can provide the best opportunities for laying the groundwork by funding these positions through the hamlet, the First Nation offices.

My question to the Minister of MACA, can the Minister agree to working with my communities to establish funding processes so that these positions can be filled. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister of Municipal and community affairs.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the Member's aware the difficult situation Fort Resolution's in with their funding for their community and how their community is being operated by a public administrator. We normally -- communities run their rec coordinators or youth representatives through their O and M, out of their municipal funding, and that's usually decided on by your municipal councils and stuff. But MACA is working with the community to see what options are available with the current funding they have. A lot of this money that is being used right now is part of the debt repayment plan for the hamlet of Fort Resolution. But I know that the community has been reaching out and utilizing some of the pots of funding that is out there, the youth contribution funding and healthy communities funding and stuff. So I think there's somewhere around \$65,000 of funding that they've utilized so far from the various pots that the GNWT has. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution have a large arena, recreation facilities, but the First Nation have to maintain them, staff them, and provide programming, and they don't have the resources.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to begin providing funding through his department to these facilities so that the communities can maximize the benefits of the gyms and arenas to keep the youth busy in sport and recreation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, the municipal funding that we distribute throughout all 33 communities are used to operate their municipalities. That was part of the new deal back in the day in order for communities to have

a more hands-on grip of operating their communities because they're the ones that know best for their communities. So with that, the communities have the opportunity to operate their facilities and how they allocate those funds within their communities is the best way to do it. Also just keeping in mind there is funds available out there. Like I was saying earlier, there's a bunch of pots out there of money that can be used for youth sports activities or youth recreational activities, and it's up to the community members to reach out to those organizations, try to get a hand on some of those pots. But, again, understanding the complications with some of these communities, you know, for MACA, for an example, with Fort Resolution, there is some conversation in the background of what we can try to do to assist a community like Fort Resolution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just find it hard to believe that, you know, we're still trying to deal with the problems in our community with alcohol and drugs, etcetera, and but we still got policies we got to work around. I'm asking the Minister if he could have a heart and take a look at how we could deal with these issues in small communities, especially when we have addiction in our small communities and drugs. So I'm asking here today what can you do to help our small communities? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know as well, as much as the other Members do, that the government isn't going to fix all our problems. It takes a community to raise a community and, you know, some of the opportunities for the residents in those -- in his communities have the opportunity to take residents and -- or the residents have the opportunity to take an initiative to start making healthy choices for the communities. There are funds available, O and M funding for the municipalities, and like I said earlier, you know, MACA is looking at dealing or helping out with Fort Res in regards to potentially assisting on some of those funds for a youth coordinator or a youth worker or whatever it was that the Member was speaking of there. But that being said, it's not just about the government having funds for the communities. It's about -- like, he's pointing at me -- having a heart. I got a heart, Mr. Speaker. I think the opportunity is for the communities to work together and, like I said, the department is also working with his community. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 645-20(1):  
SENIOR ENVOY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF  
CANADA

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up on a couple questions my good colleague, the Member for the Sahtu, had mentioned earlier and brought up with the Premier regarding the transparency process of the -- his excellency, our envoy to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. And for the record, his pay scale's not even on the public registry of the GNWT's -- but all in, his costs are -- the GNWT is paying \$400,000 roughly in round numbers and so, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to figure out a little more than -- MLAs have never received a letter explaining exactly what this position is doing so we don't even know how to measure success. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Premier enlighten the House. Specifically, what is the mandate, and how do we measure the success with this envoy, his excellency being appointed to Ottawa? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to take that on notice.

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

QUESTION 646-20(1):  
COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICER  
LEGISLATION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm a big supporter of the community safety officer program that's currently being piloted in Fort Liard. Unfortunately, I've learned recently, and I think maybe the public has as well, that the feds are going to be clawing back that funding after this if -- for the provinces and territories that don't have community safety officer legislation. Can the Minister -- or sorry, the Premier as Minister of Justice, can he let us know what that would entail, community safety officer legislation looks like. Because if it is something that's important to our communities, this is a program that lots of people have been talking about over the years, let's get it done. So how complicated is it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very complicated. So the legislation that

