



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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## **HANSARD**

**Tuesday, February 7, 2017**

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**The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Monfwi)

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*Minister Responsible for Seniors*  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PRAYER</b> .....	<b>1523</b>
<b>MINISTERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>1523</b>
118-18(2) – Tlichó All-Season Road (Schumann) .....	1523
119-18(2) – Milestone Statement - Housing Strategies (Cochrane) .....	1524
120-18(2) – Developing NWT Agriculture (Schumann).....	1524
121-18(2) – Barren-ground Caribou Species at Risk Assessment (R. McLeod).....	1525
<b>MEMBERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>1526</b>
Pedestrian Access to Hay River Health Centre (Simpson) .....	1526
Supporting the Northwest Territories Tourism Sector (Vanthuyné).....	1526
Mental Health and Addictions Support Services (Testart).....	1527
Impacts of Proposed Elimination of the Aurora College Social Work Diploma Program (Beaulieu).....	1527
E-mail to Aurora College Students regarding Proposed Program Elimination and Fee Increases (Thompson).....	1527
Opportunities for Implementing Renewable Energy Initiatives (O'Reilly) .....	1529
Sahtu Region Strategic Plan for Health Services (McNeely) .....	1529
Indigenous Guardians Program (Nadli).....	1530
On-the-Land Educational Programs for NWT Youth (Nakimayak).....	1530
Junior Kindergarten Implementation (Green).....	1531
<b>REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS</b> .....	<b>1531</b>
<b>REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES</b> .....	<b>1540</b>
<b>RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY</b> .....	<b>1543, 1553</b>
<b>ORAL QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>1543</b>
<b>TABLING OF DOCUMENTS</b> .....	<b>1553</b>
<b>NOTICES OF MOTION</b> .....	<b>1554</b>
Motion 29-18(2) – Appointment of Two Members to the Human Rights Adjudication Panel.....	1554
Motion 30-18(2) – Extended Adjournment of the House to February 14, 2017 .....	1554
<b>CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS</b> .....	<b>1554</b>
<b>REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE</b> .....	<b>1554</b>
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b> .....	<b>1554</b>



**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, February 7, 2017****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty):** Good afternoon, Members. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Transportation.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 118-18(2):  
TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Mr. Speaker, early in the new year, an important milestone was achieved with the announcement of conditional federal funding to construct the Tlicho all-season road. This represents a critical step towards fulfilling the mandate of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly to capture opportunities for investment in transportation infrastructure in the Northwest Territories.

This milestone was achieved through the strength of our partnership with Canada and the Tlicho Government. Together, we recognize the importance of strategic infrastructure investments for improving the standard of living in remote northern communities.

With the construction of the Tlicho all-season road, many of the opportunities that those of us living in connected communities take for granted will become available to the residents of Whati. The project will help build economic stability across the region and contribute to sustainable and self-sufficient communities.

Mr. Speaker, transportation affects the cost of every component of household expenditure, meaning that any improvements to the transportation system help reduce the cost of living. An all-season connection to Whati will eliminate the community's dependence on the existing winter road, which is increasingly challenged by the impacts of climate change. Replacing the southern section of the winter road will also increase the window of access to Gameti and Wekweeti, improving the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system for all Tlicho communities.

All-season access results in efficiencies, including lower travel time and shipping costs, which will translate into savings for consumers. Reducing the cost of freight helps to improve the standard of life in communities by making it more affordable to deliver a diverse range of essential goods from food and fuel to building materials for local houses and construction projects. Lowering operating costs for local businesses will allow them to be more competitive in territorial markets. In addition, the road will connect Tlicho residents to a larger selection of services such as education and healthcare, which may become more affordable with improved access.

The project will also contribute to new employment opportunities for residents in a variety of sectors. Job creation helps support the self-sufficiency of all Northerners by providing the resources necessary to access the amenities we need.

Construction of the Tlicho all-season road will result in significant employment and allow Northerners to benefit from the kind of training and experience that forges life-long skills. Through the development of a strong northern workforce, residents will also be better positioned to take advantage of future economic opportunities when they arise.

All-season access will also support key industries operating in the Tlicho region. Improved access will likely attract increased numbers of tourists interested in exploring this culturally unique region of our territory. Lands for recreational and cultural purposes will become more readily accessible, creating opportunities for businesses interested in promoting the natural beauty of the region.

Year-round access will also result in further interest from industry to develop and explore for natural resources in the area. Enabling such development is critical, not only because the resource industry remains the top contributor to territorial GDP, but also because it is responsible for providing a significant amount of employment, education, and training opportunities in the NWT. By increasing access into the Tlicho region, there is the potential to continue resource development and consequently provide jobs and training to residents for generations.

Improved transportation infrastructure gives people the tools to live strong, healthy, and successful lives. The Tlicho all-season road will contribute to vibrant communities and help capture opportunities that support economic prosperity in the NWT.

The Department of Transportation will continue to work closely with the Tlicho Government to advance the project through the environmental assessment and construction phases.

Finally, the Department of Transportation continues to work with the Department of Finance on preparing project procurement. The departments anticipate the release of a request for qualifications in the very near future, which will position us for the development of a request for proposals pending a decision on the environmental assessment for the project. We look forward to hearing from the bidders and working together on a successful plan for construction at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 119-18(2):  
MILESTONE STATEMENT – HOUSING  
STRATEGIES

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in order to address the priorities of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has made the commitment to work in partnership with other orders of government to address affordable housing requirements in support of their service delivery to Northwest Territories' residents.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is addressing this priority through its mandate commitment to develop northern solutions for northern housing as part of its strategic plan, Building for the Future. Today, I want to provide Members with an update on this collaborative work.

There has also been strong collaboration with the other two northern territories around our common goal of increased federal engagement. Given our unique economic and geographical conditions, Canada's three territories face greater challenges and levels of housing needs than our country's southern jurisdictions. To that end, the Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories worked together to develop a pan-territorial business case outlining the key housing priorities that we all share.

The increased support for northern housing in the 2016 federal budget is a product of that work: \$100 million for the North, and specifically over \$35 million for the Northwest Territories; \$15 million of

the Northwest Territories' allocation is going directly to the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to address housing issues in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is working on an agreement with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to coordinate the delivery of housing programs with this money. Discussions have been productive, and I am looking forward to a productive partnership.

Supporting the housing aspirations of Aboriginal and local governments is one of our commitments to support safe and affordable housing. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has also been working with the K'atloodchee First Nation to support the development of social housing on the Hay River Reserve.

This work has led to the completion of the land designation process for ten lots, which will allow for federal leases on reserve land. It is anticipated the Public Housing Program will be delivered on these lots. The parties are working to complete the land designation process for six more lots.

