



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

3rd Session

Day 54

18th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

Pages 4831 – 4856

The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 12, 2019****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Good afternoon, Members. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 138-18(3):
CELEBRATING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

HON CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, when our connections to our languages and cultures are strong, our people are strong. Language and culture play a crucial role in people's daily lives, as tools for communication, education, social integration, and development. Language, culture, history, and traditions shape us as people.

I will begin by announcing that, upon recommendation of the Official Languages Board, February has been declared the new Indigenous Languages Month in the Northwest Territories.

The theme of this year's Indigenous Languages Month, "We Love Our Languages," serves as an invitation to all residents to take time to show their appreciation and celebrate the 11 official languages we have in the Northwest Territories.

During this month our languages are being promoted, a meeting of the Official Languages Board is taking place, the top entrants of the Elder and Youth Indigenous Languages Video Contest are being premiered, and other events are being held throughout the regions.

Mr. Speaker, celebrations are important; however, successful revitalization won't be accomplished through the efforts of just one month a year.

Despite their tremendous value, Indigenous languages across the world continue to disappear at an alarming rate. In an effort to bring attention to this, 2019 has been declared the International Year of Indigenous Languages by the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, to combat the threat against them, this government is committed to revitalising and increasing the use of Indigenous languages. We are actively promoting the nine territorial Indigenous official languages on a continual basis and working to preserve and revitalize them for future generations. Although there are challenges, we are seeing some progress. Initiatives like the Our Languages curriculum in schools, funding Indigenous governments for language activities, and providing Indigenous language coordinators in all regions are making a difference.

Mr. Speaker, We are extremely proud of our continued work to develop the Our Languages curriculum. A large-scale pilot started in 40 of our 49 schools this past September, and the response already has been astounding. We have heard that it has been a positive experience, that it is exciting, that it is important and the right thing. We heard loud and clear that it's about time.

Just as Indigenous Languages Month draws to a close, the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie is beginning around the world. During the month of March, I invite my colleagues and the public to celebrate another of our official languages, French. Language and culture events throughout the Northwest Territories will promote the French language in the context of cultural diversity and aim to bring people together by highlighting the importance of all official languages.

The government recently released the 2018-2023 French Languages Communications and Services Strategic Plan developed with input from the Federation franco-tenoise. This is the second five-year plan focusing on ensuring the government is providing services in French to communities where francophone populations are of significant demand. Our partnership with the Federation franco-tenoise is critical to the success of our strategic plan. We continue to work together to increase the use of the Government of the Northwest Territories' French-language communications and services.

This June, we will also be celebrating an important anniversary, the 40th birthday of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. Over the last 40 years, the institution has worked with communities across the territory to care for, research, and celebrate

territorial cultures, history, and languages for the benefit of Northerners and visitors. I encourage everyone to come out to the party, have fun, and learn more about how the activities and work that occur in this building serve and represent all of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Hosting more than 60,000 visitors a year, the centre plays a key role in preserving and showcasing our connection to our cultures, heritage, and languages. The website for the exhibit "We Took Care of Them: RCMP Special Constables in the NWT" is the first digital exhibit to be available in all 11 official languages, and I must credit my colleague, the honourable Alfred Moses, for his work in bringing this incredible exhibit to fruition.

As well, the centre is also soon launching an iPad program so visitors can view and experience exhibits in Indigenous and other languages.

Mr. Speaker, languages and culture together contribute to a strong sense of identity and pride. Our government acts as facilitator, steward, and supporter of territorial languages and cultures. Our commitment is strong. We are doing more than ever to help all our languages thrive, and we are starting to see positive results, so I very much look forward to all these upcoming celebrations of the territory's languages and cultures. They showcase our past, influence our present, and lay the path for the future. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 139-18(3): COMMUNITY HOUSING PLANS

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is helping to address the high cost of living in our territory by implementing northern solutions for northern housing. We are working with other governments and housing stakeholders to support Indigenous and local governments in their housing aspirations and create initiatives to address homelessness. As part of its strategic renewal, the Housing Corporation is developing community housing plans to guide and support strategic development and investment in each community.

In 2017, one of the key findings of the Engagement Survey on Housing was a strong desire for community housing plan development across the Northwest Territories. The Housing Corporation has responded by beginning work toward a housing plan with each of the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. We are using a planning process with the community and other stakeholders that reflect community values and priorities.

To ensure that these plans are community-driven and will support local intentions to address housing needs, we are working with local leadership. We are promoting community ownership of housing plans, local coordination, and activity planning that is suitable for the community. Local housing facilitators are being hired to assist with this community planning.

The community housing plans will combine the knowledge of community residents with housing data, statistics, and other material relevant to housing needs, such as information on health, education, employment, and land. To guide planning, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is using the solid and proven planning principles of community involvement, skills development, flexibility, sustainability, and respect for local culture and traditions.

Mr. Speaker, the community housing plan process involves five steps: pre-planning, needs assessment, housing plan, implementation, and monitoring. The process will result in a community housing plan that contains a community profile, a needs analysis, and a housing plan with measurable goals and outcomes that can evolve over time.

Pre-planning sets the foundation. This work includes meeting with stakeholders to discuss potential resources, partnerships, and information-gathering. We have conducted housing research and developed methodology to guide the approach in each of the communities.

Needs assessments are conducted through community engagement. One of the lessons learned through the Voices on Housing survey was the importance of local voices and local input. At this stage, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will ask each community to designate a council member to work directly with us to support the housing planning activities and community engagements. These engagements happen at the community level and include discussions in public areas, small group discussions, and school and home visits.

As we move to the housing plan stage, which is starting to happen now, we will work with each individual community to engage appropriate stakeholders. Stakeholders will participate in local housing forums to share information, develop partnerships, and establish a strategic planning direction to develop the community housing plan.

This strategic direction will inform the community housing plan that will be presented to Councils for Plan Adoption at the implementation stage. Further to implementation, we will work with communities to

monitor these housing plans on an ongoing basis once they have been developed.

Mr. Speaker, the community housing plan process has begun, with six communities selected based on stakeholder feedback, community interest, and community readiness to engage in the planning process. To date, we have signed Agreements to Participate in Housing Planning with the communities of Whati, Fort Liard, and Paulatuk.

We have also met with leadership in the communities of Deline, Jean Marie River, and the K'atlodeeche First Nation, and we anticipate moving forward in those communities in the near future.

Community housing plans are critical in ensuring that infrastructure investments are made in the right areas. As we see investments under the National Housing Strategy roll out, including the National Housing Co-investment Fund, community housing plans will help guide all parties in making the right investments. Indigenous, federal, territorial, and municipal governments will all be able to use the plans in meeting housing needs in Northwest Territories communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited for a future of community-led housing plans in the Northwest Territories. Housing involves partnerships at all levels. Having a community voice in planning is critical to any success that we have moving forward. Not only will these plans ensure that housing programs and services reflect community values and priorities, but they will also prepare us to take maximum advantage of federal housing funding, private industry investment, and other partnerships as they become available. I look forward to seeing these community housing plans as they are completed and working together with all our people to improve housing outcomes in each and every community. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 140-18(3):
COLD WEATHER TESTING AT YELLOWKNIFE
AIRPORT

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is following through on its mandate commitment to strengthen connections with public and private sector partners in transportation infrastructure. As the primary aviation hub of the Northwest Territories, the Yellowknife Airport hosts a number of businesses and industries that employ Northerners and contribute to economic growth, provide services that support our growing tourism sector, and provide essential services to our communities and residents.

Maintaining our relationship with partners at Yellowknife Airport is vital to its growth and success. Consistent with this commitment, the airport has been seeking out partnership opportunities with international aviation leaders who are looking for locations to undertake cold-weather testing.

Last fall the Yellowknife Airport held discussions with the City of Yellowknife, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, and NWT Tourism to determine how we could come together to capture new revenue streams associated with cold-weather testing. One of the outcomes of these meetings is the newly-formed Yellowknife Airport Cold Weather Testing Group.

The group's goal is to ensure Yellowknife is recognized by global aerospace leaders as the number one Arctic cold-weather testing destination. In order to achieve this, the group is joining forces and adopting a collaborative approach to marketing the Yellowknife Airport to the highly competitive cold-weather testing aerospace industry.

Mr. Speaker, cold-weather testing offers significant opportunity and major economic benefits for the local economy. Visiting teams typically stay in the testing location for 30 to 90 days and often include between 30 to 70 professionals, such as engineers, pilots, and support staff. This could significantly increase revenue growth for Yellowknife Airport's partners and create an opportunity to diversify the Northwest Territories' winter tourism markets by developing a new sector of business tourism.

Working with local air carriers and operators, the Cold Weather Testing Group is developing the resources and relationships that position Yellowknife as the Canada's Arctic cold-weather testing location of choice. These resources will assist aeronautical decision-makers to locate suitable accommodations and working venues for their away teams prior to their arrival in the Northwest Territories.

Working with our partners, efforts are being made to ensure that information packages are available to respond to both proactive and reactive cold-weather testing enquiries. Packages will include maps, brochures, and other information, such as restaurant listings, vehicle rental locations, entertainment venues, and tourism operator information for those off-duty testing team members wishing to explore our unique northern environment and communities.

Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to say that Yellowknife Airport is hosting Bell Helicopters. They are conducting cold-weather testing of one of their larger helicopters, the new Bell 525 Relentless, the next-generation helicopter. This is the first

commercial helicopter to incorporate the Garmin G-500-H touchscreen, and is recognized as the best in class for low noise and vibration, and sets the new standard for vehicle control and operational safety.