would be required is a Police Act which is the type of legislation that would allow municipalities to set up their own police forces and things like that. So it's not a simple community safety officer piece of legislation; it's much broader.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have a sheriff -- no, we don't have a Sheriffs Act. That's another issue, a Sheriffs Act. I mean, we do have peace officers that are employees of the territorial government that have peace officer status under the Criminal Code. Is it time to look at this? We do have a crime problem. The Premier's well aware of it. The Premier has campaigned on it outside and inside the House. So maybe it's time to allocate additional resources. I don't want to lose this program; I want to keep our streets safe. Will the Premier bring forward legislation to bring sheriffs, community safety officers, and any other police force the territorial government, or our own communities want to create? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of legislation I would love to bring forward during the life of this Assembly. The Police Act, you know, that would be one of them; you know, Sheriffs Act, I could probably go on and on and on. But we have limited resources, and we have to provide the legislation for the entire territory. The same way Ontario, Alberta, all these other jurisdictions have to provide legislation, we have to do that as well but we're a much smaller jurisdiction, so it's more difficult to deliver that amount of legislation. So for this Assembly, we have a full agenda, but future assemblies may wish to look at that. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as this House knows, it's pretty easy for Members on this side of the House to bring forward legislation. So I'll do the Premier a favour. I can start drafting this -- a bill to bring public safety officers into law in the Northwest Territories. If that comes forward, will he support that? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know we're not supposed to get into hypotheticals here on the floor, so I'll leave that one alone. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 647-20(1):  
COLLABORATION BETWEEN HOUSING  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES DISABILITY  
COUNCIL

**MR. HAWKINS:** Was worried you weren't going to call, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on my question to the Minister of housing, the ones I asked yesterday, regarding the potential opportunity or new contract with the NWT Disabilities Council, and I'd like to find out for the House is the Minister planning to make some type of financial arrangement with this organization in secret or is she willing to talk about hypotheticals or -- what type of transparent process is the Minister going to give Members of this House with what type of deal they may or may not be working on behind the scenes that she's told me about but only she can reveal? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Colleagues, we are not talking about secrets, we're talking about stuff that is happening, and if there is a confidential letter that's been out there, we cannot be discussing it here in the House. Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated yesterday, Housing NWT is working with the NWT Disabilities Council, working in collaboration and supporting this not for profit society within the city of Yellowknife. There is a group, there's a board of volunteers, and housing is working in collaboration with them, communicating about possibilities with housing in the city of Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister commit that before any agreement is formalized, that a discussion is brought to the appropriate standing committee? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're dealing with here is years of collaboration with the NWT Disabilities Council. So this is nothing new. This has been happening for years with Housing NWT and NWT Disabilities Council. We're trying to find solutions here, so the opportunity to talk to standing committee about it, absolutely, we can do that. There's no secrets here, as the Member mentioned, and we're working in collaboration, working in supporting this group to get their project moving forward as well as housing's project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what the Minister's saying I'm not allowed to ask about secrets according to you. So there's no secrets, I agree. So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that guidance.

Mr. Speaker, the question really comes back to is that I understand disabilities is a significant need in a sense of challenges. I support that. My concern is Is the appropriate group getting the appropriate supports, one that we can bank on that can follow through without becoming a long-term financial liability of the GNWT. That said, Mr. Speaker, I reposit the question back to the Minister which is would the Minister ensure that she consult with committee before any deal is finalized in writing? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Housing NWT, working with operational staff, professionals that we hire to lead us with Housing NWT, we have a responsibility to make these decisions on behalf of government. I consult with my Cabinet colleagues but if decisions need to be made with committee and consulting committee, I would be happy and welcome that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 648-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE  
PROGRAM

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know I only asked about this yesterday, but I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if she has any updates for this House on the Northwest Territories nominee program. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no updates today. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide us with guidance on how we should reach out to people who have been coming to our offices concerned about this program now that this is -- there's some hope that the program could be expanded -- or extended that we can get those numbers back. People continue to ask, so. And it's good that this information's out there so people know what's at stake. So can the Minister give guidance on what we should be

providing back to our constituents who are worried about this program -- about their spots coming to an end and having to leave the Northwest Territories with their families. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day here, we're talking about people, and this is a very, very emotional subject for people who live in the territory. 99 percent of the people who are part of our nominee program are people who are already living in the Northwest Territories, and people who do apply to the nominee program as -- for those potential spots have to have worked in the territory with an employer already. So those are people that are already living in the NWT, they're contributing to our communities, they are friends, they are neighbours, they are Northerners. And so this is a very, very difficult, difficult time. So I absolutely expect that most of us will be getting outreach from people who are worried about getting a spot and maintaining the North as home. And so I wanted to start off by saying that because I think it's really important to acknowledge the emotion and the heart that's involved in this. And I appreciate the Member, and multiple Members from the other side of the House, for taking these phone calls. People can certainly always call our immigration office. They can speak as well to Minister McLeod -- sorry, our MP, our Member of Parliament. And I know that our Member of Parliament, immigration is 80 percent of what he fields in his office here in the Northwest Territories. So this conversation's very important. But I also want to be cautious in that we're not giving people false hope given how important this is to people of the Northwest Territories. But I can assure the Member that I will continue to advocate. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know the Minister is on the same page but I already -- I knew much of that response because that's what I've been telling people as well. We are all very compassionate. We want things to work. But to me and to many others, it seems like a power is in our hands to make a decision and bring back these spots and also welcome asylum seekers into the Northwest Territories and support them from these -- you know, places that they've fled from, give them new lives in Canada, and support population growth in the North and our workforce as well. The power's in the Minister's hands. Why isn't she taking it to make a decision and bring our numbers back up, help these families out, help