I have also been approached by the Akaitcho First Nations, the Hamlet of Aklavik, the Salt River First Nations, and the K'asho Got'ine of Fort Good Hope about partnering in housing projects, which demonstrates the commitment of community governments to working in partnership to meet the needs of their community members.

Additionally, my territorial colleagues and I successfully obtained a commitment from the federal government to include addressing northern housing issues as a major pillar in the national housing strategy that is under development. Work has now been initiated with our federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to translate these broad goals, priorities, and outcomes into a multilateral agreement that will lead to greater federal involvement in northern housing.

Mr. Speaker, good progress has been made in achieving these milestones. I expect that, in the near future, we will be close to delivering on most of the areas related to our mandate commitments. This will be perfect timing, as the results of our housing engagement survey will help to inform us on the future direction of housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 120-18(2):  
DEVELOPING NWT AGRICULTURE

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Mr. Speaker, residents of the NWT have told us they want to advance food production in their regions and

communities. With the support of federal government and the Government of the Northwest Territories funding, community-based gardens, greenhouses, farmer's markets, and other food-related businesses and associations are flourishing across the NWT.

Access to locally grown, locally sourced foods continues to increase for residents of the NWT. Small-scale entrepreneurial opportunities are becoming available through markets, festivals, and conferences.

While a few commercial food production ventures are gaining traction and presence in the NWT, expanding production and creating greater diversification within this commercial sector is our next objective. We have committed in our mandate to introducing a strategy that will guide and support the growth of an agriculture sector for the NWT.

To help inform the development of that strategy, we have engaged with commercial farmers and others interested in seeing the sector expand -- as well as with experts who work with various aspects related to food production. We have had conversations with colleagues in this House and within our government, and with enthusiastic residents.

We see the development of the NWT agriculture sector as a component of our government's economic development agenda to increase economic opportunities and diversity at the regional level through the local production of food that can replace what is imported at a greater cost from the south.

Over time, the implementation of this strategy will also support and advance commitments that we have made to address the cost of living, improve food security, foster healthy families, and enhance capacity-building programs for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, many of the key resources to our agriculture sector are already in place, including keen, interested participants; strong community support; public and private investment; and market demand, but we have learned that there are still some critical elements needed to facilitate the safe, responsible, and sustainable development of this sector.

We need to establish concrete regulations for the safe management and production of food and sale of agriculture products in the NWT. We need formal approaches for identifying and accessing land. We will also need to invest time and resources in building the skills, education, and infrastructure needed to realize our potential.

The strategy that I will be tabling during this session will provide a plan to address these shortfalls and provide a blueprint to build our agriculture sector for

the future. This strategy will set the stage for actions, investments, and development of legislative tools that will advance the increased production of fresh, healthy, safe, and more affordable locally grown food choices, and new economic opportunities for our people.

I look forward to the work ahead, and to delivering on this commitment of our government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 121-18(2):  
BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU SPECIES AT RISK  
ASSESSMENT

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, caribou herds across northern Canada have been declining. Many are at or near historic low numbers.

These declines prompted the Committee on Status of Endangered Species in Canada to assess barren-ground caribou across Canada, including herds in the Northwest Territories, as a threatened species in November 2016.

Decisions on this listing and a resulting recovery strategy will be made by the Government of Canada in consultation with the Government of the Northwest Territories and our co-management partners. Canada's consultation on the legal listing of barren-ground caribou as a threatened species under the federal Species at Risk Act is expected to take at least a year.

Mr. Speaker, the legal listing as a threatened species results in automatic prohibitions to protect the species and its habitat on federal lands only. It also results in a requirement for provinces and territories to identify and protect critical habitat.

This government is committed, through our priorities and mandate, to effective co-management of caribou herds and other wildlife, which can lead to improved food security through enhanced local production and traditional harvesting depending on the status of the herd.

Recovery actions to conserve barren-ground caribou herds in the Northwest Territories are already under way. These actions will contribute to the recovery of the species. Department of Environment and Natural Resources staff will continue to work with their federal counterparts to coordinate consultation with stakeholders prior to the listing.

The Northwest Territories Species at Risk Committee will assess the territorial status of barren-ground caribou in April.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue our collaborative efforts with our co-management partners, stakeholders, and NWT residents to conserve barren-ground caribou for present and future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO HAY RIVER HEALTH CENTRE

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I live at the end of the rail line. Now that the winter roads are open, every time I look out my window I see a lineup of Super Bs waiting to fill up with fuel brought north via the rail. As soon as one truck fills up it heads down the highway and another one takes its place. I like to see this because it means people are working.

You know who doesn't like seeing those trucks? Anyone who's walking to the new health centre in Hay River. That's because the health centre was built with absolutely no safe pedestrian access. Everybody who has to walk to the hospital, including seniors and parents with young children, has to dart across the highway at a point where there are no pedestrian crossing signals, no crosswalk, and not even enough light cast on the highway from nearby streetlights to assure anyone that they'll be seen.

If they manage to dodge the Super Bs and cross the highway safely, and luckily so far everyone has, then they'll make their way onto a road with no shoulders and no sidewalk. From there, they have to traverse an uncontrolled railroad crossing and make their way further down the road with no sidewalks and through a parking lot before they finally reach safety. If they want to get home, they have to do the same thing again.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious public safety concern. For those who don't drive, can't get a ride, or can't afford a cab there is no choice but to walk to get where you're going. In many cases, those people are our elders and often the most frequent users of the healthcare system.

In order to access an essential service, they're being placed in danger because of a failure in government planning. We also have to consider the safety of the employees at the health centre, many of whom walk to work. If I brought this up yesterday when WSCC was here they might have tossed a couple of the Ministers in jail. That's how serious an issue this is.

---Laughter

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm baffled that we built a hospital that is not safely accessible by foot. It was my understanding that we were supposed to have some lights installed last year. What happened? I know the health authority in the Town of Hay River has been fighting hard to get the lights installed, but as far as I know the responsibility lays with Public Works and Services.

So, Mr. Speaker, how much longer must our sick and elderly dodge traffic on a dark and often icy highway? We need the lights installed and we need them installed three months ago. While they're at it, how about a sidewalk, as well? I'll have questions for the Minister of Public Works and Services at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORTING THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES TOURISM SECTOR

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous Member's statement sounds familiar to some degree. Mr. Speaker, tourism is big business in the North. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has released a strategy document, Tourism 2020, full of information and plans and pointing to the need for an implementation plan.

This is much needed and will help guide investment and work in the tourism industry. I do feel that the implementation plan should set some priorities, particularly on growth and development of this sector, in order for some of the goals and the plan to be realized.