The partnership between the Cold Weather Testing Group and Bell Helicopters has created an opportunity to host 30 engineers and pilots for approximately 90 days in Yellowknife. This group will provide a measurable economic boost to Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that this one cold-weather testing partnership with Bell Helicopters will infuse \$2.3 million into the local economy. In recent months, Yellowknife Airport has also had discussions with Mitsubishi to test their medium-sized jets, and Korean Aerospace Industries has inquired about testing their helicopters here.

In addition to the creation of the Yellowknife Airport Cold Weather Testing Group, planning efforts are under way for the development of a preliminary competitor analysis, a marketing framework, and the decision to link the cold-weather testing marketing strategy to Destination Canada's Business Events Canada marketing program for the aerospace industry.

The Northwest Territories has a unique Arctic advantage. Yellowknife is one of the coldest cities in the country. As the major gateway airport to the Northwest Territories, conditions at Yellowknife Airport in the winter are cold, clear, and dry, and temperatures can dip as low as minus 50 Celsius. Yellowknife Airport has all of the facilities and services required to be a testing site: runway and airspace, as well as apron and ramp space, available for aircraft testing; emergency services; and onsite airport firefighting facilities, coupled with airport-based businesses that understand the needs of the aerospace industry.

The Yellowknife Airport Cold-Weather Testing Group recognizes Bell Helicopters as one of many successful partners bringing innovation and economic opportunity to local businesses. We believe that there are other cold-weather testing opportunities to be developed, all of which position the Northwest Territories as a global leader in the aerospace industry.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to cold-weather testing, there are important improvements under way at the Yellowknife Airport. On Sunday of this past week, Madame LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue, MP Michael McLeod, and I were pleased to announce the funding of approximately \$2.5 million from the Airport Capital Assistance Program for airfield lighting rehabilitation project. In addition, the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund will

contribute 15 percent of the total project cost, bringing the total of the project to over \$3 million.

This funding announcement will bring changes to airfield lighting on Runway 16-34, the primary runway of the Yellowknife Airport. The project will make the airport safer and further contribute to our commitment to reduce energy consumption.

These and other initiatives will reinforce our efforts to strengthen connections with public and private sector partners in transportation infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Colleagues, I would like to draw your attention to a visitor in the gallery. With us is Mr. David Ramsey, former Member of the Legislative Assembly. Welcome to our Assembly. Masi. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LONG-TERM CARE

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services announced plans and is already taking steps to more than double the amount of long-term care beds available in the territory. Given that we are still in the early stages of this massive expansion, now is an opportune time for us to re-examine our fundamental notion about long-term care so that we can develop and implement best practices, cultivate the appropriate institutional culture, and design facilities to help us realize this vision.

There is already much agreement on what basic long-term care should provide; shelter, meals, ensuring prescribed medication is taken, assistance with physical tasks such as bathing, if necessary, and so on. However, to achieve and maintain positive mental health and a sense of well-being, people require more than just the basics. People need companionship. They need to be engaged in activities that they find entertaining and meaningful, and they need to feel like they are part of a community.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, I know that many staff in the long-term care facilities are doing these exact things right now, and I appreciate all of their efforts. I can't emphasize that enough. I know that the residents appreciate them, as well. However, the work they do is confined by the system in which they work, a system designed around the overarching notion that, as long as physical needs are being met, the system is doing its job.

We need to decide if we want to expand that idea and put mental well-being on equal footing with physical well-being so that we can ensure residents in long-term care have the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives.

For some, family members provide this opportunity. However, it is quite common for people in care to not have nearby family for a variety of reasons. Some long-term care residents have had to relocate from other communities. There are also many in care who moved to the NWT decades ago for work. The one or two children they had have left the territory, and their spouses passed on. These people, most of whom have limited mobility and limited means, are at the mercy of the system. If the system doesn't provide opportunities for them to live fulfilling lives, no one will.

I raise these concerns with the Assembly because my constituents in long-term care raised them with me. I am concerned about the toll it takes on their mental health, and I am gravely concerned that, in our rush to supply more beds, unless we turn our minds to this issue, the proposed 48- and 72-bed facilities could turn out to be more like warehouses than care facilities.

I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SOLUTIONS

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the concerns raised by constituents and the business community concerning the GNWT's market housing program. The framework is, in effect, shutting out local businesses and entrepreneurs from being able to enter and stay in the property rental and real estate business. It goes without question that the GNWT must have a strong housing policy which supports lower income residents and families, yet there must be diversity in how this goal is achieved. Maintaining a government monopoly is clearly not effective, nor does it ensure no one is left out in the cold of the winter and dryness of the summer.

The current situation prohibits businesses or private individuals from being able to get a fair return on their investment in the rental business or from being able to invest their time and energy into eventually flipping their property for market resale. What the NWT needs is a multifaceted approach, not more of a one-size-fits-all strategy.

To achieve this end, it would be wise to ask the Housing Corporation to work with local builders to allow for the framework of a housing economy to be established that is not influenced or controlled solely by the Government of the Northwest Territories. This would be strengthened if the Housing Corporation and other GNWT departments worked with the local builders to sign market lease agreements for up to 50 percent of the private housing inventory for GNWT employees. This would inevitably alleviate some of the pressure on the Housing Corporation's demand on inventory, as it would make it easier for the government, local governments, and the private sector to attract skilled labour and professionals into the communities through the availability of housing. The secondary and tertiary effects of this are boundless.

In short, it would allow people more freedom to pursue the lives they wish. This initiative would bring with it the added bonus of training and hiring local community members to build, maintain, and refurbish these homes over the short and long term. Housing is in high demand in every community, and the opportunity to have private enterprise build rental units and alleviate the demand for housing off the GNWT would be a win-win for everyone, and particularly for the people who are in desperate need of housing.

Mr. Speaker, Regular Members have often called for this government to do more to expand private sector opportunities. Today, I am calling on the Minister to open this government's approach to addressing the NWT's housing needs with private sector solutions. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ABORIGINAL SPORTS CIRCLE 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, April 1, 2019, marks the Aboriginal Sports Circle of the Northwest Territories' 20th year anniversary.

Over the years, the organization has grown tremendously and is proud of the delivery of grassroots programs in all 33 communities in the NWT, including hosting territorial championships in Arctic Sports, Dene Games, archery, along with organizing and bringing Team NT to the North American Indigenous Games, and is responsible for developing community leaders in sport, recreation, and culture.

The organization's growth can be attributed to the dedication of the countless volunteer hours by the

board of directors. Over the years, the board has grown from one staff member to now six staff members. This is keeping true to the values of why the organization was established in 1999. With all the success Aboriginal Sports Circle of the NWT achieves, the board strives to do more, recognizing the value that sport, recreation, and culture have on community wellness.

As the organization prepares for their 20-year anniversary, it is important to reflect on where the organization has been. Aboriginal Sports Circle of the NWT would like to recognize the volunteers who have helped shape the organization and the dedicated work put forth by its volunteers, whereby creating an Honorary Board of Directors.

The creation of the honorary board will be a continuous reminder to the organization of how far they have come and reflected on the values needed to remain. The honourable board members will be welcome to sit in on meetings and will be relied on as knowledgeable members who hold wisdom to help the board and staff make decisions in the best interest of the organization.

The three inductees for the Aboriginal Sports Circle of the Northwest Territories honorary board members are Clifford Mcleod from Fort Providence, Rena Squirrel from Hay River, and Allan Browning from Fort Simpson/Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank these three volunteers for their continuous commitment to this organization, and I wish them all the best. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW PRESIDENT AND COUNCIL IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Tsiigehtchic was the election for the Gwichya Gwich'in designated Gwich'in organization, or DGO. I would like to congratulate our newly elected president, Julie-Ann Andre, and also our council members, Darius Andre, Mavis Clarke, Renie Koe, Bobbie-Jean Van Loon, and Shelly Van Loon.

I am looking forward to working with you all as we work together to ensure we have what we need in the community of Tsiigehtchic. Congratulations once again, and I wish you all the best in your leadership roles. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS FUTURES

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I often do, today I would like to speak about our relationship as a government with the Indigenous people of this territory. Discussions between government and the First Peoples about rights and land have been going on longer than I have been alive and still it seems there are no easy solutions.

Mr. Speaker, in the NWT, there are several distinct Indigenous groups, each with a unique geography, history, economy, and culture. No wonder there is no magic wand we can wave that will resolve the diverse needs and interests of all these groups. We all acknowledge that resolving the issue of rights is one of our highest priorities. We know this must be achieved before we can move ahead on many of our other mandate priorities.

Mr. Speaker, we need to build a strong nation-to-nation relationship. Essentially, we need to co-write and co-produce policy. Indigenous leadership must be central in creating the government's direction and policies and shaping the future of the territory. We need to realize solutions should be regional and local in nature and may not apply the same way across the NWT as a whole. We must be collaborative and flexible in our approach.

Our young people hold tremendous promise and will be key players in finding solutions. Our youth are continuing to achieve more and more and branch out in new areas of study and accomplishment.

Applications to post-secondary education continue to rise. Our youth want to be dedicated to their peoples, their communities, their culture, and defining resolution of Indigenous issues. That gives me hope, Mr. Speaker.

There are certainly problems, Mr. Speaker. Unemployment is high in some communities, but we can significantly reduce unemployment by resolving land rights and putting self-government agreements in place. With certainty on land rights and self-government, communities and regions will be able to establish their own priorities, develop their own economies, and hire their own people, including their own educated youth.

