



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

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**19<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**HANSARD**

**Thursday, September 28, 2023**

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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

**Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.**  
(Mackenzie Delta)

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
*Deputy Premier*  
*Minister of Infrastructure*  
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation*

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**

(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**

(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**

(Sahtu)  
*Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

**Hon. Caroline Cochrane**

(Range Lake)  
*Premier*  
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat*

**Mr. Richard Edjericon**

(Tu Nedhe-Willideh)

**Hon. Julie Green**

(Yellowknife Centre)  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*  
*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**

(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**

(Yellowknife North)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**

(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**

(Great Slave)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**

(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**

(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**

(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister of Justice*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**

(Nahendah)  
*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister of Environment and Climate Change*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**

(Yellowknife South)  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, including responsibility for the Business Development and Investment Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*

**Ms. Jane Weyallon Armstrong**

(Monfwi)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Thursday, September 28, 2023****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Hon. Frederick Blake Jr., Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Mr. Edjericon, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Ms. Weyallon Armstrong

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.):** Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 378-19(2):  
2023 ENERGY STRATEGY  
IMPLEMENTATION

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Mr. Speaker, delivering the energy Northerners need, in our climate and territory as large as the Northwest Territories, is challenging. We must constantly maintain and improve the territory's energy systems, so our people and businesses have the energy they need when they need it.

Throughout this Legislative Assembly, the GNWT has made significant progress on a number of energy initiatives and on our mandate commitment to increase the use of alternative and renewable energy that is guided by the 2030 Energy Strategy. We are making great strides in developing secure, affordable, sustainable energy for transportation, heat, and electricity across the territory.

Since 2018, this government has invested approximately \$165 million across the NWT to improve our energy systems, stabilize our energy costs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We continue to advance the planning of transformational energy projects, such as the Fort Providence-Kakisa and Whati transmission lines and which will help decrease reliance on diesel generation in those communities. Work also continues on the Taltson hydro expansion project, which will provide the clean energy we need to fuel our natural resources industry and connect our two hydro systems in the South Slave and the North Slave regions.

Mr. Speaker, we celebrated a big milestone this summer when I attended the Inuvik Wind Project ribbon cutting on July 31st. A key initiative of the 2030 Energy Strategy, Canada's northernmost wind turbine will offset diesel consumption in the town by an estimated three million litres per year and will reduce the territorial greenhouse gas emissions by 6,000 metric tonnes. This project is critical to helping us meet our objectives of reducing emissions from electricity generation in diesel communities by 25 percent, and it will continue to provide positive benefits to the Beaufort Delta Region over the coming decades.

Last year, the Department of Infrastructure also released an energy action plan which outlines plans to invest approximately \$194 million to advance the objectives of the energy strategy for the 2022-2025 period. Through 68 proposed actions and initiatives, this new plan provides a roadmap to push forward key projects and provide financial support over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, another important aspect of the 2030 Energy Strategy is finding ways to reduce our GHG energy use and operating costs. The GNWT is leading by example in this area through its Capital Asset Retrofit Program. Since the program began in 2007, we have completed 102 energy retrofit projects for GNWT facilities in 23 communities across all regions. In 2021-2022 alone, these projects reduced the GNWT's energy costs by \$4.1 million.

The Arctic Energy Alliance's programs and services are central to meeting the 2030 Energy Strategy's goals and objectives. During the last fiscal year alone, 2,656 rebates and incentives provided through the AEA resulted in the reduction of 1.1 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and 1400 megawatt hours of electricity use in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, the world is changing, and our energy and climate change strategies must as well. When the 2030 Energy Strategy was released in 2018, the GNWT committed to

reviewing in 2023-2024, along with completing a similar five-year review of the Climate Change Strategic Framework. A review of both strategies over the next two years will determine what changes should be made based on lessons learned, access to new information and opportunities, as well as the feedback we received.

On October 12th, we will complete an over three-month long engagement period on the review of the 2030 Energy Strategy and Climate Change Strategic Framework. As part of this review, the GNWT hosted a three-day in-person event in Yellowknife involving 150 representatives from Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, energy and climate change partners, and stakeholders. We have also engaged with energy utilities and industry, the Northwest Territories Climate Change Council, Indigenous governments and organizations through in-person meetings and targeted communication.

Mr. Speaker, our future energy and climate plans need to be ambitious and effective, but they must also be reasonable so that we can ensure we achieve the strategy's vision of secure, affordable, sustainable energy systems in the NWT. I am glad to report that we have successfully struck that balance over the life of this Legislative Assembly. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 379-19(2):  
BUILDING CAPACITY IN SMALL  
COMMUNITIES

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, three years ago, this government set a mandate to increase employment in small communities. Since then, meaningful progress has been made.

Under the Small Community Employment Support Program, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has provided funding that has supported almost 2900 jobs in communities across the NWT since 2018. In addition, the department provided direct financial support to over 1100 individuals and 285 employers over the life of this Legislative Assembly through its suite of labour market programs. These programs provide a range of supports, including funding for training, wage subsidies, and supports for organizations to design and deliver employment initiatives.

The comments and testimonials from clients of these programs have been moving. In the Sahtu Region, a youth canoe program accessed funding through community training partnerships. In addition to increasing employability, it assisted youth in connecting with their land, culture, and other youth across the region while promoting wellness and resiliency. In the Deh Cho Region, three cousins accessed the Skills Development Program and completed the Surface Miner Training Program together. In doing so, they created a unique support system and are now all currently employed at various mines in the NWT. And There are many more examples like this, Mr. Speaker.

To be prepared for future job and business opportunities, residents need to know what is on the horizon. This is why the department published a 20-year forecast for jobs in demand in the territory. Using updated labour market information, the forecasts provide information by education level and include the number of anticipated openings and wages for each occupation. These forecasts will inform students of the jobs that are, and will be, in demand, and how to access education and training to secure those jobs.

Skilled tradespeople continue to be in high demand across the territory. To help meet this demand, the department released updated occupational standards for the housing maintainer program in 2022. This program prepares individuals to perform preventative and on-demand maintenance, minor repairs, and modernization improvements. Housing maintainers provide an important service, particularly in our small communities and are trained in a range of areas from basic plumbing and electrical to tiling, woodwork and drywall.

To build our skilled trades workforce, the department helped 110 employers access financial supports to offset the wages of hiring and training 407 apprentices. Recognizing that one of the challenges for developing the skilled trades workforce in our small communities is the availability of certified journey persons to mentor new apprentices, this government offers a designated trainer stream to address this. If an employer does not have a certified journey person to provide training for an apprentice, they may apply to have an experienced tradesperson, without a certificate of qualification, be recognized.

We have also supported the launch of new learning supports designed to assist apprentices in addressing academic gaps and learning barriers. These programs, including Building Your Skills and the Virtual Learning

Strategist pilot, help fill a key gap and have been well received.

Mr. Speaker, this government has been committed to enhancing employment and training opportunities in small communities and continues to work collaboratively with communities to identify and address their specific needs and challenges, and to create new jobs and opportunities for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Finance.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 380-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FISCAL  
UPDATE

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to update the Legislative Assembly on the Government of the Northwest Territories' fiscal situation since the tabling of the 2023-2024 Budget. It goes without saying this has been an extraordinarily difficult financial year not only for the government but for many Northwest Territories' residents and businesses. Despite the challenges, our actions to address fiscal pressures, combined with federal disaster assistance, means that our fiscal outlook remains stable over the medium term.

We will end 2022-2023 with an operating surplus, despite last year's expenditure shocks of floods and high inflation. Unfortunately, this year's expenditure shocks are even more significant.

The wildfire season will cost approximately \$100 million for fire suppression. Low water levels have forced significant additional costs for transporting goods to many communities and caused increased pressure on electrical systems, which are pushed backed to diesel, another a high cost item. High inflation continues affecting Northwest Territories supply chains, which in turn impacts our capital budget.

As of now, these natural disasters have reduced our projected operating surplus in 2023-2024 from \$178 million to approximately \$5 million. By the time we know the final actual costs of a prolonged firefighting season, there is a risk that the Government of the Northwest Territories could realize an operating deficit this fiscal year. Operating surpluses are used to fund the capital budget. Without a larger operating surplus, we will likely need to incur more debt in order to invest in the much-needed infrastructure outlined in this year's capital budget.

Part of what is helping to keep our medium-term outlook stable is that federal disaster assistance programs should help us recover the majority of emergency expenses related to the wildfires and last spring's flooding. As a result of the anticipated federal recoveries and our actions to defer some expenditures, we are confident that the Government of the Northwest Territories will remain in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy this fiscal year. While short-term borrowing is expected to increase this year, the Government of the Northwest Territories is projected to be \$192 million below the federally imposed \$1.8 billion limit at March 31st, 2024.

Although the unplanned response to this summer's wildfire season has challenged the 2023-2024 Budget, actions we have taken during the 19th Legislative Assembly should return operating surpluses to more robust and sustainable levels by 2025-2026 and provide the fiscal flexibility to take steps to reduce our short-term borrowing and total debt.

This stable medium-term forecast is mainly due to right-sizing the capital budget this year, which now better reflects the Northwest Territories' capacity to complete infrastructure projects, which improves the cash balance and debt outlook. We also strengthened the Fiscal Responsibility Policy so that the government's total borrowing is more closely linked to the federally-imposed \$1.8 billion borrowing limit and establishes our own internal monitoring threshold \$120 million below the federal limit.

The mineral resource industry, which accounts for almost one-fifth of the Northwest Territories' economy, is in a position to benefit from strategies happening at the national level, like the focus on Canada's critical minerals action plan. This in turn would boost prospects for other Northwest Territories businesses and employment. That said, our economy is also precarious with diamond mines having set closure dates and other industries experiencing their own financial shocks as a result of the wildfires, evacuations, low water levels, seasonal resupply challenges, and a lack of labour supply. A strong public sector across all levels of government mitigates some of this risk on a territory-wide level by providing employment across the territory and contributing income to the territorial economy. Adopting proactive approaches to issues such as climate change, supply chain disruptions and cyber security, to name a few, will allow us to confront and wisely manage strategic risks.

As we move into 2024, the 20th Legislative Assembly will benefit from the fiscal decisions made in the 19th Legislative Assembly. That said, Mr. Speaker, we are not ending the 19th

Legislative Assembly in a fiscal position that allows the 20th Legislative Assembly to relax on fiscal discipline.

Going forward, it will be important to consider that if revenue growth is forecasted to be limited to 3.8 percent growth per year, expenditure growth will need to be capped at an amount lower than this if we are to remain fiscally sustainable over the long term. As well, the current medium-term outlook assumes capital investment continues to be restricted to \$260 million annually. Further, our projections are also subject to changes in interest rates as short-term debt will need to be used until the Government of the Northwest Territories starts recovering its cash resources from the federal government under federal disaster assistance programs.

Clearly, prudent management of the government's fiscal health must continue to be a priority. By this path, the Government of the Northwest Territories can start to reduce its short-term borrowing and free up more space between its ability to borrow and the federally-imposed borrowing limit. This approach will allow us to continue to address our significant capital requirements without compromising much needed programs and services. That, in turn, can help stimulate the economic potential we have throughout the Northwest Territories and make it more accessible to the private sector.

I believe we have overcome many critical challenges during the 19th Legislative Assembly, establishing a good foundation for the 20th Assembly to confidently address future challenges and help build opportunities on behalf of Northwest Territories residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 381-19(2):  
HISTORIC 2023 WILDFIRE SEASON

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize this year's historic wildfire season, the challenges faced by so many NWT residents and others across Canada, and the heroic efforts of firefighters and emergency management personnel to protect our communities.

Before the 2023 wildfire season began, weather forecasts predicted an early start to the season and a high risk for many areas in the NWT. We saw record temperatures, little rain, and severe drought throughout the summer

and fall. All of this resulted in extreme fire conditions for most of the season.

Based on the forecasts, the Department of Environment and Climate Change brought on fire crews, air tankers, and helicopters earlier in the season than normal, and added additional resources. Unfortunately, all of our wildfire personnel and aircraft were put to work right away.

We saw our first wildfire of the season on May 4th, almost a month earlier than normal, which was followed by a record number of fires, area burned, and community evacuations because of fire.

The first major fire followed on May 14th, threatening K'atlodeeche First Nation and Hay River. By the end of June, four NWT communities had been evacuated given the threat of wildfires, including K'atlodeeche First Nation, Hay River, Sambaa K'e, and Wekweeti.

In July, residents of Behchoko, and people living along parts of Highway No. 3, also had to leave their homes, and by mid-August the residents of Kakisa, Enterprise, Fort Smith, Yellowknife, N'dilo, Dettah, the Ingraham Trail, and Jean Marie River had been evacuated. Additionally, Hay River and the K'atlodeeche First Nation had to evacuate for a second time this summer.

As of this week, 299 fires have burned over four million hectares across the NWT this season. These fires resulted in 12 community evacuations, displacing more than two-thirds of the NWT residents from their homes.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from some people that wildfires are not managed like they used to be 40 or 50 years ago and that with more initial attack, we would have avoided the worst of this. I want to be clear: We monitored for new fires throughout the season and responded to every wildfire that was threatening an NWT community.

These fires grew not because of a lack of action or resources but due to the perfect storm set in motion by nature. With record temperatures and severe droughts in the Deh Cho, South Slave, North Slave, and Sahtu regions, we had fires that burned deeper, hotter, and faster.

With the buildup of forest fuel twice which is considered extreme, the forests were primed for explosive fire growth. This, combined with relentless wind events, intense smoke, and proximity to communities, made conditions very difficult for our crews. On the most difficult days, there was no amount of firefighters or aircraft we could have put in front of these fires to stop them.



Mr. Speaker, behind this year's response are people, people who are our friends and neighbours, making critical decisions and are working hard to keep the places we care about safe.

Over the course of the season, more than a thousand wildfire experts and crew members were brought in from across the NWT, Canada, and around the world. Hundreds more structural firefighters helped to protect our communities. Hundreds of armed forces members, workers from communities and private companies joined the effort, and dozens of additional aircraft and heavy equipment also assisted.

Crews did an incredible job FireSmarting and building fire breaks that will now serve as long-term protection for many of our communities. Thousands of homes, cabins, camps, and businesses were saved thanks to the help of so many. Everyone who rose to this occasion deserves the deepest gratitude of this House. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, House and colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, as the fire response slows down, we will turn our attention to learning everything we can from this year's wildfire season. Over the fall and winter, we will conduct an after-action review of this year's fires that impacted communities and apply these lessons to our operations as we do every year. Some lessons we can immediately take away including:

- Continuing to invest in wildfire and climate resilience to get ahead of challenging seasons;
- Ensuring we all play a role in FireSmarting; and,
- Strengthening coordination between local firefighting forces and wildfire management teams.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by acknowledging the immense human toll of this season. This has been the most damaging wildfire season the NWT has ever experienced. The community of Enterprise has been devastated. More than two-thirds of all NWT residents were separated from their homes for weeks. Some people lost their homes, cabins, and others had their businesses or livelihoods impacted by wildfires.

We also lost a firefighter when Fort Liard's Adam Yeadon tragically passed away while protecting his community earlier this summer. My thoughts remain with his family, his friends, and his colleagues.

To everyone who was impacted by this year's wildfire season, our government gives not only our heartfelt thoughts but our commitment to help you as we work to rebuild. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1592-19(2): UNION OF NORTHERN WORKERS BARGAINING

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak about the ongoing negotiation regarding the new collective agreement for the Union of Northern Workers, UNW.

Mr. Speaker, all throughout my life I have always been someone that is worker-friendly. I have always cared deeply for my community, and for the well-being of all my constituents and for all the people of the NWT. Plus, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the major employer of many NWT residents, so it is extremely important that the new collective agreement is fair and beneficial for all employees. That is why I am concerned about the status of talks between the UNW and the Government of the Northwest Territories which seem to have halted and broken down for some reason.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the Government of the Northwest Territories expressed to have a tentative agreement in place before the upcoming territorial election. However, at this juncture, it appears that this desired timeline will not be achieved. I also understand that as of mid July, a mediator has been called in to help facilitate both parties into a mutually agreed-upon collective agreement. I am also told, Mr. Speaker, that a third-party lawyer from Vancouver has been hired to help with this process as well, which is an aspect of this process that I have a problem with.

I do not understand why the Government of the Northwest Territories always seeks help from outside the territory, outsourcing work and paying people to come to the NWT to try solving these types of matters. That's not always the right decision to do. The people of the NWT are very much capable of making their own decisions, especially in decisions that affect

people's livelihoods and everyday lives. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, the cost of living in the NWT is always rising, particularly over the last year and a half. According to the bureau of statistics, within the last year alone the price of food in Yellowknife has gone up 10.7 percent; the price of clothing has gone up 7.6 percent; electricity has risen by 3.4 percent; and, fuel oil has risen by 7.3 percent. Also, the key interest rate from the Bank of Canada is at its highest rate in over 20 years. All of these factors are making it increasingly harder for people to put food on the table and get by.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I know that many Government of the Northwest Territories' employees are wondering when a new collective agreement will be finalized and signed by the Government of the Northwest Territories and the UNW. I certainly hope that the negotiations will not be drawn out too long, and I also have hope that these negotiations do not break down entirely and result in strike action as we have seen recently with many industries across the country and around the world. I have questions for the Minister of finance at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1593-19(2):  
FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE  
FUNDING

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, the communities of Hay River, Enterprise, and K'atloodeeche have been through not one, not two, but three evacuations in 15 months. This fact is not lost on me, nor should it be on this government.

Mr. Speaker, we have not recovered from the 2022 flood or, for that matter, from the 2023 spring fire, and now we add to that the most recent fire and the extensive damage it caused in Enterprise and Hay River. Considering the rate of which government moves, in addition to the lack of labour, trades, and contractors, I see flood and fire recovery going beyond the life of the next Assembly unless we do things differently. We need to add a level of support with sufficient financial resources to action each fire in an efficient and timely manner. We need a clear, concise, and transparent process for those impacted.

Mr. Speaker, there are residents who have been living in motels for over a year and who have been asking for our help to either provide them with a replacement home or more suitable long-term accommodation. These are people who have lost everything; they are people who may not know how to navigate a system we have created; they are people who may not have the financial resources to find a temporary rental home; they are people who want their life back. Let us provide that help.

Mr. Speaker, we have residents in Paradise Valley who, rightly so, are concerned that property values have substantially declined to the point that their properties are unsaleable. Many are at a loss on what to do. Do they walk away from their properties and mortgages; do they push for property acquisition or buyback which some residents consider as the only viable option, an option that is allowed and set out in Section 3.4.1 of the federal "Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangement Program, which states that, "any solution that reduces or prevents recurrence of damages up to an equivalent of the cost of repairing and replacing actual damaged facilities, plus mitigation enhancement values as appropriate, will be considered for eligibility..." - a program this government refuses to use.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to ramp up support for those wanting to get their life back before they throw up their arms and say enough is enough and to hell with the NWT. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1594-19(2):  
GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 19th Assembly made history when a record number of women were elected in 2019. With the subsequent election of my colleague, the Member for Monfwi, our small Legislative Assembly broke through the glass ceiling to become a legislature with a majority of women. This is one of our achievements that I am the most proud of. As a result, this Assembly has addressed critical issues impacting women, youth, 2SLGBFQIPA+ people, and families. Issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, intimate partner violence, universal child care, suicide, fertility, mental health, and family well-being among many others. And Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank you, and the rest of our colleagues, for not only allowing us the space to do so but for also taking up the mantle for issues that have typically been considered only for women. While the

Northwest Territories made huge strides electing record numbers of women, the work to support gender equity and gender equality cannot stop here.

Mr. Speaker, people who identify as women, or are from the 2SLGBTQIPA+ community, face serious barriers to running, including financial barriers as men are typically better poised to self-fund their campaigns or to solicit funds from others. Colonial political environments have traditionally been patriarchal and unfriendly to those who do not identify as male. Women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people are discouraged from putting their names forward as candidates because of the threats of violence and verbal attacks that often use social media to target, bully, and demean. Many women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people also face negative perceptions of competency and qualification despite our intelligence, experience, and education.

The Legislative Assembly and our territory need to take bold steps to overcome these challenges for women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people to have full and effective participation in politics and our democracy. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues. So the Legislative Assembly and our territory need to take bold steps to overcome these challenges for women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people to have full and effective participation in politics and our democracy. They must be sitting at the table and in this very room to share their perspectives, values, and goals to ensure that decisions made will support gender equity efforts and achieve gender equality.

With the end of this Assembly and the election around the corner, it's an important time to remember the political and social barriers that prevent women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people from entering politics. I hope that the momentum for a more diverse group of MLAs will continue beyond this Assembly as we will continue to see complex economic, social and environmental issues impacting our communities over the next four years, however, through a diverse leadership group and new perspectives we can inform how we address those issues in a more holistic way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1595-19(2):  
WILDFIRES

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NWT has faced a truly historic wildfire season. This has put all of our communities at risk, tested all of our communities, and displaced 70 percent of the entire population. This has also shown how vulnerable we are. I want to first talk about my communities, but I recognize that this has impacted all residents of the NWT in some way. We will need to further discuss what has happened here and make sure this does not happen again.

Mr. Speaker, Fire No. ZF015 which began in Awry Lake area spread to Behchoko, and towards Yellowknife. This fire destroyed millions of hectares of land and made countless animals suffer a painful death. These lands are very important to the Indigenous people of the region. That is where people practice their culture, language, and way of life. Many people have used those lands as a source of income for trapping and hunting. Many residents also use these areas for spring hunting like trapping for beaver, muskrat, fishing and duck hunting. The impact of this destruction will help to destroy our culture and language.

Mr. Speaker, on July 24th, 2023, the community of Behchoko was issued an evacuation order due to wildfire. This was the first time in the history of Behchoko, residents were forced to leave their homes. This tragic event resulted in four houses and 15 traditional cabins destroyed.

On June 28th, 2023, Fire No. ZF015 was ignited due to lightning. This fire was reported twice but deemed not a threat and it was left alone to burn itself out. Like all fires, this one began small but grew much larger over time. But soon enough, this fire grew so large and got out of control, it threatened to wipe out much of Behchoko's key infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, it threatened to wipe out of much of Behchoko key infrastructure like the fibre optic, Frank Channel Bridge, and the highway itself. Then it began to threaten the city of Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, though, the action taken to deal with this forest fire done was too late. The policy of letting fire take care of themselves in the hottest driest year on record makes no sense.