Growth in the interest from travel trade and tour operators is a vital piece of this puzzle. The GNWT must take the initiative in changing the landscape for businesses. We should make it smoother and easier for owner/operators to enter this sector and stay competitive. The current operators are working hard turning sweat equity into solid returns. That's paving the way for us to grow this sector, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I say we must make that a priority area for implementation. Tourism operators don't just need support to develop product and experiences. They also need a trained workforce and guidelines to ensure quality. We need interdepartmental commitment and partnering to bridge the gap for youth entering the workforce, and we need to offer the NorthernMost Host Program training to younger age groups. We should encourage youth to seek work experience in this sector and support them when they want to pursue



it as a career option. One way to do this would be to find our Canadian regional partners for post-secondary training and education in the tourism sector and develop a network now of alumni to mentor returning students. This means going beyond the standard strategy and working across departments to make this a priority.

I feel strongly that marketing is an important component of the plan. I applaud ITI for its efforts to build a recognized brand and a successful destination marketing campaign. I think, if we are able to align our efforts with Destination Canada, we can expand our market even further. This is an easy win and will pay off in the higher tourist volumes we are looking for.

Mr. Speaker, great work has been done. We have a strategy. I encourage the Minister to consider how we are aligning with national efforts in this sector and build the partnerships needed to get some traction and reach some of the targets from the strategy. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SUPPORT SERVICES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 3, 2015, the Minister of Health tabled "Mind and Spirit: Promoting Mental Health and Addictions Recovery in the Northwest Territories." This is the mental health strategic framework for 2016 to 2021.

Mr. Speaker, mental health is a critical issue that this government must address, not just for our citizens today but also for future generations of Northerners. I'm glad to see this government recognize this with its new strategy, and I'm equally pleased that the federal government has allocated to the Northwest Territories \$6.1 million over a 10-year period to fund new mental health initiatives, along with robust tracking standards to adequately access the state of mental health for our people. Of course, there's never enough money for this critical need, but this is a start of a conversation and a new funding agreement that I hope we can take further.

Despite the seriousness of mental health and addictions, these issues and those who struggle with them are still subject to social stigma and embarrassment. In fact, according to a recent study, only 49 per cent of Canadians said they would socialize with a friend who had a serious mental illness.

Mr. Speaker, although mental illness and addictions cut across society, I want to speak about how it affects the most vulnerable members of our society, the youth and those dealing with addictions.

Mr. Speaker, 70 per cent of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence. Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group. Similarly, people with substance use problems are three times more likely to have a mental illness. More than 15 per cent of people with a substance use problem have a co-occurring mental illness.

To put that into our Northern perspective, Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories between 2008 and 2010, alcohol and drug issues were involved in the majority of mental health hospitalizations. They made up 68 per cent of the patients and 49 per cent of the costs to the system. Hospitalization rates included drugs, alcohol, mood disorders, schizophrenia and psychotic disorders, and anxiety disorders. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, honourable Members. Mr. Speaker, people with mental illness and addictions are more likely to die prematurely than the general population. Mental illness can cut 10 to 20 years from a person's life expectancy. It keeps people from being productive at home and at work and for too long has held Northerners back from achieving their full potential.

With a new action plan and new support from Ottawa and Indigenous governments, now is the time to take a stand and assure Northerners we are taking real action on mental health and addictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPACTS OF PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF THE AURORA COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK DIPLOMA PROGRAM

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are real people affected by education budget cuts. There are five women in the social work access program at Aurora College here in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, when Aurora College decided to cut the social work program, it meant that five families were adversely affected and were hurt by this decision. Aurora College made that decision because the government asked them to make program cuts.

Mr. Speaker, no new students can go into the social work program next fall, which means that the program the students are in now, the program that they've invested their SFA in, is now worthless. The Department of Education's decision has ruined the professional dreams of the students. The decision determined that these students will not be able to be social workers in their own home communities.

Mr. Speaker, students were informed on February 2<sup>nd</sup> that the social work program that they had worked so hard towards had been cut. They were left with no idea what will become of them. They are heartbroken. Some of the students relocated to Yellowknife for this course and are full-time mothers on top of heavy school workloads, and have sacrificed a lot to get where they are. They have worked long, hard hours on their education, and now it has been taken from them. All of the goals that they have worked towards have been pulled out from underneath them.

Mr. Speaker, they have received government grants for their education. Their education is their right. How can the government take that from them? They were directed towards this path by SFA, income support, and other career counsellors.

Mr. Speaker, after all this hard work and effort, they were stuck and financially devastated by these budget cuts. The government wants Northerners to stay and contribute to their communities, yet they have destroyed the hopes of students in the social work access program. The students feel that this is brutally unfair, and something needs to be done.

People from the government came to see the students this past fall and talked about Skills 4 Success, yet the government is cutting college programs that would help students make something of themselves and help them be a part of the future of their communities. Marci cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
E-MAIL TO AURORA COLLEGE STUDENTS  
REGARDING PROPOSED  
PROGRAM ELIMINATION AND FEE INCREASES

**MR. THOMPSON:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I spoke about the social work program and the way the college was communicating with their students. A second e-mail was sent to the students at 10:32 a.m. that day about an important message regarding the 2017-18 rent, tuition rates, and program changes.

Mr. Speaker, I need to share with this House what was said because to date I have not been informed by the department or the college. I've had to hear

what is going on through Facebook, the students, and the news. This is very sad, to say the least. Again, like I said previously, communication is very poor.

Mr. Speaker, the e-mail stated:

In order to align GNWT expenditures for project revenues, all GNWT departments have been tasked with identifying expenditure reductions. Aurora College, like all GNWT departments and arm's length agencies, has been undergoing the difficult but necessary challenge of identifying ways to reduce our budget while minimizing impacts.

Based on the information we have so far, a number of actions are being taken. Planned actions will help position Aurora College for fiscal stability and ability to deliver relevant, high-quality programming that sets learners up to participate fully in the NWT labour market or pursue further education. Programming offered by Aurora College will focus on programs that improve employment success for NWT residents, close skill gaps for in-demand jobs, and effectively respond to employer and industry needs.

Mr. Speaker, the e-mail goes on to say that there are going to be changes to the Bachelor of Education and the Social Work Diploma programs.

- Effective immediately, there will be no more student intake.
- The program will continue for up to two years, for social work, and three years, for the education program, to allow the 2016-17 first-year students to complete and to bring back students who are partway through the program and could complete by June 2020.
- Program end date will be June 2, 2019 for the social work and June 2020 for education.