asylum seekers out. Seems like a win-win to me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Because the federal government hasn't yet told me what is involved in the deal, what it is that they are asking of us, and what it is and how they are supporting residents in return. So that's the information that I'm waiting for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 649-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE  
PROGRAM

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Range Lake, I have concerns for my constituents and the nominee program. I've spoken with the Minister at length. Can the Minister commit to bringing a plan forward for folks who have expiring work permits in 2026 to the House in the next sitting May-June? 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. So, Mr. Speaker, absolutely, there -- the way that we shifted the criteria, based on our reduction in allotments this year, was to really focus on those individuals who had expiring work permits in 2025. And I appreciate the Member bringing forward the concern around people who have work permits expiring at the beginning of 2026, especially given that it was February before we launched this program.

What we're doing with our stakeholder partners is spending time this year and really focusing on if we do have consolidated numbers going forward in 2026 -- we don't know what's going to happen at the federal government at this point -- but if we do have consolidated numbers again, then we need to establish a plan that really prioritizes the benefit of the NWT at the end of the day and really figures out how we can ensure that we're being strategic yet fair in this process. And so that is something that I, along with ECE, have focused on doing, is having these stakeholder conversations. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I too have planned stakeholder conversations, and I'm happy to collaborate with the Minister on this one.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the folks who are seeking asylum status, can the Minister speak to whether or not the funding is adequate, and the resources are adequate for us to be doing that currently? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is part of the information that I'm looking to ascertain from the federal government and to understand really what the resource needs would be of the people who would be identified as asylum seekers as part of this program. I know from just listening to interactions on the floor of the House, there's a huge demand, for example mental health supports across the territory, and so what kind of additional supports would we require in order to invite and welcome more asylum seekers in the territory, depending on what their health needs are, what their housing needs are, and so these are things that we need to consider as a territory and ensure that we have clear communication on that with the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 650-20(1):  
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF  
HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be for the Minister of Health and Social Services. So the compliment first.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the recruitment process is actually quite good. I hear that from the union. I hear that from the nurses and even the doctors. So hooray for the recruitment people. However, on the other side of the coin, I won't say what it -- call it -- but that said, it's the other side of the compliment. I often hear that the retention problem with respect to the investment and listening to those areas of concern is lacking; so in other words, it's less good.

Mr. Speaker, what can the Minister do to survey both the doctors and the nurses to find out more of -- or sorry, the creation or strengthen our retention policy so those folks don't get hired and then look at trying to leave. 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, I appreciate the kudos on the recruitment. You know, that is thanks to the Department of Finance working in collaboration. They lead this area. And the work that's being done within the health authority,

there is the strategic planning that is going on right now with the new recruitment and retention policy that's going on, and that will be released, I think, this spring. I don't have the exact details or time. I can -- and within the -- each authority, what we've been doing right now is we've been doing the town halls. We've completed -- we just most recently completed three regions in NTHSSA, and we completed Tlicho, we've completed Hay River. We've got the Beaufort Delta and Sahtu and Yellowknife region still to hear from, and that is with senior leadership. And from that work, we'll also add to the direction into management as to what more needs to be done at the frontline level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear that Williams Lake, BC, you know a small little town in the middle of the province of BC, gets lots of doctors and medical support people, and why? Because their recruitment and retention people cater to the needs of these particular people. Mr. Speaker, I'm talking specifically about just once we hire you, you're left alone. We can't have that attitude.