In talking with the Minister of ECC, he made reference to his experts and their management of the fire. Well, Mr. Speaker, fire management is not the word that I would use to describe this

year's fire situation in NWT. It is clear to me that anyone with a little common sense would reach the conclusion that these fires should have been fought much earlier before they had a chance to get out of control.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue with this tomorrow, thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1596-19(2):  
REGULATORY CAPTURE

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Yesterday I tabled a report and legally-binding order from our Information and Privacy Commissioner on the summaries of the secret meetings held between GNWT and the Chamber of Mines. It proves regulatory capture is alive and well in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. If you don't believe me, read the Commissioner's reports. These were secret meetings with summaries that the department then tried to heavily redact to keep much of the content secret.

There's nothing wrong with GNWT officials meeting with the mining industry. In fact, I have encouraged this practice. However, when information is kept secret and shared only with selected groups, that is simply wrong.

Here's what the Information and Privacy Commissioner said: "The department seems to say that it is appropriate to share policies with select members of the public before the policies are known to the general public. The rationale offered so industry can "prepare" does not appear to appreciate the dangers inherent in giving private individuals or organizations privileged early notice of government policy before it is made public. It is concerning to see that the department redacted not just the information about a policy decision but also redacted the admonition to the working group members not to discuss it until it was announced publicly. This is the sort of behaviour that could lead to the perception of regulatory capture."

This is a recurring pattern with this department. Discussions about COVID recovery quickly evolved into a high-level lobbying campaign to fundamentally change the way the mining industry is regulated. More than 25 secret meetings were also held on the new mining regulations with the mining industry. The Minister refused to make ITI presentations at those secret meetings public. As part of the so-called targeted engagement on the mining regulations, 21 surveys on mining

administration and policy were only open to those with prospecting licenses. The public should not have to buy a prospecting license to participate in the development of the mining regulations, Mr. Speaker.

Regulatory capture is rampant in this department. The interests of the mining industry have replaced the public interest. The culture of secrecy within the department must stop and that clearly requires direction from the Minister. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1597-19(2):  
INUVIK WIND PROJECT

**MS. SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier made supportive comments on the Inuvik high point wind turbine and some of the benefits that it's bringing. Today, Minister Archie praised this project as she has done many times in this House. I am in full agreement with this project. There are many benefits of this project from jobs to clean energy. Not only will this help our energy needs, but it will help our greenhouse gas emissions as we have seen climate change devastation continue to get worse every year in this our territory. But, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned to hear that some of businesses in my region have yet to be paid for actually installing this road to the high point wind turbine. From the reports that I have received, there are payments that are just almost \$1 million outstanding, by some of our local and regional contractors. I'm sure that these contractors would feel the same as the Premier and the Minister do on this project if they were paid for their work. So, Mr. Speaker, today I will have questions for the Minister responsible for this project as to when our local and regional contractors can expect to be paid for the work that was completed. While we can stand in this House and praise the benefits as government are starting to experience from this project, I think it's also very important that the businesses actually who built that road get paid for their work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1598-19(2):  
COMMUNITY FIRE BREAKS

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every year we are at the mercy of the Mother Nature as we face one disaster after another. One moment we have floods and then the next we have wildfires. What we know and

have experienced is that these disasters are as unpredictable as to when they will strike.

Mr. Speaker, we may not prevent or predict all natural disasters, but perhaps we can be proactive to prevent most. I believe the department of ECC promotes fire breaks around communities and FireSmarting within communities.

It is shown that fire breaks around the perimeter of the community can prevent wildfires from reaching and destroying valuable infrastructure such as homes and businesses. I believe the south end of Enterprise had been widened an extra 50 to 100 feet which saved that end of the community, so it goes to show that fire breaks can quite possibly save a community. The challenge here is funding specifically aimed at creating wide enough fire breaks around the perimeter of communities. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the ECC minister in this regard. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1599-19(2):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES CRISIS COMMUNICATION

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every evacuation story is different. Residents had access to different levels of public or personal support, and sometimes it came down to where they stood in a line. The government supplied air charters for residents to leave and return to the territory and, because of this, will not reimburse evacuation airfare costs. But the finer details of accessing those flights matter.

Yellowknife's evacuation day buzzed with evacuation rumors that Regular MLAs were never able to verify. By 9 a.m., multiple NGOs were told to move their clients because of the impending evacuation order. By 9:30, residents were told by connected East Coast friends, quote, "you're being evacuated at seven, hit the road now", end quote. By 10, people in with the right meetings knew and told friends. By noon, multiple families hit the road, and some got on flights. By 2, banks and city facilities had closed. This is all before the 7:30 p.m. press conference announcing the evacuation order. My point, Mr. Speaker, is that multiple people knew before 7:30 and got out before discussions about government support.

During the press conference, the Premier asked residents who could get on a commercial flight and leave town to do so. And they did.

On Thursday, August 17th, a kilometre-long line for evacuation flights formed at Sir John Franklin High School. Three evacuation flights left that day. Many people waited in that same line through the night to save their spot. Some were elders, many were children, some with health conditions, and some pregnant. People who could opt instead for the certainty of commercial flights.

Mr. Speaker, people didn't pay for flights because they could afford it. On the heels of watching Hay River drive through literal flames to get to safety and while expecting the fires to reach Yellowknife by weekend, they paid for flights out of fear they couldn't afford not to.

Mr. Speaker, this government also provided re-entry flights. Some residents are still waiting to hear what flight they're on. They watched as multiple flights left half empty while they were desperate to get on, but they couldn't afford to wait. They had businesses to open, employers needed them, and they had a role to fill in our community. Some needed safety of home, or simply couldn't afford to be away any longer. There's so many stories and nuances as to why evacuation flights didn't work for everyone. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of serving many newcomer Canadians whose immigration status relies on their employment. Without employment, they risk deportation. Some support essential services and many received undue pressure from employers to get home now. Like many, they needed those empty seats. Another was a teen moved from a safe hotel to an unsafe one. She was alone in Edmonton while her older siblings returned to post-secondary. Getting on that flight was a massive safety concern for her. Mr. Speaker, we eventually showed up and waited until they put her on a flight.

The government's insistence on hand holding all residents, rather than supporting those who actually needed it, meant that they did not have the capacity to serve Northerners equitably. Many things went right in this evacuation, but others did not work. This is an opportunity for this government to acknowledge that by reimbursing airfare costs of residents who worked to support the government's evacuation orders and then tried but could not be served by the GNWT's re-entry flights. Mr. Speaker, it is clear not every evacuation support system was built the same. Unfortunately, for some it came down to where they stood in a line. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1600-19(2):  
IMPACT OF TALTSON EXPANSION ON  
ROCHER RIVER

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the ongoing discovery of unmarked graves throughout Canada only further highlights the atrocities of a colonial system which has negatively impacted Indigenous people since European contact. The community of Rocher River was abandoned in order to provide a clearer path for the Taltson Hydro Electric Dam. This is a sad tale that can be told across Canada where the scores of Indigenous nations forcibly evicted from their ancestral homelands to make way for industrial development to benefit incoming colonial settlers. The history of Rocher River is complex. With the school burning down in 1950s, which triggered the sole deportation of residents from the community. The government did not support the community of rebuilding the school, which ran programming since the 1920s causing people to leave in order to receive education for their children. Those that stayed faced additional challenges as the Taltson River Hydro Project was greatly impacted -- impacted the hydrology of the area, impacted traplines, known trails, and their overall environment. These changes resulted in the history of losses to our residents making the practice of the traditional way of life near impossible.

The history of Indigenous people and colonialism and of the people not being able to return to their homelands and traditional lands use areas. Elders in my communities tell me these stories and how the Taltson dam is the reason the school was never rebuilt and why the community was lost.

Mr. Speaker, residents of Fort Resolution are still impacted by the loss of that community. The land has changed. The hunting and trapping has changed. Our people are still going into the area, or they speak of unmarked graves and need to ensure they are protected given the sensitive history of that region.

The government has made steadfast its plans to grow the size of the Taltson dam to further its industrial ambition in the Slave Geological Province. This type of major project requires a massive investment of infrastructure and risks further altering the landscape that people live in their traditional lifestyle. In addition of all of that, there is a risk of disturbing the important historical sites to Indigenous population throughout this region. We need to know that all

the risks are being considered and mitigated. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. As the government continues to advance the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project, however, I'm unclear if the overarching impacts that such expansions are understood being properly explained to the public. These grave sites of our ancestors are a critical part of our people's history. Right now as it is, those grave sites that were flooded when the Government of Canada made a decision to build this dam, it went ahead without consultation and accommodations with the people in that area. We got graves that are 60 feet underwater right now.

The elders want these grave sites relocated to their other communities ahead of a further advancement of the current Taltson Hydro Electric Expansion Project. Yes, there will be a time to consider this as part of the environment assessment process through the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, also through the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board water licensing process. But why not get ahead of this now and take action on the legacy of the colonialism that continues to harm the descendants of Rocher River? I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1601-19(2):  
TALTSON BUSINESS CASE

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In today's Minister's statement, the Minister of Infrastructure tried to paint a rather rosy picture of our energy future, and I'm quite at a loss of why we would do this because, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to be honest with the public that our energy future is looking pretty grim. I think the statement should have started with, the first thing, we subsidized our power corp \$15 million this year because of a record low water year and an underestimation of the cost of diesel in current rates. Mr. Speaker, those problems are not going anywhere. The reality is is that our rates are going up, and people in the North will continue to pay the highest rates of power in Canada. None of the projects that the Minister listed today are going to fix that, and I think that needs to be the starting point in this conversation.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have a problem building projects on budget and on time. The Minister celebrated the Inuvik Wind Project, a project that came in at almost double what we initially expected. Mr. Speaker, that was a 3.5 megawatt project for \$70 million. People down south are building wind projects at \$2 million a megawatt. We're ten times what we're building in the south. This shouldn't be celebrated. This was one of the most, if not the most, expensive wind project ever, Mr. Speaker. And I get it is expensive in the North, and I get it's hard to build. But with that project doubling in cost, the business case is very questionable whether it's saving those 3 million litres of diesel a year on a 20-year project, that's the estimated life span of a wind turbine, will actually pay itself off.

Mr. Speaker, we need to level with people that perhaps a lot of the renewables we want to build just aren't there in the cost for the North yet.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister spoke about the Whati Transmission Line, a line that was supposed to be starting building in 2021, now estimated to be completion in 2028. We still don't have a cost for that project. We don't even have a route for that project.

The Minister spoke of the Fort Providence Transmission Line, supposed to be completed in fall 2023, pushed back to 2027. It is clear that it is well over budget, and the \$60 million the feds initially gave us for that Fort Providence transmission line isn't going to cut it. We have not been provided with an updated figure.

The Minister spoke about the Taltson Hydro Project, a project the Minister refuses to tell us how much it's going to cost. We have a 2014 cost estimate that includes the transmission line going to the diamond mines, something the Minister has said we are no longer doing. Mr. Speaker, the Minister refuses to tell us what the cost of power will be sold out of Taltson and who's going to buy it mostly importantly, Mr. Speaker. We need mines to buy it.

Mr. Speaker, there is a complete lack of transparency from the department and the power corporation about what's going on with our energy future. I'll have questions for the Minister.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1602-19(2):  
EULOGY FOR MELVIN SAKE

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Melvin Sake was born

on April 21st, 1996, to Willy and Rose Sake in Fort Providence, NWT. This is where he was raised until the family moved to Mile 80. Then the family moved to Hay River and on to Fort Smith. During the move to Fort Smith, he'd attended school in Breynat Hall. He stayed in school until grade 7, then he moved to Jean Marie River, the home community of his father. Melvin liked to spend a lot of time with his father in the bush. This is where he enjoyed being especially at the family's cabin that he helped build on Sanguet Lake. Just his time there, he helped his family harvest moose, beaver, rabbits, and fish. On top of this, of his harvesting skills, he had his own trapline around the lake. He considered Jean Marie River his home even when he left three years ago. He moved to Fort Simpson to be close to his friend but was always in touch with his family.

Mr. Speaker, when the family and friends spoke about Melvin's hobbies and his past time, it was his love to be out snowmobiling in the winter and springtime and, again, it was about being on the land and fresh air. Growing up, he enjoyed playing volleyball, broomball, softball, swimming and, of course, boating. When people described him, it was what a kind person he was. He would always be willing to lend a helping hand, especially when it came to family. He was a loving and protective brother and uncle to everyone. People said that he never got angry with people, and he always had a smile and kind words for others. He really enjoyed talking and meeting new people.

Mr. Speaker, he was very proud that he knew, understood, and spoke his language. He learned it from his dad when they were on the land. He especially liked to speak to elders and hearing the stories from the past. One of the things the family and friends will miss from his passing was the way he would get people to laugh. He had the ability to make any situation to a laughable moment, and people appreciated this. Another trait was his willingness to sing a song or two or maybe even ten at any given time.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that he's going to be sadly missed by the family and friends. The family would like to thank everybody who was able to attend his funeral, those that passed on their condolences, and those who helped them with his celebration of life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts are with the family and community at this time.

Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1603-19(2):  
EULOGY FOR NOAH CARPENTER

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Noah Henry Carpenter an Inuvialuk from Sachs Harbour, Northwest Territories, known by, in Inuvialuit, as Ikaahuk. He was the son of Fred Carpenter and Ada Gruben. He was known as Dr. Noah Carpenter. On behalf of his family, friends and relatives, I would like to share a part of his story of his life.

I begin with some excerpts from CBC Canada. Dr. Noah Carpenter was a highly skilled surgeon, the first Inuvialuk surgeon in Canada. He passed away recently, leaving behind a legacy of hard work and inspiration to many fellow Northerners. Originally from Sachs Harbour, Northwest Territories, Dr. Carpenter defied expectations throughout his life. He studied chemistry at the University of Manitoba before deciding to pursue his career in medicine. In 1971, the first Inuk doctor in Canada and later specialized in thoracic surgery. Dr. Carpenter's dedication to his profession and determination to succeed made him an inspiration to all and many. He will be remembered for his significant contributions to the medical field and the impact on the community.

In 1983, CBC profiled Dr. Carpenter, an Inuvialuk man originally from Sachs Harbour, Ikaahuk, spoke about the arrival in Winnipeg years before as a young student from the North enrolled in the University of Manitoba. They had a welcoming party, he recalled, in amusement, and wanted to greet him. They were expecting someone with dark hair and Oriental-looking features wearing a fur parka and carrying a big spear. It must have been great disappointment, he says, that they didn't find that.

Dr. Carpenter, who died this month, was being remembered for his lifetime of hard work and determination, his accomplishments, and skilled surgeon, and the inspiration he gave to many fellow Northerners. He was always on top of his game in every way, said his brother Joey Carpenter in Sachs Harbour. He was always somebody to look up to.

Noah Carpenter went to residential school in Aklavik in 1960 before moving to Inuvik for high school, later the University of Manitoba to study chemistry. In 1983, a TV profile said the original goal was to become a high school teacher to teach science. Somewhere along the way, he decided to go to med school. In 1971, he was said he was the first Inuk doctor in Canada.

His education, his training, didn't stop there, though. He would go on to study surgery and to go to school in Scotland to specialize in thoracic

surgery. You know, 50 years ago, you couldn't imagine any one of us becoming a doctor. You know, times are different, and it was an aspiration that most of us couldn't even dream of, his brother Joey said. Noah would later describe how his father Fred Carpenter - a successful trapper in the North - expected Noah to follow in his footsteps in what was then still a booming business in the North. He didn't understand his own son becoming a doctor instead, Noah recalled. As the years went by, I think and understand perhaps I made the right move, Noah said, in 1983. He was quite proud actually of being a doctor; I am a doctor.

In the profile, Noah would reflect more on his decision to carve a different path for himself and the compromises it required. He spoke bluntly about surrendering to the system and often at odds with Northern culture and tradition. You can't expect to devote a lot of time hunting and fishing and maintaining the old ways of life and expect to become a first-class thoracic surgeon, he said. There's always talk about breaking through and beating the system. Well, you know, the system isn't out to beat you. I think you have to just accept it, surrender into it and that's the way you'll succeed. You have to work at it. And to do your studies, you don't do things it halfheartedly. Dr. Carpenter became the first Inuvialuit doctor in 1971 to focus on a segment in 1983, his education changed his life but led him south. One of the tragedies about the North, after trying for so long I hadn't worked out, working.

In 1995, Dr. Carpenter was recognized through an Indspire Award and many groundbreaking accomplishments, the Inuvialuit specialist surgeon to emerge from the Northwest Territories. He has been an inspiration to many and returns there to speak to the youth, motivating to understand the importance of achieving higher education, reads the Indspire website.

Dr. Carpenter would now enjoy a long career as a surgeon in Comox, BC, and later Brandon, Manitoba. He also maintained his connection to the North.

His last visited in 2019 at the high school reunion. He would have liked to have worked in the North, he said in 1983, but described it never had the opportunity. I don't know what it is about me and the North and I. It's certainly something that I wanted to do, he said. The fact that not working there will always remain a mystery.

Note the bold lettering in regards to Dr. Noah Carpenter's website. September 27th. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation remembering the great success and strong determination of Dr. Noah



Carpenter from Ikaahuk (Sachs Harbour), son of Ada and Fred Carpenter. Noah is believed to be the first ever Inuvialuk to become a medical doctor to push even farther into medicine becoming a leading general surgeon and to specialize in the field. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation said it is sad to learn of recent passing and would like to offer comfort to the family and his communities on our significant loss.

Dr. Noah Carpenter is an inspiration to all Inuvialuit. We are proud beneficiaries who have since followed and pursuing areas of medicine and science, like Noah Carpenter, who dedicate themselves to complete advanced schooling and show Inuvialuit what they can achieve in life and careers, said chair Duane Smith.

Noah Carpenter originally furthered his education beyond a medical doctor while working and advancing techniques in thoracic surgery, vascular surgery. Noah was given a Indspire, an aboriginal achievement award. We have enjoyed listening to Sallirmiutun songs and never forgot his traditional Inuvialuit upbringing.

Noah was a survivor of residential schools starting in Aklavik and welcomed back his family visited and SAMS school reunion. He is an inspiration and will be remembered.

Speaking to CBC last week, his brother Joey Carpenter, who lives in Sachs Harbour, brother to Noah, says I am still absorbing the news of my brother's death. He was always on the good side of everything. We looked up to him. It's gonna take me a while, you know, to think about it. It never really hit me yet. And I, all Inuvialuit and fcountless others who knew Dr. Noah Carpenter, will echo these words from his brother Joey. It's gonna take me awhile to, you know, to think about it. It never really hit me yet.

On behalf of the family, friends and relatives of Dr. Noah Carpenter, an Inuvialuk from Ikhaahuk, my words are too weak to express my respect -- my respect and gratitude of what he's done. Dr. Noah Carpenter blazed a wonderful way and inspiring trail for all Inuvialuit and all Northerners. Noah Henry Carpenter will be missed. Thank you for the trail you left us. Thank you for the memories and deeds of a wonderful man. Dr. Noah Carpenter was a fine doctor, a kind friend, a dear brother, and a steadfast son. Thank you, Dr. Noah Carpenter. God bless us all.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community at this time. And the

region as well. Members' statements. Member for Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1604-19(2):  
REFLECTIONS ON THE 19TH ASSEMBLY

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, one fateful evening around eight years ago, my partner told me that I should run for MLA because he was tired of hearing me complain about how the government wasn't doing enough. At the time, I was the executive director for the Centre for Northern Families, and I knew systemic change was needed for our most vulnerable residents. Soon after, a local campaign school aimed at encouraging women to consider politics and to teach them about how to run a campaign was advertised in Yellowknife. I decided there was no harm in seeing what it was all about, and it was in this campaign school that I realized there was space for me in politics.

It has been a privilege to work in this building over the last eight years, an honour that I do not take lightly. I want to thank all my colleagues for being steadfast through some of the most challenging days any of us will ever experience. We did not anticipate a global pandemic or the floods and fires we have experienced, but we experienced our strongest moments as an Assembly when we worked through these challenges together.

Thank you to my constituents for trusting me to serve you for the last eight years, and to my children Levi and Dylan for being two of my biggest supporters. The biggest thank you to my partner Rory for being the mosquito in my ear that annoyed me enough to run for MLA, and twice at that.

After much discussion and thought, I have decided to not run in this upcoming election. I don't know what I will do next, but my passion for public service continues.

Looking around the Chamber today, it's clear that great strides have been made towards improving representation since Minister Green and I were first elected eight years ago. I sincerely hope that this trend continues in the next Assembly, and I wish all candidates a positive campaign experience in October. Running for office is a demonstration of your passion for our great territory and it is an honourable pursuit no matter the outcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Madam Premier.

## Returns to Oral Questions

### RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1548-19(2): INDIAN DAY SCHOOLS

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, on May 31, 2023, regarding Federal Indian Day Schools.

Mr. Speaker, as I acknowledged yesterday in my Return to Written Question response on the issue that has been raised by the Member, the Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to engage with Indigenous governments and communities to learn more about how they choose to proceed with the investigation of this still upsetting chapter in their past and how they believe the Government of the Northwest Territories can assist them. We will work with the Government of Canada to determine how we can continue to advance housing and health initiatives along with a suite of other social programs to try to alleviate the intergenerational trauma these schools have inflicted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River South.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, I got permission to recognize somebody. I'd like to welcome my wife Bette, my daughter Chelsea, and my granddaughter, Inaaya; that's the one I've taking to her first day of school since kindergarten. And I'll continue that on into university. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River North.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't get permission but I'm still going to recognize them anyway. I'd like to recognize my mom in the gallery as well as my sister Chelsea and my niece Inaaya. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River North. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might get in trouble for this one, but I'd like to recognize Kevin Whitehead who started as a Kam Lake resident, moved to Yellowknife South, and we just got him back. Thank you.

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

we've missed anyone in the gallery, I'd like to welcome you all. It's always good to have an audience with us. Mahsi.

Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

## Oral Questions

### QUESTION 1581-19(2): NEGOTIATION WITH UNION OF NORTHERN WORKERS

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance have any timelines for when a new collective agreement will be signed between the Government of the Northwest Territories and UNW? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister responsible for Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the collective agreement between the union and the Government of the Northwest Territories did expire in March, March 31st of 2023. I don't have a set timeline. We go through the bargaining process which is not necessarily a strict timeline in and of itself. But it is a priority, certainly for the Government of the Northwest Territories, I'm confident for the union one as well. Obviously, the wildfires and evacuations have made some challenges to everyone's schedules, but it does remain a priority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to a July 2023 UNW press release, the Government of the Northwest Territories has expressed desire to have a new collective agreement in place before the territorial election this fall. Does the Minister anticipate that a new collective agreement will be signed before election day on November 14th? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the parties did begin the negotiations in March of 2023. Again, this summer season has brought quite a number of unexpected challenges and emergencies to everyone's feet. But, again, I do want to assure that the GNWT and the union do continue to have discussions. They've been in contact even throughout the evacuations. I know the department has appreciated the opportunity to be engaged, not necessarily about negotiations, but even just as a resource to be able to maintain the contact and the line of communications. All that said, though, I don't expect an agreement will be possible before election day, again, just given some of the

disruptions that we've had. But there's a process in place now, and the parties are, I'm confident, certainly from the part of the GNWT, confident to pursue a collective agreement in due course. Thank you.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide the House with an update in general terms on the status of negotiations for a new collective agreement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm always a bit hesitant to say too much in the House, and it's not for want of wanting to reassure the public service of the importance of this and certainly of their value. Right now more than ever, many public servants were asked to do much more over the last few months under very difficult circumstances. They really are what makes a lot of what anything the government does possible. So certainly wanting to give that reassurance. There is at this point, the stage we're at, Mr. Speaker, is that the parties are going to have a mediator appointed to the process and meeting with -- going through that process of having a mediator, meeting with the mediator and, again, once that -- there is a process for that. Everything is done in accordance with the Public Service Act. It may seem a bit slow but, again, at this point, I am confident that the process is being followed, that everyone is committed to it, both sides are committed to it, and we really do want to see a positive outcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm that the forthcoming new collective agreement will be fair and favourable to ordinary workers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that really does go to the real heart and the purpose of having the process that we're in, of having that process laid out as it is, to ensure that it does bring us to a place that we have agreements that are fair, that do, you know, reflect and respect the role of the public service and the Government of the Northwest Territories and that ensures that we have a sustainable contract to provide to our public servants over the long-term and in a way that is reasonable. So all of those ideals and all of those values remain unchanged. Again, I believe we are -- we're committed to seeing this process through fairly and, again, I am confident that with the process that we're underway and that both parties will be able to reach an agreement. You know, Mr. Speaker,

we certainly have monitored closely the challenges over the last year and many public service agreements that have been reached across the country. It's been a difficult year. But, again, we've been watching that closely, and I'm confident with that in hand that we'll be in a position to come to an agreement in due course. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

QUESTION 1582-19(2):  
FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE  
FUNDING

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on September 20th, 2022, after meeting with residents individually, MACA shared their process document entitled Process to Rebuild or Purchase a Home on a Different Property for Residents of the Town of Hay River and the Hamlet of Enterprise. In early March 2023, some residents, not all, were advised the GNWT was no longer pursuing a buy back or property acquisition option as originally explained by MACA staff.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister responsible for MACA, has his department reconsidered its decision of not using property acquisitions as a mitigation tool for those areas of Hay River and Enterprise that have experienced flooding and now damage due to a forest fire? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Disaster Assistance Policy has been applied to both the 2022 flood and the 2023 fire season, and this tool that will continue to be used to help those who have experienced property losses or damages during these events. The DAP does not contain specific buyout or buy back language, but its provisions do accomplish similar results in supporting home and business owners to relocate if they choose to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements allows for innovative recovery solutions under section 3.4.1, a tool provided to help those impacted by disasters. What are the barriers stopping the Minister's department from using this tool? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Municipal and Community Affairs is using this section of the

DFAA as part of its approach to the 2022 flood recovery and supports to those impacted. As part of its claim to eventually be submitted for reimbursement from Canada under its Disaster Assistance Program, the GNWT intends to seek reimbursement for mitigation costs used towards relocation as an innovative recovery solution under the DFAA section 3.4.1 to assist individuals with relocations where mitigation on their existing properties is not feasible. Like many others, department staff were impacted by the recent evacuation but are now again working on this file, working with those who were impacted by the 2022 flood and still have decisions to make regarding their next steps. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister if we are using the property acquisition option, has consideration been given on how the acquisition would be calculated. Would it be based on fair market value or like what is currently done under DAP? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of June 2023, I wrote to the Paradise Gardens residents to advise that the GNWT is not amending the DAP to provide for a different approach. The GNWT is providing the eligible claim under DAP. The government is also directing -- or directly paying for damage assessments, emergency work, structural assessments, mitigation assessments, and property appraisals. Finally, the GNWT is also providing mitigation funding of up to -- or of \$75,000 per claim. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about, we're talking about Paradise, it's actually a flood plain and, you know, the damage there was significant and there's potential for it to happen again. So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister if he is prepared to offer the property acquisition option to residents in areas where rebuilding is not feasible due to the severity of flooding and fire potential, such as Paradise Valley, and if not, is he willing to step aside as the Minister responsible for MACA and allow someone who will? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll answer the first question. If the Member wants to come sit over here and deal with these disasters, I'm more than willing to sit over there and ask the questions. But saying that, Mr. Speaker, we have been working with Paradise Gardens residents for over a year on their options under DAP and provide -- and prior to the

fire -- wildfire event, I had written to them to clarify what is available to them under DAP. We are aware that people are in process of making their own personal decisions about their next steps, including whether or not they want to rebuild in Paradise Gardens. MACA staff are available as they have been over the past year to work with Paradise Gardens residents through a disaster assistance process. And, Mr. Speaker, I've had the conversations with the Member, and we do have some residents who were impacted by the flood and this fire season here, so we have reached out to the federal government and to talk to them about that situation. So we are working on these files, both files on moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 1583-19(2):  
IMPACT OF TALTSON EXPANSION ON  
ROCHER RIVER

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project, it's an outstanding issue for Members in my riding and the constituent Members. In the early days when the project was started, I remember Canada undertook this project but there there was really no consultation or accommodations with the residents of Taltson, residents in Taltson River.

Mr. Speaker, the -- right now, last weekend, I went down to Fort Resolution and I went to Hay River. I paid my respects to my relatives at the graveyard. I go to Fort Resolution. We do the same thing. In Dettah, every fall, we meet and clean up the graveyard. We say rosary, and then we have a feast to honour our ancestors. Mr. Speaker, right now, we have a lot of graves that are under water as a result of this project, and the people and the families that are impacted when they pray, they pray from home. They can't actually go to the site and pay their respects. So that's why I brought this issue up. And this issue was brought forward to me by an elder from my community, Lawrence Casaway, and he was very instrumental telling me that this has got to be said.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a question that I want to just bring to the Minister of Infrastructure. I believe it's the Minister of finance on this one here. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, additional funding will be required in order to proceed with the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project. What mitigation, traditional economy, and archaeological sites in the region have been developed by the Minister, and what consultation and accommodation has been

done with all Indigenous governments on this issue? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the project has been designed to take advantage of existing infrastructure with no new flooding as an important design requirement. We are in the process, Mr. Speaker, of engaging with our Indigenous partners to define the project footprint as well as integrate traditional knowledge, land use, and areas of importance to our Indigenous partners as part of that work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the GNWT's working closely with various Indigenous governments through engagement on the expansion. My question is about public consultation, particularly with elders, on the potential impacts for unmarked graves regarding the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT and interested Indigenous groups are working on a partnership that acknowledges legacy impacts from the original facility that was built in the 1960s, including Rocher River area. There was a report that -- on known impacts that had been prepared in regard to shared -- and was shared, including the ADFN leadership. Discussions are still underway, Mr. Speaker, to determine next steps as it's a very important issue to us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Can the Minister confirm if work has been done to identify potential unmarked graves in the former Rocher River community in an effort to protect these sites from potential development? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker -- and I do want to thank the Member for that question. I don't thank Members very often for their questions, but this one is a really important question that I want to acknowledge the Member for saying so. And I want to note that we have ongoing dialogue with project partners, and we are open to working with the -- on specific areas of interest that are identified at the steering and the working group level. We are aware that there is potential for archaeological sites in the Rocher River and are open to learn more about the archaeological sites or the grave sites that

have been identified as part of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given the history of the Rocher River, can the Minister confirm the involvement of the Akaitcho First Nations in the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project and what financial resources have been provided to them to -- into a meaningful participant in this work to help relocate the graves to drier land or to communities in the Akaitcho region? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the actual Deninu Kue First Nation, which includes the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Deninu Kue First Nation, and Lutselk'e Dene First Nation, are actively engaged in the steering committee as well as the working group levels on this project.

Mr. Speaker, to date, we have spent a collective \$1.7 million to support the Akaitcho and the NWT Metis Nation participation. And we have also, which is really great news, committed to multi-year funding up to an amount of \$1.2 million per year to support ongoing participation of this important project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 1584-19(2):  
COMMUNITY FIRE BREAKS

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for ECC minister related to my Member's statement regarding fire breaks. Can the Minister advise if the department has standards and layouts to develop fire breaks to communities in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Climate Change works closely with communities to provide advice and recommendations on ways to help mitigate risk for wildfire. Fuel breaks are one of the multiple tools that are used in wildfire prevention, mitigation, and response. Characteristics of the fuel breaks are typically based on specific fuel types in a specific area and take into consideration the type of trees, including tree species, height, and density. It is important to note that the fuel breaks are not intended to

stop the spread of wildfire. They are to help -- they are there to help slow the fire and also provide fire personnel a control line to safely initiate from there, where possible, to remove fuel between the community and the main fire. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and mahsi to the Minister for that answer. Has the department completed an assessment of what each community has for fire breaks and if they are currently compatible with any standards for such? Mahsi.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department regularly provides advice on ways to help protect communities from the risk of wildfires. The department has worked with all 29 forested communities in the NWT to update their community wildfire protection plan, which are designed to help reduce risks for wildfire. One of those tools available to the community is the use of fire break -- or fuel breaks and are included in the community wildlife protection plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi to the Minister for that. I believe that many of the fire breaks that he speaks of are a bit -- not wide enough to prevent fires from entering the communities.

Mr. Speaker, failing to have any set standards to determine proper and safe fire breaks for communities in the Northwest Territories, will the department work to develop acceptable standards of fire breaks to protect communities? Mahsi.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I noted earlier, the construction of fuel breaks needs to consider a number of factors, specifically to each area and community, including the type of fuel in the area. The Department of Environment and Climate Change has worked closely with each forested community to develop their community plans, which include consideration of these factors. We are committed to continuing to work with communities to provide technical advice and expertise in planning for fuel breaks as well as other fire mitigation measures.

Mr. Speaker, just so people here in the House and people out there are aware, the fires can and have jumped the Mackenzie River from one side to the other. So when we're looking at the size of the fire breaks, again it's not to stop fires. It's to help us be able to break it and to initiate the fight the flames moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Regarding the fire breaks, you know, the wider the fire break and when you get rid of the topsoil, as most communities are starting to chip, using a chipper to chip away and do FireSmarting so that fire -- that chipping there, that's wood chips, and that's fuel, that adds fuel to the fire. So I don't know if that's a real good idea if the department is advising communities to do that. So even their fireguards, you know, they need to be a set standard because they will protect communities. If we're not doing anything, well we're leaving it up in the air for next fire season. We're going to have communities that will be totally lost because of all the forest that we have in the areas. And we need to be proactive and start looking at trying to mitigate these situations. And, you know, because right now what they're doing is just reactive, getting all the Caterpillars, it's all in the South Slave. Now they're making fire breaks after the fact. You know, that's -- that doesn't seem to make -- you know, to rhyme or reason. Funding is always an issue when communities are left to fend for themselves, especially in developing fire breaks that will meet an acceptable standard of protection.

Can the Minister work with all communities to develop a work plan as to the fire break needs of each community and funding requirements and present these findings to the federal government for further funding? Mahsi.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECC has internal funding available each year to help communities implement their community wildfire protection plan, which can include building of fuel breaks. I can advise this House that we work with NWTAC who successfully applied for \$20 million of disaster mitigation and adaptation funding from the federal government. That money will be -- as I said yesterday, will be brought forth to NWTAC and they're going to give it -- allocate it to the communities, those 29 communities.

Mr. Speaker, NWTAC realizes that work needs to be done now. So they've reach out and worked with the communities to be able to start that work now and then all those costs can be reimbursed April 1st. So if they know exactly what money they are eligible for -- so we've already done the work. We've already gone to the federal government, and we've done it through the NWTAC. So it doesn't need to be us. We've worked with NWTAC for the communities to get this done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 1585-19(2):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES CRISIS COMMUNICATION

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Yesterday I started questioning the Minister in regards to reimbursing residents for airfares incurred during evacuation. And I'd like to continue those questions today.

As I explained today during my Member's statement, some residents tried unsuccessfully to use the government charters, and some also thought when they were leaving on commercial flights that they were aiding the evacuation efforts of the Government of the Northwest Territories. And so I'd like to ask the Minister again, will this government reimburse the personal costs incurred by residents who booked commercial flights to either get out of town or to re-enter the territory once the evacuation order was lifted? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday it was said in the House that we were telling people to get out on the planes, get the planes going out there. This is the communication that we sent out: If it's safe for residents who have vehicles and are available to drive, to start evacuating now. If there are any smoke conditions, residents evacuating by the highway will be escorted from Yellowknife through active fire zone. Air evacuation is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m., Thursday, August 7th, 2023. Only residents who do not have the option to leave the area by road are asked to register for evacuation fly outs.

As I said yesterday under section -- or has been saying under section 4 of the DFA with the federal public safety eligibility, section 4.11 is a reference to provincial and territorial eligible costs that the province or territorial province provides temporary relocation shelters, etcetera, to residents. The GNWT did provide evacuation support, including transportation, accommodation, and food. So the GNWT will be making a claim for that cost as in terms for the DFA. The Member -- I understand what the Member has said. I've heard her numerous times. We've had numerous conversations. And, unfortunately, no, we will not be reimbursing people that decided to take the flights out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know I've had numerous conversations with the Minister about this and at this point, I'm thankful that the Minister still answers my phone calls. But I'm not done having this conversation.

Mr. Speaker, I get that the government had evacuation flights. Those evacuation flights weren't available on Thursday. There was extreme environmental factors that heightened peoples' fear; and people were being told the fire's going to be here by the weekend, you need to do what you can to get out. Then they sat in those line-ups, and they were not put on planes. I went down to the evacuation centre. People were organized. The military was organized. They had them registered. They had them ready. They were waiting for airplanes. Pilots were waiting to be told when to fly. So it's not just a matter of people just choosing to get on other flights. This was an issue where the flights weren't actually as ready as we'd like to think that they were or we would have liked them to have been. Was it perfect? No. And so I'm asking the government to acknowledge, yes, it wasn't perfect, and there are other mechanisms that we can help residents out. We can help them out by reimbursing the cost of those flights. And I'd like to know if MACA will do that. Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thursday wasn't perfect. I had conversations with the military. The military people that were there helping us were pretty calm about it. They said, for the first day, it's actually going pretty smoothly. Yes, was there a long lineup? Yes. Were flights not ready to go? Yes. But I can tell you the next day we had people out and when people were registering, we were getting them on flights. We had the military that brought in four extra crews to help us get those flights out. So we did have that. We were still within the timeframe that we had. I understand where the Member's coming, and I still take her phone calls whenever she phones and I mean, I understand we got a job to do. However, at the end of the day we had a process of evacuating people from this city, from Dettah, and N'dilo, and we were following that process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's one side of things. The other side is the re-entry flights. The re-entry flights where people literally sat and waited. Some people have never heard back. They needed to get back for work. And in some cases, like I said in my Member's statement, if people didn't get home they lost their jobs, their permanent residency in this country was going jeopardized, the fact that they needed some people to get home for safety reasons. I mean,

there's a multitude of nuances. And the other part of that is that the airlines on the way home were also capping flights between \$150 and \$250. So I'm wondering, then, if the -- if MACA won't reimburse the flights, even though, yes, I agree it does state under the DFAA eligible response costs include, and that includes transportation. There's also section 5.2.1 which also refers to travel, accommodations, incurred during an evacuation. But if this -- if MACA will not do it under the DFAA, will they put together a program similar, then, to the transportation -- Evacuated Transportation Support Program where we supported residents who drove out. They can put together, you know, a fixed cost of what they'll support residents with and tie it into that. So there are other ways that creatively the government can support residents to refund these costs, and I'm wondering if MACA will do that. Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we've got numerous phone calls from the Members, including Members from on this side, that had residents that were -- didn't get their information. We then worked with them to get on those flights. Yes, we heard some of the challenges that were there and we were trying to get people on those flights. We also had people that showed up here without telling us, and we were looking for them too. So we did have staff there that we were working on that.

As for coming up with another program, we have our bailiwicks of our options available to us, and at this point in time I am not looking at that. But we can say that it's something that maybe Cabinet can look at later on but right now, we are focusing on what we are able to provide through the Disaster Assistance Program with the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. I appreciate the acknowledgement that Cabinet will take some time to discuss this.

Mr. Speaker, it's one of those things where absolutely there was charter flights that were going out. But there was also other people who did help the evacuation and the re-entry process by putting themselves on flights, and people did what they had to do in order to be compliant with the order in order to be safe. I acknowledge that this might in turn be a substantial cost for the government, but this is a cost that the government is much better suited to incur than individual residents of the territory. And so I'm wondering if the Minister

can speak to under what parameters would MACA potentially refund a flight to a resident? Because I know that there are times where different residents have different situations that might qualify for a refund from MACA. So I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to that. Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to speculate on what conditions or where that -- I would take some time to think about it. So right now, I will not be able to answer that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 1586-19(2):  
TALTSON BUSINESS CASE

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our mandate commits that we will develop the business case for the Taltson hydro expansion for spring 2020, Mr. Speaker. And what's notable about that is that we tabled the mandate in February 2020, and it seems to me the only reason you would essentially not give yourself any timeline to develop something is that it was already done. Yet here we are, Mr. Speaker, in fall 2023, and we have not seen the Taltson business case.

So my question for the Minister of Infrastructure, has the Taltson business case been developed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the business case is being developed to articulate things like the strategic rationale for the project, demonstrates both economic and social impacts to the Northwest Territories, determine the method by which the project is implemented to ensure optimal value for money. This is still work underway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, I understand what a business case is, Mr. Speaker. I understand you need one in order to justify spending billions of dollars. I didn't quite get an answer there of whether -- so I'll try again. Has the business case been developed and if so, can we release it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the business case was shared with the Indigenous groups. Until we get further feedback from our working group and our steering group, whether we provide it to the public that's still yet to be determined. So



right now, it is with the Indigenous groups. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this Cabinet repeatedly, in every single capital budget, including those asking for money for Taltson expansion. We spent tens of millions of dollars already, and we will continue to spend it, and yet they refuse to share the business case with us. Additionally, the Minister refuses to tell us how much the project actually is going to cost. The last cost estimate we have is from 2014. It included a transmission line to the diamond mines. I understand we are no longer doing that.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister give us an estimate of how much the Taltson project is going to cost. I honestly don't know whether it's two and a half billion dollars or \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker. That is the order of magnitude I am unsure of the cost of this project. Can we have an estimate of how much this is going to cost us? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is in the early stages of the Taltson project. You know, we are seeking federal government. They have provided us money to be able to work with Indigenous partners. We're doing that. We also need to look at things like, you know, exploring some business options. We're able to work together with Indigenous groups to get everybody at the table because this is going to be a big, huge project for the Northwest Territories. I'm not in a position right now, Mr. Speaker, to provide what the -- but the next government can decide how much to share. Right now it's confidential with our partners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, Mr. Speaker, I just find it completely unreasonable we're having this debate with no sense of how much this project is going to cost. It's clear this will be the largest infrastructure project this territory has ever built. It's a 60-megawatt expansion. Currently, between Blue Fish, Snare, and existing Taltson, we have about 50 megawatts of hydro. So we are more than doubling the amount of power we need to sell in this territory. That is a giant project. It is a multibillion-dollar project; I feel confident saying that. Unlike nothing we have ever done. So can we answer some basic questions. Who are we selling this 60 megawatts of power to? That is tens, if not hundreds of millions of more dollars of power we need to sell. We essentially have to double our rate base. That is a lot of mines that need to exist, Mr. Speaker. So can the Minister try

and explain to me who we are selling this power to? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll say it again. Our working group and steering group are working with Indigenous partners to look at the alignment. You know, we still haven't decided on what phase we're going to work on. And I just want the Member to know it's a big picture thinking. It's thinking about the future. You know, leveraging federal funding so that we could make life better for Northwest Territories residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1587-19(2):  
WILDFIRES AND MINING SECTOR

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ITI. It's been a while since I asked her about anything to do with mining so I thought it would be a good opportunity to do so.

Given that a lot of what we've been talking about has been around the wildfires, can the Minister please give us an update on how wildfire evacuation and fighting has impacted our mining sector. And I guess particularly I'm interested to know how Pine Point is doing considering they are in the South Slave area that was quite impacted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the wildfires certainly this season did have an impact on the industry.

With respect to Pine Point, Mr. Speaker, I imagine, quite fortunately, they're -- I understand their property was not affected by the wildfires notwithstanding how close they may have come. But one of -- there was one gold property actually much closer towards Yellowknife that did see some damage to some of their properties. But other than that, those are the only damaged properties. The impacts really were more in terms of the timing. There were some slowdowns of -- some of the operating mines were loaning out their equipment and their staff. Some of the exploration projects were loaning out -- and perhaps loaning is not the right word but giving access to their helicopters. So work that they would have otherwise planned for the summer season did see some delays. That said, Mr.

Speaker, I'm happy to say that Pine Point folks are back on the site. The lithium folks here are back on their sites. They were evacuated. And at this point -- and we also didn't miss the September 11th valuation date for diamonds, which is a pretty significant event here in the fall and which would have had pretty significant timing issues. So things are now back up and running.

My last comment on -- in terms of the wildfire impacts, \$500,000, I understand, was provide to the United Way by the operating diamond mines. So quite a lot happened, but a lot of it actually ultimately is good news. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that's really encouraging to hear. I'm not surprised to hear about the donation from the diamond mines. They always have been stepping up when needed, including during COVID and providing cleaning supplies and such to NGOs.