To add insult, the college is going to increase student rent with increases over the next two years, and tuition for certificate, diploma, and degree programs by increasing by \$300 per term in 2017-18. Mr. Speaker, I wish to seek unanimous consent to finish my Member's statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for allowing me to finish my statement. By \$300 for this term in 2018-19. Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the college is taking more funds from the students' SFA to cover the costs. To me, it's taking money from Peter to

pay Paul. This is very disappointing, to say the least.

Mr. Speaker, the e-mail goes on to say:

In these difficult economic and changing labour market requirements, we have had to re-examine the way we do business in order to set Aurora College up for long-term stability and success. To assist us in moving forward, we are in a strategic planning process that will help set our course for the next decade. We have the Skills 4 Success Framework and Action Plan, and we have a number of strong partnerships across the territory that will fully support us in offering community deliveries.

In my opinion, it looks like the strategic plan has already been done because we are cutting programs already. It looks like they are going to use the Skills 4 Success Framework and Action Plan as a strategic plan. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. As the government consults on its NWT Energy Plan and Climate Change Strategic Framework, one non-governmental organization has done its part in pointing the way to a clean energy future, with minor funding but major commitment. Alternatives North has produced a way forward to 100 per cent conversion to renewable energy for the Northwest Territories.

The analysis is contained in the report "A 100 per cent renewable energy NWT by 2050 – Starting the Conversation," which I tabled in this House on November 2, 2016. It was also the subject of one of the Ledge Talks here in our Great Hall last week.

The really good news is that the Northwest Territories could indeed be 100 per cent renewable by 2050 using presently available, already proven technologies. The report established criteria and evaluated over 100 renewable energy options covering all sectors of energy use, heating, transportation, the mining industry, and electricity production. The report is very strict in rejecting any technologies that are not already commercially available.

It finds that in a 100 per cent renewable energy future, biofuels could provide up to 90 per cent of the energy supply in the Northwest Territories.

Biofuels like fossil fuels can be transported and stored for up to several years between fuel deliveries. The key biofuels are wood, wood chips, wood pellets, compressed and liquid biogas, and bio-jet fuel. Currently, less than 10 per cent of the Northwest Territories' energy supply comes from local sources, but hydro, solar, wind, and particularly local biomass could increase that to 70 per cent which would create new green jobs in the Northwest Territories. New economic opportunity accompanies the conversion, with the need for everything from electricians trained in wood and solar, to sustainable forest managers in trades knowledgeable in the latest energy efficient construction methods. The report stresses the need to stop installing new non-renewable energy sources we will have to live with for years to come.

We've heard the Premier and Finance Minister say many times that there are no economically viable alternatives to oil and gas as energy sources in producing the NWT Energy Plan and Climate Change Strategic Framework. Our government should provide its analysis of the options presented in the Alternatives North report, including which renewable energy options it considers the most viable. Then, based on that analysis, GNWT should also determine ---

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Frame Lake, your time for Member's statement has expired.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement?

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Mr. Speaker. Based on the analysis done by Alternatives North, GNWT should also determine and announce a timetable outlining which of the available options it intends to implement during the remaining life of this Assembly. I'll have questions later today, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Mahsi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SAHTU REGION STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HEALTH SERVICES

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last several days, I've spent a number of days in both the Vital Abel Home and the Stanton Hospital assisting residents and families.

Mr. Speaker, we have always been seeking ways to hold dialogue and improve our program delivery, especially in the small, remote, isolated communities. The strategic plan developed in 2014

for the Sahtu Health Authority is a reflection of this; however, it needs updating.

Mr. Speaker, a number of positive changes are in the proceedings which are the new Sahtu Regional Health Centre, new legislation that became effective August 1<sup>st</sup>, and the new organization at the regional level, as well as the territorial level.

Mr. Speaker, given the new change for the region, we now need to update our regional strategic plan with involvement of all stakeholders, namely, residents whom we serve in the Sahtu region. It should be for the Sahtu, made by the Sahtu, for the Sahtu people in the area of medical care. Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I will have appropriate questions for the Minister of Health later. Thank you.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS GUARDIANS PROGRAM

**MR. NADLI:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, a non-profit organization, has asked the federal government for \$500 million over five years for a new nationwide monitoring program.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed National Guardians Program would send around 1,600 First Nations people out on their traditional lands to keep an eye on visitors, protect sensitive environmental and cultural areas, and help in case of emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, the former Premier of the NWT, Stephen Kakfwi, described it as an ambassadorial program, keeping people's eyes and ears on what's happening out on the land. It builds on things people do already. Many times, Aboriginal people are the ones who find spills, or who help search for people who are lost or in trouble. They also help people before trouble happens.

Mr. Speaker, this program has worked well in some regions and communities in the NWT. It's modelled, in part, on the Haida Nation's Watchmen Program that has been running for over 30 years in BC. A similar program in Australia employs over 750 Aboriginal people. It has been extremely successful where full-time, sustainable employment opportunities are scarce and students don't have funding or the flexibility to leave their communities for post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, the Guardians Program could also increase tourism in the Deh Cho and manage increasing pressures on the land. It could also bring much-needed employment and training

opportunities to communities in other parts of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, the current training program in BC welcomes students ranging from 18 to 50 years of age. They have varying levels of experience, but all have strong connections to their traditional territory and enjoy spending time on the land.

When not assisting travelers, they do other environmental stewardship and traditional knowledge projects. First Nations Guardians have stepped up where cutbacks have left gaps in BC Parks, and federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans services.

As Stephen Kakfwi says: "There's not enough wildlife officers and park officials to do an adequate job in many parts of the country... the territory is just too huge."

Mr. Speaker, I encourage this government to work together with all partners to bring the Guardians Program to the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ON-THE-LAND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR NWT YOUTH

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the daylight gets longer and more people go out on the land, on-the-land programming helps ensure that youth are exposed to traditional culture and ways of harvesting and preparing country food. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' field environmental programs for youth are a valuable part of education in the Northwest Territories. For generations, youth have learned on the land. Now that we no longer rely on traditional skills for survival, we must ensure our vital connection to the land is not lost. ENR delivers a range of programs in NWT schools both inside and outside the classrooms. These programs teach students about ecology, natural history, traditional knowledge, wildlife, arctic botany, geology, archaeology, and safety and survival skills. Mr. Speaker, this learning can spark an interest that can lead to further education through Aurora College's Environment and Natural Resources Technology diploma or environmental monitor and training programs.

Mr. Speaker, youth who might not excel in classroom academics may do well out on the land where hands-on learning is emphasized, where they get to practice skills with family members outside of school. Mr. Speaker, on-the-land programming teaches students about how people

lived before the modern amenities they have never lived without. It introduces new Canadians to the traditional ways of life when Canada's first people and the people who adapted to a new land, culture, years before.