Our system must support and empower Indigenous governments with responsibility and authority for self-determination. Mr. Speaker, this will allow communities to flourish and grow on their own terms. At the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DISTRICT EDUCATION AUTHORITIES
TRUSTEES TERM OF OFFICE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President.

[Translation] Yellowknife MLAs met recently with the trustees of Yellowknife Catholic Schools and Yellowknife Education District No. 1 and the Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

The City of Yellowknife held a plebiscite on extending the term of office for councillors to four years from three. Of the Yellowknife voters who voted, 60.6 percent were in favour. Yellowknife City Council subsequently completed passage of a bylaw to extend the term of office for mayor and council to four years.

As all Yellowknife MLAs now know, the term of office for city council and our district education authorities are now out of sync. District education authorities have held their elections at the same time, piggybacking on to the city's efforts and processes. The Yellowknife district education authorities have to hold their own elections; the cost will be approximately \$65,000 or more in terms of advertising, hiring workers, and other expenses. I am sure we would all rather see that funding spent on our children's education rather than running a separate election.

For the CSFTNO, the situation is more interesting in that half of its commissaires are from Yellowknife, where there is now a four-year term for our local government, and the other half are from Hay River, where there is a three-year term. CSFTNO holds its own elections, if necessary, at its schools so there is no additional cost, but an obvious need for coordination. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, it looks like it would take a change to the Education Act to adjust the terms of office for district education authorities to account for the four-year term of city council. The current wording in the Education Act already contemplates coordination of the terms of office. However, it does not deal with the situation we are now in, where a local government body has a term of office beyond three years, or for the CSFTNO, where there are different terms of office for the local governments that its commissaires represent.

Although we have some time to deal with this situation, I will be asking the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Translation ends.]

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the collective bargaining concluded over the past weekend, where a no strike decision was lifted. This has brought great relief and lifted the atmosphere of uncertainty and tension. Mr. Speaker, for that, I am grateful. Congratulations to the negotiation parties and mediator Vince Ready.

Mr. Speaker, as legislators, our first and foremost obligations are to the residents of the Northwest Territories and our regions' constituents. Decisions we conclude are often heartfelt on our abilities as to whether it is the right choice.

Mr. Speaker, our public service employees can look now forward to household income security. Our students can now again focus on their academic studies.

Advancing, Mr. Speaker, we are decision makers of an enterprise looking through the lens of legislation and policy. I now look forward to the ongoing business at hand of our annual budget and legislation reform deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, this process of labour collective agreement bargaining truly reflects the benefits of democracy. However, the equitable balance must not outweigh the GNWT's mandate of prudent, sound fiscal spending and program and service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I echo the success that both parties have now concluded in providing preliminary closure and relief to the NWT communities. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WEALTH INEQUALITY

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about an issue which is affecting more and more people in the NWT. This issue is wealth inequality, which can be described as an increasing wealth disparity that exists between our richest and poorest citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT has the highest median personal income in Canada, at \$50,000 per year. However, a closer look at the figures will show that the distribution of wealth among our people is not equal. Of the 22 communities that have income data, only four have an average personal income above \$50,000, which means that all other

communities have an average personal income lower than the territorial average.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the gap in wealth accumulation is even starker when you examine the incomes of different demographics. For example, the average median income for non-Indigenous residents in the NWT is \$71,000, which is more than double the median income for First Nations people and nearly three times more than the Inuit.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of food insecurity in the NWT has also been increasing in recent years, going from about 13 percent in 2007 to over 19 percent in 2014. One fifth of our population fears that they will run out of food before they are able to get more money to buy food. The average number of people on income assistance has risen over time, going from 1,400 recipients in 2009 to 1,900 recipients in 2017.

Mr. Speaker, it is for those reasons that we have created cost-of-living priorities in our mandate. We have tasked ourselves with increasing affordable housing; improving food security; supporting energy-efficient technologies; implementing affordable daycare; allowing seniors to age in place; and fostering healthy families.

I can go on, Mr. Speaker. These staggering figures represent a reality that is only getting worse as years go by. As such, we in the NWT must work to close the wealth gap that has threatened our economic potential, prosperity, and day-to-day livelihoods. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ABUSE IN AMATEUR SPORT

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of us will have heard the shocking and disturbing revelations of this week's CBC Sports investigation into sexual abuse in amateur sport. For those who haven't heard, here is a summary of the findings.

The CBC investigation found that at least 222 amateur sport coaches in Canada had been convicted of sexual offences in the last 20 years. Those convictions involve more than 600 victims under the age of 18. Thirty-four cases are before the courts, including new charges against a Hay River swimming coach previously convicted of sexual assault in 2015. Because sexual abuse is an underreported crime, experts say there could be thousands of cases still unreported.

No sport is immune, Mr. Speaker. Hockey and soccer are Canada's most-played sports and have

the largest number of coaches charged and convicted, but convictions were found in 36 other sports.

Anti-abuse policies exist at the national and subnational levels, but transparency is lacking. CBC journalists contacted 160 sports organizations across Canada and asked if they had a public list of coaches and volunteers who have been banned and/or charged or convicted of a crime. Only half responded, and of those, only seven said they publish some form of this information online. Importantly, Hockey Canada didn't respond at all.

Local clubs are often on their own. After multiple sexual assault cases involving Canadian national team coaches, the federal Sports Minister introduced new anti-abuse rules that national sports organizations must follow in order to get federal funding, but that doesn't protect hundreds of thousands of kids competing below the elite level. Local clubs and associations often lack the resources to enforce measures like background checks that could make a difference.

All of this makes me wonder about the situation here. There are clear, common-sense steps that can be taken that do not require a lot of resources to achieve. MACA working with Sport North and other organizations could help supply clear rules around sexual abuse and promote training for coaches, parents, and players. We also need clear and easily accessible ways to report suspected abuse. I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SPEEDING ON THE DEH CHO BRIDGE

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] My constituents have brought a safety issue to my concern, and I would like to raise it in the House today. It isn't the first time my constituents have raised it with me, nor is it the first time that I have addressed it here. [Translation ends]

Mr. Speaker, road safety is the problem. Deh Cho residents, particularly in Fort Providence, are worried by an increase in speeding semi trucks on the Deh Cho Bridge and surrounding highway.

When the Deh Cho Bridge opened in 2012, it introduced uninterrupted 24-hour traffic to Highway 3. At this time of the year, when the winter roads north of Yellowknife open up a temporary route to the diamond mines, traffic volume increases even more, reaching its annual peak.

This isn't just a Deh Cho issue. Commercial traffic can disrupt regular road use all down the road. Residents of the Ingraham Trail area will be familiar with the trials and tribulations, and even the hazards, of living along a busy trucking route.

When it comes to our highways, our laws are clear. Speed limits are clearly posted, including speed limits for the recently repaired Deh Cho bridge. There are no surprises there, Mr. Speaker. Yet my constituents tell me that commercial trucks are still flying down the highway, posing a danger to other road users and to themselves, especially close to the community of Fort Providence and the Big River service station.

These peak traffic volumes aren't a surprise, either. We know that, when winter traffic to the mines begins to ramp up, that means law enforcement, including both the RCMP and the GNWT motor vehicle officers, need to be prepared to get out on the highways and enforce our laws. The safety of our highway depends on it.

Later on I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week I spoke about advancements in the development of a new Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and the role that the GNWT and northern Indigenous governments will need to play in making this framework a reality.

Arctic people want to have a seat at the table. We want to see capacity-building and the application of traditional knowledge. We want to see our government, the GNWT, guiding the federal government in the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

It is well known that other circumpolar countries, like Russia, Finland, and other Scandinavian countries, and other major global powers, like the United States and China, are making rapid advancements in their Arctic policy.

Mr. Speaker, Finland is testing a 5G network, Russia is advancing its military interests, and China is exploring how it can get involved in Arctic governance and development as a near-Arctic state.

I recently read an editorial in the Hamilton Spectator that quoted governance policy specialist Mr. John Higginbotham, who said, "We are falling further and further behind the European Arctic, Russian Arctic, and the East Asian Arctic in terms

of all kinds of measures of development and capacity. We have very primitive airports up there, very poor east-west links, limited icebreaker capacity, limited deepwater ports. There's just really nothing happening up there now."

Mr. Speaker, this is a painful truth, but I couldn't have said it any better myself.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the federal government will make major decisions for the Canadian Arctic on the global stage, but I also know that, without the benefit of Northerners' expertise and Indigenous local knowledge, without a united voice advocating loudly and proudly for our Arctic interest, the Arctic will become developed and designed without us. In fact, I worry that we will be left behind altogether.

Mr. Speaker, we have many mutual benefits to maintaining a close relationship with Canada and other Arctic states. Sovereignty is a priority for Canada, and we need to be engaged in the discussions to ensure that our people can participate in future discussions to ensure that the Arctic remains a peaceful and stable region.

Mr. Speaker, sustainable development through cooperation of all levels of government will benefit our people and enhance the quality of life of all residents of the Arctic. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Range Lake.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize my nephew, Jeremy Beauchamp, the second Cochrane to be in the House. I'm so proud of him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a former MLA, former Minister, good friend, and constituent of Yellowknife North, Mr. Dave Ramsay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize David Ramsay, former Minister, former MLA, and friend. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 546-18(3): ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, my statement was on Arctic sovereignty, and I have questions for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, I am concerned that the Canadian Arctic Policy is dragging and that it may have negative effects on our Arctic regions. Apart from the engagement with the federal government, Mr. Speaker, what government partners in Canada and abroad does the GNWT work with to advance its Arctic Policy positions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories participates on the Canadian delegation to the Arctic Council, which provides the opportunity to work on issues of importance with the federal government, the Indigenous permanent participants, as well as other international partners. Through the Arctic Council we share our priorities with other governments in the Circumpolar North, and also learn from best practices in other jurisdictions.