Mr. Speaker, is there any way that the Minister can do a survey through the medical association and the CAN, the nursing association, to find out what is it the nurses and the doctors need to ensure that they feel as either they're part of the community, their work's recognized, or even the changing of the nature of the industry is such that needs aren't currently being met. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the discussions that I'm having with NTHSSA and the public administrator, this is some of the work that I would be expecting them to do. I know that the public administrator has met with the medical association. I know that they are scheduled to meet with CAN. I know that, you know, there is ongoing work that he takes part in the town halls hearing from frontline staff. He works directly with NTHSSA. You know, with the PA for Hay River, this is the work that they're doing, as well as the Tlicho. You know, there is a lot of work that is going on, listening to -- and it's not to be that there isn't work going on. That work is continuing to go on. And at this time across -- you know, across every region, you know, we're all struggling. We're all struggling where we're working, you know, when we talk about a lot of the nurses going into the small communities, you know, there's just not a lot of nurses going back to those communities to live and work. So what we're struggling with is the turnaround is not necessarily long-term nurses. The nurses that have been around are retiring. We've got a lot of retiring staff within the health field that are leaving small communities, and

now it's ending up being a lot of locum staff having to fill those gaps. So we're working with each region. And I think that's the work that I've, you know, left within the PA of both health authorities, and Tlicho is doing a lot of that work at the ground level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Very quickly, Mr. Speaker, I'm not here to tell the Minister how to bargain; however, for years the nurses, for example, have been asking for shift premiums and labour market supplements.

Mr. Speaker, if they provide proposals, will the Minister carry that like a football all the way through FMB and score a touchdown with that industry and show them you care and you're fighting for them? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not sit at the bargaining table when the collective agreements are being negotiated. There is a team that does that. However, they do -- health does carry that football and brings it over as part of those -- all of those things that they're hearing from their staff. And, you know, and I think that when the Member relates to different regions in different provinces, we have to bargain -- like, we can only do what we can do within our collective agreement and that agreement now is a new agreement that we have to follow for the next -- I think it is until 2027. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Mr. Clerk.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 7.27, I received follow-up information for Oral Question 49-20(1), Eviction Notices Issued during the Winter asked on February 12th, 2025, by the Member for Deh Cho to the Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, our time for oral questions is up. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

## Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 307-20(1):  
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 22:  
LEGISLATION ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 308-20(1):  
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL  
22: LEGISLATION ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Plain Language Summary for Bill 22, Legislation Act; and, the Statement of Consistency for Bill 22, Legislation Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Public Utility Board.

TABLED DOCUMENT 309-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC  
UTILITIES BOARD 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Northwest Territories Public Utilities Board 2024 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Public Utilities Board. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

TABLED DOCUMENT 310-20(1):  
INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING  
\$250,000 (APRIL 1 TO DECEMBER 3, 2024)

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Inter-activity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 from April 1st to December 31st, 2024. 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. Minister of Justice.

## First Reading of Bills

BILL 23:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE CHILDREN'S LAW  
ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 23 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second



reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

**BILL 24:**  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE FAMILY LAW ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Family Law Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 24 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

**Second Reading of Bills**

**BILL 22:**  
LEGISLATION ACT,  
CARRIED

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 22, Legislation Act, be ready for the second time.

The proposed Legislation Act sets out comprehensive rules about the processes for enacting, certifying, and publishing laws in the Northwest Territories and for ensuring laws remain up to date. This will consolidate existing provisions about these processes that are found separately in several statutes and will update and modernize current practices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

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

**Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters**

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates, Departments of Education, Culture and Employment and Department of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. We'll take a ten-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, conclusion of Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Department of Finance, form and concurrence -- concurrence.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates. We will consider the departmental totals for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and finance which we previously deferred. We will then consider the borrowing plan for the government reporting entity and established borrowing limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, as we conclude deliberations on the 2025-2026 Main Estimates, I want to recognize the work of Members in shaping this budget. And through collaboration, note that we are making additional strategic investments that reflect the priority of this Assembly and the needs of Northerners.

One of the most significant outcomes of our discussions, Mr. Chair, is that there is a commitment here being made to support housing. We will be introducing a \$41.6 million supplementary appropriation for Housing Northwest Territories in 2025-2026 to make critical investments in public housing. This funding responds directly to the priorities set by the 20th Legislative Assembly to improve suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing across the Northwest Territories.

In addition, we are committing a total of \$50 million per year for the next two years, ensuring a long-term and sustainable plan to help modernize and replace aging public housing. In making this commitment, we are cognizant that

we are living in a time where businesses are worried in a climate of tariffs, tariff threats, and financial uncertainty. Housing Northwest Territories already has innovative partnerships with Northwest Territories Indigenous governments and businesses and this commitment can help deepen and build upon them. This three-year commitment supports a plan that we believe can be delivered for Northerners by Northerners.

We are also addressing concerns about elders in public housing. Housing Northwest Territories will develop a strategy and a policy to forgive arrears and stop garnishment of elders, ensuring that this is in place before the 2025-2026 debt forgiveness period.