Mr. Speaker, climate change is rapidly changing the traditional territory of the Inuit. Youth need to learn about what is changing and what has stayed the same for generations. Programs like Take a Kid Trapping or original programs like the Dehcho Youth Ecology Camp are great for teaching traditional knowledge from a practical perspective. It would be good to see similar opportunities offered to students in the Beaufort Delta.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential for youth to have positive learning experiences on the land. Field environment programs should be a permanent part of the education curriculum. They also present great opportunities for partnership between government departments and with Aboriginal governments that could ultimately help build a greater trust between governments and diverse groups of people who work together to teach the next generation about life on the land. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the saga of what funding is available to implement junior kindergarten continues because communication by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and his department is so ineffective. But it is not too late to turn things around. What we need are some straight answers.

In early December, parents and trustees appeared at the Standing Committee on Social Development to deliver a simple message about the introduction of junior kindergarten. Another grade of school requires another grade of funding. At that point, the Minister said he planned to fund the new grade with a combination of new investments and cuts.

Last week, the Minister of Finance said the government would provide an additional investment that would fully fund junior kindergarten in the life of this Assembly, although he did say that not all schools were ready for JK. Then later in the week, an assistant deputy minister at the Department of Education, Culture and Employment announced through the media that the government would provide the whole \$5.1 million needed this fall. He said school boards would not be asked to reallocate any of their funding to cover the extra grade; but wait, there is more.

Yesterday, the Minister told this House that the whole amount of money allocated to JK won't be needed this year. He said, and I quote: "We will work with boards to make the money they need to implement junior kindergarten available to them when it is needed. Once we know the actual enrolment figures, the government will bring a request for supplemental funding to the Legislative Assembly in the fall of 2017 to fully fund implementation."

Mr. Speaker, this is not how school boards or district education authorities' budgeting works. Once we pass the budget, school authorities create a budget for the 2017-18 school year and it is submitted to ECE for approval. That has to take place before the end of the fiscal year in March. If they are going to hire new teachers or they are going to lay them off, they must plan in advance and not do that two weeks before school starts.

Mr. Speaker, school boards in Yellowknife are behind the idea of JK. They are holding parent information nights this month. They expect enrolment of about 250 four-year-olds in September. They remain concerned that inclusive schooling doesn't include the new grade and about the cost of busing these little people, yet they are ready to go. But is the government ready? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move item 12 on the orders paper, replies to budget address. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. SPEAKER:** Item 12, replies to budget address. Member for Frame Lake.

### Replies to Budget Address

#### MR. O'REILLY'S REPLY

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. I will use my reply to the budget address to set out some of my thoughts on the following: a quick review of what I recommended to the reply to the budget address of 2016; description of the process for 2017 and how it might be improved; and the good, the bad, and the ugly of the 2017-18 budget as proposed by Cabinet.

What did I recommend in my last reply to the budget address in 2016? I recommended the following: open up the budgeting and business plan review to allow for some level of public scrutiny; set firm deadlines around negotiation processes between Regular MLAs and Cabinet on the budget,

which may lead to a process convention of the budget process; better cross-referencing of the main estimates to the business plans; clear reconciliation tables to show changes in staffing by departments and by community in relation to full-time and part-time employees as a result of sunseting of programs, reductions, and new initiatives; better engagement of our citizens as part of the budgeting process; and raising revenues for a more balanced approach to fiscal sustainability. I will come back to these again, the various points, in my reply, but I wanted to highlight them now to help set the context for what follows, the budget process.

Regular MLAs have been working diligently on the budget behind the scenes since September 2016, when we reviewed so-called business plans, which are really departmental budgets. I attended all of those meetings even though I was not a regular member of two of the standing committees. One major failing is that there was little or no effort to reach any agreement or consensus of what the overall fiscal context or direction should be prior to that review. The overarching objectives of the budget were not established before the detailed work on business plan reviews began. This is a serious flaw, as was raised yesterday by the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

During those business plan reviews, behind closed doors, most of the presentations and exchanges made reference to the reduction targets given to each department and the overall target of cutting \$150 million. Regular MLAs sent detailed correspondence back to the Finance Minister and held meetings in an attempt to reach some sort of a compromise by rolling back some of the cuts and strongly urging investment in the mandate. We listed unacceptable reductions and provided supporting rationales for our opposition.

The response was to roll back some of the cuts and then offer some new initiatives that were largely based on issues raised in this House in the fall sitting. The new initiatives were not discussed with us first and did not necessarily reflect any particular approach or linkage to the mandate. Further reductions were also introduced that more than offset the cuts that had been rolled back.

Given the lack of consultation on new initiatives, Regular MLAs spent considerable time developing our own list of strategic investments in the mandate. These were rejected by Cabinet.

After another meeting, one more reduction was rolled back, likely to happen next year, and then a promise of more funding later in our term for another initiative. I should point out the requested revisions from the Regular MLAs amount to a very

minor proportion of a \$1.7 billion overall budget, less than 2 per cent.

Here we are in a game of chicken to see who will blink first. This is not my idea of consensus government. It is a disservice to our residents.

I go back to one of the recommendations I made last year about opening up the budget process to greater public scrutiny. I believe this will encourage more accountability. There also needs to be earlier, meaningful consultations with Regular MLAs about the overall fiscal context and direction of the budget. I think we also need to develop a process convention for the budget.

Lastly, in terms of the budget process, I am not aware of any attempt to engage the public in the development of this budget. The Finance Minister used to hold annual public consultations. These resulted in a shopping list of public suggestions, but at least the effort was made to gather some input. The Premier spoke in his sessional statement about Cabinet open houses. While this is a worthwhile effort, I went to the open house here in Yellowknife and there was no invitation to discuss the budget.

Last year I recommended improved efforts, a public engagement, but this has fallen on deaf ears. In my previous life, I volunteered with a Yellowknife-based non-governmental organization. I remember having at least four or five Finance Ministers come to our meetings pre- and post-budget to hear us out. Similar meetings were held with others, including the business community and Aboriginal governments.

For the life of me, I don't understand why our Cabinet and Finance Minister have stopped this practice of focused meetings on budgets. This only reinforces the impression of government being aloof and unresponsive. Continue this approach at your own peril.

The good, the bad, and the ugly of the budget. I'll start with the good, Mr. Speaker. There are some good points in this budget. It would be unfair and dishonest of me not to recognize this work by our colleagues on the other side of the House. Here is my list of favourite, good things in the budget.

There is a small increase in tobacco taxes and some fees. Some of these fee increases are long overdue, but should have been phased in. It took a long time for me to better understand what Cabinet is actually doing in terms of income assistance and the NWT Child Benefit because the communication was so poor, but I am now convinced that there will actually be an increase in support for our most vulnerable individuals and families. This is a very good thing and has my support. Hats off to Cabinet,

but please find a better way to explain all of this, especially to our clients and the general public.

