



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, March 11, 2025****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer or Reflection

---Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):
Thank you, elder Annie Goose.

Colleagues, on February 28th, 2025, the Member from Yellowknife North rose on a point of order regarding comments made by the Member from Yellowknife Centre. I will not repeat those comments today; however, I am prepared to deliver my ruling at this time.

As your Speaker, I find that our rules were broken and there was a valid point of order raised by the Member for Yellowknife North. Although the words spoken by the Member for Yellowknife Centre were not captured on our microphones or recorded in Hansard, they were clearly heard in the chambers. Colleagues, I do not need to hear the words in a recording or to read them in Hansard to determine if they were appropriate. They were not. In fact, these words could be easily interpreted as breaking several of our rules of debate. Specifically, I feel the comments violated Rules 3.2(3)(h), (i), and (k), which respectively prohibits Members from making allegations against another Member, imputing false or hidden motives, and the use of abusive or insulting language that is likely to create disorder.

I will now ask the Member from Yellowknife Centre to apologize to this House for his comment. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Whatever I said, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife Centre, could you give a little bit more clarity.

MR. HAWKINS: Whatever I must have said, I withdraw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Colleagues, before we begin, yesterday was Commonwealth Day. This is an annual

celebration observed in the 56 commonwealth countries around the globe. This year's theme is Together we Thrive, which really hits home for me. I feel like this year's Commonwealth Day theme was selected for us. In our consensus government system, we are stronger when we work together for the benefit of our people, the people we represent, The people who elected us to speak for them in this House.

Colleagues, I know all of us want to see the Northwest Territories thrive. I know I do. That's the reason I got involved in politics. In the spirit of Commonwealth Day, I would like to remind you that together we can thrive as a territory. Now let's get on with our business today.

Ministers' statements. Minister of ECC.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 114-20(1):
BUILDING RESILIENCE TOGETHER –
ADVANCING CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, climate change is creating significant challenges for the Northwest Territories, impacting communities, people, ecosystems, and infrastructure. The GNWT is addressing these challenges by integrating Indigenous knowledge and fostering partnerships to build resilience and sustainability for the future generations.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we have achieved significant milestones with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, and community partners on climate change adaptation initiatives. This includes building consensus on the most pressing climate risks, implementing practical solutions, and sharing information to support residents and protect the environment.

A critical part of this work is flood mapping. Recent floods in several NWT communities highlighted the need for updated maps. The Department of Environment and Climate Change, in collaboration with the NWT Centre for Geomatics and funding support from the

federal government, is working to update flood maps for ten at-risk communities. We have developed draft flood maps for Hay River and the K'atlodeeche First Nation Reserve, Fort Simpson, Aklavik, and are working on Fort Good Hope, Nahanni Butte, and mapping for Jean Marie River, Fort Liard, Fort McPherson and Tulita. These will be initiated over the next few years. When finalized, the updated flood maps will provide essential tools for emergency and community land-use planning.

Mr. Speaker, we are also addressing extreme water level fluctuations, which have ranged from record highs to record lows over the past five years, impacting transportation, hydroelectricity generation, public safety, and harvesting. The GNWT has expanded its water monitoring networks, improved data management, partnered with researchers, and shared updates through monthly water monitoring bulletins. This past year, departmental staff met regularly with marine transportation services to share data and information that informed decision-making for the upcoming barge season. In addition, our ongoing snow and climate monitoring will support assessment of climate change impacts on northern hydrology, aligning with the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy.

Adaptation planning is another priority. Together with Indigenous governments, community representatives, and federal partners, the GNWT is conducting climate risk assessments to address vulnerabilities in housing, infrastructure, ecosystems, and health. Recent projects include developing hazard maps for high-risk areas, permafrost sensitivity studies, and deeper integration of the Indigenous knowledge into climate resilience planning.

Mr. Speaker, federal funding and partnerships with institutions, like the University of Victoria and Royal Roads University, are advancing our work to create new opportunities for Northerners through skill-building and adaptation programs. Training programs and resources are being developed to build climate adaptation skills in communities across the territory, empowering them to respond effectively to climate impacts. These initiatives deliver real benefits. Updated flood maps and expanded water monitoring enhance safety and preparedness, ensuring safe communities for Northerners. Greater climate knowledge strengthens decision-making at all levels. By integrating Indigenous knowledge, we are ensuring our approach is inclusive, collaborative, and reflective of northern values.

Mr. Speaker, our efforts today are crucial for building resilience and adapting to climate

change. We are committed to securing a sustainable future for residents and communities across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 115-20(1):
COLLABORATION WITH INDIGENOUS
GOVERNMENTS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, today I want to describe how key infrastructure projects are helping support our government's commitment to building strong relationships with Indigenous governments.

A key example of this collaboration is the Taltson Hydro Expansion. This project is being advanced through a memorandum of understanding agreement between the Government of the Northwest Territories and Indigenous governments with traditional territory in the Taltson watershed; namely, the Northwest Territory Metis Nation, the Akaitcho Dene First Nations, and Salt River First Nation.

Regular meetings at the leadership level have become more frequent over the last 12 months creating strong momentum as we work together to address legacy issues, advance commercial agreements, and prepare an environmental regulatory application. I hope that in the coming year to have a plan to move forward on legacy issues, have a preliminary commercial structure in sight, and a timeline for the environmental review process. Together we can connect over 70 percent of the Northwest Territories population and bring access to hydro power to our most promising mineral resource region.

Another major project that depends on strong collaboration is the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We have a memorandum of understanding with the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated to facilitate collaboration during the environmental assessment and we are working together to update the business case for the project so that we are ready to seek investment upon completion of the environmental assessment.

We are also working closely with the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation to address concerns raised about the alignment in the Deh Cho between Wrigley and the Sahtu Dene and Metis settlement agreement boundary. The Government of the Northwest Territories is pleased to have provided funding to Pehdzeh Ki First Nation to conduct alignment work and Indigenous knowledge studies, and we remain committed to reviewing and discussing these

findings. Feedback from local communities has already led to optimizations and changes, including adjustments near Bear Rock and Big Smith Creek, based on input from community organizations in Tulita. Our projects are informed by both Indigenous knowledge and western science studies of water, wildlife, habitat, socioeconomic and climate change impacts, and they are stronger for this.

Mr. Speaker, the need for the Mackenzie Valley Highway has never been more evident, as this critical infrastructure will provide much needed resilience for annual community resupply operations in the Sahtu and serve as a unique access corridor into the heart of Canada's Western Arctic.

Mr. Speaker, and these are not the only projects built through partnership. The Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge replacement is another example, with ongoing work alongside the Tlicho government. And two public engagement sessions for the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge replacement took place in Behchoko a month ago, and we received valuable input that is currently helping us shape next steps. In addition, we have begun to re-engage regional Indigenous governments about routing for the Slave Geologic Province corridor and an access point into the Eastern Arctic.

By working together, we can address shared priorities more swiftly, identify more investment opportunities, and create more opportunities for the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 116-20(1):
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING ADDICTIONS
RECOVERY PROGRAM UPDATE

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, substance use and addiction continue to have a big impact on people across the Northwest Territories. Addiction is closely tied to our shared history of colonization, the legacy of residential schools, and the trauma and mental health challenges that have followed. The Government of the Northwest Territories understands these deep-rooted connections and is committed to supporting Northerners on their path to recovery. That is why I am pleased to announce that the Government of the Northwest Territories first residence of the transitional housing for addictions recovery program, known as THARP, will begin accepting clients in April.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important milestone for the Northwest Territories. For the first time, residents will have access to both addiction recovery support, and safe transitional housing within the territory.

The first THARP site, located in Yellowknife, will be operated by the Salvation Army, which will have staff on site to support clients. We hosted the grand opening of this residence yesterday, and it was clear that everybody was impressed. Second site in Inuvik, operated by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, is set to open later in 2025. These programs will provide safe, stable housing, and recovery-focused support for individuals who have completed addictions treatment. This is a big step forward in providing community-based recovery support.

Mr. Speaker, THARP is more than just housing. It will offer recovery programs like life skills training, job support, and assistance in transitioning to safe longer-term housing. A stable and supportive environment is key to helping people avoid relapse and maintain their sobriety, reconnect with their communities, and build healthier futures.