Just a little bit further, and I'm not sure if the Minister has this information, but have any of the mines expressed that there would be delays to their projects given the wildfire season? I'm glad to hear that equipment that was here was utilized. I actually -- if you run into former Member Wally Schumann ask him about the anthrax guy showing up with his chopper at the 60th parallel during his evacuation. So definitely impacting a lot of our workers are scientists, so. Does the Minister know if there will be any delays to any of the project timelines that were proposed prior to the wildfire season? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd, right now, be probably most concerned about the exploration projects but as I said, at this point folks are back on their sites. They are back up and running and hopefully going to make the most of the time that we still have this fall season. So we are -- I know that the department is actively looking to get back in touch and to be fully briefed directly from the proponents as to where they're at. But at this point, I don't have any information of delays. There was some concerns about some of the resupplies for the CN rail lines but, again, that also appears to be resolved or on its way to being resolved this fall. And with that, we should see, again, while there was certainly some anxious days, I'm sure, for many projects, it does appear that they are proceeding. Thank you.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad to hear that. I was a bit concerned about impacts on supply chain, especially since we've already been reeling after COVID with

that sector not being super stable as well as materials being shorthanded. I guess another way that I think that we -- you know, I'm hoping our mineral industry can be supported is that we've been long awaiting the federal government's sort of plan for what they're going to do around the critical mineral strategy, and I know that the Northwest Territories and other territories are key to the federal government's strategy. So I'm just wondering -- I know there was money allocated in -- billions of dollars, I believe, in the 2023 Budget. So I'm just wondering can the Minister speak to -- is that money actually materializing here in the territory any time soon? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal, provincial, territorial Ministers for energy and mines were scheduled and, indeed, did meet during the time of the evacuation. I was evacuated but I was able to attend the meeting virtually and with respect to the critical minerals and the mining side of this file, and continue to raise with colleagues federally, as to when we're going to see more progress on this file. It was a good opportunity to meet. I can say we are fortunately now part of the second round of provinces and territories that are doing work called regional energy and resource tables. And that is meant to be the driver that will help determine where and how we can see some of the funds that were announced coming into the territories. But we pressed them again on the fact that, really, the Northwest Territories does need the opportunity to compete at a level that is equivalent to the rest of Canada and we have higher costs. We're going to need some energy availability and sustainable solutions, and we're going to need something that levels the playing field, whether it's a north of 60 mineral exploration credit or otherwise. So all of those conversations were actively had, as I said, really just within the last month. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that there was a recent meeting. I think it's really key right now given where we're at sort of economically in our rebuild. I guess the question I'd want to ask, then, is -- oh, gosh, now I'm losing my train of thought.

With the Minister meeting with her colleagues and such, and given that as we watched the safety issue with our communities not having roads and the acute infrastructure deficit, has the conversation shifted at all for a recognition that our mining sector is also going to be supported if we look at the infrastructure needs that our territory has? So I guess what I'm trying to say is is there now a greater recognition

federally that the lack of roads really, while impacting our safety, is really impacting mining. And is that a way that the Minister can kind of push for us to fix that infrastructure deficit. I feel like it's a good thrust that we now have more than one reason why we need roads. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think there's been a long uncertainty about which would take priority, whether it's the roads that bring the resupply or whether it would be access to greener and more sustainable energy solutions, which is really an area that is particularly for critical minerals but for the mineral -- the large diamond mines that make public commitments as well as to how they're going to move forward, whether, again, which of those two they take first. I'm sure they'd probably be happy to take both. You know, with respect to roads, Mr. Speaker, I know two -- at least two of the diamond mines -- I know -- I believe De Beers and I think at least one other were flying chartered food into some of their IBA partner communities. So they are well aware of how difficult it is to be disconnected from a road system. I think that angle that the Member's getting is always the angle that we present not only for the mineral resource industry, it's really for all of the industries in the Northwest Territories. Our economy relies on transportation corridors just as others do. It relies on energy access as others do. And the minute we can get to a place where we are on par with the rest of Canada, then we'll be far more competitive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

QUESTION 1588-19(2):  
INUVIK WIND PROJECT

**MS. SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, the issue that I brought up in my Member's statement is not a new issue. It was actually addressed to the Minister of Finance and her team while she was up in Inuvik. So my questions for the Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corp who was in charge of this contract, for the wind project in Inuvik, that the contractors who built the road for the wind turbine project have outstanding amounts that need to be paid. Can the Minister advise us and the businesses in my riding and region when they can expect to be paid for the work that they completed? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, NT Energy has bonding in place for the project to protect the financial loss and protect subcontractors if they're not paid accordingly to the contract terms for their labour and materials they provide. NT Energy provided subcontractors with information on how to access the labour and materials bond, but some subcontractors have been unable to access it due to the terms of their contract with the primary contractor. NT Energy cannot compensate the subcontractors for unpaid work as it's not a party to this contract. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a project that has been praised and praised by this Cabinet in this House. I've raised issue after issue after issue that has been ongoing that's been brought to my attention that I've raised with the Minister multiple times, and now the contractors in my region -- in my community and in my region are wanting to be paid. This is a federally-funded project so when is this Minister going to pay -- going to have these contractors or figure out when they're going to get paid? They're out, some of them, almost a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, and then the cost of living and those small businesses that run in my community, they are putting food on the people's table and roofs over their head and, you know, they can't be out a million, you know. So I'd like to know, and they would like to know, when they're going to be paid and how are they going to be paid. Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to note that this matter is before the courts, and I don't have a lot of detailed information that I could share on the floor of the House. I do want to note, though, that I have shared detailed information with the Member to be able to go through the whole process on what's happened on this project. I also want to note that direct payments to -- that are made by NT Energy to the subcontractors would not offset outstanding contract amounts between the primary contractor for access to the road and its subcontractors. Mr. Speaker, this could result in NT Energy paying for the same goods and services twice and at the detriment of NWT taxpayers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my colleague has just said we as a territory are planning on wanting to build probably more than a \$2 billion project. I would feel sorry for those contractors now because are they going to get paid for any of the work that they do? So I want to know how this Minister's going to fix this. And sending my small businesses to go and find a lawyer to fight

things in court is not an answer. They need to be paid, and I want this Minister to make sure and commit in the House that she will rectify this before our term is up. We don't have much longer, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to see these local contractors paid as soon as possible. We are working with the contractors to be able to direct them to be able to get their payments. You know, this is in my riding as well, and I'm doing my best to be able to ensure that, you know, we start this process. Right now it's just in the -- it's before the legal system so my powers are very limited. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like this Minister or her staff, or whoever's listening behind that's going to be there, you know, if she's the Minister of something else next time, or you know, she's on this side or whatever the future holds for us, that this project is looked into so that way when we move on to the next project that we're doing on this energy strategy, that we don't make these same mistakes so our local contractors, if they're going to do work, they're going to get paid. You know, they can't be sitting out. So I would like this Minister to commit that she will have her staff make sure that there is a detail of what not to do next time. Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I can commit to continuing to keep the Member in the loop. I want to do note that, you know, as a result of this project we've had challenges. You know, I've been on the floor talking about some of the challenges. We have had lessons learned. So in the future should we have major infrastructure projects, we can look at some of our lessons learned. That's the whole idea of having this lessons learned document. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 1589-19(2):  
MINING REGULATIONS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. There are no new mining regulations, so we're stuck with what the federal government gave us for mining, as bad as that was. The Mineral Resources Act was passed four years ago that gave the Minister extraordinary new powers, but not much of

anything has been completed or implemented. Can the Minister tell us the status and the development of the mining regulations? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the extent of the work -- the Member's quite right, the extent of the work to see the implementation to the Mineral Resources Act is extraordinary. It is huge. And I'm happy to say I will be putting forward to the House a full summary status report detailing all the different pieces, all of what's been worked on with the technical working group, with the Intergovernmental Council and in order to show a pathway that we're on and where we would -- what we've achieved over the last four years. There is quite a lot that has been done. I will have that tabled in the House. Perhaps I can get it here for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and so we can have that fulsome document before you and for the Member to see, again, exactly how much work has been done and how far we've come. Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I'm trying to contain my drooling here, but I've asked numerous times if the new regulations will change our regulatory -- our royalty regime to ensure a more balanced approach between competitiveness and fair return. Can the Minister tell us whether there is anything to report on the royalty regime, or are we stuck with what experts have called the, quote, "world's most charitable fiscal regimes where", quote, "the NWT sells its nonrenewable resources more cheaply than most other jurisdictions in the world." Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there will be changes to the royalty regime. It's part of the regulatory process that we're undergoing. Whether it will necessarily be what the Member wants or visions for it, I can't say. Obviously, the process isn't done. It's one that we are going through, and I will detail it at some length in the summary report showing the process that is followed with the Intergovernmental Council. I can say from the recent mining and Minister's -- or energy and mining Ministers' conference that I was at that there's been some work done at Enercan, looking at all of Canada, to determine where we all fall in terms of the kind of costs that are associated both in taxation as well as from royalties. They looked at all the Canadian jurisdictions. They used much the same methodology that we use. And by doing so, they found that we sit quite

squarely in with the rest of the jurisdictions of Canada and, as such, you know, whether or not there needs to be change or what that change will look like, we'll be taking into account all of that kind of expert information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I asked for that study last week. I'm still waiting. But the engagement to date done by the department has been done very selectively with the mining industry with secret meetings where information is shared internally and not made available to other interests. So can the Minister tell us what, if any, public or industry engagement is going to take place from now until a new Assembly is elected on November the 14th? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since 2017 the level of engagement with respect to the Mineral Resource Act, and then now the mineral resource regulations, has been extensive. In particular, of course, and leading that work has been with the Intergovernmental Council and the technical working group there, and the status report I want to put before the House will detail all of those meetings, including some of the hours that were spent on some of those meetings.

Mr. Speaker, between now and the election, there's not anything that is out for public review. The process -- the policy documents -- the policy intentions document did go out earlier, back in December of 2022. That details the direction that we are going to the regulatory process. That did go out for public consultation. And now we're at the stage of wanting to get that out to drafters so the drafters can put pen to paper and get this thing done. Once they've got it drafted, it does go back out yet one more time, but they are under -- that work is underway right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final short supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. And I contrast the public engagement undertaken in the Yukon with what has happened here. In the Yukon, there was a thorough discussion paper with policy options outlined, public meetings were held. It was a public process, Mr. Speaker. So can the Minister tell us what lessons have been learned during the four-year long process to develop mining regulations that is not yet complete here? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm hesitant to try to

stand and draw comparisons to the Yukon, and the reason is this: This Mineral Resource Act regulations was the first resource -- first of all of the projects in the Northwest Territories land and natural resources sector that relied on the Intergovernmental Council process. There were a lot of lessons learned on what that process could look like, how it could work. In the end, it's actually -- and my understanding from reading the summary report that I've seen is that the technical working group composed of the Intergovernmental Council members are positive about the experience. They took a point to get there. There was some learning that had to go in. That learning now is going to help inform the work of all the land and natural resource departments as we move forward, whether it's under the Lands Act, the Forestry Act, other future work that needs to happen at ITI. So this is -- and, again, it's something that, I think, ultimately the Northwest Territories, Government of the Northwest Territories, and IGC will be proud of. It's a process that we will be proud of. And when we -- you know, that's the lesson learned here. So do we want to compare it to what's happening in the Yukon, again, I don't think their process is what ours is, but I think ours is one to be proud of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 1590-19(2):  
TRANSMISSION LINE TO WHATI

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is for infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the Whati Transmission Line. Could that Minister please provide an update; we haven't seen any update or anything like that with SCEDE. So I just wanted to ask the Minister about that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to provide the Member with detailed information on the Whati line. We're still in discussions and looking for some partnerships along the line. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Not just to me, but to the SCEDE would be much appreciated. When is the construction expected to be complete, and how much is it going to cost? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are looking at the transmission line to partner with Tlicho. We

have had that discussion with the Tlicho government, looking at partnership, the cooperation agreement. The intent is to advance this project in a way that benefits Tlicho communities, businesses, while also helping GNWT achieve our energy goals and our priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I did ask that, you know, when that construction is expected to complete and how much it's going to cost. So the next question is that will this be part of the Tlicho infrastructure agreement? Will it include subcontractor and support services. Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the next phase of the work on the project is expected to be advanced early in the new year. It includes things like the preliminary planning, design, consultation, engagement activities, as well as the environmental baseline studies, developing -- there's a lot of things that come into play here, Mr. Speaker and, you know, I would be happy to prepare a brief update to the Member on some of the details. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I just wanted to ask the Minister, has the route been selected for the transmission line? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are still in discussions with the Tlicho. We are looking at the cooperation agreement so that we can have more information to be prepared and provide to the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. And I must say you did a lot better today than yesterday, but we still have to tighten it up a bit to have everybody an opportunity to ask questions. So keep that in mind next time, keep the preamble shorter, and you'll have time for more questions is what I'm saying. Okay, moving on.

Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

#### BILL 83: LIQUOR ACT

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report consideration of Bill 83, Liquor Act.

Bill 83 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on March 20th, 2023, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. Committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Finance on May 29th, 2023. Committee held three public meetings in Inuvik, Norman Wells, and Yellowknife. Committee also received one written submission. On July 28th, 2023, the committee held a clause-by-clause review at which time the two department-driven motions were moved and approved.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 83, Liquor Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole as amended and reprinted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The bill is referred to Committee of the Whole. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

#### BILL 92:

#### AN ACT TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CARBON TAX ACT, NO. 3

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 92, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 3.

Bill 92 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on June 1st, 2023, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. The committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Finance on June 27th, 2023. On July 28th, 2023, committee held a clause-by-clause review.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 92, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 3, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole as amended and reprinted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The bill is referred to Committee of the Whole. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

## Reports of Standing and Special Committees

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have nine reports of standing committees which I will read in their entirety.

---laughter

Mr. Speaker, no, I will be seeking that all of these are deemed read but there's 18 total motions. So it may take some time.

### COMMITTEE REPORT 65-19(2): REPORT ON BILL 83, LIQUOR ACT

Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on government operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of Bill 83, Liquor Act.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 65-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 83: Liquor Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### Introduction

Bill 83: Liquor Act (Bill 83) received second reading on March 30, 2023, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) for review.

Bill 83 repeals and replaces the existing Liquor Act (Act). The Bill follows a two-year Liquor Legislation Review that considered how to modernize and streamline liquor laws in the Northwest Territories. The Review results were released in fall 2022 and made 66 recommendations to improve legislation, regulations, and operating policies and procedures.<sup>3</sup> Bill 83 aims to implement the recommendations that were legislative in nature, including changes to:

- Streamline how the liquor industry is regulated;
- Ensure safe public access to liquor;

- Increase community control over liquor; and
- Modernize liquor enforcement.

This report outlines Committee's engagement with the public and the government on Bill 83. The government provided substantial background information in support of Committee's review, which is included in the appendices to this report. This report also explains a pair of department-driven motions to amend Bill 83 that were adopted at the clause-by-clause review.

### Public Engagement

#### Committee Heard a Range of Views in Three Communities

Committee hosted three public meetings on Bill 83 in Inuvik, Norman Wells – Tlegohi, and Yellowknife – Somba Ke. Thirteen residents participated in these meetings. Several common themes of interest emerged, including:

- Alcohol addictions. Many participants expressed dismay at the personal and societal harms of alcohol addictions and maintained the need for more local treatment and wellness supports, especially for youth.
- Bootlegging. Committee heard strong agreement to tackle bootlegging with specific liquor retail sales controls and enforcement actions. Multiple participants suggested requiring liquor retailers to keep data on the volume of sales to each purchaser and be allowed to share that data to law enforcement. They also suggested prohibiting retailers from selling liquor to likely bootleggers.
- Streamlining regulations. Committee heard strong agreement on streamlining how the industry is regulated. Participants wanted to see less onerous application requirements and lower fees for special occasion permits and licensing more generally. One specific suggestion was to waive the fee on special occasion permits for a Class D license – event organizers are often not-for-profit, and after paying for liability insurance and other costs, their liquor event may not break even.
- Sales model. Committee heard some agreement on allowing more different types of liquor retail stores, including private liquor sales and off-sales. - Registrar. Committee heard cautious support for moving licensing and penalties functions from the Liquor Licensing Board to a new "Registrar" position. Some participants were concerned that the "wrong person" in the position could impose unreasonable and onerous requirements on license-holders and applicants. Committee

heard support for proper oversight of the new Registrar.

- Local decision-making body. Committee heard mixed views on the proposed change on which body makes decisions about community control of liquor. Some participants supported the proposal to leave decisions with a single "local authority". Others were concerned this approach left out important voices and preferred a committee system approach including leaders from the local public government and local Indigenous Governments.

- Public places. Committee heard mixed views on continuing to prohibit liquor consumption in public. Those against the prohibition suggested maintaining the prohibition in certain areas, like schools.

- Server training. Committee heard mixed views on making server training mandatory. Some participants felt this requirement was excessive, especially for one-time events under a special occasion permit. Others shared examples of disorder when servers did not have adequate training and supported mandatory training.

Committee thanks all residents who participated in the review. Committee recognizes the difficult balance between those who want more access to liquor and those who want less.

#### **Committee Received Limited Written Feedback**

Committee also sought written submissions on Bill 83. We sent close to 300 targeted engagement letters to:

- Indigenous Governments and Organizations;
- Municipal and community governments;
- Public agencies;
- Liquor retailers, manufacturers, and licensees; and
- Advocacy organizations;

Committee only received one written submission in response, from Big River Service Centre. Big River's written submission primarily addressed a private licensing issue, rather than Bill 83. Committee forwarded the letter to the appropriate departmental officials.

#### **Departmental Input**

#### **The Department Shared New Information To Support Committee's Review**

On May 29, 2023, the Minister of Finance and departmental officials provided a public briefing on Bill 83. The department's presentation is included in Appendix A. The department also provided an extended summary of the Bill, included in Appendix B. At the public briefing, the Minister responded to Committee's questions and concerns. Some key pieces of information include:

#### **Hay River Jobs Impact**

Bill 83 transforms the Hay River-based Liquor Licensing Board into an appeals board and shifts its licensing and penalty functions to a new Registrar position. Committee was concerned the changes could result in job losses in Hay River. The Minister reported that she is not anticipating any significant human resources changes, and no changes to the number or location of positions. Committee is pleased the new Registrar position and the new appeals board will be in Hay River.

#### **Interaction with the Alcohol Strategy**

In March 2023, the Department of Health and Social Services released An Alcohol Strategy for the Northwest Territories. The Alcohol Strategy aims to reduce alcohol-related harm. Committee asked whether the Alcohol Strategy informed Bill 83. The Minister confirmed that policymakers working on the two projects were talking to each other. She also said the Alcohol Strategy informed several proposals in Bill 83, including minimum prices for standard drinks, lower prices for lower-alcohol content, and increasing community control.

#### **Defining And Publicly Identifying The 'Local Authority'**

Bill 83 requires community decisions about liquor control to be made by one body called the local authority. This authority for each community will be designated by the Minister. Committee was concerned that Bill 83 does not require the department to be transparent about which government or council the Minister designates as the local authority. The Minister said she had no problem making public the designated local authority. Committee expects the department to make this information public. Any decisions to change the local authority should also be communicated to the public.

#### **Streamlining Special Occasion Permits**

Committee asked whether plans to streamline the special occasion permitting (SOP) process would involve the Office of the Fire Marshall (OFM). The OFM currently reviews occupancy load applications for each special occasion permit and may also require a site inspection.11 The Minister committed to discussing this issue



with the OFM. Committee encourages the department and the OFM to collaborate on streamlining special occasion permitting as much as possible.

### **More Changes In 2024 With New Liquor Regulations**

At the public briefing, Members asked how Bill 83 fits within the broader work to implement the recommendations from the Liquor Legislation Review. The Minister explained that of the 66 recommendations, 20 percent related directly to the Liquor Act and were being addressed in Bill 83. The remaining 80 percent affected the Liquor Regulations and would be dealt with after Bill 83 receives assent.

Committee requested additional detail on this matter. In response, the department provided a high-level overview indicating where each recommendation would be addressed: in Bill 83; in the Liquor Regulations; or in separate operating procedures. This overview is included in Appendix C.

The Minister also provided a timeline for updating the Regulations. Once Bill 83 receives assent, drafting work will start. The drafting is expected to be completed by fall 2024. The new Regulations are expected to be finalized before the end of the 2024 calendar year.

Some of the changes coming forward include:

- Streamlining licensing requirements if an applicant or a premises is already licensed, allowing for bundling of applications, and putting permitting applications online;
- Removing sales restrictions related to Sundays, Christmas Day, Good Friday, and election days.
- Creating new licences for local liquor delivery and ferment-on-premises; - Creating a vendor designation for licensed manufacturers in the Northwest Territories; and given that the public was already consulted during the Liquor Legislation Review. In this case, Committee encourages the department to be transparent about its progress updating the Liquor Regulations.
- Making server training mandatory.

The Minister indicated that the department would not do additional public consultation, given that the public was already consulted during the Liquor Legislation Review. In this case, Committee encourages the department to be transparent about its progress updating the Liquor Regulations.

### **Amendments**

Committee approved two department-driven amendments. The department requested two motions to amend Bill 83. The first motion fixed a typo. The second motion made consequential amendments so that five other laws would be consistent with the new Liquor Act. The motions are included in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively. Committee was satisfied with these amendments and approved them at the clause-by-clause review, held on July 28, 2023. Committee then passed a motion to report Bill 83, as amended, to the Legislative Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

### **Conclusion**

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' review of Bill 83.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that the Committee Report 65-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 83: Liquor Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees.  
Member for Yellowknife North.

### COMMITTEE REPORT 66-19(2): REPORT ON REVIEW OF BILL 92: PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CARBON TAX ACT, NO. 3

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of Bill 92: An Act to Amend the petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 3.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that the Committee Report 66-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 92: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 3, be deemed read and

printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### Introduction and Summary

Bill 92: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 3 (Bill 92) received second reading on June 1, 2023, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) for review.

On June 27, 2023, the Minister of Finance and departmental officials provided a public briefing on the Bill. Bill 92 requires the government to set up an unconditional carbon tax revenue sharing grant with community governments. Bill 92 also requires the government to prepare and release an annual report on the carbon tax. Bill 92 ultimately fulfills commitments from the Minister of Finance to improve the government's carbon tax approach, in response to Members' concerns during the third reading of Bill 60: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act (Bill 60).

This report summarizes Committee's review of Bill 92, focusing on our amendments to improve the Bill. As originally drafted, Bill 92 fell short of the improvements many Regular Members wanted to see to the government's carbon tax approach – so much so that the Member for Frame Lake introduced a parallel private member's bill. Committee worked with departmental officials and the Member for Frame Lake to develop amendments to strengthen Bill 92 that everyone could support.