The Government of the Northwest Territories also regularly participates in the Arctic Circle Assembly. Participation in this forum has allowed us to both increase awareness of our territory and policy positions and build on our network of contacts with other nations and subnational governments on an east-west basis, as well as a north-south basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: It's good to hear that the GNWT is involved in activities outside the Northwest Territories, especially the Arctic Circle, which is a very important arena for development in the Arctic. Some policy specialists have also highlighted our infrastructure limitations, for example, limited airport capacity and the lack of deep-water ports. How does the Premier and his government address these types of infrastructure issues when engaging with the federal government on Arctic sovereignty?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: When we attend these different international meetings, we learn very soon how the Arctic in some Arctic countries drives their economy and how their federal governments are investing heavily in large infrastructure. It's the same here, where we need more investment and improved transportation, energy, and communications infrastructure, because we know it's essential for the growth and prosperity of Northwest Territories communities. This is also how we support Canada's work on Arctic sovereignty.

As a result, much of our engagement with the federal government has focused on improving key infrastructure that will benefit communities and grow our economy. An example of cooperation in this area is that the federal government has supported this recently with funding to construct four double-hulled barges.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: I appreciate the response from the Premier. For many years the GNWT has maintained a policy on the application of traditional knowledge in the planning and delivery of its programs and services. My question is: can the Premier give us some background on how this policy is applied in the GNWT's work on Arctic sovereignty and policy planning?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The Government of the Northwest Territories has had a Traditional Knowledge Policy in place for well over 25 years, and as with any work of the Government of the Northwest Territories, traditional knowledge is considered in work related to Arctic policy. It is a priority in particular of the permanent participants of the Arctic Council. The Government of the Northwest Territories engages and supports Canada in this work. The Government of the Northwest Territories' knowledge agenda recognizes the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge into NWT-based research programs. This is important when working with international scientists working in the Northwest Territories. When Canada was chair of the Arctic Council from 2013 to 2015, the Northwest Territories contributed significantly to a circumpolar project dedicated to promoting Indigenous traditional knowledge and traditional ways of life. This work led to an Arctic Circle compendium of best practices.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 547-18(3): SEXUAL ABUSE IN AMATEUR SPORT

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs responsible for amateur sport. CBC's revelations this week about sexual abuse in amateur sport is a call to prevention. One clear and obvious precaution is a requirement for criminal record name checks for persons with access to amateur sports players. Can the Minister tell us whether there is a requirement for criminal records name checks, not just for coaches, but for all persons with care and oversight responsibility for young athletes? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to thank the Member for bringing this very serious and disturbing issue to Members of the House, as well as all our residents across the Northwest Territories. I can assure the Member that the department and the organizations that we do work with do support the Northwest Territories athletes and that we take the responsibility related to the protection of our youth and those who are participating, whether it's in sport, recreation, or even in the arts, very seriously.

Our current requirements include the necessity for coaches to submit regular criminal records and vulnerable sector checks, certification by coaches in various training programs including coaching ethics and education sessions, as well as education for parents and athletes through either national or territorial sport organizations on preventing, identifying, and dealing with situations that may be harmful to our athletes and our youth.

It was a very informative article, and in the article it does say questions that parents and caregivers should be asking. I encourage all parents and caregivers who watch over youth and their children who participate in recreation and sport to look at the article and ask those questions when they're putting their youth and some of our most vulnerable people into these programs.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the information from the Minister. If the Minister will send me an email with that link in it, I'll certainly make it known. Parental responsibility is obviously part of the equation here. Further, does the Minister require a list be kept by Sport North of people convicted of abuse in connection with young athletes, and is there a way for the public, meaning primarily parents and caregivers, to access it?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned, all of our partners that we work with do take their responsibilities very seriously when working with our youth and our athletes. That's something I'll have to take a look into in terms of the policy for having that information shared with parents and the general public, as it is in a legal term, but it's something that we need to look at. Next week or later this week I will be meeting with my federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts in Red Deer prior to the Canada Summer Games, and we will be discussing it. One of the agenda items, actually, is prevention of harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport, with this article being released and with the support of Minister Duncan and some of the work that she has done vocally through the media. I will be bringing this up as something that we need to discuss and look at creating some type of policy and what we can do at the national level.

The article was very hard to read, and the stats that the Member did share that are shown in the article are very tough to read, and we want to make sure that we address them. I will assure Members of this House and our parents and our residents that I will be bringing this up at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting and seeing how we can have an impact on this, address it, and ensure that our youth and our athletes are safe.

MS. GREEN: Again, I appreciate the Minister's response. I understand that this is a very sensitive topic for all of us. One of the things that the federal government has done is tied funding to sports to policies and prevention around sexual abuse of amateur athletes. Is there any equivalent in place for territorial funding of sports organizations?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: One of the opportunities I will have this week is to bring up such concerns as that with our federal government to look and see how we can access more funding for education, creating awareness, a promotional campaign, and I think that all jurisdictions will probably have the same type of focus when we have the meeting on that agenda item. We are also going through a territorial sports strategy and working with our partners, as well as our territorial sport organizations. I think this is the time to have those discussions and I encourage anyone who might be going through something like this. It is a very sensitive topic, but I do encourage anyone who might be going through this experience to speak up. I really thank the Member for bringing this to the attention of the House, but also I am sure all of our sport organizations, our partners, our TSOs, and our schools are listening as we are having this discussion right now.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if the CBC series was timed very well in terms of having this issue already on the radar of various government officials, such as the Minister. My final question is: if there is a young person in a small community who feels victimized by somebody who is a sports official or coach in their lives, where would that youth go now, today, to report that abuse, and what would the follow-up to a complaint like that be? Does the Minister have that information? Mahsi.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I would encourage the child, as I mentioned, to speak to somebody who they trust, who they can speak up to, whether it is a teacher, a parent, a close friend, or perhaps somebody of adult supervision in their lives, whether it is a care provider, but I encourage them to speak up, as I mentioned in the previous response. Anybody who is going through this

doesn't deserve it, any type of abuse. I will be bringing it up at the national sports meeting that I will have later this week and see how we can address that, look at getting funding, and how we can create more awareness and prevention education within the school system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 548-18(3):
DISTRICT EDUCATION AUTHORITY TERM OF
OFFICE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to assure the House that I gave these questions to the Minister in English beforehand.

[Translation] My notes show that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment was at the meeting of Yellowknife MLAs with the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 on December 13, 2018. We discussed the need to change the term of office for trustees. Has the Minister received a formal request from the Yellowknife district education authorities requesting changes to allow for a four-year term? Thank you. [Translation ends.]

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was at the meeting with the Yellowknife Education District No. 1, so I did hear the concern brought up there. It has been raised to me verbally. At this point, though, I know that the Yellowknife Catholic School Board is also interested in submitting a similar request, but they haven't formally requested this until after their February board meeting, so I am expecting these to come forward immediately. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: [Translation] Thanks to the Minister. Does the Minister agree that the significant additional costs for the Yellowknife district education would be better spent on our children's education rather than holding their own elections? [Translation ends.]

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. We need to really look at where we are spending our monies for education and make sure that we are giving the best supports to not only school boards but ultimately to the students, because they are the ones who we are impacting and they are our future. I do want to say it is a little bit difficult because currently our act is structured so that the terms fall within the municipal government. Right now, it is structured within a two- or a three-year term, so it will be a little bit of a challenge.

MR. O'REILLY: [Translation] The situation for the Francophone school board is different in that its commissaires now represent two communities with different terms of office for their respective communities. The best solution may be to allow our district education authorities to set their own terms of office, with the approval of the Minister. I am sure the Minister is aware of this complication, but I am wondering whether her department has contemplated a solution for the term of office issue? [Translation ends.]

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes, as soon as the issue was brought to my attention actually, we have been discussing it and how we can actually make it more efficient and make it work for the population. We do recognize, like I said, there are a few glitches within that that we have to figure out. For one, the Commission scolaire has a different schedule, being with two communities. That makes it an issue.

The other thing is that, if we change it right now, the current term for the Yellowknife ones are three years. Our municipal government is four years. Then how do we bridge that gap, or how do we let the public know that that is going to happen because these are elected officials. They were only elected for three years. We know that that can be a problem. We are on it. We are looking at it. We are going to start consulting, but we need to figure out a way that can protect the interests of all stakeholders.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the answer. I understand that there is a heavy legislative agenda finally before us. I am wondering whether the Minister is of the view that what should be a small change to the Education Act can be made during the life of this Assembly, and if not, how do we make sure it gets dealt with before the next election, which is due in 2021? [Translation ends.]

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: At first, I agreed. I thought it was a small change to an act, too, and I thought, "Can we get it done?" Then I asked the department. Wisely, the department kind of put me back a bit and they told me the reality is that we're dealing with, like I said, a couple of issues. One is that the Commission scolaire doesn't fit within the package as it is now. Two, how do we deal with the three-year term moving into a four-year term, addressing the gap and the public perception?