Additionally, we will be restoring \$100,000 in funding for the 2025-2026 for the Family Violence Shelter Network and would note that in accordance with its new role as the GNWT lead for non-government support, this funding will move to the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Over 2025-2026, EIA will be engaging other non-government organizations and Indigenous organizations in order to explore how to best align available funding to address the needs of vulnerable populations, including those experiencing intimate personal violence -- intimate partner violence.

On the issue of community learning centres, Mr. Chair, we all acknowledge that CLC facilities have been important hubs for education, for training, and for community-based programs, and the Minister of ECE has committed to working with Indigenous governments and community organizations to ensure that residents will continue to have access to quality adult education and employment programs building off the successes of individual communities that individual communities may have seen within the existing CLC programs. A timeline for this work will be provided before the end of the May sitting.

I will speak further and further opportunity upon the location of an appropriation bill being introduced about the process of concluding this budget and on the broader direction that we are taking with these changes. But for now, Mr. Chair, I do want to thank Members for their contributions. This budget is, again, a product of the consensus process and together we are advancing these meaningful investments for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for her comments. Mr. Chair,

at this time I'd like to move that consideration of Tabled Document 275 -- sorry?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize; I was getting ahead of myself as we often do.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to again thank the -- certainly thank the Members of AOC. I mean, it's been an interesting couple of weeks for sure as we've deliberated on this budget and negotiated on this budget and, as the Minister said, I'll certainly speak more to it once we have the main estimates in front of committee tomorrow.

I would like, again, to thank Members of AOC for their direction, for certainly working collaboratively to work towards our common goal and thank Cabinet for their support as well. The housing funding that the Minister spoke of certainly is no small ask, and I think we all recognize in this House the importance of that priority to this government. We've -- you know, we've been saying it for the past year, you know, housing is likely our number one priority and to see this kind of a commitment going forward in this year's budget, coming back on the supplemental appropriation of \$41 million to add to the additional funding that housing has already budgeted, I think will put us, Mr. Chair, up to, you know, upwards of \$50 million this year alone with anticipating more funding coming in the next two years as we'll go through the budget -- through our capital budgeting process for even more housing and certainly addressing that important need.

So for now, Mr. Speaker, again -- Mr. Chair, I'd like to, again, thank my colleagues, thank the Minister of Finance for her time, and we'll leave it at that until tomorrow. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document? Committee?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will start with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Please turn to the department summary found on page 29, revenue summary information items on page 30 and 31. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditure, total department,

2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$403,245,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will now move to the Department of Finance. Please turn to the departmental summary found on page 159 with information items on page 160 to 161. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Finance, operations expenditure, total department, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$407,895,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, committee. The borrowing plan is separate from the estimates but required by the Financial Administration Act to be presented with the estimates. Further, the borrowing outlined in the plan will be included in the subsequent Appropriation Act that is presented to the Assembly. Please turn to page 17 to find the borrowing plan from the government reporting entity established borrowing limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, I will now call this page.

The borrowing plan for the government reporting entity and established borrowing limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories, the total considered borrowing limit is \$1,722,122,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that it has concluded the consideration of Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates? Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

COMMITTEE MOTION 76-20(1):  
CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED  
DOCUMENT 275-20(1): 2025-2026 MAIN  
ESTIMATES,  
CARRIED

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now that we've all caught up, Mr. Chair, I move that consideration of Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates, be now concluded, and that Tabled Document 275-20(1) be

reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an Appropriation Bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, this concludes our consideration of tabled documents. Thank you to the Minister -- oh sorry, thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. The motion's in order. The motion's not non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiliideh.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiliideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 275-20(1) and would like to report progress with one motion carried and consider Tabled 275-20(1) is concluded, and the House concurs in those estimates as amended and that an appropriation bill to be based thereon to be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiliideh. Can I have a seconder, please. Member from Nunakput. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carried.

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

### Orders of the Day

#### CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, March 13th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Motions
  - Motion 51-20(1), Affirmative Action Policy
  - Motion 52-20(1), Strengthening Support for Nurses and Healthcare Workers
  - Motion 54-20(1), Extended Adjournment of the House to May 22, 2025
5. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 530-20(1), Senior Envoy to Government of Canada
  - Oral Question 607-20(1), Coverage Exemptions for Uninsured Medical Procedures
  - Oral Question 645-20(1), Senior Envoy to the 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 14-20(1), Operating Rooms at Stanton Territorial Hospital
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
19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act
- Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Family Law Act

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

This House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 13th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:41 p.m.