Ultimately, Committee put forward four amendments, which are included in Appendix B of this report. The Minister concurred with all four amendments, which were then adopted at the clause-by-clause review on July 28, 2023. Committee is satisfied that the changes to Bill 92 represent a reasonable compromise between the views of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and of Regular Members.

### Amendments

#### Motions #1 and #2 Legislative housekeeping

The Legislation Division initiated two minor changes to re-arrange the definitions in the Bill and make several resulting grammatical changes. These changes were minor and non-substantive. Committee agreed to both changes.

#### Motion #3 Discretion for a higher community grant amount

Bill 92 sets the amount of the community revenue sharing grant at 10 percent of net carbon tax revenues. While this amount is consistent with the Minister's commitment in the House, Committee was concerned that this may not be consistent with Committee's vision for the grant's purpose – to compensate community governments for the fiscal impacts of the carbon tax.

Using data from the Department of Finance, Committee projected communities' grant revenues with their tax burden. The projections included two scenarios: one in which communities' fuel use stays the same from 2021 through 2030, and another in which fuel use in 2030 is 15 percent lower than 2021 levels. A 15 percent reduction is consistent with a target in the 2030 Energy Strategy. Committee found that, in both scenarios, communities' total tax burden overtakes the total grant amount in 2025. The gap widens to between \$1 million and \$2 million after 2028.

When the Minister committed to the 10 percent grant amount, Regular Members assumed that meant the carbon tax would be revenue-neutral for community governments. Our analysis suggested that would not be the case.

Committee sought to confirm whether the government also projects that the carbon tax would not be revenue-neutral for community governments. The government did not confirm or deny this point and emphasized that the community grants were not intended to reduce communities' carbon tax burden to zero. The department characterized the 10 percent as a "minimum" revenue sharing rate.

However, as Bill 92 was originally drafted, the revenue sharing grants had to be "equal to" 10 percent of net carbon tax revenues. With this wording, the 10 percent was not really a minimum revenue sharing rate, but rather an exact revenue sharing rate.

Committee wanted to ensure that a future Minister would have legislative discretion to provide a bigger grant, above 10 percent of net

carbon tax revenues. We would have preferred that the legislation require the carbon tax to be revenue-neutral for community governments, but this proposal was unlikely to receive support from the department. Instead, Committee developed a motion to tweak the wording for the revenue sharing rate from “equal to 10 percent” to “at least 10 percent.” The government accepted this compromise.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 1: That the Department of Finance ensure that the carbon tax is revenue-neutral for community governments. Total carbon tax revenue sharing grants should equal or exceed community governments’ total carbon tax burden each year.

**Motion #4 More prescriptive requirements for the annual report**

Bill 92 requires the government to prepare and release an annual report on the carbon tax. Although the Department of Finance already does this work, reporting on the administration of the carbon tax was not previously required in legislation. Committee has sought legislative requirements for carbon tax reporting since the 18th Assembly, and more recently during our review of Bill 60. While Bill 92, as originally drafted, required an annual report, it did not specify a deadline for completing the report or what types of information must be disclosed.

The Member for Frame Lake, in particular, was dissatisfied with these omissions. He advocated unsuccessfully for these requirements to be included in the government’s bill before it was tabled in the Assembly. As a result, the Member for Frame Lake introduced a private member’s bill – Bill 91: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 2 (Bill 91). Bill 91 provided a list of 17 types of financial and other items to be disclosed in the annual report, and a six-month deadline to prepare and release the annual report. Committee was tasked with reviewing Bill 91 alongside Bill 92. Committee received a public briefing on Bill 91 from the Member for Frame Lake on June 27, 2023.

Committee considered the competing visions for carbon tax annual reporting in Bills 91 and 92 and compared these with the department’s current reporting practices. Committee found that Bill 91’s reporting requirements surpass the department’s current voluntary reporting practices. For example, the current annual report does not disclose information on penalties and fines, refunds, and emissions reductions. Our detailed analysis on this topic is available in Appendix A of this report.

Committee preferred the annual reporting approach in Bill 91, with its more prescriptive requirements, over the approach in Bill 92. Committee believes the detailed reporting requirements in Bill 91 would ensure transparency from future Ministers and promote accountability for the government’s work to address the effects of climate change – without imposing an unreasonable burden on the department.

However, advancing the changes in Bill 91 presented a procedural challenge that implicated Bill 92. Bill 91 and Bill 92 both placed measures related to annual reporting in sections numbered ‘20.2’. The Legislative Assembly could not pass two section ‘20.2’s’ with different wording and legal effect.

Committee’s preferred approach was to insert the list of required contents in the annual report from Bill 91 into Bill 92. Committee sought the Minister’s support for this approach. The government was concerned that certain reporting requirements in Bill 91 would create legal obligations on matters that were impossible to measure. Two subclauses in Bill 91 highlighted this concern:

- Subclause 20.2(2)(k), which requires reporting on the anticipated reduction of emissions in the Northwest Territories thanks to the carbon tax; and

- Subclause 20.2(2)(l), which requires a description of the effectiveness of the carbon tax in reducing emissions. The government department further asserted that subclauses (k) and (l), with their focus on emissions, are outside the purpose of the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act (Act), which focuses on tax rates and collection.

Committee accepted the government’s concern with subclause (k), but not with subclause (l). Committee believes subclause (l) provides enough discretion on how to report on the effectiveness of the carbon tax. We also stress that emissions reductions are indeed integral to the purpose of the Act and should not be out of scope for the annual report. The Minister has said that the carbon tax is meant to meet the territory’s commitments under the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change.

Under this federal framework, the government has committed to both a minimum level of carbon taxation and a target for emissions reductions. The 2030 Energy Strategy explicitly links the carbon tax with emissions reductions.

Committee therefore put forward a motion to insert the list of annual reporting requirements from clause 20.2(2) in Bill 91 into Bill 92, save

and except for subclause (k). The wording of the motion contained several other minor differences from Bill 91, for clearer and more consistent wording. The Minister concurred with the motion and Committee approved the amendment at the clause-by-clause review.

### Impact On Bill 91

Given the Minister's concurrence with motion #4, Committee decided to not proceed with Bill 91. The government's legislation now includes detailed annual reporting requirements that Committee supported. Committee is satisfied with this outcome. We thank the Member for Frame Lake for his tireless advocacy for greater transparency and accountability around the government's work to address climate change.

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' review of Bill 92. Typically, Committee includes a recommendation in each report requesting a response from government within 120 days. The recommendation is then moved as a motion in the House and Cabinet is required to respond. However, since the 19th Legislative Assembly will dissolve in less than 120 days, Committee has decided to leave out this recommendation and requests that the government provide a public response to this report, even of a preliminary nature, before the beginning of the 20th Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 66-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 92: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 3, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

## COMMITTEE REPORT 67-19(2): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF 2021/2022 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2021/2022 Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 67-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2021/2022 Public Accounts be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### Executive Summary

In December 2022, the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) publicly reviewed the 2021-22 Public Accounts. The Public Accounts are the financial statements that show the financial results of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) for a given year.

To address key issues identified in the review and by the Office of the Auditor General, Committee developed four recommendations to:

- Enhance reporting on the health sustainability plan;
- Evaluate and improve health governance;
- Reduce lapses of grants and contributions; and
- Require more detailed reporting from crown corporations.

This report also reiterates ten previous recommendations that the government has not implemented and includes observations regarding rising net debt, unauthorized spending at departments, and the revised Fiscal Responsibility Policy.

### Background

### **Earliest Review of the Public Accounts in Many Years**

The Public Accounts are financial statements that show the financial results of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) for a given year.

Each year, the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) reviews the Public Accounts. These reviews assess the credibility of the government's financial position and provide accountability for the government's financial results. Put differently, these reviews matter because they ask whether public money was spent prudently and as intended by the Legislative Assembly.

In November 2022, the Minister of Finance released the 2021-22 Public Accounts. These were the fourth and final Public Accounts that Committee reviewed during the 19th Assembly. Within weeks, on December 5, 2022, Committee held the public portion of its review.

Committee invited officials from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Office of the Comptroller General (CG) to identify and clarify key issues. This public review was the earliest in at least twenty years. This timing meant Committee could review the 2021-22 Public Accounts ahead of the 2023-24 Main Estimates, in January, making the review more relevant and supporting more transparent public finances. Committee appreciates the OAG's and the Comptroller General's collaboration to move up this review. Committee encourages the 20th Assembly to continue and improve upon this practice.

### **Previous Recommendations**

#### **Ten Previous Recommendations Remain Unactioned**

In recent years, the Comptroller General has brought incremental improvements to the Public Accounts. The changes are most noticeable in the financial highlights section, which now provide more details on variances. These changes have both been self-initiated by the Comptroller General and in response to recommendations from Committee.

However, many other recommendations from Committee in the 19th Assembly to enhance fiscal reporting and transparency are still outstanding. Outstanding recommendations include:

1. Classify the Stanton Legacy Project as a public-private partnership (P3);

2. Enhance reporting on contingent liabilities, including identifying individual claims above a certain threshold;

3. Quantify and disclose each cost driver of the operating deficit at the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA);

4. Enhance reporting on the Environmental Liabilities Dashboard;

5. Enhance reporting on resource revenues;

6. Add reporting on tangible capital assets with zero book value;

7. Move up the deadline for the Public Accounts;

8. Publish in-year fiscal reports each quarter;

9. Digitize the Public Accounts;

10. Add program-level spending information to the Public Accounts.

Officials from the OAG have said that many of these proposed changes have merit, though may take time to implement. Committee stands by these recommendations and encourages the 20th Assembly to continue advocating for these changes.

### **New Recommendations**

#### **1. Enhance Reporting on the Health Sustainability Plan**

In the six years since the NTHSSA was created, its accumulated deficit has almost quadrupled to \$194 million. Committee has expressed alarm at the size and persistence of the operating deficit. Last year, Committee recommended more transparency in this area. We asked that the government quantify and disclose each cost driver of the NTHSSA's operating deficit. This kind of break down – for example, showing the total cost of unbudgeted overtime or of locum staff across the entire health authority – is not available in the NTHSSA's annual report, its financial statements, or in the Public Accounts.

In its February 2023 response, the government said it knows the significant deficit drivers and listed each one, but stopped short of divulging dollar figures to each driver. Committee is not clear whether the government truly knows the cost of each deficit driver at a system level. The government should be more forthcoming in this area. The government's response also emphasized the role of the Health and Social Services Systems Sustainability Plan (Sustainability Plan) to manage cost growth and find efficiencies. However, reporting in the

department's business plan, its annual report, and in the NTHSSA's annual report provide only limited information about the targets, progress, and achievements of the Sustainability Plan. Committee expects more transparency and accountability. The Legislative Assembly and the public need to be able to scrutinize whether Sustainability Plan is delivering improvements to contain costs and improve health services. A public briefing on the Plan in August 2023, which is included in Appendix A, was a good opportunity to promote accountability. This information should be more accessible to all residents and updated on a regular basis.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 1: That the Government of the Northwest Territories enhance reporting on the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services System Sustainability Plan, including measures, targets, timelines, financial outcomes, and other outcomes related to quality and operational efficiency.

## **2. Evaluate and Improve Health Governance**

Committee's concerns about the NTHSSA's performance extend beyond the accumulated deficit. For example, last year the OAG reported that "many areas of internal controls needed improvement" at the NTHSSA and issued a management letter to this effect.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Leadership Council (Leadership Council) plays an important role in holding the health authority to account. The Leadership Council's role is "to oversee the management and affairs of NTHSSA and to take reasonable steps to ensure that NTHSSA achieves its legislated mandate." This responsibility goes as far as appointing and replacing the NTHSSA's CEO as needed.

The depth, breadth, and persistence of performance issues at the NTHSSA raise questions of whether the Leadership Council has the tools, information, and supports to ensure accountability. Committee is also under the impression that the key players in the NTHSSA's governance framework – the Minister, the Department, the NTHSSA, the Leadership Council, and the Regional Wellness Councils – are not clear on their roles and how they relate to one another. Regional Wellness Councils do not appear to be empowered to meaningfully participate within the governance structure.

With these concerns in mind, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 2: That the Minister of Health and Social Services commission a review and evaluation of governance at the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) since amalgamation. The review should focus on the Leadership Council's responsibility to oversee the NTHSSA's performance, including strategy development and risk management oversight, as well as the role of the Regional Wellness Councils. The review should be led by an independent body, such as the Internal Audit Bureau or an external audit group.

## **3. Reduce Lapses of Grants And Contributions**

The Public Accounts allow the Legislative Assembly to scrutinize the government's budget implementation. This scrutiny helps hold the government accountable for delivering the programs, services, and investments it committed to in the budget.

There are two significant areas of "lapsed" spending – where the government appropriated money through the budget process but did not spend the full amount by the end of the year. The first area is in capital expenditures. In 2021-22, the government appropriated \$476 million to acquire tangible capital assets but only spent \$261 million.<sup>18</sup> The remaining \$215 million, or 45% of the budgeted amount, was left unspent. Committee is waiting to see whether the government's new capital budgeting approach – which caps the departmental portion of capital spending at \$260 million – will make the capital budget more achievable.

The second significant area for lapsed spending was in grants and contributions (Gs and Cs). Gs and Cs are allocations to other individuals, organizations, businesses, or levels of government. They allow the government to deliver various services and support initiatives without providing the services itself.

In 2021-22, the government left millions of dollars unspent for key Gs and Cs.<sup>20</sup> For example: Three funds for Indigenous Governments to support addictions recovery, aftercare, and on the land healing left \$1.1 million unspent, over 40% of its \$2.8 million budget. The Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, which supports the 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework, left \$5.4 million unspent, or 60% of its budget.

Several reasons can contribute to allocated funds going unspent: inefficient planning, project delays, lengthy procurement process, onerous administrative requirements, or changing priorities, among others. In any case,

when the Legislative Assembly authorizes spending on Gs and Cs, it expects those funds to be spent and to deliver results for residents. When significant amounts are left unspent, it is unclear whether the government can deliver results in those funding areas. More work is needed to ensure effective budget implementation of grants and contributions.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3: That the Government of the Northwest Territories identify challenges and take steps to improve the distribution of budgeted funds for grants and contributions.

#### **4. Require More Detailed Reporting from Crown Corporations**

The Public Accounts are an important tool to promote transparency of the public sector. However, not all government entities have the same reporting requirements in the Public Accounts. Departments' reporting requirements in Section II of the Public Accounts surpass in many ways those of most boards, agencies, and crown corporations. Certain entities, notably the Northwest Territories Power Corporation (NTPC), do not report at all in the Public Accounts on a non-consolidated basis. While NTPC does separately release audited financial statements, this disclosure misses various categories of information that must be disclosed by departments. The federal Public Accounts Committee recently reviewed this issue and recommended that the federal government study enhanced spending disclosure from crown corporations in the Public Accounts. Committee believes this idea has merit and is relevant to the Northwest Territories.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 4: That the Government of the Northwest Territories consider requiring all Crown Corporations, boards, and agencies to divulge all expenditures in the same manner as territorial departments in Section II of the Public Accounts. The government should consult with stakeholders on how this change could be achieved, its advantages, and the potential administrative burden, and report back to Committee on the matter.

#### **Other Observations**

##### **Rising Net Debt and Fiscal Rebalancing**

In the year up to March 2022, the government's net debt grew by 2.5%, reaching \$1.37 billion. The net debt is approaching the federally-imposed borrowing limit of \$1.80 billion. It is even closer to the territorial debt cushion in the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, which basically

limits net debt to \$1.68 billion. The Auditor General observed that the government "will need to take action in the future to rebalance its finances." Committee is concerned by the fiscal constraints outlined in the Public Accounts, which do not include the fiscal impacts of the 2023 wildfire season. Committee is disappointed that one of the government's primary responses to the territory's fiscal challenges – the Government Renewal Initiative – has not delivered substantive results to improve budgeting in the 19th Assembly.

##### **\$10 Million in Unauthorized Spending**

Four departments collectively spent \$10 million in funds that the Legislative Assembly did not authorize. Those departments, and their unauthorized amounts, include:

- The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (\$5.1 million);
- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (\$3.1 million);
- The Department of Justice (\$1.2 million); and
- The Department of Finance (\$0.8 million).

Over-expenditures of this nature contravene the Financial Administration Act (FAA). However, the FAA also allows the Comptroller General to "deem" these overexpenditures as a "supplementary appropriation".

Committee asked officials from the OAG about the appropriateness of these overexpenditures and the practice of "deeming". The OAG found the government's explanation for these overexpenditures to be "reasonable" but noted that neither the Yukon nor Nunavut allow "deeming".

##### **Unactioned Input for the Revised Fiscal Responsibility Policy**

Last year, the Minister of Finance invited Regular Members to provide input on revising the Fiscal Responsibility Policy. The Fiscal Responsibility Policy guides the government's debt management. The government was recommending seven changes to improve the policy.

In November 2022, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight provided feedback on the seven recommendations, as well as 14 additional, detailed comments on how the government could further improve the Fiscal Responsibility Policy. These comments sought to align the Northwest Territories' fiscal approach with international best practices on fiscal rules and had implications for the Public Accounts.

In April 2023, the government released the revised Fiscal Responsibility Policy. 27 Committee was disappointed that the revised policy did not incorporate any of the additional comments. This input has been included as in Appendix B of this report. Committee hopes it will be considered by the Minister of Finance in the 20th Assembly.

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' Report on the Review of the 2021-22 Public Accounts. Typically, Committee includes a recommendation in each report requesting a response from government within 120 days. The recommendation is then moved as a motion in the House and Cabinet is required to respond. However, since the 19th Legislative Assembly will dissolve in less than 120 days, Committee has decided to leave out this recommendation and requests that the government provide a public response to this report, even of a preliminary nature, before the beginning of the 20th Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 67-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2021/2022 Public Accounts, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE REPORT 68-19(2):  
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF 2022 AUDIT  
OF ADDICTIONS PREVENTION AND  
RECOVERY SERVICES, NO. 2,

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2022 Audit of Addictions Prevention and Recovery Services, No. 2.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 68-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022 Audit of Addictions Prevention and Recovery Services, No. 2, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 68-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022 Audit of Addictions Prevention and Recovery Services, No. 2, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE REPORT 69-19(2):  
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF EARLY  
CHILDHOOD TO GRADE 12 EDUCATION,  
NO. 2,

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2020 Audit of Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education, No. 2.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 69-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2020 Audit of Early Childhood to Grade 12



Education, No. 2, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### **Executive Summary**

In November 2020, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) released an action plan to address deficiencies identified in an audit of the delivery of education in the Northwest Territories.

As the 19th Assembly draws to a close, the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) sought to ensure accountability at ECE for implementing the Action Plan. Committee requested and received a status update on each of the 60 action items. Committee found that two thirds of the deliverables are either complete or on-track for completion within their original timelines. The remaining third of the deliverables have revised timelines, are delayed, or are on hold.

The results show that a lot of work has been done, but a lot of work remains to be done to ensure education programs and services are fair, inclusive, and culturally relevant. Committee urges the department to prioritize work on incomplete action items. Committee also encourages Members in the 20th Assembly to build on this review and develop a consistent approach to ensuring accountability for audit follow-up work.

### **Background**

On February 6, 2020, the Speaker tabled an audit report entitled Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories. 1 This performance audit was conducted by the Auditor General of Canada, who is also the Auditor for the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT).

The Auditor General sought to find out whether, to improve student outcomes, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) planned, supported, and kept track of the delivery of fair and inclusive education programs and services that reflect Indigenous

languages and cultures. As a result, the Auditor General made nine recommendations. ECE agreed with all recommendations.

Independently of the audit, ECE evaluated the Education Renewal and Innovation Framework (Evaluation). The Evaluation also identified recommendations for improvement.

In response to the Auditor General's report and the ECE Evaluation, the department released An Action Plan to Improve JK-12 Student Outcomes in the NWT (Action Plan). The Action Plan addressed seven themes with 60 action items. Each action item is tracked in an online progress tracker. In June 2021, the Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) issued five recommendations to increase the impact of the Auditor General's recommendations, by requesting additional actions and reporting. The government tabled its response to the recommendations in November 2021.

### **Audit Follow-Up**

Committee is responsible for holding the department accountable for addressing the administrative deficiencies identified in the audit. In June 2023, as the 19th Assembly was concluding its work, Committee sought to follow up on the education audit.

Committee requested an update on the department's progress implementing its 60 action items and Committee's five recommendations. Committee provided the department a response template to ensure a concise and comprehensive status update.

The department's response is disclosed in Appendix A. 40 of the 60 action items – or two thirds – are considered either "complete" or incomplete but "on-track" according to their original timelines. 13 further action items are also "on-track" but now have "revised timelines" stretching into 2024 or 2025. The remaining 7 action items are "delayed" or "on hold".

Considerable work remains to fulfill the 38 action plan items that are not yet complete. Committee urges the department to prioritize work this work. Examples of incomplete items include:

Research and develop a 3-year pilot Indigenous Language Diploma (ILD). This deliverable was supposed to be completed by the end of 2022 but is "on hold". ECE says it only received a program proposal from Aurora College in June 2023, and research and development will only start in 2023-24.

Develop greater integration of services for children and youth in the education system

through expanding regional capacity. ECE wanted to do research and prepare for a pilot on expanding the Territorial-Based Support Team (TBST) to the regional level by the end of 2022, but this work is “on hold”. ECE says it has been difficult to staff TBST positions due to labour shortages. It is unclear what the department is doing instead to better integrate school-based services regionally.

Committee also asked the department follow-up questions on key action items and deliverables. Committee wanted more information regarding Indigenous language education, equitable access to education, and the department’s use of data. Committee’s questions and the department’s responses are included in Appendix B.

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations’ Report on the Review of the 2020 Audit of Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education, No. 2.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 69-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2020 Audit of Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education, No. 2, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE REPORT 70-19(2):  
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2021-  
2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
INFORMATION AND PRIVACY  
COMMISSIONER

**MR. JOHNSON:** Halfway, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide

its report on the review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 70-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### Introduction And Summary

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC).

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA Act) and the Health Information Act (HIA) require the IPC to prepare an annual report. The report includes information on the number of files the IPC opens to review complaints. It can also include recommendations. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the report.