We are looking at it seriously. I cannot commit that it will be done within the next couple of months, but the good news is that we have a couple of more years until the next election. I think it is a point that

should be brought forward in the transition report to keep doing this, so that we can actually have it dealt with before the election. It is not appropriate to be wasting our money and making school boards spend extra money when they don't need to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 549-18(3):
LIIDLII KUE SCHOOL LIBRARY

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently I had some parents reach out to me in regard to the lack of library books in the Liidlil Kue Secondary School. It is my understanding that the previous principal had the majority of these books removed from the library. This is a concern. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of ECE: why would a school remove books from the library? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a variety of reasons that things actually get thrown out, or books get taken out of libraries. It is a normal procedure. I just want to ensure that, when I first heard the concern, this wasn't a book-burning exercise; that wasn't happening. It is regular that teachers and principals have to go through their books in their libraries to make sure things are still current.

Books get outdated very quickly, covers of books get ripped up very quickly, and cultures change. We are really aware of that. It is very common, actually, to go through books to make sure that we are still appropriate for the generation that we are in, and the students that are accepting that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I would like to thank the Minister for that answer, and I am glad we are not burning books, because I think we need to worry about our education and the history of it. Can the Minister explain how the principal decided what books were to be removed from the library?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The first thing that was brought to the principal's attention was actually brought by staff members who were complaining that the books were outdated, that the resources weren't being used, that they were old, and they were sitting in boxes for years. They wanted better access to them. Then the principal actually went to the superintendent of the board to get their approval and was approved, and so then the process began.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for that answer. Can the Minister advise if there are any steps to replenish the books that have been removed from the library?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes. There is a yearly fund that is given to schools to actually purchase more resources, such as library books, if that is their wish. I should note that, within that region, also, the District Education Council is in the process of setting up a virtual library called OverDrive. The current plans will see this virtual library up and running before the end of March 2019, so I am excited to return to the region and actually take a look at what that virtual library will look like, because it will be my first experience, as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer, and I look forward to going with her to see what this OverDrive looks like, because I was thinking it was a vehicle, but I guess it is now a library term online.

Mr. Speaker, parents and community members still have concerns about re-establishing a central library in the Liidlil Kue Secondary School. Who would they bring their concerns to? Is it the local DEA, the principal, or the DEC superintendent? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: There are regular reporting or conflict procedures to deal with in schools. Ideally, like any good communication, it is speak to the individual, so speak to the teacher. In this case, though, when we are looking at books, it would be speak to your principal and then, if you are not happy with the principal's answer, go to your superintendent for the District Education Council.

If you are not happy with the superintendent, then you can put out a written letter into the board, the District Education Council, but I really want to stress that most of these issues can be dealt with at the local level. It is very appropriate to deal with these issues with your principals to follow the correct procedures. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 550-18(3):
COMMUNITY HOUSING PLANS

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation based on his Minister's statement today. I would

like to ask the Minister why they are not developing housing plans for all 33 communities at once. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my Minister's statement, the overall plan is to get a community housing plan in all of our 33 communities. Right now, we have six. We have three that we have actually signed agreements to participate in, and I mentioned those. They were Whati, Fort Liard, and Paulatuk. We are working with another three communities; Deline, Jean Marie, and K'atlodeeche First Nations.

As we have been getting these programs, we only have so much staff to get out and work on facilitating these community plans. They have been doing a great job getting into the communities. If the plans aren't put in place, we are giving information and updates and working with leadership.

In the meetings that I have had with leadership, there is a great interest in getting these plans up and running. If we can try to move them faster, we will try our best, but really, it's our resources and the work that we have been doing, as you have heard in other Minister's statements that I have had, with the co-investment fund and some of these National Housing Fund programs. We are trying to get those out the door, as well as working on just maintaining our housing stock throughout the Northwest Territories.

It's a new initiative, it's a great initiative, and we are going to try to get it out to as many communities as soon as we can, but really I think it comes down to resources and also making sure that leadership and community stakeholders are available to have these very detailed meetings moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: These community development plans or community housing plans are something that could be done from a desktop. We have needs surveys. We know the lay of the communities. We have been dealing with these communities ever since the Housing Corporation was formed in 1974. We know what is there. Why are we sending people into the communities? We have 19 or 20 communities that have LHOs. We could use them.

We need to get this thing started. If it is going to take six years or five years to get all 33 communities done, by the time that we are done the last ones, the first ones would be obsolete. We need to be able to do all of them quickly. These things can be done in hours, not months. They can be done in hours. I would like to know: with the process that this Minister is taking to go through

community development, how long is it going to take to do all 33 communities?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I don't currently have a timeline for all 33 communities right now. As I mentioned in my Minister's statement, we do have to do a needs assessment. As I mentioned as well, one of the lessons learned through the Voices on Housing survey was the importance of local voices and local input in creating these housing plans. As I mentioned, it is going to require five steps; the pre-planning phase, the needs assessment, which is very important, as well as the housing plan, implementation, and monitoring. We want to have very good agreements in place with the communities as we move forward, the agreements to participate in this, and that is going to require local input and local leadership as well as stakeholders in the communities to tell us what is best for them moving forward.

MR. BEAULIEU: The NWT Housing Corporation probably has the best perspective of what is on the ground in all of the communities, comparing one community to another in order to allocate resources. Why are we waiting to have somebody agree, signing agreements, in order to do community housing plans? Planning is our responsibility. We need to do the planning. In order to do it, we don't have to just plan. We need to implement the work on the ground.

We have been talking about this for a long time. I started talking about community development plans in 2007. I asked questions in 2007 and asked this government to develop community development housing plans. Today we are now pre-planning to plan community housing plans. I would like to ask the Minister if he could look at the mandates that will be affected by improving housing situations, and I would like to ask the Minister if the mandate priorities played into the community development plans.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned, we are going to be getting information from our local leadership and our local membership on what their priorities are in their community. That way, it can help us better identify where we are going to put our investments as a government, and the investments that we got from the federal government, how we are going to be spending those dollars to meet the needs of each of the communities as we roll out these community housing plans. That is going to take input from our local leadership, our local membership, our stakeholders, and working with our partners to address the housing needs across the Northwest Territories. With anything that we do, as I mentioned, with the needs assessment and the preplanning phase as we implement these housing plans, of course, we are going to look at addressing

how it is going to impact our mandate on our core needs as well as our most vulnerable people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Minister what we need in the communities I represent. I can tell the Minister that we need to address the home ownership of the seniors so that the seniors can remain in their homes so the seniors can age in place. That is the number one priority. That is the priority where people come to me almost every day. There are seniors coming to me almost every day saying, "I need my house repaired. I need my furnace done. I need this. I need that." That is where that comes from.

As far as the social housing portfolio goes, Mr. Speaker, the public housing or social housing portfolio that the community -- LHOs are doing a fantastic job. People are in their homes. If there are any maintenance issues, they go in and they repair it. Where the big gap lies is repairing home ownership units that were built several years ago for the seniors, several years ago for families. I think it is that simple. I would like the Minister to just focus in on one thing. I would like to ask the Minister if he would look at the core needs as they were presented on the 2014 needs survey and follow that so that he can begin to put work on the ground, as opposed to more planning. Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I have made statements in the House on all the programs, the initiatives that we are doing through the NWT Housing Corporation, and I appreciate the Member making some good comments with our LHOs, our district offices, as well, trying to get out to the communities to address the needs and the maintenance and the operations, which is always a big issue. We are trying to address those, as well. Even, we are working with people who are in the home ownership.

The Member had mentioned senior housing. We do have a senior housing planning study that we are going to be using to look at where we need to put our investments, as well. You know, we are doing the best that we can with the resources that we have in our district offices. I encourage our leadership to have those discussions.

I have said in this House we are going to be looking at doing a northern housing summit here in the NWT. Initially, it was going to be an Indigenous housing summit, but we figured, you know, why not invite our other jurisdictions, such as the Yukon, Nunavut, and bring Yellowknife and regional centres up to Inuvik to have those discussions and

look at what some of our partners are doing, such as the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. The work is under way. We have a lot of good initiatives going on, and we will continue to inform Members and the public on what those programs are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 551-18(3):
LAND RIGHTS AGREEMENTS

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier. The Premier is also the Minister responsible for Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier today with regard to the urgency with settling the land rights agreements. We have obviously many good reasons for wanting to do that. Can the Premier start by updating this House and the public on the status of the unsettled land rights in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories is actively involved in land and resource negotiations in most areas of the Northwest Territories without modern treaties. Today, we are in final agreement negotiations with the Acho Dene Koe First Nation from Fort Liard and with the Northwest Territories Metis Nation. In addition, negotiations with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations are making good progress towards completing a draft of an agreement-in-principle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: It seems like there might still be some hope to get some of these land rights agreements done. I won't go into detail in terms of asking about the Dehcho or the Metis at this point. I will maybe save that for a later date. I would like to ask the Premier about self-government agreements. They, too, are of value to us. The Premier has expressed confidence in this House in the past that we will get through a number of those, as well. I would like to ask the Premier: can he please advise us on the status of these negotiations, and does he still believe that, within the life of this Assembly, a number of them will get finalized?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I was very pleased to be able to go to Norman Wells in January to sign the self-government agreement-in-principle for the Sahtu Dene and Metis of Norman Wells. This is a significant milestone that all parties should be proud of. In addition, the Sahtu Dene and Metis of Tulita are reviewing a self-government agreement-in-principle for finalization, and self-government negotiations are also under way in Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake. Negotiations are also well

advanced toward concluding an Inuvialuit final self-government agreement. I am also happy to report the self-government negotiations with the Gwich'in have resumed following a break in negotiations where the Gwich'in considered how they wanted to approach self-government.