We also need to work very hard to ensure that everyone files tax returns to see the full benefit of these changes. The addition of \$500,000 to support seniors staying in their own homes through a home repair program is another good move, but definitely not enough and low compared to the \$1.85 million investment requested by Regular MLAs.

The new funding for homelessness in Yellowknife is desperately needed and another positive item in this budget. It is very good to see GNWT supporting the comprehensive homelessness plan coordinated by the City of Yellowknife.

We will finally get 911. I've raised this on many occasions in my short time as an MLA and sincerely thank Cabinet for seeing the light. There's still a lot of work to do with the city and others to get this fully implemented, and I look forward to helping with this essential service.

An additional \$132,000 for a North Slave tourism officer is a good thing, but I'm just not quite sure what it's going to be used for while we have a crumbling visitor centre that desperately needs to be rebuilt.

A relatively small increase in funding for community governments for infrastructure and services, that's another good thing in the budget. There's still a need for a plan and money to make up the municipal funding review shortfall.

Mr. Speaker, now onto the bad things in the budget. In my opinion, your budget trumpeted lots of great investments, but most of this is actually forced growth beyond our control. I believe the budget should have been much more transparent and more accountable in presenting the cuts, especially positions to be eliminated through sunsets and reductions. No one likes to deliver bad news, but it's even worse to hide it. If you don't disclose some of the bad and ugly items in the budget, that's now the job of this side of the House, so let's go.

No new taxes except for a small increase in tobacco taxes. Taxes are the price of civilization. To focus almost exclusively on reduction sends the wrong message. Taxes are also a way for us to start to ensure that wealth is shared. The world, this country, and the Northwest Territories have witnessed growing and unparalleled gaps between rich and poor. Our government has done little to address this issue through the tax system. For example, we should create a new income tax bracket for our highest income earners. Competitiveness and capitalism rule in our race to the bottom.

If our government is to have any credibility and moral authority to implement the drastic austerity it preaches, there must be an equal effort to raise new revenues through our tax system and fair return to government from the extraction of non-renewable resources.

In this budget, lip service is paid to renewable energy. No new investment in renewable or alternative energy, but a decrease through the sunsetting of \$760,000 of funding leveraged by Regular MLAs during the bailout of the NWT Power Corporation for diesel to replace hydro power during low water levels. What are we waiting for? Federal dollars to rain from heaven? There are no positive proposals to get our communities off diesel or for housing retrofits to bring our stock out of poor need.

We can subsidize the road to help the Fortune NICO mine to the tune of about \$130 million, but we can't find a cent to increase the \$2.75 million budget for Arctic Alliance that delivers programs on renewable energy and conservation. To be clear, Regular MLAs proposed an increase in funding for Arctic Energy Alliance of \$1.5 million a year, but this was rejected. The next time the entire Cabinet goes to Ottawa to outline its climate change fighting priorities, it would be good to talk to the lowly Regular MLAs beforehand. Cabinet could have pitched costed programs to bring all of our housing out of core need while we create employment in all our communities, lower the cost of living, and make real reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions.

My colleagues have raised the point that, although the addition of \$3 million to the small communities' employment fund is interesting, their concerns are about being able to actually get the money out the door. The GNWT needs to move this program from wage subsidies to actual job creation. Virtually no work has been done, and certainly nothing has been shared with Regular MLAs on a carbon tax. There is no money identified in the budget for this work, although a carbon tax gets an honourable mention in a few places in the Budget Address.

Within Environment and Natural Resources, there will be five positions cut at headquarters, four of these in corporate management that appear to be related to communications and policy. There was a lack of detail in the publically available ENR business plan. This is troubling, and I'll have lots of questions. My main concern is the internal capacity of this department, which has a lot on its plate with at least six legislative proposals that have not seen the light of day.

ENR is also responsible for major public policy initiatives, including the climate change strategic framework and heavy communications responsibility with caribou and fire management.

How can this work be accomplished with a reduced capacity when it is already behind schedule?

While the Finance and ENR Minister boasted about action on transboundary water management, he's making cuts of about 5 per cent, or \$155,000, in the water management function within water resources at ENR. I will obviously have questions on this and how this really squares up with our commitments to protect water.

I'll move on to Industry, Tourism and Investment, where cuts are being made to our efforts at economic diversification. While all of Cabinet was off in Vancouver, the budget presses were at work to cut 17 per cent, or \$2 million, compared to grants and contributions for economic diversification and business support last year. I recognize that some of this is sunsets, but there are also some reductions in there. For example, the budget of the Business Development and Investment Corporation is being cut by 15 per cent, or \$500,000. So much for Cabinet's commitment to economic diversification.

Now, on to the Department of Lands, which will also take some heavy cuts of almost 7 per cent, or almost \$2 million. Travel for field operations or inspections is being slashed by a whopping 33 per cent, or \$415,000. What is going on? Needless to say, I'll have lots of questions. What happened to our commitment to do things better than the feds under devolution? Is this money that was given to us by the federal government to manage our resources under devolution now being used to help build a surplus for ill-defined infrastructure mega projects?

Overall, there is about a 14 per cent reduction in the NWT Housing Corporation total expenditures between the revised 2016-17 estimates and the 2017-18 mains. Not good, when our housing stock continued to decline without a real plan to get housing out of core need.

The mains show a decrease in transitional supportive housing of \$225,000, or a 38 per cent reduction, and the Transitional Rent Supplement program is also being cut by a third, or \$300,000. The Shelter Enhancement Fund is also cut by about 39 per cent from last year. All this in the face of a motion for this Assembly calling for core need in our housing stock to be reduced by 2 per cent per year to bring the NWT housing stock in line with national core need levels. We can all hardly wait for the housing survey to be finished and put into action, but the NWT Housing Corporation is not waiting, as it is making some substantial cuts in transitional housing now.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker; on to the ugly parts of the budget. Seventy-nine positions will be lost through discontinuation of programs and services and

elimination of positions. This will have a profoundly negative impact, particularly in small communities where every job is important, and in Yellowknife where another major employer is moving its offices to Calgary.

I didn't even bother this year asking for an economic impact analysis of the cuts because the one done last year was so poor and biased, it was useless.

Cabinet has said that many of these positions to be eliminated are currently vacant. That may be true, but in many cases there may be term or casual people filling those positions who will lose their jobs. Even if the positions are vacant, these programs and services are being lost, and the contribution that they can and should have been making to our quality of life and our economy.