As part of the review, the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC), Mr. Andrew Fox, appeared before Committee on June 27, 2023. Committee appreciates his continued work to enhance the public’s exercise of the right to access information and uphold the protection of residents’ personal information.

This report is an opportunity to reinforce previous Committee recommendations where the government has not moved as far as Committee has requested. Last year, Committee recommended four “upstream” access and privacy measures to reduce “downstream” complaints and costs. Committee found partial uptake and mixed progress in this area. We are hopeful that new recommendations to promote one key “upstream” measure – proactive disclosure –

will help streamline the access and privacy regime.

This report also presents Committee's response to eight recommendations in the IPC's annual report. Committee carefully considered each one. Committee decided to endorse seven of the IPC's eight recommendations. We are pleased to advance these recommendations and hope the government will act.

### **Previous Committee Recommendations**

#### **More upstream measures to address surging reviews and investigations**

In Committee's previous report on the IPC, we brought attention to the extraordinary growth in the number of files opened, a trend that has continued again this year. Since 2012-13, the number of files opened has increased twenty-fold, from 16 files to over 320 files. Much of this growth comes from files opened under the Health Information Act, which came into force in 2015-16. The IPC says that this surging workload "raises questions regarding the efficacy of privacy protection policies and processes governing health information custodians."

Committee shares the IPC's concerns. In our earlier report, Committee made four recommendations for "upstream" measures and investments to the access and privacy regime to reduce "downstream" complaints and costs. Our recommendations addressed gaps identified by the IPC. Those recommendations, the government's responses, and recent developments include:

1. Making information privacy training mandatory for all government employees. The government declined this recommendation.
2. Updating the Mobile Handheld Devices Policy, by April 2023. The government agreed to this recommendation, but with a longer timeline. As of July 2023, the policy did not appear to have been updated.
3. Reinforcing accountability for reducing faxing across the health and social services system. The government provided an update on this issue and identified the barriers to reducing faxing. However, the government did not disclose associated metrics, targets, or timelines, as Committee recommended.
4. Reinforcing accountability for proactive disclosure. The government said it would implement proactive disclosure directives, as required by section 72(1) of the ATIPP Act, by early 2023. In July 2023, the government released the Proactive Disclosure (Open

Government) Directive. The Directive identifies 14 categories of information that the government must make publicly available without request. Many of these categories were already being disclosed proactively.

Committee stands by the recommendations and encourages the government to implement further "upstream" access and privacy measures, noting that at this point, the government has only achieved partial uptake on those recommendations.

### **New Recommendations**

#### **Additional measures to promote proactive disclosure**

Committee is pleased the government has released its Proactive Disclosure (Open Government) Directive. The Directive is a promising foundation to increase government transparency. Committee encourages the government to introduce additional categories of information for proactive disclosure, to meet residents' expectation for increased access to government records.

To ensure accountability for this work, the government should include updates in its annual report on the administration of the ATIPP Act. The most recent annual report, for 2021-2022, does not mention any work on proactive disclosure or implementing section 72(1) of the ATIPP Act.

Committee also encourages the government to increase the accessibility of already completed access to information requests. The federal government publishes a searchable list of completed requests and allows the public to ask for a copy of the records at no cost.<sup>10</sup> Committee believes investing in a similar dataset for the territory would increase transparency. Having this information available by default would also reduce the number of formal requests and costs.

Committee therefore recommends:

**Recommendation 1:** That the Government of the Northwest Territories expand the categories of records that must be proactively disclosed under the Proactive Disclosure (Open Information) Directive. Progress on this and other work to implement section 72(1) of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act should be regularly reported in the government's annual report on the Act.

**Recommendation 2:** That the Government of the Northwest Territories take steps to make available, on a website, summaries of completed access requests and allow the

public to request a copy of the records at no cost.

### **Endorsing seven of eight IPC recommendations**

The Information and Privacy Commissioner made eight recommendations in his annual report. Committee carefully considered each one. Those recommendations, Committee's thoughts, and our decision whether to endorse each one, are as follows:

1. Time extensions for third-party consultation. The IPC wants the ATIPP Act amended to allow public bodies to extend the deadline to complete third-party consultation one time without his authorization. The IPC says he has no reason to deny the first request for extension and that this process is just a "rubber stamp." Committee endorses recommendation #1. The government should formally consider this proposal during the next statutory review of the ATIPP Act, which must start within 18 months of the start of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

2. More resources for the Access and Privacy Office. The IPC wants public bodies that depend on the Access and Privacy Office (APO) to ensure it has enough staff and resources. The IPC heard of departments and agencies blaming lack of capacity at the APO for missing statutory deadlines. Committee endorses recommendation #2. Committee is alarmed that in 2021-22, one third (32%) of access requests were considered late.<sup>15</sup> This means there was no legislative authority under section 11 of the ATIPP Act to exceed the statutory deadline. The Department of Finance and the Department of Lands have particularly poor track records – over half of their access requests were considered late. Committee reminds the government that it is departments and agencies, and not the centralized Access and Privacy Office, that are legally required to meet deadlines set out in the ATIPP Act. The government should consider a chargeback model, like the approach to the Technology Service Centre (TSC), to internally manage the access and privacy regime. By treating access and privacy as a core government service, this approach could support departments and agencies in meeting their statutory deadlines.

3. Discretion to extend IPC timelines. Until July 2021, the IPC had 180 calendar days to complete a review. Amendments passed in the 18th Assembly have now reduced that time to 90 business days. The IPC says it is "unlikely" that he can complete most reviews within 90 business days and wants the ATIPP Act amended so he can have discretion to extend the deadline.

Committee rejects recommendation #3. The Legislative Assembly recently shortened the review period and Committee continues to support this change. When the IPC cannot meet a deadline, he should still provide notice to all parties that he needs more time. The government should also ensure that the IPC has the resources he needs to fulfill his mandate and meet deadlines.

4. Reporting on implementing recommendations. The IPC wants health information custodians to be required to report to him about implementing recommendations – either through a government policy or an amendment to the Health Information Act. The IPC noted that oversight and legal obligation are lacking for information custodians to implement recommendations. Committee endorses recommendation #4. The government should formally consider this proposal during the next statutory review of the Health Information Act, which must start by October 2025, 10 years after this legislation came into force. In the meantime, this recommendation should be implemented through a government policy.

5. Reducing or eliminating faxing. The IPC repeated a long-standing recommendation for health information custodians to reduce or eliminate the use of fax machines. He is not aware of any government plan to meet this goal and emphasized that faxing remains a significant source of privacy breaches.<sup>19</sup> Committee endorses recommendation #5. Committee has not been satisfied with the government's previous responses to recommendations on this topic and wants to see more reporting in this area, potentially in the government's annual report on the ATIPP Act.

6. Ensuring privacy training for employees in health and social services. Despite the Department of Health and Social Services' Mandatory [Privacy] Training Policy, the IPC has found that lack of training is a significant cause for persistent privacy issues. He wants to ensure proper implementation of the Mandatory Training Policy. Committee endorses recommendation #6.

7. Earlier requests for privacy impact assessments. The IPC wants requests for privacy impact assessments to be submitted earlier so he has enough time to review, and organizations have enough time to consider the results. Committee endorses recommendation #7.

8. Extending privacy impact assessments to health information. Right now, privacy impact assessments are only required in the ATIPP

Act. The IPC wants an amendment to section 89 of the Health Information Act so that privacy impact assessments are also used for health information. Committee endorses recommendation #8. The government should formally consider this proposal during the next statutory review of the Health Information Act, which must start by October 2025, 10 years after this legislation came into force.<sup>23</sup>

Committee has endorsed most of the recommendations in the IPC's annual report.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3: That the Government of the Northwest Territories implement, or commit to time-bound plans to implement, recommendations #1, #2, #4, #5, #6, #7, and #8 in the Information and Privacy Commissioner's Annual Report 2021-2022 – Tabled Document 711-19(2).

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Typically, Committee includes a recommendation in each report requesting a response from government within 120 days. The recommendation is then moved as a motion in the House and Cabinet is required to respond. However, since the 19th Legislative Assembly will dissolve in less than 120 days, Committee has decided to leave out this recommendation and requests that the government provide a public response to this report, even of a preliminary nature, before the beginning of the 20th Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 70-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The

committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

### COMMITTEE REPORT 71-19(2): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2021- 2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUD

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Ombud.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 71-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Ombud, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Ombud.

The Ombud Act requires the Ombud to prepare an annual report. The report includes information on the number of inquiries and complaints received. It can also include recommendations. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the report. As part of the review the Ombud, Ms. Colette Langlois, appeared before Committee on June 27, 2023.

The Ombud has released three annual reports since setting up her office in 2019. In that time, the Ombud has shown leadership in navigating the challenges and complexities that come with launching a first-time institution. Her dedication to the principles of fairness, competence at managing an increasing workload, and accessible communication have laid a foundation for an effective Ombud office that residents can trust. Committee commends the

Ombud for her hard work and high standard of public service.

### **Ombud's Recommendation Addressed In Private Member's Bill**

The Ombud made one recommendation in her annual report: To allow the Ombud to investigate complaints going further back in time, to April 1999.

The Ombud already made this recommendation in her first annual report, in 2019-2020. It was one of fourteen recommendations at the time. The Ombud prioritized repeating this recommendation because it impacts the public and whether she can accept their complaints. Committee also endorsed this recommendation in a previous review report.

After the Ombud submitted her annual report, the Legislative Assembly passed Bill 61: An Act to Amend the Ombud Act (Bill 61). Bill 61 was a private member's bill sponsored by the Member for Yellowknife North. The Bill effectively implemented the Ombud's recommendation by extending her temporal jurisdiction back to April 1999. Committee supported this change, which came into effect in July 2023. Committee appreciates the Ombud's persistence in advocating for this change and the initiative from the Member for Yellowknife North for bringing forward this change.

In her presentation, the Ombud said she would "repackage" the outstanding recommendations from her first annual report in her next annual report, for 2022-2023. Committee welcomes this input and encourages the next Assembly to consider the recommendations. We note that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has also "agree[d] to a review of the [Ombud Act] in the first two years of the 20th Assembly."

### **Suggestion To Look into Unfair Hiring Practices**

During the 19th Assembly, Committee's priority has been to increase the representation of Indigenous people at all levels of the public service.<sup>9</sup> A key aspect to that work has been to identify barriers to achieving a representative public service. In every community Committee visited, there were residents who felt that the GNWT's existing Affirmative Action Policy is not being followed consistently.

Committee discussed this issue with the Ombud at the public briefing. We asked what the Ombud could do to help Indigenous residents who feel unfairly treated in a GNWT hiring competition. The Ombud explained that

she could not investigate whether discrimination is occurring because that work infringes on the mandate of the Human Rights Commission. But she said she can investigate other unfair hiring practices – such as whether the hiring process was followed properly, or whether enough information was provided to an applicant. The Ombud was open to a broader investigation on unfair hiring processes. She reported that hiring is the subject of 5 per cent of case files, a rate she characterized as "pretty significant". Given these statistics and the public's interest in the issue, Committee encourages the Ombud to investigate systemic issues in the GNWT's hiring practices. We recognize the timing of such an investigation is complicated by the government's plan to replace the Affirmative Action Policy with a new Indigenous Employment Policy. Nevertheless, Committee hopes the Ombud will examine unfair hiring practices sooner rather than later.

### **Ombud May Need More Resources For Growing Workload**

At the public review, the Ombud was concerned her office lacked capacity to fulfill its mandate. The office's current complement of three staff, including the Ombud herself, manages between 150 and 200 case files per year. They also initiate investigations and provide public education. However, due to capacity constraints, the Ombud warned that she may need to start "triaging" which investigations to pursue. The Ombud also indicated she has "no capacity" to accept referrals from the Legislative Assembly, municipal governments, or Indigenous governments. This duty has been mandated in the Ombud Act since January 2022.

Committee believes the Ombud's office should have the resources it needs to fulfill all aspects of its mandate. We note that the Ombud's capacity may be further strained with the recent coming into force of Bill 61. Bill 61 expanded the list of authorities that fall within the Ombud's mandate and allows the Ombud to investigate complaints going further back in time, to April 1999. Committee encourages the new Board of Management in the 20th Assembly to consider the Ombud's concerns.

### **Conclusion**

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Ombud.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that

Committee Report 71-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations report on the review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Ombud, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE REPORT 72-19(2):  
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2021-  
2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
LANGUAGES COMMISSION

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 72-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report of the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

**Introduction**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner.

The Official Languages Act requires the Commissioner to prepare an annual report. The

report includes information on the number of complaints filed. It can also include recommendations. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the report.

As part of the review, the Languages Commissioner, Ms. Brenda Gauthier, appeared before the Committee on June 26, 2023. In the past year, the Commissioner has also engaged with Committee on two other significant projects – our statutory review of the Official Languages Act (Act) and our legislative review of Bill 63: An Act to Amend the Official Languages Act (Bill 63). Across all this work, the Languages Commissioner offered thoughtful input to enhance rights, especially for Indigenous-language speakers.

In her annual report, the Languages Commissioner offered four recommendations. Committee carefully considered each one. This report presents Committee's response to the Languages Commissioner's report, including two of our own recommendations to reinforce the Commissioner's advocacy.

**Recommendations from the Languages Commissioner**

**Separating the Minister Responsible for Official Languages from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment**

The Languages Commissioner recommended that the Minister Responsible for Official Languages be a standalone role within a different department. She believes some of the Minister's legislative duties, especially the duty to promote the use of Official Languages in delivering public services, "appear[] to be lost in the provision of providing education services."<sup>5</sup> She noted that residents are "not getting service in all 11 of the official languages [...] as required."

Committee agrees with the importance of providing public services in each official language. In March 2023, Committee recommended that the government implement a right for each resident to receive services in the official language of their choice. The government responded by pointing out various initiatives currently underway to expand official language service delivery.

While Committee welcomes the work underway, the government should also review whether the Minister Responsible for Official Languages could more effectively carry out their mandate if they were not also the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE). Committee shares the Commissioner's concern about language and culture getting lost within a department that also handles early learning and

childcare, K-12 education, income security, and labour development. The size and scope of ECE may not allow for enough focus as the Minister Responsible for Official Languages.

One alternative is making the Minister Responsible for Official Languages a standalone role within a department that serves a broader mandate. This approach was cited by the Languages Commissioner, who suggested it be more like the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Another option is placing the secretariats for French and Indigenous languages within a smaller, more focused department. Nunavut, which has a standalone Department of Culture and Heritage, could be a model.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 1: That the Government of the Northwest Territories study separating the Minister Responsible for Official Languages from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in the 20th Assembly.

#### **Clarifying the relationship between the Languages Commissioner and the Minister Responsible for Official Languages**

The Languages Commissioner recommended clarifying the Official Languages Act on whether she can make recommendations to the Minister. The Commissioner has previously said she finds her role to communicate with the Minister is “blurred.” Committee already endorsed this recommendation last year and put it forward to ECE. In response, the government said it believes the Act allows the Languages Commissioner to bring forward concerns and recommendations to the Minister.

Committee is satisfied with the government’s response. Committee encourages and supports the Languages Commissioner in making recommendations to the Minister and suggests that she copy us on communications to the Minister. Committee believes such recommendations can enhance oversight for official languages in the Northwest Territories.

#### **Reviewing official language service delivery**

Section 29(a) of the Act allows the Official Languages Board to “review the rights and status of each of the Official Languages, including their use in the administration and delivery of services and communications by government institutions.” The Languages Commissioner recommended that the Board action this part of their mandate, with a focus on the nine Indigenous official languages. Committee does not know when the last review took place – none of the annual reports on official languages going back to 2006 make any

mention. It is important for the Board to exercise all aspects of its mandate.

Committee supports the Languages Commissioner’s recommendation. We note with some concern the issue of vacancies on the Official Languages Board. As of July 10, 2023, four of the eleven official languages did not appear to be represented on the Board. Any review by the Board would be more effective with full representation on the Board. We encourage the Minister to ensure all official language communities are consistently represented on the Board. The Board plays an important oversight role to ensure services are being delivered in each local Indigenous official language.

We also note the importance of having more Indigenous language speakers in the public service, especially in leadership roles and policymaking roles related to Indigenous language program - and service-delivery. Committee has expressed this concern before. We believe it is a key aspect to improving service delivery and revitalization in the Indigenous languages.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 2: That the Minister Responsible for Official Languages work with the Official Languages Board to enable the Board to carry out a review as prescribed in Section 29(a) of the Official Languages Act and report on the results. The review should evaluate the administration and delivery of public services in each official language, with a focus on the nine Indigenous official languages.

#### **Responding to Recommendations from the Languages Commissioner**

The Languages Commissioner repeated a long-standing recommendation regarding her ability to get responses. She asked for a formal process for the Legislative Assembly to respond to her recommendations.

A formal process already exists. Committee outlined the two processes that exist in last year’s review report. Committee does not see the need for any new or additional processes.

However, Committee shares the Commissioner’s frustration with the lack of action on her office’s recommendations. Languages Commissioners have put forward dozens of recommendations over the last 20 years. Previous Standing Committees have reinforced many of these recommendations with reports and motions in the House. But many recommendations have not been implemented.



Improving legislation and administration regarding official languages is not only good governance; it's also a matter of rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples makes this clear. Article 13 commits governments to take effective measures to ensure Indigenous peoples':

"right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing system and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons."

When the Languages Commissioner issues a recommendation, she is often advocating for the recognition, protection, and enhancement of Indigenous official languages. By doing so, the Languages Commissioner plays a role in bringing the government closer to fulfilling the rights outlined in Article 13 of the Declaration. The government needs to be more serious when considering and implementing recommendations from the Languages Commissioner and Standing Committee.

We are encouraged by recent steps by the Minister, who put forward Bill 63. That bill was the first legislation to improve the Official Languages Act in twenty years. The government has also expressed openness to additional, more ambitious legislation to improve the Act in the 20th Assembly. Committee urges the government to pursue this work and implement more of the Languages Commissioner's historical and current recommendations in the next Assembly. The government should consult the Languages Commissioner in this work.

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner. Typically, Committee includes a recommendation in each report requesting a response from government within 120 days. The recommendation is then moved as a motion in the House and Cabinet is required to respond. However, since the 19th Legislative Assembly will dissolve in less than 120 days, Committee has decided to leave out this recommendation and requests that the government provide a public response to this report, even of a preliminary nature, before the beginning of the 20th Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that

Committee Report 72-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for -- oh, sorry, getting ahead of myself here. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

### COMMITTEE REPORT 73-19(2): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2020- 2021 AND 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Annual Reports of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 73-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Annual Reports of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report is deemed read.

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:**

### Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Annual Reports of the Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Act requires the Commission to prepare an annual report. The report includes information on the numbers and grounds of complaints filed. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the report.

As part of Committee's reviews, Committee received public briefings from:

- Mr. Charles Dent, Chair of the NWT Human Rights Commission;
- Ms. Nicole MacNeil, Executive Director of the NWT Human Rights Commission; and
- Mr. Sheldon Toner, Chair of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel.

The public briefings were held on April 26, 2022, and June 26, 2023, for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 annual reports, respectively.

This report summarizes Committee's reviews. Committee is recommending two legislative changes to address gaps that could give rise to human rights violations – the first, to prohibit genetic discrimination; and the second, to legislate accessible design standards. The report also makes observations about how the Human Rights Commission classifies and reports on human rights complaints.

## **Recommendations**

### **Prohibiting Genetic Discrimination**

The Human Rights Commission made one recommendation in its 2021-2022 annual report: To add genetic discrimination as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Human Rights Act.

The Human Rights Commission previously recommended – and Committee endorsed – this change in 2019. At the time, Committee also moved a motion to amend the Human Rights Act to this effect. The government declined to make the change, citing reluctance to be the first province or territory to adopt such a ground. The government was also concerned that the change could undermine access to affordable insurance, based on a letter from a life and health insurance industry association.

Since then, the federal government has amended its human rights legislation to prohibit discrimination on the ground of genetic characteristics. This Committee in the 18th Assembly also heard that all G7 countries have laws that protect against genetic discrimination,

and that residents in the Northwest Territories want similar protections so that they can access genetic testing to identify inherited health risks without fear of reprisal. Northerners should not be denied insurance coverage based on their genetic make-up.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 1: That the Government of the Northwest Territories add genetic discrimination as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Human Rights Act.

### **Legislating Accessible Design Standards**

Disability continues to be the most common reason cited in complaints of discrimination. About three in five new complaints in 2021-22 alleged this ground of discrimination. Over the past ten years, this type of discrimination has been cited almost 170 times. The volume of such complaints highlights the relevance of taking action to make the Northwest Territories more accessible and accommodating for residents with disabilities.

For years, the Human Rights Commission has called for the government to adopt an updated building code with stronger accessibility standards. The government currently relies on the National Building Code as the minimum acceptable standard – but this is not necessarily considered accessible by the broad concepts of the NWT Human Rights Act. The Commission has pointed to building standards from the Canadian Safety Association (CSA) as a preferred alternative.

Committee has previously endorsed the Commission's advocacy in this area. In 2020, Committee recommended that the government ensure building standards meet requirements in the NWT Human Rights Act. In response, the government referenced several encouraging examples of increasing accessibility requirements for the built environment. However, the government stopped short of committing to legislate more accessible building standards for all builders across new and existing infrastructure.

Committee believes that residents, builders, and building owners need to know what is required to make a building completely accessible. Committee acknowledges this work is complex and requires a broader cultural shift towards expecting inclusivity in the built environment. The government's role is to ensure residents have equitable access to opportunities and services, and standards and codes must be consistent with legislation.

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 2: That the Government of the Northwest Territories develop building standards legislation that incorporates minimum requirements for accessible design. The legislation should require new infrastructure to adhere to Canadian Safety Association (CSA) standard B651 "Accessible Design for the Built Environment" and set a timeline for existing infrastructure to meet the standard.

### Observations

#### Classifying Human Rights Complaints

There are 22 grounds protected by the Human Rights Act. In its annual report, the Human Rights Commission breaks down how many times each of the 22 grounds was cited in complaints. Committee notes that certain grounds are conceptually closely related to others. For example, "race", "ancestry", "place of origin", and "ethnic origin" seem closely related. Committee is concerned that the multitude of grounds could distort our understanding of the nature of human rights complaints in the Northwest Territories – in particular, that what the general public would consider to be "racism" may be undercounted in official statistics because these complaints are classified under a ground besides "race". Committee encourages the Commission to explore this issue further and provide more understanding through the annual report.