THARP sites will work closely with other addiction and aftercare services to ensure people get the help they need as they continue their recovery journey. To ensure THARP provides high-quality care, we have developed standards that make sure services are safe, consent-based, culturally respectful, and grounded in dignity. We will also gather feedback and data to make improvements as needed.

Mr. Speaker, THARP would not have been possible without strong partnerships. The city of Yellowknife, Housing NWT, the Salvation Army, and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, have all played key roles in making this happen. These partnerships help us build on community strengths to better serve those in recovery. THARP fills a long-standing gap in services by providing stability and support for healing, giving people the foundation they need to recover and rebuild their lives. Through investment and collaboration, we are building stronger communities and creating a more compassionate territory where people in recovery can succeed. Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of NWT residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 584-20(1): ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about environmental assessment as a way to make projects better and how it makes projects better.

Sometimes we talk about environmental assessment as if it's just an obstacle, as if it's some GNWT employee sitting in an office tower gatekeeping, checking off some boxes, and could they please just get it done faster because we have mines to develop and roads to build and jobs to create. But it's not that at all.

Environmental assessment is central to our co-management systems. It's enshrined in modern treaties. It brings Indigenous governments and the federal and territorial governments together as equals to make decisions about anything that could have big impacts on the land and water, including how to maximize economic benefits. Environmental assessment can make projects better for everyone. For example, it can recommend a road take ago slightly different route to avoid interfering with harvesting and wildlife. It can ensure that a mine doesn't contaminate the water and fish and that community members get to participate in regular sampling and fish tasting to confirm for themselves. But it can only make those projects better if there's full participation from all the top experts. That's traditional knowledge experts, elders, and scientists who have their own important information about how mines and roads affect caribou and water and fish and all the rest.

Most of our best scientists work for the government, and since devolution, the majority work for our territorial government. But what if the territorial government is the one proposing the project like the Mackenzie Valley Highway or the Lockhart All-Season Road? The GNWT has decided that its own scientists should not be able to freely participate in those environmental assessments. They're supposed to share their scientific expertise behind closed doors, and then the higher-ups in the GNWT will decide what becomes public. What I fear is being lost, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity for scientists to collaborate directly with traditional knowledge experts in the communities about what the impacts could be and how to design, for example, roads better.

Ten years ago, I had the privilege of facilitating on-the-land camps bringing together TK experts, scientists, and young people learning to be environmental monitors, and I saw firsthand the incredible potential for that kind of

collaboration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have questions for the Minister.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 585-20(1): ADDRESSING THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to preface my statement with a content warning that I will be speaking to sexual abuse and trauma so that those listening can decide if they wish to not listen to my statement.

Mr. Speaker, we speak a great deal in this House about access to health care, and with good reason. However, holding hands within that same priority is addressing the effects of trauma. Mr. Speaker, we are doing good things in this area. I was elated to attend the opening of the first transitional housing for addictions recovery program, or THARP home, here in Yellowknife yesterday. It's wonderful to see health, housing, the city of Yellowknife, and the Salvation Army, all working together to address a crucial gap for folks returning from addictions treatment from the south. I think it's a promising model and wish it every success.

Mr. Speaker, that said, we still have far to go in adequately addressing the effects of trauma. I have spoken in Committee of the Whole last week and in e-mails to both the Ministers of health and justice around my concerns for folks who need to heal and have the support they need in recovering from sexual trauma and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice does provide services to inmates who are overcoming experience of sexual abuse, but I am concerned that we need these services to be preventative as well. We need pre-emptive supports for folks who have the wherewithal to know that they are struggling and do not wish to continue the cycle of trauma, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 586-20(1): PRIMARY HEALTHCARE ACCESS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week my 2-year-old came down with a nasty ear infection and though I was able to stay at home with him, 811 instructed my family to err on the side of caution and have him checked out. As Yellowknife Primary Care

accepts booking just after they open at 8 a.m., I made sure to have my phone in hand ready as the seconds ticked closer to the right moment to make my call. First, 8 o'clock, then 8:01, 8:02, 8:03, 8:04, and finally I hit dial just as 8:05 came on to the screen of my phone. When the phone rang, I eagerly anticipated my opportunity to arrange the care my child needed yet the phone kept ringing and ringing. Then to my disappointment, it ended with a message informing me that a high volume of calls meant I would have to wait a little longer. So I did. After 15 minutes, my fears were confirmed. My call still went unanswered meaning an appointment was out of reach.

Mr. Speaker, this frustrating experience is shared with too many of my constituents who often fail in their attempts to secure their own appointments as well. And, as frustrating as it is on our end, I can't imagine how it must feel for the staff on the other end of the phone who try their best every day when their switchboard is lit up with dozens of incoming calls. They don't work in health care to drop calls, Mr. Speaker. They work in health care to help Northerners and their families, but under such unmanageable conditions, sending me to voicemail must have been their only option.

Instead of primary care, we then relied on the Range Lake clinic and booking the appointment was a trivial matter. I merely chose a time on their website, filled in my details, and I was set. We were relieved to have the care we needed for our son, and luckily, the appointment didn't come at any cost.

Mr. Speaker, I know health and social services would have preferred that I gotten the care my son needed from them. We are constantly reminded that we are in the midst of significant primary care reform, yet we have not heard from the Minister what this reform is in exact detail and how it will improve the delivery of care. We are well into our second year, yet when we ask in this chamber how we will fulfill the Assembly's priority to increase the accessibility of care, we are met with a ringing phone call that ends in a message telling us to call back at another time. Mr. Speaker, for too many of us, and too many of us Northerners, that phone is still ringing unanswered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 587-20(1):
ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NWT is in a vulnerable position because of the national and global tensions. One example is the US tariffs and the resulting trade disputes. The NWT imports more than it exports, so we are more vulnerable to the increasing costs of things we buy every day.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of negative economic impacts on the horizon. I'd rather focus on the positives.

The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment recently took part in discussions to reform provincial and territorial trade barriers when the committee on internal trade, or CIT, met in Toronto last week. If CIT achieves its objectives, it will be easier to do business in Canada and grow the domestic economy. What will this mean for the territory?

Mr. Speaker, the political landscape is shifting daily with that's recent economic changes. I echo what my colleague from Boot Lake has said: The NWT is resource rich and cash poor. Talks on tariffs imposition has created uncertainty and, more importantly, questions about sustainability. How can the NWT reposition itself as a supplier of critical minerals to the rest of Canada? How can the territory be a leader in refining, production, and mineral processing?

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the NWT needs federal funding to advance an infrastructure agenda. We have heard that the federal Arctic foreign policy may lead to increased defence spending and access to capital. However, we might see a more immediate economic impact by creating additional resource revenues and retaining devolution benefits. I will have questions to the Minister of ITI later. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 588-20(1):
ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC
HOUSING

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to echo the concerns and frustrations of my constituents from the community of Tetlit Zeh, and other communities throughout the NWT, in their efforts to combat the influx of hard drugs coming into our community without any support from the local authorities, Housing NWT, or local housing authorities.

This past week while I was home in Tetlit Zeh, I was confronted by numerous members of the

community about drug dealers from neighboring communities coming in to Tetlit Zeh and setting up their business within Housing NWT's public housing units and nothing being done to accommodate the residents' concern.

Mr. Speaker, the drug dealers are coming into our smaller communities and setting up their network in the public housing units because they know that nothing is being done to move them out by any authority. The residents know who these drug dealers are and where they are stationed yet when they give tips to any of the authorities, it is the policies and procedures that protect the criminals. The tenants of the housing authority are also benefitting from these transactions and letting them stay within their units to conduct these illegal activities.

Mr. Speaker, there are community members who are targets of these drug dealers because they are addicted to these hard drugs and they see easy access to drugs and money. It hurts me personally to see those unfortunates targeted and preyed upon. Our family and community members cannot do anything to help protect our members of the community.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I will not have any questions for this government because their solutions are far and in between to implement a solution to save our communities in combatting the drug crisis we are experiencing. The drug dealers are using our own residents to kill our own people just for the simple financial transaction. The only question to this House is what can we do today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 589-20(1):
ARCTIC SECURITY COUNCIL

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Arctic security again today and, specifically, around the Arctic security council. Certainly the leadership in my community are very live to the issue of Arctic security given that we have infrastructure there, the forward operating location as well as the NORAD office in Inuvik.