MR. VANTHUYNE: All right. There is some positive information there for the public. That is much appreciated from the Premier. As we know, the NWT is seen as a favourable place to invest in with regard to mineral development. We also know that residents are counting on progress on recreational land-use plans, and the business community wants to develop new sectors of diversified economy like agriculture, forestry, and others. I would like to ask the Minister: how can we reassure these sectors that there will be certainty in the future as it relates to getting these land rights settled, the self-governments negotiated, and getting land-use plans in place?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to place a high priority on negotiating these complex and very important agreements. The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that the certainty provided by modern agreements benefits everyone. The need for providing clarity and setting out the rules has also informed this government's approach to the Mineral Resources Act by laying out the need for benefit agreements.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of these agreements, as I alluded to in my Member's statement earlier today, have taken decades and some of them, you know, longer than I have been alive to complete. Has the government looked at other processes or possibly increasing the capacity of the GNWT teams to get these agreements done faster? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: There are a number of reasons why these negotiations have taken a long time. Some NWT Indigenous governments more recently are waiting to see how new federal policies are evolving before they proceed and conclude their land claim and self-government agreements. We respect this decision and will continue to support Northwest Territories Indigenous governments' decisions around timing.

With this said, during the term of this Assembly, I have pursued new approaches to negotiations. Minister Bennett and I jointly appointed special representatives to give us independent advice regarding negotiations with the Dehcho First Nations, the Akaitcho Dene First Nations, and the Northwest Territories Metis Nation. This advice

informed new government offers made at these negotiations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 552-18(3):
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SOLUTIONS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation spoke about the sometimes challenging circumstances with limited resources that the Corporation operates under. I have a solution for the Minister. That is to let the private sector come in and help unburden some of those resources for the people who don't really need them. In many communities, GNWT employees are being given Housing Corporation-owned property. Will the Minister agree to enter into market lease agreements for 50 percent of private market inventory owned by the GNWT Housing Corporation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Members know, and when we go and visit our constituents, sometimes one of our biggest issues is finding housing for our nurses, RCMP, teachers, and we want to try to address that. The Housing Corporation typically is the sole housing provider in some of our rural and remote communities. Sometimes, our developers have a hard time doing business or building houses. At the same time, we don't want to be disrupting the market unit. We have tried in some communities and we have had some contractors bring concerns.

One thing that I can tell the Member, as the Members know, I did make an announcement here in the House on that \$60 million carve-out fund of the co-investment fund. I would encourage private developers to reach out to our office and work together to see how we can provide affordable housing throughout the Northwest Territories. That fund is going to be a game changer in the Northwest Territories during the life of this government. We are trying to get that information out and work, whether it is a private industry or some of our Indigenous governments, as well.

MR. TESTART: So, no. I think what I am hearing is that there is this new funding made available, that there is an opportunity for co-investment, but what does that really mean to people who want to get into market rent, for people who want to build equity through their properties to potentially resell them, potentially rent them out and turn it into a business opportunity? Is that something that this fund will facilitate?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned in my Minister's statement, as well, we are looking at doing a needs assessment with all of our communities and community housing plans. We would also encourage the private sector to invest in affordable housing. We do have the Community Support Initiative that we can work with, whether it is Indigenous governments or private industry. The Co-Investment Fund is another opportunity that we can work on addressing these issues. I encourage the private industry to reach out to us at the NWT Housing Corporation to have those discussions. Obviously, if we can get other partnerships and stakeholders to help us address our housing needs across the Northwest Territories, we are more than welcome to have those discussions.

MR. TESTART: Before anyone assumes that this is a Yellowknife-based issue, it is not. The Norman Wells Chamber of Commerce has published a letter that is asking for the GNWT to allow fair market rent to be established by the market supply and demand and for the GNWT to base its programs around that through the Housing Corporation. Is that something the Minister is willing to do in the community of Norman Wells and in other regional centres?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I will just take, for example, the partnership that we have with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. That is a great partnership that we have developed with them. It is a good opportunity, as well, to share with other Indigenous governments as well as private industry on how we can work to address whether it is market rent or public housing needs, transitional housing.

This co-investment fund, like I have mentioned, we did get a \$60 million carve-out on that. It was application-based and very flexible on how we spend those dollars. We want to make sure that information gets out to anybody, any of our stakeholders and our partners that we are working with. I also agree and understand about the regional centres and how we can address those through the community housing plans, but also working with stakeholders to help us address our housing needs.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between self-governments, community governments, and private sector, and that is really what is at the heart of this. You know, it is not about building the units. It is about allowing the private sector to offer that market space and to provide a private sector solution. I am hearing more of a top-down approach, more of a maintenance of the government monopoly. Let's let the private sector come in here. Will the Minister at least reach out to

the NWT Chamber of Commerce, to the various chambers of commerce and businesses that wish to be involved in this enterprise, and work with them to develop a solution that works for our private sector here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, we are already doing that. We have reached out to private sector. We are having partnerships. We are doing some pilot projects across the Northwest Territories. We are learning from some past decisions that were made and have taken a better approach to ensure that our investments, the dollars that we are spending, is going as far as they can and meeting the needs of our housing situations throughout the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 553-18(3):
SPEEDING ON THE DEH CHO BRIDGE

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I made a statement on my constituents raising their concerns on speeding on the Deh Cho Bridge and, of course, we are all concerned about public safety. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure: can the Minister explain the role of departmental motor vehicle officers in enforcement of traffic laws, including speeding laws? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The division that looks after the highways, and highway patrol in particular, has a couple of roles that they follow. One of them is to follow the weight restrictions of the highway and particularly around the heavy truck traffic and how that has to be patrolled and followed by the heavy truck traffic in the Northwest Territories. They also do patrols out on the highway systems in the Northwest Territories. They have authority to stop heavy truck traffic, but they do not have the authority to stop civilian traffic for speeding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NADLI: Mr. Speaker, how do the department and its motor vehicle officers work with the RCMP to maximize enforcement coverage?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: This question has been raised in the House a number of times, especially around the Ingraham Trail. As we have stated in this House, I have said that we worked with all people. Let's use the Ingraham Trail for an example. We work with the City of Yellowknife, the RCMP, and the highway patrol, and the residents on the Ingraham Trail. In this situation that the Member is talking about here today around the Deh

Cho Bridge, we would be working and coordinating particularly with the RCMP on what they can do to help increase patrols around the Deh Cho Bridge and what additional resources they can do to enforce the speeding on the Deh Cho Bridge. We would probably also reach out to the community, as well.

MR. NADLI: Obviously, everybody is concerned about public safety, especially at this time of the year. It is winter. We have lots of traffic, a lot of big semi trucks with their heavy loads travelling as far as Edmonton. How will the department tackle this specific road safety concern and enforcement issues inherent to the winter road commercial trucking season, especially around the Deh Cho Bridge?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: There are a couple of things that I can answer. I will answer them all. The Ingraham Trail, we had our recent meetings and followed up with the City of Yellowknife and the RCMP and the highways divisions. Around the Deh Cho Bridge, the Member has sent me an email on this particular issue. I have already reached out to the RCMP's traffic divisions to see if they can provide additional resources to this. I have also asked the department, ourselves. We have directed the highway patrol to provide a presence of enforcement in this area as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit at least, at the start and end of the trucking season, to do speeding enforcement exercises, more than likely involving our resources, including the RCMP, during the start and end of the trucking season? Mahsi.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: At the beginning of every winter road, we take safety as the number one priority, and the Member's point is well-noted. One of the things that I have asked the department already to do is look at engineered solutions, particularly around the Deh Cho Bridge, as safety is a priority, and we want to protect this asset, as well as the residents of the Northwest Territories travelling in the public.

I have asked the department to look at what it would take to install one of the posted speed limit signs that is permanently mounted there, with the radar one that tells you your speed when you are pulling up to the bridge. We are going to have a look and see if we have some resources within our Highway Safety Fund to help facilitate that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

QUESTION 554-18(3):
LONG-TERM CARE

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Health and Social Services has been waiting patiently for almost an hour for these questions. Earlier I spoke about the residents of long-term care and how we could have a few more opportunities for them to live life to the fullest, and that is in terms of activities, in terms of getting out of the facility a little bit more, and things like that. I have some questions for the Minister of Health.

One of the objectives of the Department of Health's Continuing Care Action Plan is to optimize healthy aging by increasing opportunities and improving environments for seniors and elders to lead active and independent lives. This objective contains actions aimed at keeping seniors out of long-term care, including developing adult day programs and accessible transportation to help seniors get out of the house. There seems to be a recognition that these types of activities are vital to living a fulfilling life. However, the long-term care section of the action plan ignores such concepts. It speaks more about the administrative and back-end operational aspects of long-term care. Can the Minister explain why the action plan doesn't contain any actions that support mental well-being of long-term care residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to, obviously, thank the Member for his statement earlier today. I would like to confirm, first off, that I personally feel that our minds, the minds of everybody in this Assembly, the minds of the staff who are working on this incredibly important file, have been turned to the exact issues that the Member has identified.

When it comes to the particular action plan that the Member has referenced, there are other action plans as well that we are working on. We are moving forward with the long-term care review that actually clearly articulates some of the work that we are doing around design and other things with long-term care. You have to take the document as a whole, as well as the work that we are doing in other areas as a whole, as opposed to just focusing in on one action item.

Mr. Speaker, people often speak of long-term care facilities the same way that we talk about hospitals or other clinical settings, but it is really, really important to remember that long-term care facilities are a person's home. In our planning and in our design, we have worked really hard, and we have a standard of design that we have been implementing and evolving. As we build each facility, we learn

from the last, and I hope that all of the Members have had an opportunity to visit the facility in Norman Wells, where you can see that the facility has really been designed with the focus on a home.