I'd also add that continuing to cut positions while we are in negotiations is a clear sign that Cabinet would rather cut people than find new sources of revenues. That's not the kind of message I think we should be sending to our valued public service.

Offloading cuts onto others, including the implementation of junior kindergarten: there is still no clarity on the timing of junior kindergarten funding and whether it will cover all the costs, which is inclusive of schooling and busing, due to the evasive answers in this House from the Education Minister. Now, there is going to be some kind of magical meeting with the school board chairs to make them find the shortfalls from within. This is totally unacceptable.

Another example of offloading costs is the proposed changes at the Yellowknife Airport. Let no one be fooled that this is driven by improving facilities and economic opportunities. If that was truly the case, it would have been done a long time ago. It was simply low-hanging fruit, a way to reduce expenditures by \$4 million without any real say by users in how the airport will be run or improved. I will have a lot more to say about this, Mr. Speaker, when the report on Bill 7 comes forward to this House.

Departmental amalgamations that were driven by the goal of cost-cutting alone: again, let no one be fooled that the motivation is to improve public services and find efficiencies. If this was the case, where are the zero-based budgeting and functional analyses to support these mergers? How were form and function analyzed to improve public services and programs? Clearly, reduction targets are what guided this effort.

I'm particularly concerned about the amalgamation of Aboriginal and Intergovernmental Relations into the Executive, where there will be a continued



decline in capacity to carry out negotiations on land rights with Indigenous governments. By the way, let's stop using colonial terms like "land claims" and use "land rights" instead, Mr. Speaker. The 2017-18 business plan for the Department of Aboriginal and Intergovernmental Relations also shows a loss of four positions. In no way do these cuts or this amalgamation support our mandate and the Premier's commitment to speed up negotiations.

Other education-related reductions include \$3.8 million to Aurora College, or more than 10 per cent of the total contribution. What a bad idea in the middle of a strategic planning exercise, the outcome of which seems to inevitably point toward further cuts. Yesterday, we found out that the Minister knew what programs the college was going to cut as far back as November. These cuts include the Teacher Education Program. The Minister's own labour force survey shows that the most in-demand job over the next 15 years will be -- you guessed it -- teachers.

The contribution to the education authorities is also going to be reduced by \$1.86 million on a total of over \$151 million, but it comes at a time when they're being told to take in junior kindergarten students, without access to inclusive schooling funding and no plan for busing of junior kindergarten students. Ordering school authorities to do more with less is not something I can support.

The proposed elimination of the Mackenzie Delta winter ferry service of \$1.8 million may save some money for infrastructure projects, but it will certainly put Inuvik at risk, as we heard from the mayor last week on the radio. With a storage capacity of a couple of weeks for propane and a possible stoppage in vehicular traffic of four to six weeks during freeze-up and break-up, how can this cut be justified?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I've offered some thoughts on how to improve the budget process, highlighted the need for better public engagement, recommended a focus on diversifying our economy in line with new federal funding and ensuring a more balanced approach that includes more revenues.

As I said last year, what has been driving Cabinet is the belief that big projects in non-renewable resources are the preferred and only future for the Northwest Territories. That way of thinking was blown out of the water in the fall of 2015 with the election of a new government in Ottawa. Their priorities include infrastructure for a cleaner economy, more inclusive schooling, a low-carbon economy, and transformative change. We need to get our housing out of core need while creating local jobs; providing stronger support for tourism, agriculture, and the fishing industry; reduce

greenhouse gas emissions; lower the cost of living; and develop a real post-secondary education system with a university for the Northwest Territories. These sectors will create even more jobs than the non-renewable resource development. This is the kind of leadership I had hoped for in the budget.

Above all, this budgetary process and the resulting plan can in no way be described by the word "consensus." Regular MLAs have attempted to get more strategic investments that benefit the greatest number of our residents, help diversify our economy, and create lasting benefits or avoid future costs. I'm not going to trot out those investments. I've referred to a few of them, and they're going to be available, apparently, later today.

It is most unfortunate that we have come to this point, where there are fundamental disagreements. There are some exciting initiatives in this budget, and I thank my Cabinet colleagues and their staff and my committee colleagues for much hard work in getting us to this point. However, on balance, I cannot support the 2017-18 budget given the fiscal austerity and debt management approach of Cabinet. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Replies to budget address. Member for Yellowknife North.

#### MR. VANTHUYNE'S REPLY

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday the people of the Northwest Territories and the Members of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly listened to the Finance Minister give his second budget address. It is astonishing how quickly our term in office is flying by. The speed that time is passing underscores for me the urgency of making meaningful changes now.

Today, in this reply to the budget address, I want to reflect on Cabinet's approach to the work at hand and the expectations held by Members on this side of the House. Most importantly, I want to reflect on the degree to which we are meeting the needs and expectations of the people who elected us to represent them.

As I am sure most people are aware, when the Members of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly took office, we agreed to work together on a mandate to guide this government's actions over the coming four years. The ability to do this is one of the advantages of our consensus system of government. As a caucus of 19 Members, we collectively identified the priorities of this Assembly. We agreed that these priorities would serve as the ultimate business plan, orienting our decisions and actions over the coming four years. From amongst ourselves, we selected a Premier to lead the government and Members to sit

on Cabinet. We placed our trust in these individuals to meet the priorities we set, and we did it with the belief that, when moving forward, they would be guided by the roadmap we collectively established.

As a caucus, we also reviewed and in some cases modified the GNWT's draft mandate. The finalized mandate identifies the commitments made by the government to meet the priorities set out by the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Why is it important to have a mandate to guide us? For one thing, it provides Members of this Assembly and the people we serve with a shared understanding of the progress we hope to achieve; in other words, transparency. It also sets out clear commitments that we can judge progress against, but, most importantly, it is a way for NWT residents to decide for themselves if their government is living up to the promises it has made. This is vital to government accountability, but, if the mandate is not really driving government decision-making, then really it is nothing more than window dressing.

As we enter this second year of our term and as I listened to the Budget Address, it has become increasingly clear to me that our mandate is not what is driving the decision-making of this government. Instead, it is Cabinet's fiscal strategy, one which was developed behind closed doors, that is dictating how the government moves forward. As an MLA and as someone who believed we were working collectively toward shared goals, I find this very troubling.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has told us the government has a three-pronged fiscal strategy. Let me share those with you. One, increasing fiscal capacity by lowering our operating expenditures or increasing our revenues. Two, disciplined spending to ensure expenditure growth is aligned with revenue growth. Three, reducing our reliance on our line of credit as a way to finance day-to-day operations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe there is a Member in this House or a member of the public who would take issue with this approach. It appears at first glance to be the very definition of sound fiscal management, but let's examine each part of the strategy to see what the practical implications are.