Mr. Speaker, the federal department of defence announcement on March 10th identified Inuvik and Yellowknife as military hubs which will share in a \$2.6 billion investment with Iqaluit. Given the recent article on Cabin Radio, Mr. Speaker, there may be some ambiguity around how those funds are going to roll out but certainly now is the time, you know, for us as a

government to ensure that, you know, we are working with the ND and to ensure that we are prepared for the investment and how it can benefit our communities, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are things happening. Canadian Institute of Arctic Security, which is the Yukon, the Yukon's Arctic council, are having a Conference Zero -- they're calling it -- on March 27th in 2025 to discuss Arctic security. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier's aware of this and likely may have even gotten an invite to attend.

The town of Inuvik, Mr. Speaker, is hosting the Arctic Development Expo on the 17th to the 19th of June, 2025, where the theme is Preparing for Our Future in a Changing Arctic where, again, Mr. Speaker, there will be three days of discussion around Arctic security and development.

The leadership in my community has been made aware that the department of defence, the Joint Task Force North, will be meeting with Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon in Whitehorse in late May of 2025 to, again, discuss shared DND infrastructure projects. The Premier's office, I assume, will have a delegation that will be part of this discussion, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest that the Premier include the mayors of Inuvik and Yellowknife as part of this delegation to take part in these important conversations.

Mr. Speaker, Inuvik just hosted the very successful and biggest operation of Nanook since began in 2007. There were several NATO countries involved as well as the Canadian Rangers from across the country. In total, there were 700 military personnel on the ground and in the air for the event. There was also media in Inuvik from across the country. The town of Inuvik, the Gwich'in, and the Inuvialuit were all fully engaged and involved supplying DND with meeting facilities, accommodations, and operation space. This was a huge economic boost to the area. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to complete my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, it's important that the Premier and this government are fully engaged, and now is the time to create an NWT Arctic security council that includes the Premier, applicable Cabinet Members, mayors from Inuvik and Yellowknife, and Indigenous leadership representatives, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 590-20(1):
FROSTBITE 55

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the spring equinox, there is palpable excitement in Yellowknife. I'd like to take a moment to highlight one of my favourite winter events, the the upcoming Frostbite 55 taking place this Saturday, March 15th. This event is the premiere winter endurance event in the Northwest Territories and brings together skiers and snowshoers from across the NWT and Canada to undertake a grueling 55-kilometer course. The course traverses the area around Yellowknife, N'dilo, and Dettah, and highlights the beautiful and rugged terrain around these communities.

Mr. Speaker, this event is entirely organized and supported by volunteers committing their time and energy for the benefit and enjoyment of the community. The participants train throughout the dark, cold months of January and February, and come prepared to undertake the physical and mental exertion necessary to achieve their personal goals either individually or as part of a team. Businesses in and around Yellowknife provide their support through generous donations and sponsorships for prizes and draws for participants and volunteers. This event pushes the limits of our endurance, but also brings or community together in celebration of the wild beauty of our landscape. The strength of our community is apparent as the skiers and snowshoers start off Saturday morning complete with throngs of friends, family members, and teammates cheering them on outside the Yellowknife ski chalet.

Again, this event wouldn't be possible without the hard work of so many volunteers who have spent countless hours preparing for this incredible event to ensure the safety of participants. I want to congratulate them and thank them for their contribution to their community. I'd like to wish all the participants the best of luck in this year's race. I hope the sun is bright and snow conditions are just right.

I'll personally be on the course this weekend as a safety rider, and I've heard that the Member for Yellowknife North, who I'll note won the event last year, will be participating so look out for a few of your local MLAs on the course this weekend. I would note that if you're on the fence about participating, today is the last day to register, and I strongly encourage you to try it out. It's a great event. Let's all mark our calendars for March 15th and keep an eye out for these dedicated athletes as they tackle the Frostbite 55. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 591-20(1):
JUNCTION LIGHTS ON HIGHWAY 5

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of this Assembly, we came together to agree on several key priorities to focus on during our term. One of those key priorities is ensuring the safety of residents and communities. While territorial-wide dangers like disasters and crime often come to mind when we think about public safety, but we're also hear to solve public safety challenges which is unique to our communities as well.

A challenge to public safety my constituents uniquely face is the lack of junction lights on Highway No. 5 on the way to Fort Resolution. Without these lights, drivers often miss the turnoff on Highway No. 5 towards Fort Smith in the dark. My constituents fear worse than that. However, they feel it is only a matter of time a vehicle could collide with one another in and out of the turn towards Fort Smith. This is specifically a concern during the winter months when it's dark. Nights are long and freezing conditions could reduce a driver's ability to react and take evasive action.

My constituents raised this issue to my office often, and I agree with them. The lack of lights at this junction poses a serious threat to drivers yet when I raised this last chamber, I am told that these concerns have been flagged or studied enough for a solution to be considered. How many studies do we have to have to build a set of lights at the junction? Surely, we do not have to wait for a serious accident to take place before the Minister takes action. If an accident happened before the lights are set up, our priority for safety committees would not have been upheld for my constituents. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 592-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to discuss how the government will safeguard higher learning in our small communities.

Mr. Speaker, in a public briefing about the closure of community learning centres, both the chairperson of the board and president of the

Aurora College outlined the college's decision to move to online learning. The board says the reason is, quote, low enrolment and high costs. The president of the college suggested the closure of CLC will save \$8.29 million.

Mr. Speaker, I find the proposal to transition to online learning deeply troubling. The college number for online enrolments are inflated by classroom restrictions dating back to the pandemic. Their plan comes down to one thing: The loss of in-person learning for adult education programs and upgrading.

Mr. Speaker, in small communities, technology is a huge barrier to education. Many students do not have internet access or their own computers. Students with special needs such as FASD and others need hands-on visual learning opportunities. Were these factors considered in Aurora College's decision-making? This problem cannot be solved by a support line. Connectivity at the Whati CLC is currently adequate for running remote programming since the school has recently been hooked up to the fibre optic line. But this will not be the case if we force learners to upgrade online at home.

Mr. Speaker, we need a brick and mortar approach. Closing all 19 centres to save a small amount of money is wrong. Students will need to use the existing infrastructure to join classes online. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 593-20(1):
FEDERAL DEFENCE SPENDING IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with approximately 937 days left in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what will happen next. Mr. Speaker, in my February statement I talked about being bold, reaching out to the defence Minister, talking about getting investment in the North.

Mr. Speaker, recently a Cabin Radio story talked about Inuvik and Yellowknife becoming the hubs in the North. Mr. Speaker, their story said there's \$218 million over 20 years going to be spent. Let's be frank, Mr. Speaker. That's a drop in the bucket as far as defence spending goes. Mr. Speaker, if I spoke in NWT terms, I'd refer to that as 72 kilometers of highway. That's all it is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need northern infrastructure. We need northern bases. Mr. Speaker, we could be the true hubs to protect all 135,000 Northerners from one side, be it the Yukon to the other side; be partners with Nunavut, Mr. Speaker. There's no reason we can't be bold.

Mr. Speaker, historically we always know that we've had Russia, China, and different views of how geopolitical problems work. Now if you read the Globe and Mail, you'll see a former Yellowknifer Nathan VanderKlippe talk about Trump's influence and desperation of saying I'm annexing Canada and I'm taking Greenland with it, Mr. Speaker. Shame on them. Now couldn't be a better time to demand Ottawa starts better spending in the Northwest Territories. Even the city of Yellowknife sent a letter saying that we could be a strategic centre.