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' Report on the Review of the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Annual Reports of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission. Typically, Committee includes a recommendation in each report requesting a response from government within 120 days. The recommendation is then moved as a motion in the House and Cabinet is required to respond. However, since the 19th Legislative Assembly will dissolve in less than 120 days, Committee has decided to leave out this recommendation and requests that the government provide a public response to this report, even of a preliminary nature, before the beginning of the 20th Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Last one, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 73-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Annual Reports of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission be received and

adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? Please, get those hands up, Members. Just kidding. All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. The committee report has been received and adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Finance.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 999-19(2):  
WHAT WE HEARD – AFFIRMATIVE ACTION  
POLICY REVIEW

TABLED DOCUMENT 1000-19(2):  
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT  
2022/2023

TABLED DOCUMENT 1001-19(2):  
69<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 NWT  
LIQUOR LICENSING BOARD

TABLED DOCUMENT 1002-19(2):  
69<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 NWT  
LIQUOR AND CANNABIS COMMISSION

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following four documents: What We Heard - Affirmative Action Policy Review; Public Service Annual Report 2022/2023; 69th Annual Report 2022-2023 Northwest Territories Liquor Licensing Board; and, the 69th Annual Report 2022-2023 Northwest Territories Liquor and Cannabis Commission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 1003-19(2):  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CORRECTIONS  
SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Department of Justice Corrections Service Annual Report 2022-2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change.

TABLED DOCUMENT 1004-19(2):  
CONFERENCE OF MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITIES SPECIES AT RISK ANNUAL  
REPORT 2022-2023

TABLED DOCUMENT 1005-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SPECIES AT  
RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-  
2023

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Conference of Management Authorities Species at Risk Annual Report 2022-2023; and, the NWT Species at Risk Annual Report 2022-2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23, Committee Report 52-19(2), Committee Report 53-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 973 and 974-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 973-19(2) Capital Estimates 2024-2025 and Tabled Document 974-19(2) Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2023-2024. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with the first item.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 973-19(2), 2024-2025 Capital

Estimates. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I am here to present the Government of the Northwest Territories 2024-2025 Capital Estimates, the last capital budget of the 19th Legislative Assembly. This budget builds on our commitment to tabling a capital budget that is achievable while still addressing the priorities and needs of Northwest Territories residents.

These capital estimates propose:

- \$361 million in expenditures to support and continue infrastructure investment in our communities. Major highlights of this capital budget include:
- \$94.2 million for highways, winter roads, bridges and culverts. Key investments in this area includes funding of \$26.4 million for the Frank Channel Bridge and \$18.9 million for the advancement of the environmental assessments and planning work for the Mackenzie Valley Highway and Slave Geologic Province All-Season Road;
- \$73 million in funding to support community governments for their infrastructure needs;
- \$62.6 million for various airport and runway projects under the Disaster Mitigation Adaption Fund, Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan and the Department of National Defence;
- \$55 million for planning and construction of long-term care facilities, health centres, improvements to health information systems, and biomedical equipment, including \$20 million for the Health Centre in Tulita, \$11.9 million for the Wellness and Recovery Centre in Yellowknife, and \$10.9 million for the construction of a long-term care facility in Hay River;
- \$26.2 million for renewable energy projects, including \$18 million for the development of the Fort Providence transmission line.

The planned capital expenditures are offset by a total of \$172.2 million in support from the federal government through various infrastructure programs, including \$50.5 million from the Department of National Defence, \$47.2 million from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan, \$35.1 million from the National Trade Corridors Fund, \$11.9 million from the Green and Inclusive Building Program, \$7.2 million from the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, \$5.5 million from the Building Canada Plan; and \$14.8 million from other partnerships.

That concludes my opening remarks, and I would be happy to answer questions that Members may have.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Do any Members wish to make general comments before we consider the tabled document in detail? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, I just got general comments overall. But I've been here for almost a year and a half in this position, and I continue to advocate our wishes of what I've been hearing from my leadership in Lutselk'e; for example, you know, winter roads, and I've been bringing this issue forward. There was no commitment by this government. This was no commitment to undertake a study or anything like that for the need to put a road into the community of Lutselk'e, a winter road. And, you know, like, it's hard for me to sit here to go through this budget again. And, really, you know, when I advocate for projects in our communities in the last year and a half but it goes onto deaf ears. And I know that the Assembly had -- in 2019 to 2023, had a four-year mandate, and no matter what I said and to advocate for the community of Fort Resolution as well and Dettah and N'dilo, it seems to go onto deaf ears. And even if I try and put stuff on the moving train that's been going over a four-year period, it bounces off the train. I know the Premier had made commitments about trying to get, you know, my luggage onto the train but it hasn't happened. And, you know, so it's -- yeah, you know, I hear and see what you guys are talking about in terms of this budget. It's really tough. And, you know, I'll -- I'll have to keep thinking about it because last year when we did the budget in March, I didn't support it for those reasons. You know, we -- you know, we need infrastructure in our communities. And, again, I don't see it. But anyway, I just want to make that as a general comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Are there any other general comments? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I've long had issues with the formatting of the way we present the capital estimates, largely because it's an accounting document, but I -- you know, I think you could go to any single municipality and see how they do their capital planning. They essentially have a get chart that shows you what year a project will start, what year it will finish, the total cost of that project, and you can kind of look through time what's planned weekly. We do not provide the total costs of projects in our capital estimates.

We believe that that it will affect procurement. I don't buy that argument. And we seem quite bad at getting fair value for dollar on a lot of our contracts and committing them on time. You know, I could go through, as I've done in years past, almost every single project and ask the same three questions: How much is this total project going to cost? How much federal money did we get from it? How is it being tendered? You know, basic questions. But I really don't think I should have to answer those questions. I think that that should be presented with the capital estimates.

I've been promised for years now some sort of dashboard. I don't quite know what's going to be in the dashboard but I'm told that it will track projects as they progress and hopefully will track overages and change orders and delays and perhaps even some reasoning. But I remain cautiously optimistic that one day we will have a dashboard.

I guess to reiterate what I said in my statement today, really, I think the perfect example of this is the Taltson hydro expansion. The government is asking for an undisclosed amount. They won't tell us how much publicly they're asking for the Taltson hydro expansion in this document, and yet they won't tell us how much the project costs. I just can't understand any reason I can't have a general estimate of what that project costs. Is it a billion? Is it \$2 billion? That is all I want to know so I can have a coherent conversation about it.

Absence some -- like, this is our last kick at the can but I just can't see myself supporting these capital estimates absent some progress being made on either that dashboard, on the costs of projects, on getting a copy of that Taltson business case, on just any sort of recognition that the way we are doing this is lacking in transparency. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions? Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I look at the capital budget, and I'm very happy with what's in there. I think there are some areas that are -- you know, we're always talking about green energy, and we're going to go ahead with the planning of the expansion of the Taltson. There are some issues that I will put in a statement next week. But, you know, overall -- and the territorial fire centre is more important now than ever. And I'm very happy that it's in this capital budget. I think that, you know, looking at that old building that's over 50 years old and all the plug-ins that we saw and now they're trying to save the data that has been accumulated through the years, I'm very

happy with this capital budget. And, you know, we're always talking about -- and I hear my colleagues, everybody was interested in the Taltson today. Not on a really positive note. It should be a positive thing when you're going to green energy, especially with climate change. I've learned a lot about climate change even though I'm very pro-business in this Assembly because I was never really interested in that area before because never had to. I was able to make a decision the day that I decided I wanted to make a decision the last 14 years before I came here four years ago. This was a learning experience for me, this last -- these four years, but it was a positive experience. I've learned from each of my colleagues in a different way, and I appreciate the budget that's before us. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Are there any further general comments? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, you know, I went through the budget and, you know, what's in there is in there, I guess. Well, we're never all going to be happy with what's in there but, you know, we've got a little bit for all our communities and for, you know, highway work and that type of thing. But I guess what I would just like to state, I guess, is that, you know, we are going into election, you know, government's going to kind of slow down here a bit. Contractors, some of them have been, you know, impacted by the fires as well so they've been out of work, some of them for -- for, you know, several weeks, and they're going to be looking for something to sustain them, you know, while we do this transition. So I would just like to send the message to the other side is that make sure that we get, you know, the work continues, we get work -- we get contracts out there and so that we can make sure that our small, medium, and large-sized businesses continue to work. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I do have a few questions if I can, and then a few comments. I'd like to know how much of this is carryovers from the previous fiscal year? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** We're just doing general comments right now. If you want to save your questions for the -- okay, sorry, I stopped your time.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair, for stopping the time on me. Okay, well, I'll offer a few comments, then.

So I guess I want to start with page 2, the introduction and, you know, I continue to point out that the biggest part of our capital budget is highways and roads at 26 percent. Housing is 4 percent. When our government continues to spend, you know, six times as much on highways and roads as we spend on housing -- and I understand that this is probably not -- doesn't include some federal money and so on, but this is money that we're spending, and when our government continues to spend six times as much on roads versus housing, there's something wrong, fundamentally wrong with the way that we do our budgeting and we allocate our resources, period. Look, roads are important. I get it. I had to drive out of here during the evacuation. But that's it, right there. Anybody wants to know what the priorities of this government are, look at page 2. We're spending way, way more than roads and highways than on housing. It says it all to me.

So when I get the Minister in front of us, we will find out that there's very significant carryovers from the previous years, although there's this \$260 million cap on capital spending. It's actually a lot more than that. A lot of this is carryovers. We just cannot -- continually cannot get the money out the door. Doesn't matter what we do. We just cannot spend the money. And that leads to very significant overbudgeting again and again and again. I don't think I've actually voted in favour of a capital budget in the eight years I've been an MLA because of the significant overbudgeting on the capital side because then you have to build up a surplus to be able to spend money on capital, which you don't actually end up spending at the end of the day, which means you have to cut and scrimp and save money on the O and M side, programs and services that our people need. That's what it comes down to. That's what the overbudgeting on the capital ends up doing. It means we're not spending money on people on their basic human needs. And that's why I'll continue to oppose the capital budgets that this Cabinet brings forward.

The other thing that I'm particularly concerned about and I'll ask the Minister when we get her in front of us is the new fiscal situation. I listened to her very carefully. She delivered a fiscal update today in terms of, you know, the unexpected expenditures from fires and so on. I don't think there's been anything changed in this capital budget as a result of that. That's not a good place to be. We're going to run a deficit. The Premier said it. It's in the news. We're going to run a deficit because of these unexpected expenditures. But I don't sense that anything's changed. It's business as usual. That's just not good financial management. And we're leaving the next Assembly in a very

difficult position because of this continued overbudgeting on the capital side.

I could say a bunch of things about some of these individual projects, and I'll probably save some of that for when we get to the line items, Madam Chair. But there's no way I can support this budget when we continue to spend way more on roads than we do on housing. Wrong priorities. And I just disagree with Cabinet fundamentally on this since day one. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I see here as capital estimates, it would be nice that, you know -- to see Tlicho region in this as well because there's North Slave region at 22 percent. I would like to know how much money is going to be spent in Tlicho region. It doesn't have anything like that here. I see the roads. It's \$94 million. And I'm grateful, thankful that, you know, Frank Channel Bridge is on there. But Frank Channel Bridge is a benefit for the Northwest Territories.

And I'm kind of a little bit disappointed because for the school, it says \$3 million. Like, we have a lot of schools in the Northwest Territories that needs upgrade. Some of our schools are over 50 years old. Even the Sahtu. In Tlicho, you know, like, that's what we keep saying that we need a new school. And I know there is a study, and the Minister has said that before because it is in the -- they're doing their own little studies. And, like, it's -- I know it's going to get -- you know, it's -- we're going to get our new school eventually, I know that. But it's just that why \$3 million? I mean, that's, like -- and for a few upgrades. And a lot of school needs some minor and major repair. And this budget is disappointing. Yes, we do have -- we have a housing crisis. We have a lot of homeless people. And more should have been given over there because even in my region, we have a lot of people on the waitlist for family units, and we don't have that. And we have -- we have a warming shelter. We have a lot of homeless people. And if some of those people cannot be accommodated in Tlicho region, what do they do? They come to Yellowknife and they become Yellowknife problems, and we don't want that. We would like to take care of our own people back home, but we don't have a lot of housing. We do have housing issues. We have housing crisis. A lot of social problems. A lot of addiction issues, mental health. And we do need more of those programs and services, and it's not reflected in this budget. There's not much.

And we have a lot of aging infrastructure too as well. We have over 50-year-old water pipe system in Edzo that needs a major repair, that needs to be replaced. We have a lot of school that needs, you know, replacement or a lot of school repair. And also a lot of our government building needs to be replaced as well. And it's disappointing to see this budget the way that it is -- it is written, and with the North Slave region, 22 percent. I would like to see Tlicho region in there so that way we will have a good estimate of how much money is going being spent in Tlicho region because there's four communities that I represent, and there is over 2,000 people that I do represent as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to sort of expand a bit on some things that my colleagues have talked about. Yes, there is a massive amount of money in here for infrastructure which does includes roads, but as my colleague from Monfwi pointed out, a big part of that is the Frank Channel Bridge. Another piece of that is also the Great Bear River Bridge planning study and as well a lot of -- there's at least five highway reconstruction projects. And I think it's worth noting that for the first time in a while under ICIP, I believe we are seeing 100 percent dollars for this funding. So while the amount of money that looks like it's being spent is disproportionate on highways and roads, it is actually, in fact, largely funded 100 percent through the federal government, or at least 75 percent. So that's a bunch of money that comes in that basically keeps our main industry or business industry alive, which is our construction industry.

So to me, the \$94 million on highways and roads actually shows an increase in investment from the federal government into our infrastructure deficit. And I'm really pleased to see the 100 percent dollars, which was always something that I've said from day one that we needed to be pushing the federal government on because we can't afford to pay the way a province does. We don't have the same revenue sources. So when I look at that, I'm quite pleased. And the same when I look at airports and runways. Yes, it looks like a really large number, \$62 million, but Madam Chair, you know from that in your own region, a large portion of that is the Inuvik highway -- sorry, the Inuvik runway expansion and the terminal buildings, which is 100 percent funded by the Department of National Defence.

So while these numbers look like they're very heavily weighted over towards more of the

roads and industrial type work, it's not a full picture to say that -- like, to sort of express that as being GNWT money and GNWT investment when clearly it is more about the federal government than it is about us. And often, as we noted numerous times in this House, we cannot afford -- we are not allowed to move money from certain pots of funding from the federal government to other pots. So this is not a questioning of housing versus roads. They come from two different sources in the federal government.

So I am disappointed though, however, to see that the housing is only at \$13 million. I struggle after four years to understand where the houses have actually shown up for all this money that the Minister speaks to getting. I see stuff in communities that -- when I speak to the communities when we were on committee tour, they told me they worked with the federal government directly, they got those houses. So I'm not quite sure what housing has been doing. And I hope \$13 million here actually means \$13 million in units on the ground and not \$13 million that half is sloughed off to administrative costs and bureaucracy. This department needs to get under control the fact that they are a social programming department and stop, you know, middle managing and not getting their money out the door properly.

So I think with that being said, I just also wanted to echo the disappointed in seeing the dismally low number for the schools. We did tours for -- we went on tour for the Education Act or with committee and as an engineer -- I'm not a building engineer so I'm not going to profess to have that expertise, but I know when I can go in and look at a school and see that the entire floor of the school is being jacked up and held up by plywood on the ground and jacks to hold it in place to keep the building from falling down, the buildings all smell. As a Minister, I went into Aklavik school on a tour with Cabinet, and I could smell mildew in the gym, and that's their hall. That's what they use for every single event that's ever held in Aklavik is in that school. So what is that doing to our health care and to the people's health in those regions?

This government has not been serious or taken really to heart the mandate item to actually improve the educational outcomes of students to the rest of Canada because how could they even begin if they're in schools that are making them sick and are not full of the equipment and the things that they need to learn. And that's when you consider students that are probably starting at an equal footing, and then we have students that aren't even coming from an equal footing with southern Canada. So I have to say that this is actual quite shameful, that it's only \$3 million for schools considering that I sat here

now and listened to my colleagues from Nunakput and Monfwi talk about the schools that are lacking and then yet I was -- had been invited to the opening ceremony of the beautiful new school here in Yellowknife. So the school that was here in Yellowknife that it replaced would have stayed in a community for another 40 years like that, just being shored up and fixed up, but because it was Yellowknife it was replaced. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Are there any Members who haven't spoken to general comments? Seeing none, we'll proceed to the details tabled in the document. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, please, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness into the Chamber.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Minister, would you introduce your witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, with me, I have the deputy minister of finance, Bill MacKay. And I have Kristal Melanson, director for the management board secretariat.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Welcome. Does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, the Legislative Assembly begins on page 14. We'll defer the Legislative Assembly totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning at page 15 with Office of the Clerk with information items on page 16. Are there any questions?

Legislative Assembly, Office of the Clerk, infrastructure investments, \$105,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Members, please turn now to the Legislative Assembly found on page 14. Legislative Assembly, 2024-2025 Capital Estimates. \$105,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree that consideration of the Legislative Assembly is now complete?



**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Education, Culture and Employment which begins on page 17. We will defer the departmental totals, review the estimates by activity summary beginning at page 18 with culture, heritage, and languages with information items on page 19.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, culture, heritage and languages, infrastructure investments, \$490,000. Does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So I see there's two items here, the Hay River library sidewalk. I've been to the library. It's a nice one. I'm glad to hear they're going to fix the sidewalk; that's great. I guess -- the Minister probably knows that I love the archives. It's been -- I actually go over there and spend time. So what's the money here for the archives? What's that all about? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the facilities that are currently being used to house all of the territorial archives are not at national standards. This is meant to be, at this point, just a temporary stop gap measure in advance of a full standalone archives being a project that can be contemplated. But at this point, we do need to protect those cultural materials. So this is meant to be that work to get that process underway. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks. Yeah, fully in agreement. I've been pushing and trying to hope for the last eight years that something would be done because the archives is overflowing. I've been for at least a couple of tours there. The stuff is not in any kind of climate-controlled facility. Is this for the archives building itself, or is this the offsite storage? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do believe this does take into account the offsite materials which are noted to not be currently and as already noted not in an environmentally controlled state. So this is, again, to, I believe, take all of that into account and support that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks. Yeah, so the offsite storage, for anybody who's listening, is actually the government warehouse over on Byrne Road, has no climate control whatsoever. The records that are there, as I understand it actually, you know, they take in a significant part of the history of this government moving to Yellowknife, all of the work that's been done on devolution, negotiations of agreements, really important records. They're sitting over in a government warehouse without any temperature control. That's just not a good idea. I doubt that we're actually in basic legal compliance with the Archives Act. And that's going to be the subject of a statement and questions coming up, Madam Chair. But, you know, what's the long-term plan here? I've seen so many plans for actually building a proper archives building, and it all comes down to we're not going to do it because it costs too much money. So what's the long-term plan here other than spending, I don't know, a couple hundred thousand dollars or whatever it is to try to fix up a really bad situation in the first place. What's the long-term plan or vision here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, that is not part of the current capital plan that's in front of committee. At this point, these are meant to ensure that we are, of course, protecting what are critical cultural assets. But, Madam Chair, at this point, it would be whether -- where it would fall in a future capital plan. There certainly is the five and 20-year plans that do exist. They are ranked based on, you know, considerations -- you know, the preservation of life and safety of individuals and people first, for example, and then a ranking list thereafter. So I also am certainly sympathetic and live to the importance of safeguarding our cultural heritage. But, yeah, at this point, we're going to be looking most likely for whether or not some federal funding can help support the project, and then at that point it may well see itself advanced. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. And, look, I know I'm not even probably asking the right Minister here. So I'll just leave it at that. But I've waited eight years for something to happen. It hasn't happened. And I'm really worried. And I don't think we're in basic compliance with the law as a government. So I'm going to leave it at that

but I'm going to raise this in a statement, and I'll have questions for the appropriate Minister probably next week because we're just not living up to our own laws. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, culture, heritage, and language, infrastructure investments \$490,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We can go next to page 20. Junior kindergarten to grade 12 school services with information items on page 21. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, junior kindergarten to grade 12 school services, infrastructure investments, \$3,100,000. Does committee agree? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I mentioned in my opening comments there, you know, I'm really concerned about the lack of money that we're putting in towards the schools, and I understand that this isn't this Minister's realm to know. But, you know, \$3 million is very small and it really is -- the only school that's actually getting sort of any construction, so to say, is Mangilaluk in Tuk. But we have many schools that are in needs of almost full replacements. Does the Minister have any idea if we are going to be seeing any federal funds come in to take care of our school infrastructure deficit. And one of the things that was really concerning that I have learned in my role in social development is that we fund even the school infrastructure per capita.