We don't just focus on the design of buildings. We are also trying to improve and evolve our services around this area in long-term care facilities, and there are a number of standards already in place that help support the concept and the philosophy of home, as opposed to a clinical facility.

Mr. Speaker, we support the establishment of family and resident councils, whose role is to contribute to the creation of positive living environments to help them set up the environment, make sure that the supports come in, the exact types of supports the Member has talked about, helping people get out into the community, those types of things. We are trying to do that work. We need to look at everything that we are doing as a whole, as opposed to looking at single items. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to remind Members to shorten their answers and also questions, because we haven't gone through all of the Members yet, and it is already five minutes before our session is done. Just a reminder to the Members.

MR. SIMPSON: A few minutes ago, I sent the Minister the questions I was going to ask, and I think he thought that that was one question because he answered all of them. How about this, then? Moving forward, the Minister mentioned there is a long-term care review. There are regulations that are being developed. Would the Minister commit to going and speaking with the actual residents of long-term care? Because that is where I hear these concerns coming from. Will the Minister commit to him or the department speaking to the residents so that they can develop some of these opportunities that we have discussed regarding opportunities to live a fulfilling life?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: In many ways, I have already done that myself, but I hear the Member. I have visited many long-term care facilities. I have talked to many residents. I have heard many of the same things that the Member has already articulated, which is why we are doing much of the work we are doing.

Yes, staff will be going to facilities, will be learning from the residents, will be talking to the residents, but there are a number of things that we are already doing. I mean, we are implementing interRAI. I won't go into the details on that, because I know the Member knows how important it is to do assessments to identify what types of supports individuals need. We are currently getting our facilities accredited, which will help us articulate

some more needs that we need to address. We are developing new regulatory framework, so we absolutely will be reaching out to residents, both in facilities today, but some that might be eventually in facilities. We are implementing our Continuing Care Action Plan that the Member commented about earlier. There is a lot happening, but absolutely, yes, our staff will be working closely with providers and residents.

MR. SIMPSON: Can the Minister give us a timeline for the completion of this review and of the regulations?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: InterRAI will be rolling out in quarter four of 2019-2020. The accreditation is currently taking place in a number of facilities. I can't tell you exactly when that will be done. It really depends on how it rolls out. For the regulatory framework, we are going to need to do an LP and a number of other things. Some of that, we might not see the results in the life of this government, but the work will be beginning in the life of this government.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 555-18(3):

YELLOWKNIFE ADULT DAY PROGRAMMING

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, approximately six months ago Yellowknife MLAs met with the Minister of Health and Social Services to ask him about how he was going to establish a new adult day program for seniors in Yellowknife. He outlined a range of options, and we haven't heard from him since. Could he please provide the House with an update? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to those meetings, staff from the department did reach out to a number of stakeholders in Yellowknife. There was a meeting. They had an opportunity to share what different organizations are doing within the community. I had an opportunity to speak, myself, to the mayor and talk about the concept of supporting Yellowknife to become a seniors-friendly community. I think there is a lot of room that we can do there.

There is another meeting scheduled for February 21st to see where we can go based on what we have heard and what we have been able to compile. Like the Members, I am getting a little frustrated on the timeline here. I feel like it is taking too long. There are competing demands, but I have told the department that I hope to see some concrete results out of that February 21st meeting.

Otherwise, we will go to a different plan, as we discussed with the Members. I think it was the honourable Member for Frame Lake who suggested that, if we can't find an option, we just need to do it in-house. We all agreed that wasn't the best solution, but if we don't get some solid results out of the 21st, it may well turn out to be the solution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. I want to note that contacting with community organizations seems to be off the table, no results to the RFP partnership model. We have capacity issues in the non-profits, so that seems to be off the table. At what point is the Minister prepared to go to the next option, which is operating it in-house? I mean, we have been waiting two-and-a-half years. At what point does this issue achieve priority that there is, in fact, a solution proposed that doesn't only involve meeting?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: When we went with the Yellowknife MLAs, we explored a number of options, and we pretty much, I think, came to the conclusion that going out for an RFP was off the table, but it was suggested that we reach out to a number of different groups and figure out if there is an opportunity to partner together, building on the strengths that exist in a number of the NGOs, the municipality, and the government so that we could partner on a solution.

That is what we have been exploring since that time. There has been some progress, but I am really hoping that, on February 21st, as I have already said, we will get a concrete direction. If not, I am prepared to go down the route that the honourable Member from Frame Lake suggested, which is the in-house option.

MS. GREEN: I would have more comfort in that answer if the Minister would make a commitment to offer it in-house within a specified time frame. I think we have waited long enough.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am hoping to get some concrete direction on the 21st from our partners working together in a collaborative way. If that does not happen, I am prepared to bring it in-house.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to tell us whether there is money to offer the program in-house in the next budget, the one for the next fiscal year, or whether he is prepared to obtain funding through a supplementary appropriation? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I don't think this is a surprise to the Member. We had money to go out

for an RFP to deliver this service. We still have those dollars available for us. We will use those dollars to deliver a program in-house. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The time for oral questions has expired. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to the Commissioner's opening address. Item 12, replies to budget address. Item 13, petitions. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 32-18(3):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO
FEBRUARY 20, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, on Thursday, February 14, 2019, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that, notwithstanding rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 14, 2019, it shall be adjourned until Wednesday, February 20, 2019, and further, that, at any time prior to February 20, 2019, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council of 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. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 34:
MINERAL RESOURCES ACT

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 34, Mineral Resources Act, be read for the second time. This bill sets out a framework for mineral prospecting, exploration, development, and production in the Northwest Territories. It governs the issuance of interests in minerals and related instruments. Also, it ensures the collection of geoscience information and provides tools for facilitating the progress of exploration and mining.

This bill requires engagement with Indigenous governments and organizations as part of certain processes, including in establishing restricted areas where issuance of mineral interests is prohibited and in establishing zones where exploration is encouraged.

The bill enables the establishment of requirements relating to benefits for the people in the Northwest Territories. It also requires benefit agreements for Indigenous governments and organizations for production projects that have attained a prescribed threshold size.

This bill addresses royalty valuation and collection based on the output of a mine. This bill also enables inspectors to enforce compliance with the requirements of the act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. To the principal of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Members may speak to the object, expediency, principles, and merits of a bill at second reading, and I will certainly take that opportunity with the proposed Mineral Resources Act. We have had it for less than 24 hours, to review the 65-page bill.

I will speak to the process that got us here and how that could and should have been better. I will also provide some comments on the approach of the bill and concerns with what is there and what is missing. There are some good things in the bill, as well, Mr. Speaker.

The Process

This bill will replace the Mining Regulations under the NWT Lands Act. The Mining Regulations mirrored the federal government law under the old Canada Mining Regulations. Those regulations were built on the centuries-old concept of free entry, where mining was viewed as the highest and best use of the land.

With devolution effective April 1, 2014, our government has had the opportunity to develop our own legislation on mineral rights disposition. The public part of that process began in August 2017 with the release of a discussion paper, "Unlocking our Potential Together." Community drop-in sessions were held August to November 2017. The Minister, his department, and public communications promised world-class, leading-edge, and made-in-the-North legislation that would increase competitiveness. The scope of the consultation included just about everything, including a review of royalties, closure and reclamation, socio-economic benefits, Ministerial authority, accountability, and more.

Limited public information was made available, despite claims of extensive cross-jurisdictional research and analysis, including best practices. A mineral sector review and benchmarking study was released on October 11, 2017, after repeated requests for more information. On October 18, 2017, the Minister had this to say in the House about a jurisdictional scan of best practices: "We can share with all the people in the NWT."

A so-called "what we heard" report was released on February 12, 2018. I described it as a classic example of regulatory capture, when a government agency, created to act in the public interest, instead advances the commercial concerns or interests of the industry or sector that it is charged with regulating. Public input was boiled down into almost unintelligible bullets, where comments were taken out of context, categorized improperly, or not even included. Next steps were not clearly identified, there were no timelines set out, and no clear policy direction emerged. None of the written submissions made to ITI are available on its website. This stands out in stark contrast to the department's own review of the targeted changes to petroleum legislation, where such submissions are posted, and a thoughtful "what we heard" report was developed. I would add that information was provided freely to the standing committee as part of the petroleum legislation review process.

Calls for more information on topics under consideration in the Mineral Resources Act continued from the public and Regular MLAs. I had to resort to Access to Information requests to finally force the Minister to make more information available, including a review of socio-economic agreements, which I tabled in the House on October 28, 2019. I tabled five more documents obtained under an additional Access to Information request made to ITI requesting deliverables under a publicly available contract listing for assistance in the development of the bill. Mr. Speaker, I tabled those documents yesterday in this House.

I continue to encourage the Minister to make this sort of information available to the public to help with the review of the bill and subsequent regulations. It is quite remarkable that a Regular MLA has to resort to Access to Information requests to get a Minister to share information in a consensus government system, information paid for with public funds. This certainly does not reflect well on how this legislation was developed or the state of a consensus government purportedly committed to transparency and accountability.

To be fair, around the end of last year, the Minister began to provide confidential briefings and more information to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment on the bill. This improved communications is much

appreciated. The bill development was clearly being shaped by a mysterious technical working group made up of Indigenous government representatives that was involved in some sort of co-drafting process. This is, as it should be and is indeed, a legal requirement of the devolution agreement, its implementing legislation, constitutionally entrenched land rights agreements, and a requirement of section 35 Aboriginal rights to consultation and accommodation. We are still trying to figure out how to mesh this new way of developing legislation with the public government approach of the Executive holding the pen and the Legislature conducting a review.