Mr. Speaker, that 2 percent NATO spending ain't going to spend itself. Mr. Speaker, we don't need all the F35s, just a couple, Mr. Speaker, because a couple mean tons of jobs, a lot of money, serious investment, and commitment to protecting Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Boot Lake pointed out that that delegation in a few days, I encourage the Premier to invite MLA for Boot Lake and myself because we feel very strongly about this particular concern, so strongly I wrote a draft joint working group terms of reference in response to the Premier about how could we advocate for more defence spending in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I want to see money in Inuvik, and I want to see money in Yellowknife, and I want to see Northerners working to help protect Canadians, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I read the quote in the story a couple days ago and the Premier says the federal government now appears to know that they should come talk to things, actually I reverse it. We should now be on the tips of our toes leaning into Ottawa and saying now's your opportunity, we're open for business, and we need your money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 594-20(1):
RECOGNITION OF GAVIN WILKES

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, today, I would like to talk about an individual who is a great-grandson of Baptiste Cazon, the former chief for Liidlii Kue First Nation. The GNWT named the ECE building in his honour just previously. One of these individuals that provide a message to everyone present via the grand chief was Gavin Wilkes.

Gavin was born in Peace River, Alberta, to Naila Cazon of Fort Simpson and Brian Wilkes of Northampton, England. Gavin is one of seven children between the two. He has two half-brothers and a half-sister on his mother's side, and two half-brothers and a half-sister on his father's side.

Gavin's great-grandfather Baptiste Cazon was a chief of Liidlii Kue First Nation for over 20 years. Growing Gavin was inspired by the work and dedication of his great-grandfather helping the Dene people and being a voice that he served in the region. People highly respect his great-grandfather.

Gavin wanted to do something similar like his great-grandfather. He studied hard and was accepted to attend the University of Augustana faculty from 2014-2018 where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in drama and philosophy. Then his next step was to attend the University of Alberta for his law degree from 2020 to 2023 and obtained a doctorate degree.

Gavin is now legal counsel at the Wahkotowin Law and Governance Lodge in Edmonton, Alberta, where he is working diligently with First Nations to identify, articulate, and implement their laws and legal governance structures.

Gavin's mother is very proud of the young man he has become and for his dedication to pursue his goals and his tireless dedication and commitment to his work. She told me that she sees a lot of her grandfather in Gavin, and she knows he will do great things for our people.

Recently Gavin attended and spoke at the 30th Annual Deh Cho First Nation meeting that was held in Fort Simpson this past summer where he shared his educational journey and addressed the youth, inspiring them to challenge themselves and to pursue their education. Gavin shared that he made this ten-year educational journey for the Dene people and to advocate and serve the Liidlii Kue First Nation of Treaty 11. I would like to congratulate him on his achievement.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 621-20(1):
FEDERAL DEFENCE SPENDING IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just following up on my Member's statement today. Given the fact that the Premier's noted in a recent story about this engagement of the federal government, I'm asking the Premier what is he doing about the national defence investment money in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this was announced about a year ago, I've had numerous meetings with Minister Blair, the Minister of National Defence and with other federal Ministers, and we have -- along with the other northern Premiers, we have been lobbying the federal government to enlarge and advance more quickly their investments in the northern operational support hubs. I believe it was \$218 million is the number that was in the original plan, and that was mostly to be spent in the final years of that plan. And so we've been advocating to get that money spent sooner than later. In the meantime, we actually have hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of investments from the Department of National Defence in infrastructure projects in the territory currently underway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I should mention I forgot to say that MLA for Range Lake was also advocating on this issue too.

So, Mr. Speaker, back to the question at hand. Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I had some conversations in the last sit -- sorry, in the last month about a joint working group. Would he still be interested on creating a joint working group, and I'll table the terms of reference today. I'm curious on his opinion on that with respect to national defence spending.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'd have to see those terms of reference and figure out what exactly the Member is talking about in terms of a joint working group, what that would look like, who would be involved, what the subject matter would be, and so on. And so after I see that, I'll be able to speak to the Member about it. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Defence money's good money, Mr. Speaker. And we're spending almost half a million dollars on our super envoy who will be living or working in Ottawa from time to time. That said, I'm asking is the -- is this individual on this file to help get defence investment in the Northwest Territories?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're using all the tools at our disposal. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 622-20(1):
COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL TRADE

MR. McNEELY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question following up on my statement earlier is to the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. As the chair of the committee of internal trade, what key accomplishments have been achieved under NWT's leadership? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister of ITI.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a collaborative table with all jurisdictions across Canada, and it's a collaborative table that I am very proud to be part of. As a group, the committee on internal trade has set four key recommendations across the country, and they include enhancing commitments under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, and that includes conducting a rapid review of all party's specific exceptions, prioritizing mutual recognition on priority goods and sectors to reduce regulatory and administrative burdens, Mr. Speaker. It includes facilitating labour mobility and then also sectoral priorities like, for example, direct-to-consumer sales system for alcohol, and that is specifically for willing jurisdictions. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that information reply. It's good to see our government taking a forefront role in these national committees. The next question, Mr. Speaker, how has the NWT's leadership encouraged other provinces and territories to take a more ambitious approach to internal trade deliberations? Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, even though the NWT has the privilege of sitting as the chair, I have to say that Ministers from all jurisdictions showed up to the table in Toronto ready to do good work on behalf of Canadians, on behalf of the residents that we individually and then collectively serve. And so there wasn't a need to encourage one another to go farther. It was a very exciting table where people were literally stepping out of the meeting room in order to call their Premiers and get expansions to their negotiating mandates, and there were commitments made on the fly at the table, and it was really encouraging to see how dedicated

Ministers from across the country were to this work. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister for that reply. It seems to me there was a lot of excitement on advancing in a productive kind of way during the session.

My third question: It sounds like there has been good progress. What are the primary barriers to internal trade that would remain? Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so while we came together at the table in order to discuss the barriers of mutual concern across the country, certainly what exceptions each jurisdiction chooses to remove and how they choose to tackle those are going to be unique by each jurisdiction. There's been jurisdictions who have done reciprocal agreements, jurisdictions who have done, you know, a lot of work on their exceptions, and there was some who have even done a lot of work previous to this. So as it sits, Manitoba only has eight exceptions right now, and other jurisdictions are using that as a shining light.

The other piece that we're doing, that I'm really excited about for the Northwest Territories, is the mutual recognition of goods which really stands to have a positive influence on our industries here in the territory and on our administrative burden as well as the potential costs of doing business in the territory. So that's where I'm very excited, also very excited for the work to be done under the labour mobility piece that is in collaboration with the labour Ministers across the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 623-20(1):
HARM REDUCTION SUPPORTS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I just got a note of thanks for my content warning for earlier, so I'll make it again for my questions. I will be speaking about sexual trauma and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell me what harm reduction supports exist for people who may recognize that they need help to not commit acts of sexual abuse? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now the community counselling program, which provides mental health support to all residents, could be available to support individual needs of support to preventing acts of abuse as community counsellors can work with individuals to provide individual counselling but also to provide support referrals to other treatments and options of care as applicable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister and I have corresponded in the past about what may be needed for specified treatment services for folks struggling with the results of their own sexual trauma. There are specialized programs such as the sexual behaviours clinic at the Centre of Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto that could help. Can the Minister explain if she can review whether this would align with insured health services? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I can't commit to a review on a specific topic, I can commit to reviewing approaches to specialized health services as part of the larger system sustainability work that's underway. The Department of Health and Social Services and EIA are in partnership with the health sustainability unit, and Members are aware that this work is taking place to establish an inventory of core and insured services, and type of specialized mental health services could be considered as part of this work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I appreciate that commitment. Even if it's not a review, making sure it's in the scope of what she's reviewing as a total mental health approach is very much appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that local and culturally-sensitive solutions are the best path forward. So can the Minister look into what available services with justice could be feasibly offered within the lens of health and social services with adequate training as a pilot program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about culturally sensitive solutions, you know, I want to just state that here on the floor, and with everybody, we've been told time and time again that government needs to respectfully, you