So there's no taking into account the fact of, you know, the remoteness of a community or the inability to build there or the lack of an all-weather road for supplies to come in or for even maintenance to be done on an existing school. So, you know, I think it's really at a state where the crumbling infrastructure, you know, the federal government needs to step up, I think, and really -- you know, what a great act of reconciliation that would be after all these years of taking children to school, why don't you go -- you know, the federal government come in and build proper schools for us in the North. So not -- I know the Minister doesn't have a crystal ball, but if she has any idea of whether or not we're going to see a significant school investment soon, I would like to know. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I don't need a crystal ball on this one. I can tell you the answer and that the federal government doesn't typically provide funding

for schools. But what I would like is it would be more of a magic wand where they would, in fact, provide the funding for schools for the reasons that the Member has set out as well as any other reason that that would, you know -- if we can invest with children starting from early education, junior kindergarten through two, you know, there would -- I think a lot of the other problems that we see across the territory or elsewhere in Canada might well be solved. So I don't think any of us disagree, but right now the federal government does provide significant funds for things like roads and other sort of the traditional, if you will, infrastructure, and we are making use of it because those are areas where we are also at a tremendous deficit as compared to the rest of Canada. And in the meanwhile, we have to try to race to catch up with the limited funding available to us as a territorial government in order to fill all of the rest of the gaps, like schools. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess -- I don't want to let it go because I just find it to be such a frustrating topic. You know, I want to ask the Minister, well, then what is the plan to accommodate in the meantime as students can no longer stay in these conditions of these schools. Like, you know, as someone was saying, you know, the paint, the lead paint in the gymnasium and then, of course, someone's friend, you know, popped online to say well, that's not a problem; it's at these limits. Well, yeah, that's when it's on the wall and it's not being, you know, flaked off and degraded and inhaled by people. So, you know, there's a lot of reasons for -- and excuses made for why these schools can be sort of slipped -- you know, taped up and Band-Aided back together, but at the end of the day we are paying for it. We're paying for it in the health of our students. We're paying for it in the truancy rates. We're paying for it in the lack of education. We're paying for it in the unemployable people that don't have the skills. We're paying for it in upgrading for two years afterwards just to get the grade 12 education the rest of Canada gets. And I'm -- you know, I know that's not this Minister's portfolio, but I guess just more of a comment. I am extremely frustrated to see this amount. And, again, it's just failing our children. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Member for Kam Lake -- oh.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Mangilaluk school, page 21. In regards to -- can I have an update from this Minister in regards to a finished timeline? And I have other questions with that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this project -- I certainly share some frustration with respect to the progress on this project. There seemingly has been a number of challenges over the last couple of years. And that's certainly led to a negative outlook by the community, which quite frankly saddens me more to think that the children there or the students there would think that they are not the priority of anyone in elected office. I can say at this point, while we have been assured that there be certain completions here for September, including not the least of which be a gym space, the trade space. Unfortunately, with the evacuations, this caused some site delays. You know, Yellowknife unfortunately -- or I don't know. It just is what it is. It still is a hub for supplies, a hub for contractors. And as such, there's now -- we've now been provided with a revised completion schedule. It's been amended to say that -- so as I think was already communicated, the total completion date would be in August of 2024, but in addition to that, we are expecting that the gym and other facilities that were previously expected for this school year are now we're looking at middle of this fall. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just give you a little bit of history. April, when we left the House, my mayor of Tuk called me. He was asking me to take the lead on it in regards to it. So I sourced out the land. I sourced out the trailers. I sourced everything out. Did all that work for our government. Had a commitment in this House for two trailers. I tried to get four but I only got two.

And all of a sudden when it's time to purchase the trailers for the community because we're -- they're looking at adult ed -- taking away from the community. They were at the time. They were going to take away the gym -- hamlet chambers, the one church in the community and one classroom at the adult ed. I don't know where that's at right now because we don't know. So that's the first time it ever happened to me in the Legislative Assembly since I was first elected in 2007 the first time, the first go around, that any Minister that promised me something that fell through. I'm really disappointed. I brought them, both Ministers into the community, to see where we're at of getting trailers. So basically, we came in. We said we'd work towards it. Then all of a sudden, we're making good headway, then it all stops. We have problems with the

contractor having not enough people working on the school. Now they're making a tunnel in from the school into the gym to where they're going to have kids going to school in a construction site. So anywhere else that we've done schools -- we did one here in Yellowknife. They had eight or ten portables brought in from the south sitting here that are going into another project in Behchoko. I know that. What's the difference between Tuk, Behchoko, and Yellowknife for that project? Tell me. Just for getting proper safety of students in my riding. To me, this is a total fail. I'm thankful for the school. I'm very thankful because the first time I ever brought this project up was in '07 because I had 38 staff using one bathroom. And now the school looks beautiful. We had a tour with the Ministers and that, it's going to be a beautiful school. But at the end of the day, though, it's the safety of the kids that are my concern. It's the safety of my leadership back home. We had meetings. Why aren't we able to get these portables into the community? Even two of them. Why? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this has been a difficult contract with the contractor that was in place. There have been some steps taken over the summer, I understand, to try to bring greater oversight to the delivery of the project. And the last update that I had also received just before the evacuations was that that had in fact brought about some changes, namely in the form of -- well, greater oversight from the project management team, a new project manager on top of that, and as such greater confidence that the promises made around a September date for the gym and the trade facility would, in fact, be achieved. Madam Chair, I was not at that time anticipating the evacuation or the magnitude of what that would do to a number of projects, including this one. And frankly, I wouldn't have necessarily expected that this one would be impacted by it. But unfortunately, it was. And that is where that project stands.

Infrastructure and ECE have -- did analyze whether or not having portables would be feasible. Both came back in the end indicating that existing portables had already places where they were destined to and that the idea of putting in these portables as was being contemplated or described as not deemed feasible by infrastructure for a number of reasons. So that's where that ended. And, again, as I said, yes, I'm also disappointed that the expectation we had for the September delivery is now not going to be met. But we are -- we'll certainly for the time we have left

been watching to see that they can meet their revised timelines. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, that -- I wouldn't say in the House that -- like, it's a lie. I had this company sorted out, lined up for them. I went out. I did all the groundwork for them. It would have took six weeks for these portables to be built. And I had them ready for August 15th coming into Tuk if we followed the plan.

Tell me where the money went in regards to being told I'm allowed to have two trailers in the community, not four, on the floor of the House? It's in Hansard. I want these trailers. I want safety of the youth in my community of Mangilaluk School deserve no less than here, no less than anywhere across our territory, and it's all been done. All the homework was done by me and my office seeking the land, seeking the trailers, the company out of Lethbridge. I did all the groundwork. All they had to do was sign and they fell short on that. So tell me, are we allowed to get these four trailers now? And don't burn the clock because I only got two minutes and 30 seconds. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, there's nothing in this capital plan for additional portables. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Why? I was promised in the House in the Legislative Assembly during a regular sitting day by the Minister of the day, which is sitting across from me, saying we're allowed to have two, two portables, not four, could do two. We had everything sorted out. Why aren't -- why is that money not in place to get them done? And it's shameful. They all -- I always say they got a Minister's directive not to be told they could put it down. Why didn't they pull that trigger when they had the chance? What is going on here is not right, and they know it. They got to look at themselves in the mirror. I got to answer to my leadership back home that's asking me what's happened. We were so close. They came to the community. And now all they did is let them hear what they want to hear on this project. I want those two trailers. Find it somewhere in regards to this money. When it's stuff like this, it's so hard to find money. When it's other things, it's not a problem. Yeah, bring it forward, we'll pass it again. Another \$100 million, \$120 million we're looking for. So Madam Chair, I want these guys

to find the money in regards to Mangilaluk School and two portables for Tuktoyaktuk by the end of the week. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Did you have any further questions for the Minister?

**MR. JACOBSON:** Two trailers, Madam Chair. So make it happen. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And thank you to my colleague from Nunakput for painting a picture, you know, life on the ground in Tuk.

We as the Standing Committee of Social Development had the opportunity to be hosted in the community of Tuktoyaktuk by the Member in June of this year. And what we saw was a school gymnasium that was not useable by community members because it was literally the entire gym was covered in a tarp in order to protect the work that was going on underneath it. But that meant that kids weren't allowed to use it. My perspective on this project is different because I serve a lot of the contractors that are doing some of the work on it from down here. And so my experience with this goes back to the beginning of this Assembly. This is a project that was awarded by government before we were all here. And it's still not done. We -- this -- it was awarded in the 19th Assembly. There were delays, yes, with COVID, but there were issues with this that were raised to myself that were then raised to the Minister of Infrastructure years ago. And I'm sitting here looking at an email right now that says to me, you know, staff from infrastructure were travelling to the community of Tuktoyaktuk almost exactly a year ago. And things haven't changed. Things -- the school is still not done. And when we were there in June, one of the saddest piece of that was what was portrayed to the committee as far as how this has had an impact on the attendance of schools in the community.

And a lot of times when -- especially when you're younger, gym is your favorite -- it's your favorite class. It's what excites kids. You know, math isn't exciting for everybody, but gym generally is. It's also an area that communities use in order to bring communities together and that has been removed from the community of Tuktoyaktuk who has just experienced a tremendously challenging year. And so having a school out of play for, you know -- and a project like this on the books and having a school kind of taken apart for years and years and years, we're not just talking about, you

know, a delay to contractors; we're talking about a complete shift and a complete change to the fabric of a community. And that's a huge, huge deal. And so, you know, the Minister responded to the Member's questions in regards to schedule, but I'd like to know what was the initial budget for this, what has been spent to date, and of this money that is in this capital budget, what portion of that is specifically for Mangilaluk School in Tuk? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, I do have, I believe, the project here of \$36 million. This was -- it was from prior years. We still have \$2.5 million is what we're asking for the current plan that's before the House right now. This was a major renovation. This was intended to be, you know, really a place that has a mezzanine area, the gym viewing, a gym -- a new gym with, say, all bells and whistles, a career and technology building. It was meant to be the kind of flagship place that students want to go to school. It was something -- Madam Chair, I don't think anyone disagrees with the importance of this, and it is not lost on me that the Beaufort Delta has had a number of challenges in the last few years in particular, and it is a region that I am concerned for those students. So it is not lost on anyone, and it is not lost on the government.

We are unfortunately relying on a contractor who it became apparent was not able to complete this on the timeline that we had hoped. And when meetings were being held this summer, we were given further assurances and steps were taken and in line with those assurances to demonstrate that the good faith would be acted upon. As I said, project management was changed, and oversight was provided, and things seemed to be going well. The evacuations did lead to some delays. I don't have the details of it, but I can certainly get that. And right now, as I -- I don't think I had the date in front of me before, but we are looking at a date in November at this point to have what was previously promised at those meetings in the summer that I was at. That included the completion of the gym, the -- and the CTS, or the trades space. So looking there at November the 1st. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. So this project, the Mangilaluk School, will be done November 1st, 2023, in its entirety? Can that be confirmed, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, as I said earlier, Madam Chair, the overall completion date for the total project is August of 2024. The revised gym completion date -- because when we recognize, again, discussing with community leadership at the behest of the Member from the region was really looking at that as a priority for the community for the reasons that the Member's already mentioned and so the revised gym completion date, which was supposed to be ready for the school year, is now, I've been given, November the 1st. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Yeah, thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, just quickly, then, so if the students are still going to be without the completion of the school for another school year, what is the interim solution from this government for yet another school year? What is the interim solution of what they're going to do with kids? I know that my colleague mentioned portables. And we've heard that on the floor of this House numerous times. And so is that an option that they're looking at for this school year?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I understand that early access to this gym and a school, rather, at this point as quickly as possible it does remain a priority, which is why it is given the new November 1st date. And in the interim, there's been a phasing of some temporary classrooms that are adjusted in order to continue instruction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, given the conversation we've just had now about the importance of schools in communities, the fact that we heard, you know, even during the Premier's Member's statement about how this has truly been an Assembly where we have gone from crisis to crisis to crisis, what is the intent, then, of the Department of Infrastructure -- what are their intentions of how to keep these very important projects moving on time and moving to a state of completion? Because to get a project like this done in five years is not timely. It's not realistic for a community to not have a school for five years or to not have access to a gym for extended periods of time. Like, these are projects that we

need to make sure are moving along on time, on budget, and in a realistic amount of time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, that is a huge question. It's a huge question that comes in light of the fact that, you know, again, this was -- this was a difficult few years, and we have some projects where people work in communities for safety reasons didn't want teams come into their communities. Then we had other projects where they were not able to go into those communities. And we've had then some other projects where the supply chain has utterly disrupted our schedules and then significantly impacted on the costs.

So I'm not sure that in -- at the end of those -- three years of that nature is necessarily the right moment to provide some simple answer to say well, okay, we'll just -- you know, we'll do better next time. We have to do better. I can say, Madam Chair, that there was less carryovers over the last year that -- in terms of the proportionality of the total budget and then what was actually being spent. That has seen some improvement. We do have a more manageable project, which not only does it mean that we'll spend more of the budget; it also means that we are now having to prioritize the projects that are actually going to get done and then be able to better monitor them. So hopefully those two things combined with hopefully less crisis over the next few years we'll see significant improvements across the board. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under the junior kindergarten to grade 12 school services? Seeing none.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, junior kindergarten to grade 12 school services, infrastructure investment, \$3,100,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Members, please turn now to the departmental summary found on page 17. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2024-2025 Capital Estimates, \$3,590,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree that consideration of

Department of Education, Culture and Employment is now complete? Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will now consider the Department of Environment and Climate Change, which begins on page 23.

Sergeant-at-arms. Minister, would you please introduce your witness.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I still have the deputy Minister of Finance with me, and I'm now joined by Dr. Erin Kelly who is the deputy minister for Environment and Climate Change.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Welcome. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Environment and Climate Change, which begins on page 23. We will defer the departmental totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 25, with environmental management monitoring and climate change, with information items on page 26. Is there any questions from Members? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. So I see that there's -- it looks like there's a new air quality monitoring trailer in Norman Wells and something called a gas chromatograph which, I guess, can be used to identify the gases that make up samples. But I'm just kind of curious what's our monitoring -- air quality monitoring network look like now, and are we contemplating any changes as a result of the horrendous fire season we had? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wouldn't be in a position to speak to what might be coming down the pipes here. I turn it to Dr. Kelly, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Dr. Kelly.

**DR. ERIN KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The network is already set up to assess for mostly particulate matter associated with forest fires. So we will be maintaining it the way that it is right now. And this air quality monitoring trailer is because the one that's there is past its useful life. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I realize I'm probably straying a bit here, but are

there any plans, then, to expand the network in the future as a result of the fires and what we've learned or maybe not learned? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I'm going to go on a limb here based on all of the information I've seen over the last few weeks is that we're not ready to necessarily make concrete plans in response to the current wildfire season and that the after-action reviews that have been spoken about already in the House are, you know, underway but certainly far from complete. So that question will have to probably wait until that process is complete. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay. I don't want to go any further on this, but I'm probably going to have some questions tomorrow in the House about this after-action review because I think there's an RFP about it right now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Department of Environment and Climate Change, environmental management, monitoring and climate change, infrastructure investments, \$315,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Please turn now to page 27 for regional operations with information items on page 28. Department of Environment and Climate Change, regional operations, infrastructure investments, \$225,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. You can now turn to page 28 for wildlife and forest management with information items on page 29 to 32. Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, infrastructure investments, \$20,538,000. Does committee agree? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I just have a couple questions about this section. But I figured I should start off by thanking Dr. Kelly for her service during this absolutely insane wildfire season, so thank you very much.

My first question is in regards to the fact that these capital estimates are generally

developed by departments well in advance, and I think they're done in, like, April or May if I'm right. I might be wrong on that one. But they're done -- they're not done in the middle of summer. And so I'm wondering if based on our wildfire season if the department sees any of this changing because there's a lot here that refers to heli-based locations and whatnot. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, no, the current capital estimates are still the current capital estimates. So there's no change to what's before the House now with respect to or as a result of this wildfire season. You know, again, as I'd indicated, if there was to be changes coming, that would be in a future capital plan. But the -- yeah, I mean, the materials and the information that's before you here, there is already -- or quite a bit of investment into the area. So nothing contemplated to change in these capital plans. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm also seeing in this capital acquisition plan points for -- or calls for things like dual seat firebosses, which is an aircraft. It calls for fire engine types, and looking at the summer we just had and the incredible support that we had from other places both nationally and internationally, I'm wondering if these are items that the GNWT also loans out or rents out to other places down south, or if we also send our crews south as well, looking at the support that we had here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** The short answer is yes, Madam Chair. I think there's a fairly good network around Canada between different jurisdictions, depending on the needs of any particular wildfire season or at any particular point within the wildfire season. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, infrastructure investments, \$20,538,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Members, please return now to the departmental summary found on page 23.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2024-2025 Capital Estimates, \$21,078,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree that consideration of the Department of Environment and Climate Change is now complete?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. Committee, we will now be considering the Department of Finance. Did you wish to change your witnesses?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the Chamber. All right. Welcome back, Ms. Melanson. We will now consider the Department of Finance which begins on page 33. We will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 34 with Management Board Secretariat with information items on page 35. Are there any questions? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So is there anyone else bringing money into this fibre link to Tuk? Is there any other outside funding? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Madam Chair, the federal government is a fairly significant partner in this project. I believe that we are still sitting at approximately 75/25 percent on this, but let me just pause to the deputy minister to see if I'm correct. I'm correct with that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. If I remember correctly, though, I think I've seen this now over two or three different capital budgets. Has this work actually started and when is it going to finish? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Madam Chair, we are -- the contemplation is that this would follow the transportation utility of the Tuk Highway. So, but, which took, you know, some time to finish that, and now to be ready for it, I gather we are now at a point where they are doing the environmental assessments and we'll be prepared to submit that to then have the project move forward. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay. So the work hasn't actually started, I think is what I heard. Who's going to own this thing at the end of the day? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an extension of the Mackenzie Valley fibre line. So it will be a GNWT asset. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, but this is part of the overall P3 approach on this thing. So NorthwesTel's building the thing for us or something and going to operate it for 30 years or whatever, and then we're left with it afterwards, is that how this works? And maybe I'm, you know -- but I'll -- yeah, I'd like to hear what the Minister has to say. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is the one -- this part is owned by the GNWT and not being constructed by NorthwesTel. So it's separate from the other portion of the Mackenzie Valley fibre line. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. I'm actually glad to hear that. So is this actually going to be taking fibre into people's houses or, you know, the edge of their lots, or is this just into some place in the middle of the community? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the Member's asking if there's a point of presence, and that is -- that's what there will be. There will be a point of presence into the community. Fibre into the



home is provided by a certain internet service provider which would be, for example NorthwesTel, but there are other internet service providers and particularly in the Beaufort Delta area. But once they have the point of presence, they can then take that fibre into a home. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks. I guess maybe I'm jumping the gun here, but has that party been identified, and are we facilitating that in any way? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What I was hoping to find quickly is that I know that NorthwesTel was under an obligation to the CRTC in order to provide fibre to the home and have been providing updates of the progress on that project now for some time. I don't on my fingertips know where -- whether they are under the same obligation for this stretch. I anticipate that they may be. I'll commit to find that, Madam Chair. I don't -- I don't see it here on the list of communities that NorthwesTel is obligated under. So they may not -- oh no, Madam Chair, I take that back. They are on the list of upcoming communities that NorthwesTel has on their every community project, which I think would support greater connectivity. The details of that would be with NorthwesTel, not mine though. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay. Yeah, I'm kind of just in this because I don't think the promise of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link really panned out because, you know, when it was sold to MLAs, and I wasn't here, the idea was that this was going to lead to a faster, more affordable, more accessible internet. I don't think it's actually done that in some cases for some of the communities along the route. So it sounds like this -- Tuk is going to be done a little bit differently, or is some magic pot of money that's going to make this happen, is that the case? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there would be no fibre to the home in any of the communities along the Mackenzie Valley fibre line but for the existence of the Mackenzie Valley fibre line. And then Tuktoyaktuk will be in the same

position, that once the fibre does reach the community, the -- what again, I can't speak for CRTC, nor for NorthwesTel, but my understanding of the expectation between those two parties is that this is a service that NorthwesTel is responsible for, that they've committed to 50/10 for all communities and, indeed, have, I think, delivered a majority of the communities at this point, particularly along the fibre line but also in some of the South Slave communities.

So I can certainly get that and have an update for Members from Northwestel and ask them to provide that directly as to what they've done but, again, without the fibre line to begin with they wouldn't have been able to accomplish what they have. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks. I would appreciate the update. Look, I get that this is kind of the backbone thing, but when the project was sold, it was that people were going to get faster, cheaper internet in their homes, and I don't think that that's actually happened in some of the communities. So anything we can do to help make that happen, great. Because it -- I don't think it's really panned out the way that it was sold, so. And I'll just leave it at that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Department of Finance, Management Board Secretariat, infrastructure investments, \$1 million. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Please turn now to page 36 for the Office of the Chief Information Officer with information items on page 37.

Department of Finance, Office of the Chief Information Officer, infrastructure investments, \$2,847,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Members, please return now to the departmental summary found on page 33.

Department of Finance, 2024-2025 Capital estimates, \$3,847,000. Does committee agree? Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree that consideration of the Department of Finance is now complete?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services which begins on page 39. We will defer the departmental totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 40, with administrative and support services, with information items on page 41. Did you need to switch out your witnesses?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, please, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the Chamber.

Minister, would you please introduce your witness.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Joining now at the table is Perry Heath who is the director of infrastructure and planning for the Department of Health and Social Services.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Welcome. Members, we are on Department of Health and Social Services, administrative support services, infrastructure investments, \$1 million. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Please turn now to page 42 for health and social programs with information items on page 43 and 44.

Department of Health and Social Services, health and social programs, infrastructure investments, \$40,021,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Next, turn to page 45 for long term and continuing care services with Member for Frame Lake, which -- are you wanting to speak to long term? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. We need to do third reading on a bill. I think this is -- sorry, a good place to cut this off so that we can move. So that's why I'm going to move that the chair rise and report progress.

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

---Carried

Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

**MR. SPEAKER:** May I please have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MS. SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 973-19(2) and would like to report progress, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the committee be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Frame Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Justice.

### Third Reading of Bills

#### BILL 82: LEGAL PROFESSION ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 82, Legal Profession Act, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. The Minister's requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

#### RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):** The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise.

The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 82 has had third reading.

---Carried

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

### Orders of the Day

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Friday, September 29th, 2023, 10 a.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 1578-19(2), Fire Management Policy Effect on Indigenous Culture
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
  - Motion 84-19(2), Taxation of Vaping Products under Coordinated Vaping Taxation Products Agreement
  - Motion 85-19(2), Extended Adjournment of the House to October 3, 2023
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3

#### 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
- Bill 65, Builder's Lien Act
- Bill 74, Forest Act
- Bill 75, Council of Women and Gender Diversity Act
- Bill 78, Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Act
- Bill 80, Dental Hygienists Profession Statutes Amendment Act
- Bill 81, An Act to Amend the Education Act, No. 2
- Bill 84, An Act to Amend the Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation Act
- Bill 85, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act
- Bill 93, Practice of Engineering, Geoscience and Applied Science Technology Act
- Bill 94, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023
- Committee Report 52-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
- Committee Report 53-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Supporting Northern Businesses
- Committee Report 55-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 55: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act
- Committee Report 61-19(2), Standing Committee of Social Development Report on Bill 81: An Act to Amend the Education Act, No. 2
- Committee Report 62-19(2), Report on Bill 74: Forest Act

- Minister's Statement 264-19(2),  
Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's  
Report on Suicide
- Tabled Document 681-19(2),  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
Response to Committee Report 26-  
19(2): Report on the Child and Family  
Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth  
and Families: An All of Territory  
Approach to Keeping Families Together
- Tabled Document 973-19(2), 2024-  
2025 Capital Estimates
- Tabled Document 974-19(2),  
Supplementary Estimates Operations  
Expenditures, No. 3, 2023-2024

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 77, Nursing Profession Act

23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Friday, September 29th, 2023, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:49 p.m.