Clearly a lessons-learned review is required for the development process on post-devolution legislation as the processes across department and even within departments has varied wildly with different outcomes and satisfaction levels. The process for developing the Mineral Resources Act could and should have been a lot better.

I want to move on to the principles and merit of the bill, Mr. Speaker.

Principles and Merit of the Bill

This bill is about mineral rights management. It is not about promoting mining. The purpose lays out a number of matters necessary for responsible and balanced mineral exploration and development, including maximizing benefits, building positive relationships, respect for Indigenous and treaty rights, improving geological knowledge and sustainability. One of the most fundamental questions is: who should administer and implement the bill? I have already raised the issue of regulatory capture, in that ITI developed the bill but is also largely responsible for the promotion of mining. The department certainly does a very good job at promoting mining.

In my view, it is an inherent conflict of interest for a department to promote something and attempt to impartially regulate it at the same time. This is not good governance. This issue was also raised during the development of the bill and received very little serious consideration. The implementation of this bill should be transferred and delegated to the Department of Lands, which already has systems and expertise in place for surface lands management. This would remove the apprehension of bias.

There are definitely some improvements in the bill to current mineral rights management, including some potential modifications to the free entry system through notice requirements. It offers possible improvements to benefit retention with agreements as a condition of production, potential reductions to environmental disturbance from

exploration through map staking, and better capture of geological information. I suspect that the mining industry would agree with me on many of these matters. The biggest issue I see is the overwhelming amount of ministerial discretion within the bill to implement all of these principles and new approaches. A process of regulation development is needed to fully implement the bill, and this will drag on for years. Information on implementation on the ITI website references the experience in Ontario of taking about 10 years to develop its legislation and regulations. I think we are in the same boat. The Minister and his department have raised unrealistic expectations since the beginning of this process back in 2017 and even earlier. Today, we have a hollow shell with so much discretion and work required for regulations that I fail to see how certainty and clear policy direction is created. I think a step-wise or phased approach to targeted changes over time would have been a much more effective strategy in building certainty and clarity in policy direction and public confidence. This seems to be the approach that is being taken with the amendments to our petroleum legislation.

I would like to discuss some of the major shortcomings of the bill as I see it. The dispute resolution processes are muddled with a Mining Rights Panel and another possible body. It is not clear how they will relate to the NWT Surface Rights Board and arbitration processes under the land rights agreements already in place. The Mining Rights Panel does not reflect a co-management approach where Indigenous governments can appoint or nominate individuals to sit on it. Virtually absolute ministerial discretion on appointments creates the potential for an "old boys club" or patronage approach to this key body under the bill.

There is no role anywhere in the bill for community governments, despite this matter being raised during the public consultations and by myself directly with the Minister and his staff. Community governments deserve to be notified of claim staking and work plans on mineral leases within their boundaries. Community governments should also have the right to request temporarily restricted areas to prevent mineral exploration within their boundaries to protect their infrastructure, such as potable water sources and gravel sources. This could also help avoid the sort of land use conflicts that have taken place in Inuvik regarding its major gravel source. This is a disappointing omission.

There is provision for the creation of zones with more favourable requirements or lower standards to promote mining. These zones could be created by the Minister or on request from Indigenous governments. This approach is very problematic. If the purpose of these zones was to facilitate access to high mineral potential areas or to better capture

revenues, zones might make some sense. However, when the purpose is to lower fees or requirements to promote mining, this is a dangerous mixing of objectives, promotion of mining, and regulation of mining rights. In my view, these so-called zones will create a race to the bottom that pits regions against each other to lower requirements in the hope of attracting exploration. I cannot support this approach of mixing objectives.

I do support the tying of benefit agreements to commercial production. This is simply best practice and good corporate behaviour. The problem is that the bill creates almost no guidance in this area, leaving all the details to regulations. However, the Minister and Cabinet do have discretion to waive whatever requirements and thresholds there may be for benefit agreements. This will not create certainty or clarity and should be dropped.

I mentioned that there is some modification of free entry through notice requirements of claim staking and intended work on mineral leases. This is good, but all the details and thresholds are left to regulations. I am not convinced that these potentially very weak notice requirements fully recognize or comply with the concept of free, prior, and informed consent, or satisfy the constitutional duty to consult with and accommodate Indigenous peoples. These concepts are enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that this government has adopted and should be more clearly reflected in the bill.

I am very disappointed at the approach to confidentiality of information under this bill, especially when it comes to the disclosure of revenues and royalties paid to our government. This is definitely not consistent with best practices, the international efforts on disclosure as shown by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives, and a Cabinet that espouses open government. The bill appears to preclude or prevent the public reporting of aggregated royalty payments by commodity type to our government. I find it very troubling that our government insists on the disclosure of the identities of students and their loan remission amounts in the public accounts that vary from about \$39 to about \$15,000, but the public cannot know how much a mining company pays in royalties to our government. The disclosure of revenue information is at the basis of responsible government. I am also concerned that the confidentiality requirements in the bill will hinder the building of our geoscience knowledge base that should help industry better target its efforts and reduce the environmental footprint of exploration.

What is required and not in the bill? Clearly, the Minister and his department have done a lot more research and analysis that has not been publicly released. As much of this work as possible should

be made available now to ensure transparency and to assist with an informed review of the bill. Such information would also assist with the mountain of work required on regulations to fully implement the bill.

I have spoken at great length about the promise of devolution, how we were to devolve and evolve and build responsible resource management through a public and independent review of the royalty regime. The federal government never did it, but Alberta has done it at least twice for its petroleum sector. If we have any hope of demonstrating that we are capable of managing our resources in the hope of securing further authority, we must show leadership and work in the public interest by conducting an open review of the mining royalty regime.

So much of the real detail on key issues, such as work and reporting requirements, threshold and content of benefit agreements, notification, confidentiality, and more, is to be set out in regulations. My hope was that the bill would create the floor or minimum requirements, but this is clearly not the case. We may be able to move the bill in that direction or to ensure that discretion is exercised in the public interest. There needs to be a strong and clear commitment to develop regulations in a transparent, collaborative, and inclusive manner. I sincerely hope that the lessons learned from the development of the bill, such as the need for greater transparency, inclusiveness, and greater collaboration, are applied to the regulation-making process.

I wish to commend the department for the public information materials that have been prepared, as this should assist the standing committee with its public review of the bill. Mr. Speaker, we are making history with this bill and we have a responsibility to get it right for this and future generations. There are some good initiatives that may come out of this, but a lot of work is required to be done. I look forward to being an active participant in this process as it moves forward. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the principle of the bill. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to take an opportunity to speak to the bill. I just want to start by thanking the Minister and his department and all those who have provided input to date with regard to getting the bill where it is so far.

I do want to remind folks that, in the early days when the LP came to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, in fact, we did have concerns. We shared them with the

Minister. We had to do that a couple of times. I commend the efforts of our committee and the efforts of the Minister for taking a number of the ideas and recommendations that we shared and incorporating a number of them into the bill as we see it presented today.

We had others who had the opportunity to speak to the bill, or not speak to the bill but to get consulted with regard to the forthcoming legislation, the Chamber of Mines has shared their position as has some, if not all, Indigenous governments. Their input has been very valuable.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to devolution legislation, we need a starting point. We have to start somewhere. We need to respect that not always will every piece of legislation that we are taking on for the first time be perfect out of the gate. There is considerable work that will take time as we move forward that will evolve this legislation through amendments, et cetera, as we learn how the act itself will apply to industry. We have to be lenient in that regard and allow some wiggle room so that we can start to shape it as the future unfolds.

Mr. Speaker, we are at the end of this Assembly. We are in the last handful of months. We have put a lot of tremendous effort into the work so far on this bill. It wouldn't be very becoming of us as a government who has this in our mandate to not get this bill presented and get it over to the hands of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, because we have a lot of work to do, taking it out on the road for further consultation before we pass this bill. We have a lot of regulations, even policy, that will stem from passing this bill. It is going to be significant. It is going to take years, as well, to develop. Delays in passing the bill would be detrimental to that process.

Mr. Speaker, just lastly, I want to remind folks that I had the opportunity to join Cabinet colleagues and Indigenous governments down in Vancouver at the annual roundup. That is a place where we learn a lot from investors. We learn a lot from junior exploration companies, mining companies, but also from Indigenous governments about the importance of responsible and fair development and the opportunity to be able to share the great resources that we have with the world. It is taking this responsibility, this next step of responsibility, that is incumbent upon us to do what we have to do so that those who have the interest in what we have to offer the world can get on with doing their business.

The last thing is: I know that we have, in the past, shared some concerns with the government with regard to royalties and why the royalties aspects were not included in this. Mr. Speaker, we have more work to do as it relates to the discussion

around royalties and how that might even tie in with our territorial financing formula and future negotiations around that. I would suggest that it might have been a little bit premature to try to tuck royalties in here. Royalties deserves its own time and attention, and we will get to that.

Mr. Speaker, that is really all that I have to add today. As I have mentioned, the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment is certainly looking forward to getting this put on our agenda and taking it out for further public consultation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 34 has had its second reading. It is now referred to a committee. Second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Minister's Statement 131-18(3), Sessional Statement; Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020, with the Member for Hay River North in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report, Member for Hay River North?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Minister's Statement 131-18(3), Sessional Statement; and Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Do we have a seconder? Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Masi. Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 13, 2019, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgments
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Opening Address
11. Replies to Budget Address (Day 6 of 7)
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 35, Supply Chain Management Professional Designation Act
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 131-18(3), Sessional Statement

- Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020

22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Masi cho, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 13, 2019, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