know, work with Indigenous governments, work with those that are providing care. We've created the community wellness and addiction recovery funds. You know, and those are some of -- they can use towards trauma healing. I know there's been some really good programs even up in my region. Most recently, the Gwich'in Tribal Council had a men's camp. You know, so there is work going on that is based in their culture. And so for us as GNWT, working with justice, you know, we can always look at what they're doing and what we're providing and see how we can work together but also incorporating Indigenous values, you know, for those that are struggling with issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 624-20(1):
PHYSICAL ASSETS OF AURORA COLLEGE
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Aurora College has said closing the CLCs will save \$8.29 million. Can the Minister say what it would cost to keep the centres open. Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the college identified a total of \$8.29 million that they would, first of all, have for their staff retention policy; second, the delivery of their online programming; and then third, further work to be done on reinstating their bachelor of education and social work programming that we've heard a lot about in this House as well. And so I would have to assume that maintaining the CLCs would continue to cost upwards of the \$7 million figure. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you for the information. Can the Minister say what plan is in place with the Department of Infrastructure to maintain the CLC building after programs stop in June? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is absolutely right. These are still assets of the GNWT, the ones that are owned by the GNWT. The Department of Infrastructure does have asset policies so that if there is a need to pass the facilities on to another owner, there is a policy for that. And infrastructure and ECE will be working together on this work, and we have had some phone calls already from Indigenous

governments or NGOs that are wanting to have a role to play in the future of the CLCs and have identified that. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister say whether students in small communities without computers will be able to continue working in the learning centres once everything moves online? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't comment as to what those facilities will become used for down the road, and so certainly if it's a situation where an Indigenous government chooses to have a facility like that, then that would certainly be an option depending on what that choice down the road is. My understanding through the presentation from Aurora College president and the chair is that in order to support students across the Northwest Territories through online learning that they would have wraparound supports not only for student life but also for student learning. They would be set up with the hardware required for online learning and have access to somebody who would show them how to use that hardware as well. And that would not just be a computer, it would also be headset, it would be internet. And so Aurora College intends to ensure that students have access to the technology that they would require. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 625-20(1):
INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT POLICY

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon we received -- Standing Committee on Government Operations received a briefing on the Indigenous employment policy. Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I've heard, one of the main concerns, is from families with children schooled in the NWT returning to university who are concerned their opportunities for employment will now be limited. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister discuss how students who previously benefitted from P2 status will still have opportunities for employment with the GNWT. Mr. Speaker, will we still be prioritizing our northern students in our hiring? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so the Indigenous employment policy does apply to the internship and the summer student program so all students who are Indigenous -- Indigenous Canadians that are students would certainly have access to that. And to be a member -- or to have access to the student programs, that does continue to have the ordinarily resident eligibility to it. So for young people or anyone who's applying for an internship or a summer student position, they would have to have a connection to the Northwest Territories as an ordinary resident just as they would also if they were utilizing our student financial aid programs.

And, Mr. Speaker, one other part of the student programs, we do create a bank of students so when people put their names in, they are then matched with available opportunities. So we encourage students to reach out to members of the public service to help identify potential opportunities, to identify potential placements, identify the kinds of work they might be able to do, and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker folks who have grown up here, who have family here, who have connections here, are obviously much better placed to do that and to make those matches and those connections much more quickly. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that answer. Mr. Speaker, during the presentation, the department hired -- highlighted a number of areas which still need more work, for persons with disabilities, women, long-time Northerners who are now left out of the new policy. Can the Minister discuss how the department plans to address diversity and inclusion and prioritizing northern hires under this new policy that they've just approved. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the affirmative action policy also had groups and people who were not recognized who may have been left out from some sort of priority status, and it really was one policy that was being used to solve a multitude of different problems rather than what we've now tried to get to which is a place of having multiple different policies that are, you know, all being used as a suite within the department of human resources -- or Department of Finance and human resources. So the Indigenous employment policy looks at priority hiring for Indigenous Northerners and Indigenous Canadians. The diversity and inclusion framework is the way in which the department is approaching the importance of ensuring diversity, of accommodating diversity, of recognizing diversity, supporting people to be in a workplace that recognizes diversity. And

as well, Mr. Speaker, we now have greater deal -- greater planning on succession planning through a strategic approach to human resources. And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, we continue to -- I mentioned earlier the summer student program and continuing to improve our recruitment and retention efforts. So, really, all of these are different ways that we're looking to improve that process. We want to get to a place, Mr. Speaker -- and I would note for folks, for whom this might matter, where right from the minute that someone applies, diversity and inclusion and the duty to accommodate applies right from that moment so that if somebody does have an identifying feature or aspect that they need to see accommodated, that that would be part of that process right from day one and they wouldn't even have to ask, ultimately that that's just part of the culture that we want to have developed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And continuing on this thread, one resident that wrote to committee raised the fact of while the department has frequently highlighted that the government is not representative of the full population of the NWT, the issue at hand is that of the available workforce. So, Mr. Speaker, why is the department not using the demographics of the available workforce as a way to measure representation as it moves forward with this policy? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent observation by a member of the public. And it's a direction that we may well see ourselves moving towards in terms of being able to communicate better of what our successes and our challenges are in the space of being representative. We know that the Northwest Territories has a 50 percent Indigenous population, but it's quite right that the actual labour force is not necessarily a 50/50 split. And that may be owing to the age demographics, if people are too young or too old to be in the workforce for example. What we do find is that in the Northwest Territories our labour force is actually sitting at approximately 63 percent non-Indigenous. And then further challenges that we run into, Mr. Speaker, is that, in fact, of the group of people in the Northwest Territories in the labour force who are Indigenous, not as many had access or had the opportunity to obtain post-secondary education.

So, Mr. Speaker, understanding this, and then seeing what that barrier is to support residents so that they cannot only go get a position but

that they can be applying and moving up in succession planning and moving into positions of management, it allows us to better identify the challenge at hand and identify the barriers at hand. And then as we report in on the individual targets of the different types of positions with different levels of requirement, we can make sure that we're supporting residents if they need training internally, if they need training to apply, if they need post-secondary access, or if we need to re-examine what our equivalencies are or what our actual job needs are. And all of that together, Mr. Speaker, I think will help us ultimately to be a more representative workforce. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 626-20(1):
ARCTIC SECURITY COUNCIL

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my Member's statement, the town of Inuvik, Mr. Speaker, is well aware of what military spending looks like in the community. Pre-1986, there was 140 to 250 military personnel there as well as their families, which made up about 800, which were school kids that integrated into the community and teachers and nurses and that was the model -- the preferred model at the time. A lot of the leadership, Mr. Speaker, are still there. They lived through that time. So when the Premier talks about setting up an advisory council, or as my colleague from Yellowknife Centre has said, a committee, will the Minister -- will the Premier, sorry, ensure that when we set something up that we look at regions like Inuvik to ensure that we have representation on the committee that is expertise as we've talked about outside of this building that would fit excellent on a committee like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So there is no committee at this point. I'm not sure what the working group proposal looks like. So I can't really make any commitments around that. That being said, obviously there's a lot of value in ensuring that everyone's on the same page and everyone's communicating. And so we're in the early days of this interest in the North and talking about investments and Arctic security. And my officials are working with officials from Joint Task Force North and the Department of National Defence, and we share information as required. And I know that officials from the Department of National

Defence, or Joint Task Force North perhaps, are in contact with officials in the Member's community in Inuvik. I know that they're disseminating information as well. That being said, once we get to a point where we need to ramp up and ensure that we're all, you know, working together on the same page and in the same direction, I'll ensure that all voices, all relevant voices are at the table. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Premier. I appreciate that, and I know the Premier's live to this, and I know he knows that I get plenty of e-mails and telephone calls from my community on this as military, again, as I've stated before, is important to my community, to my region.

So, you know, the Premier's people and the people in Inuvik, everyone is aware and everyone is speaking to each other, I guess if the Premier is planning to send a delegation or heading to the -- I noted in my statement there's meetings at the end of May between Joint Task Force North, the Department of National Defence, with our territory as well as Yukon and Nunavut, would the Premier consider looping in potentially the mayors of Inuvik and Iqaluit for that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think the Member might be talking about the Arctic security working group, which is an officials' level working group. They meet twice a year. I believe it's once in Yellowknife, once in the Yukon, and so this time it's in the Yukon. And we are not organizing that, the Joint Task Force North. I believe the Yukon might be co-hosting it so they might have a role in it. But we're not in a position to invite anyone to attend this event. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just hope the Premier will use his significant influence in that situation.

I also mentioned that there's a conference taking place in the Yukon this month called Conference Zero which is their Arctic security council have set up through funding through CanNor. Will the Premier or anyone from his office be attending that conference? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't be able to attend that conference, and so we're still looking at options to ensure that there is some sort of presence there from the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 627-20(1):
ROLE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
PROCESS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So following up on my Member's statement, my questions are for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

So even for those projects we may have decided are necessary, like roads, we need environmental assessments with full and open participation by scientists and traditional knowledge experts in order to make them the best they can be. So on a project like the Mackenzie Valley Highway, once the GNWT's already submitted its developer's assessment report, as the government did in 2023, are there any further opportunities within the environmental assessment process for those government-employed scientists to engage in the back and forth dialogue with TK experts about how to make the project better? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is much discussion amongst all the parties during the environmental assessment process. And, you know, the feedback from all of those parties is very important as well because that's what actually improves the project as we move forward. ECC, on this specific project, is supporting the Department of Infrastructure as the project lead, and infrastructure is engaging and working with traditional knowledge holders and communities in regards to advancing this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So as I understand it, the role of the GNWT-employed scientists is to give their input and expertise internally before that gets fed into the process. Does the GNWT employ any traditional knowledge experts that the GNWT's scientists can engage internally with to have that dialogue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECC is working with the Department of Infrastructure as the project lead to support the development of the project and providing technical advice in this regard. And as mentioned in my response to the first question, the GNWT is engaging and working with the traditional knowledge holders and the communities in regards to advancing the project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose I'll assume, unless directed otherwise, that the government is not employing traditional knowledge experts directly to have that internal dialogue.

But the final question is while I understand that government-employed scientists are still allowed to participate in responding to information requests, are those scientists allowed to collaborate with any other parties in issuing information requests as part of the environmental assessment process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is using a whole-of-government approach to the Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessment, similar to the approach that was used on the Tlicho All-Season Highway or the Giant Mine remediation project through those environmental assessments. And this approach involves collaboration between the GNWT, our subject-matter experts across the different departments, to consider the GNWT's submission within the board process. You know, our experts also work within that process, for example technical sessions, to hear input from other parties respond to concerns and, if warranted, adjust the approach through collaboration and discussion, which is always a really important part of this whole process. They also participate in hearings which truly are a quasi judicial process. And during that process, you know, they bring their opinion and their position on -- very freely on whatever questions are raised through that process. The GNWT project that will contribute to this -- this is in advancing our mandate, and all the departments are working together in this advancement, no different in how we are supporting infrastructure in this way on this specific project as other departments would support environment and climate change on initiatives initiated by our department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 628-20(1):

JUNCTION LIGHTS ON HIGHWAYS 4 AND 5

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, Ingraham Trail is Highway No. 3, and Dettah is Highway No. 4.

Mr. Speaker, since the mining industry's been around for a while, they used to have anywhere from 13 to 15,000 truckloads that go through to the mining ice road, and they'd pass the junction of Dettah Road of Highway No. 4. I raised this issue in the 19th Assembly, and I was told that there was a study that was done. I just wanted to ask the Minister maybe she could let me know what the study was about and what were their findings. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not the Minister in the 19th Assembly. I'm happy to see if there was a study done on that stretch of road and to share whatever outcomes or recommendations there are with the Member for the region. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Pine Point mine is looking at restarting up again sometime in the near future and my question, again, now is the Minister of Infrastructure is that is there also another study on this road for high traffic demands on that road? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do take the safety of highways quite seriously. There's regular inspections of all the highways. To what extent there are inspections versus specific studies or studies related to private projects, I'm happy to look into it. Mr. Speaker, it may well be that the project proponents themselves have done some examinations. I know, for example, over in another -- in your own region, Mr. Speaker, the Norzinc mine certainly was looking at what impacts having extra highway traffic would bring to those, to the highways in that area. So happy to look into it and see what I can find. I can't say for sure, but I will certainly look into it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ingraham Trail, again, is Highway No. 3. Dettah is Highway No. 4. Highway No. 5 is Fort Smith. And Highway No. 6, Fort Resolution. Mr. Speaker, to meet the 20th Assembly's mandate for safe residents and communities, my question to the Minister is that what can we do to work towards to put up junction lights in these two locations probably in the next -- in the near future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had heard the Member's statement earlier with respect to the

junction between Fort Resolution and Fort Smith and did already begin to inquire of the Department of Infrastructure as to what previous studies might have been done. I can say we do monitor accident reports along all the stretches of highway in order to determine if there is a need for different types of signage. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that Highway No. 6 has actually not had any reported events or collisions since 1989. So in terms of any significant or serious injuries, I'm sure some folks do run off the highway at times and may well miss the junction at times. Mr. Speaker, lights are hundreds of thousands of dollars, but signage is significantly less. So it may well be that we can in the near future look at signs leading up to a juncture to give folks more warning so that they are not slamming on their brakes and hopefully creating more safety for all of these various regions that the Member is raising. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 629-20(1):
PRIMARY CARE REFORM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health and Social Services provide this House with a comprehensive plan for primary care reform that is fully costed, has clear milestones, and is based on input from patients and healthcare workers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did send a letter to the social development committee offering a briefing on primary care reform. And so I'm hoping to be able to have a lot of that discussion and the Member's question to be answered in that briefing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we see that some of the aspects of the plan that's already ongoing is being reported in the media. There was a story on it just the other day -- or just today, I think. Maybe yesterday. But it's active out there. I think it's important that the public be aware of this. Can the Minister commit to make that plan public? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the primary care reform is a long-term commitment, and it'll take time and engagement, and it is something that is ongoing as it's been -- right now we've

implemented it into Yellowknife, Fort Smith, and Fort Good Hope. And so as we start to expand, you know, we will continue to have these discussions with public throughout the primary care reform. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is it a plan, though, that's being executed, or is it piecemeal decisions called primary care reform? We're hearing a bunch of different facts. We're seeing a bunch of different actions being taken. We still don't have online booking. Other places do. So is this, again, a comprehensive costed plan with clear milestones that this Assembly can judge, the public can judge, and we can actually see some improvement? And not just for us but for the people who work within the system as well. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, primary care, as I mentioned in this House many times, takes a holistic approach to healthcare system transformation. And it is not a one size fits all. And so there is not a costed plan as to this is what it's going to be in the Northwest Territories A, B, C. It is what are we working within our communities? We are doing the assessments as we're rolling out into the different regions. So Yellowknife's primary care reform, yes, it does have these issues that have been raised in this House. We're finding that, you know, in Fort Smith, we've heard a few things. We're trying to improve those before we expand it out further into other regions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 630-20(1):
STATUS OF CARIBOU HERD
POPULATIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of environment some questions regarding caribou.

Mr. Speaker, I was on the highway a couple weeks ago, and I saw a small herd of eight caribou near the Whati Road, and I only thought to myself jeez, I sure hope they know where they are. Because I'll tell ya, they looked delicious. Anyway, that said, the numbers have always been at risk and hence my question specifically to the Minister is is what is the most current count of herds, and do we have any that are on the increase? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to hear that the Member saw a nice small herd of caribou over there. It's nice any time you can experience that. Those specific numbers I don't have with me today, but I'm happy to provide to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware of any herd on the increase? In other words, has it been rebounding from some of the record lows? At one time in the Yellowknife area, we had the Bathurst at close to 500,000 and, you know, just a few years ago, it was just under 7,000, Mr. Speaker. I'm curious is the Minister aware of any that are on the increase? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the one I am -- that comes top of mind is the Bluenose-East herd which has increased in numbers. Approximately 14,000 or so, give or take, increase from 2021 to 2023 is the one that comes to mind right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly describe moose as the northern delicacy. But that said, dry meat from caribou is always welcome and delicious, Mr. Speaker. What types of working groups are out there that the Minister's working with trying to encourage sustainable harvesting so we can see the herds increase in numbers so they will be there for further generations? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a tremendous effort between the Department of Environment and Climate Change working with all of the Indigenous governments across the Northwest Territories. You know, climate has certainly played an impact on the caribou as well and, you know, the caribou are a very traditional part of the culture all across the NWT. So you know, we are working with all of the Indigenous governments. We're working with the -- sorry. Yes, thanks, drew a blank. My apologies.

Working with the -- sorry, working with the monitors, with the monitoring programs across the NWT. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to go up the actual -- the winter road yesterday. We went up to MacKay Lake and, unfortunately, we didn't see any caribou, but we had five officers up there. There are a number of monitors. The Yellowknives Dene are up there. The North Slave Metis are up there, as well as the Tlicho.

So there's a lot of work going on amongst those groups as well as, you know, our engagement with the traditional knowledge holders and working with communities all throughout the North Slave region as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 631-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE
PROGRAM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since the Northwest Territories nominee program has opened its doors to new applicants, well my office has been flooded with frustrated and worried people about their fate in the program. I am hearing through various sources that there may be options to restore our numbers back to 300. Can the Minister clarify some of these -- the information that's been going around this space and let us know where her negotiations with the federal government are at. 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, through my conversations with the federal government, the federal minister did offer to the Northwest Territories an opportunity to potentially increase our allotment for the Northwest Territories nominee program, and the conversation there revolves around the Northwest Territories welcoming asylum seekers to the territory. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is interesting news, Mr. Speaker. I believe the Northwest Territories has already welcomed around 80 asylum seekers and refugees to the Northwest Territories. Seems like something we can do. Is the Minister going to be taking the federal Minister up on his offer and get our quota back? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I have asked for further details from the federal minister to better understand exactly who he would be speaking about and then also the potential demands on our system for -- so, for example, our healthcare system. And then, in addition, have wanted to better understand what support services the federal government would be open to offering the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the clock is ticking on the federal government. I don't think we have much long left with them. And certainly many people who are asylum seekers are able to work in the Northwest Territories as well. This seems like it could be two birds with one stone. And certainly the North is welcoming to people, and this would help solve a lot of problems. We have precious little time to get it done. When will the Minister have an answer for the House on this issue? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So I have asked for those further clarifying details from the federal government myself and then have also had a sit-down meeting with MP McLeod to also indicate the additional information that I'm looking for, and he agreed to take that back to his -- to the federal Minister as well. So we're both working together to try and flesh out this information. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 632-20(1):
INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT POLICY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to pick up where some of the questions were left off with respect to the Minister of Finance and the Indigenous employment program. And one of the things she had mentioned how Indigenous Canadian summer students would be able to qualify. So I'm curious would they qualify above local P2s? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under the summer student program you do need to be ordinarily resident so that right now persons who, as P2, would be born in the Northwest Territories. If they are not an ordinarily resident, then they would not. If they are a P2 because they have lived more than half their life and might be a student from that -- in that respect and if they're now still ordinarily resident, then they would qualify, Mr. Speaker. If under the Indigenous employment policy, you would have -- of course, again, it's related to persons who are Indigenous to the Northwest Territories or Indigenous Canadians but, again, would also still have to be ordinarily resident in the

Northwest Territories. So, again, depends, I guess, what kind of P2 you might have under the current policy. But in any case, the individuals applying to the student program do all have to be ordinarily resident. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance, not infrastructure. Same person, but I apologize. Back to oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the similar note, Mr. Speaker, in the committee just recently the Minister had said known the policy of -- the affirmative action policy to be clear -- was known to be unconstitutional. Now, I'm not asking her opinion. I'm asking for her facts. So what facts does she have in a legal opinion that state this, and would she be willing to share this secret knowledge to Members? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that there have been discussions in public and with myself and perhaps with other Members and perhaps with other Members or representatives from the Department of Finance with respect to concerns around Section 6 of the Charter which relates to the mobility rights of Canadians to be able to move between jurisdictions. It's obviously a hot topic right now as we are facing challenges with tariffs and a response to tariffs that includes removing mobility or encouraging mobility across jurisdictions.

With respect to legal opinions, Mr. Speaker, it should, I think, be fairly well known by most people that legal opinions are not the kind of document that get readily shared by anyone who is in possession of one, and I won't be doing that today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, only for a sentence at most, really, Bill 21 in Quebec is used to protect them from their philosophical position. I don't necessarily agree with it, and I want to make that clear. But that said, that is a state which is protecting their objectives, culture, rights, whatever. I'll let them defend it, not me. That said, the affirmative action program was a way of recognizing the value that P2s provide, including the other areas of women and persons with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, how unconstitutional is it so bad that people don't even have a legal opinion but yet flog it and say well, it doesn't meet the rights. Like, in other words, why can't we just do it until we're challenged? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not that the department doesn't have legal opinions over the last 35 years; however, I just won't be putting forward legal opinions that are subject to solicitor-client privilege here on the floor of the House. Mr. Speaker, certainly happy to sit down and engage further about the various risks that go into determining policy. I'm not going to speak to what Quebec may or may not do. And there is a significant difference in the application of, you know -- if where this was going was some suggestion around, you know, what kind of risk mitigation strategies one might go into, and you are concerned about having an unconstitutional policy, Mr. Speaker, there's, again -- the question was difficult, quite frankly, to follow. I'm not trying to cast dispersions. I'm just wanting to ensure that I'm not now told I'm not answering the question. We have legal opinions. Mobility rights are a live issue. It was quite clear based on the language within the former affirmative action policy that it would more likely than not be across the line of being against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Mr. Speaker. And I think I'll leave it there. And there's 11 minutes on the clock; I'm happy to take more questions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 633-20(1):
ACCESS TO YELLOWKNIFE DAY AND
SOBERING SHELTER

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I wanted to ask the Minister about the policies of the GNWT-run day shelter and sobering centre here in Yellowknife around how and when they might restrict access to prevent individuals from using those spaces for reasons other than immediate safety threats. And I just wanted to especially note that the day shelter is the only co-ed space available in Yellowknife for social connection and community support.

Can the Minister confirm, do the day shelter and sober centre have policies to refuse access to anyone who may regularly seek shelter somewhere else, such as the women's shelter or the Salvation Army? 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, as the Minister of Health and Social Services that does oversee this temporary day shelter, they do have policies;

however, I don't have those policies in front of me to be able to go through them and respond to that question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Okay. Can the Minister confirm whether the sobering centre restricts access to intoxicated individuals if they already have a room allocated to them, for example, at the women's centre or the Salvation Army? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that level of detail. I do know that they have their processes and if they are an intoxicated individual, they -- whether they know they have a room somewhere else, I don't know how they work with the shelters within the network of Yellowknife. 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. Well, I do look forward to following up with the Minister to pursue this further. But my final question is just that given that the women's centre has a policy now stating it can't safely support intoxicated individuals during the daytime, even if they rent a room within that space, if these folks are being turned away at the sobering centre and they can't go back to their room at the women's centre, is the Minister aware of anywhere else those folks can go if they're intoxicated to safely get off the street? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, the health and social services does operate the sobering day shelter which acts as an emergency shelter at night; however, there are many other facilities in Yellowknife that are NGOs that run their facilities. Those things that I don't have as most of the shelters do not fall under just the shelter -- the sobering centre. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 634-20(1):
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF
PHYSICIANS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this sitting I had asked questions about physician staffing in the Northwest Territories. We learned that nine physicians have left since fiscal year 2023-2024, and now we're hearing that 64 percent of physicians in the Northwest Territories are planning on leaving. This is a

crisis to put it mildly, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister's plan to reverse this trend and bring either new physicians here or -- or bring new physicians to the Northwest Territories and keep the ones we currently have? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NTHSSA and the department, you know, they work closely together and they work with their partners with the medical association on, you know -- and I'll highlight an article today that the medical association is doing a lot of things that they feel that they can try to, you know, work with their staff; however, turnover in physicians throughout the Northwest Territories, historically, you know, has happened but this, again -- and I highlight this is not something that is isolated to the Northwest Territories. This is something that my colleagues, health Ministers in jurisdictions across Canada, are struggling with. There is some work being done at the national level to identify -- as I recently was at the FPT, and we had this discussion on data. So we actually know what the vacancy rates are in physicians and primary care physicians and family physicians, in specialty areas, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, all of the fields that we are currently seeing that we have vacancies in. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that they've identified through gathering that data is the amount of positions that -- or amount of spaces in schools that are producing -- that are college students and, you know, going into. The graduates of all of those programs across Canada are not even enough to fill those gaps with the numbers of people that average retire through every year. So there is a national plan on looking at how can we open up more seats across Canada, how can we use that data to improve, you know, providing more training, more health professionals across Canada, because that's the area that we're struggling right now across Canada in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a great assessment of the problem but we're looking for solutions, and the Minister mentioned the work the association's doing. But what's the work that the department is doing for recruitment and retention of physicians? She mentioned university spots, there's too few. Are we funding new university spots? Are we expanding the residency program? There's a ton of things we do that are actually very helpful that we've heard from physicians are useful. Are we going to expand those programs? Like, when are solutions

going to come forward? We all know the problems. They're loud and clear in our ridings. They're loud and clear in our hospitals and clinics. So what are the solutions the Minister's bringing to the table? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the solutions that we are doing is we are actually doing the health sustainability system review. We need to find out what our core systems are and the dollars that we are getting in that -- you know, and if there's changes to our system that are going to support our core programs to make them more robust and to be able to do the things that we need to do to attract more physicians or health care workers within the system, we need to get that work done. That is the big part of the work that needs to get done because we have a system that is constantly, you know, moving. It's a 365-day system that never stops within health and the other work that we're doing is we're now looking at models of care in the small communities, and so that way we're looking at primary care reform. You know, we're looking at ways that other health care professionals can do and work at the scope of their -- like, their profession. And that takes the burden off the physicians to do the things that they can do. You know, we've heard from physicians what their thoughts are in primary care reform. We're working with them. The PA is working with them to continue this work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2023-2024, we lost a family physician, an obstetrician, a pediatrician. These are frontline physicians that provide primary care services that families need, that Northerners need. I get the public administrator is busy doing this work. We haven't seen that plan. So I'm going to turn again to this: What's the public administrator's role in this, and when are we allowed to find out about it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we will be having -- offering a briefing to standing committee within the early first quarter of the next fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 635-20(1):
STATUS OF ROCKHILL HOUSING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, back, I believe in June of last year during oral question 253-20(1), my question, I was asking about the future of Rockhill. And the Minister in her response said that they had an agreement with the NWT Disabilities Council, and that's in Hansard, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to get an update with respect to what's happening with that agreement, and is it moving forward in what form, either with the disabilities council or what is happening with that property? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in February I shared a highly confidential letter with MLAs that indicated the progress with the Rockhill properties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Mr. Speaker, there must be some future with respect to what's happening with both. The Minister can speak to that. And it's her letter, so it's not confidential if she speaks about it. It's confidential if I speak to it. So that said, can she enlighten the House as to the direction of this relationship: A, with Rockhill; and, B, with the NWT Disabilities Council; which way or where is it going? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The most important thing we're doing with Rockhill properties is we're working in collaboration. We want NWT Disabilities Council to succeed, but we also want Housing NWT to succeed. We have a prime piece of property in downtown Yellowknife. We have potential projects on the go, and we want this to succeed. But we have to work in collaboration; we have to work together. Success is really important, especially with Yellowknife. I mean, we have many families on the waitlist that are looking for Yellowknife housing. So it's important we work in collaboration, and that's what we're doing, 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 trying to find out has any new agreement or objective, even a handshake deal, been done between any of these situations that can be clarified in the House? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing to share at this moment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Colleagues, time is up for oral questions. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Member from Frame Lake.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 304-20(1):
TOWARDS A BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE
IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES,
JANUARY 2025, PLANITNORTH

TABLED DOCUMENT 305-20(1):
TOWARDS A BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE
IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES: A
PROPOSAL TO INVEST IN PEOPLE FOR
THE COMMON GOOD – SUMMARY FOR
POLICY MAKERS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following documents: First is Towards a Basic Income Guarantee in the Northwest Territories prepared by PlanItNorth for Alternatives North. And second is Towards a Basic Income Guarantee in the Northwest Territories: A Proposal to Invest in People for the Common Good - Summary for Policy Makers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

TABLED DOCUMENT 306-20(1):
DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR JOINT WORKING
GROUP, TERMS OF REFERENCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my Member -- or sorry, my oral questions -- I think even mentioned in my Member's statement -- I have a draft joint working group terms of reference. And, again, I can't stress enough it's a draft to start a conversation off. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 51-20(1):
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, March 13th, 2025, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Range Lake, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to immediately halt any further advancement and implementation of the new Indigenous employment policy, also known as the IEP, and return to using the affirmative action policy without delay as the primary hiring guidelines for the Government of the Northwest Territories;

And further, that the Minister of Finance engage with the Standing Committee on Government Operations prior to any further changes in the Government of the Northwest Territories' hiring policy, to discuss and seek guidance that can improve the affirmative action policy which ultimately strengthens the Government of the Northwest Territories hiring practices with the intent that supports northern Indigenous, long-term Northerners, women, persons with disabilities, as well as other marginalized communities;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MOTION 52-20(1):
STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR NURSES
AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 13th, 2025, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Monfwi, that the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly undertake a comprehensive review of healthcare management practices, bargaining structures and labour policies, in consultation with nurses, labour unions, independent professional associations, frontline healthcare workers, and other key stakeholders to identify and implement measures that:

- (i) reinforce workplace protections for nurses and healthcare workers, including improved work-life balance initiatives, competitive compensation, and mental health supports;
- (ii) address management practices that contribute to low workplace morale, fostering a supportive and collaborative working environment;

- (iii) strengthen recruitment and retention strategies for nurses and healthcare staff through focused incentives and stable workforce planning; and

- (iv) increase accountability in the administration of health care in the Northwest Territories to ensure that policies reflect the realities of frontline work and lead to real improvements in working conditions in all healthcare settings including hospitals, health centres and health cabins;

And further, that the Legislative Assembly engage thoroughly with labour unions, professional associations, health agencies and Indigenous governments to ensure that these measures accurately reflect the needs of healthcare workers in the Northwest Territories;

And furthermore, that the comprehensive review of healthcare management practices, bargaining structures and labour policies, be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for further study.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MOTION 53-20(1):
REAPPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE
HUMAN RIGHTS ADJUDICATION PANEL

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 13th, 2025, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Sheldon Toner of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and Jay Sengupta of Hamilton, Ontario, be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for reappointment as members of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel, effective April 1, 2025, for a term of four years.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this specific motion later today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MOTION 54-20(1):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE
HOUSE TO MAY 22, 2025

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 13th, 2025, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that notwithstanding Rule 2.1, when the House adjourns on Thursday, March 13th, 2025, it shall be adjourned until Thursday, May 22nd, 2025;

And further, that any time prior to May 22nd, 2025, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Yellowknife North.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice earlier today with respect to the Human Rights Adjudication Panel. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Member from Yellowknife North is seeking unanimous consent to deal with his motion for Human Rights Adjudication Panel. Seeing no nays, Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Motions

MOTION 53-20(1):
REAPPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE
HUMAN RIGHTS ADJUDICATION PANEL,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS Section 48(1) of the Human Rights Act provides for the establishment of an adjudication panel composed of at least three persons appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS Section 48(4) of the Human Rights Act provides that the members of the panel hold office, during good behaviour, for a term of four years, with the exception of the first member appointed;

AND WHEREAS, there are currently two appointments to the panel which expire March 31, 2025;

AND WHEREAS, the board of management is tasked with recommending individuals to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly is prepared to make a recommendation to the Commissioner;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Sheldon Toner of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and Jay Sengupta of Hamilton, Ontario, be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for reappointment as members of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel effective April 1, 2025, for a term of four years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

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

First Reading of Bills

BILL 22:
LEGISLATION ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 22, Legislation Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 22 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

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

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried. Thank you.

---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. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 275-20(1) and, Mr. Speaker, I move 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 for that motion, please. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carried.

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 12th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. 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
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions

9. Returns to Written Questions
 - Written Question 14-20(1), Operating Rooms at Stanton Territorial Hospital
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act
 - Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Family Law Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 22, Legislation Act
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 12th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:26 p.m.