First, what does it mean to have increased fiscal capacity by lowering our operating expenditures or increasing our revenues? If memory serves me, Mr. Speaker, the GNWT's revenues are expected to decline by almost 2 per cent or more in the next five years, owing mostly to decreased corporate income taxes and resource royalties and downward adjustments to transfer funds coming from Canada.

We have heard repeatedly from this government that our ability to raise additional revenues is limited. In fact, in March 2016, the Finance Minister tabled a revenue options paper which concluded, and I quote: "The few revenue options that could generate significant revenues would discourage business investment and economic growth and would leave individuals and families with less disposable income at a time when the costs of living are rising."

Lacking any real option for raising revenues practically speaking, that leaves us with only one option: reduce spending, lowering our operating expenditures as a means to increase our fiscal capacity. In one word, Mr. Speaker, cuts. This, as the Finance Minister pointed out in the October 2016 fiscal update, "requires us to make difficult decisions on what programs and services are no longer needed or that can be funded at a reduced level."

I agree 100 per cent that difficult decisions are required, but what I do not agree with is how those decisions are being made. I do not believe that these decisions are only Cabinet's domain. I believe that each and every MLA, representing the people who elected us, should have a real, meaningful hand in those decisions.

This, Mr. Speaker, appears to be the crux of the concern that Regular Members have over this budget. It highlights a fundamental difference of opinion about who is ultimately responsible for making the difficult decisions in a consensus government and that it ought not come from the fiscal strategy derived by a few, but rather, it must be driven by the voice of the people, which is in the mandate we 19 MLAs assembled.

In last year's Budget Address, the Finance Minister informed the public of the GNWT's target to cut spending by \$150 million. Mr. Speaker, Members on this side of the House were notified that departments were tasked with identifying potential cuts, starting from \$30 million, then \$50 million, up to \$75 million, and even \$100 million. Almost before we knew it, and with no consultation, that \$150 million figure became the chosen target, the only target, and the one that was enshrined in the budget.

It is a target I can assure you was not and has never been endorsed by Regular Members. When we asked why this target, we were told that these cuts were part of the GNWT's fiscal strategy and that they were necessary to ensure the government is in a cash surplus position by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. We were also told they were necessary to ensure the GNWT has a cushion of at least \$160 million between the money it has borrowed and the limit of its borrowing authority, a

limit of \$1.3 billion set by the federal government. Again, Regular MLAs endorsed neither of these objectives.

We have objected strongly to this target and these objectives for a number of reasons. The key one is that they are simply too severe. I, for one, do not believe it is either responsible or prudent to attempt to wipe out a year-end cash deficit accumulated over a number of years and estimated at over \$300 million in the life of this Assembly. We have asked time and time again to find compromise. Maybe one of those other fiscal reduction targets would have been a suitable compromise. Unfortunately, we never got to see what those options looked like.

While I believe that the government should work as efficiently as possible, I do not believe that undertaking a major government reorganization yet again is the way to achieve it, especially given that it will cut jobs and will most certainly result in the loss of families. These families, many living in my constituency, will be forced to look outside the NWT for work, taking with them approximately \$30,000 per person in revenue that comes to the GNWT through federal transfer funding.

Mr. Speaker, what happened to the population growth strategy of the last Legislative Assembly? What happened to attracting 2,000 people to the North over five years? Have we deflated those efforts already? Although the government may improve their bottom line with this reorganization approach, the NWT's economic bottom line will indeed suffer, and this is not the time to impart more suffering.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: This government reorganization was not included in the mandate. It was quietly introduced in the business plans in neutral, nonthreatening language, describing it as a zero-based review. The benign name given this initiative was, in my opinion, not unintentional. A deficit reduction measure by any other name is still a deficit reduction measure, and this one will still result in job losses.

As a matter of fact, the GNWT has a long and storied history of responding to fiscal challenges with restructuring initiatives dating back 25 years. In 1991, it was Strength at Two Levels, also called the Beatty Report, advocating the decentralization of power to local governments, an effort which is still a work in progress. That report was followed very closely by the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly's fiscal restraint measures, which ushered in the deepest cuts to the public service to occur in the quarter century since the government moved from Ottawa in 1967. That restraint initiative was followed by more, including the 2001 Cuthbert Report recommending health and social services board reform and the 2003 Deloitte Touche review of the GNWT's

departmental and headquarters organizational structure.

Now, we have the zero-based review, the details of which have not, unlike the others, been made public. This means that Regular Members and the public still aren't privy to the government's overall vision for a reduced public service. Whatever that vision is, it appears to have been designed without any analysis of the economic impacts associated with cutting jobs.

I will be frank, Mr. Speaker. I am discouraged by this government taking the easy route. Make no mistake about it; that is exactly what restructuring is, an instant gratification approach to budget reduction. Its appeal lies in the fact that Cabinet of the day can proclaim success by pointing to all the belt tightening it has done during the four years in office.

Mr. Speaker, making really tough choices would involve having the vision to address the root social problems driving up the delivery of costs of government programs and services such as poverty, addictions, low levels of education, high levels of incarceration, and poor health.

Mr. Speaker, these are the factors that contribute the most to increased expenses of our government, not the salaries and wages paid out to hard-working public servants.

Speaking of economic impacts, I would be remiss if I didn't raise my objection to the Department of Transportation's plans to create a so-called self-sustaining Yellowknife Airport by imposing an airport improvement fee of up to nearly \$30 per ticket for NWT residents travelling south. This initiative is another example of something not included in the mandate, yet now deemed necessary by the GNWT to ensure that taxpayers are no longer subsidizing the airport by \$4 million per year. Really? Taxpayers subsidizing public infrastructure? If taxes are not intended to finance public infrastructure, what exactly does government think they are for? I will note that, of the \$4 million currently subsidizing the airport's operations, only \$1 million of it is paid by Northern taxpayers, because we all know that 75 cents of every GNWT dollar comes from Canada in transfer funding.

Now we will be going from \$1 million in northern taxes to \$10 million in mostly northern user fees. That is driving up the cost of living for Northerners, no matter how you look at it. I will have more to come on this fee at a later date.

This brings me to the final part of this government's fiscal strategy, reducing our reliance on our line of credit as a way to finance day-to-day operations. We have heard the Finance Minister repeatedly

admonish Members that the government relying on its line of credit to finance operations is like an individual maxing out their credit cards, and that it is something you wouldn't want to do with your own personal finances. I am getting mighty tired of hearing this old analogy.

I do agree with the Finance Minister to a point. No one would want to run their personal finances in a way that would see them undergoing unnecessary hardships to save money in the first two years of their financial plan so that they could spend wantonly in the final two. Yet, this is exactly the fiscal strategy that the Finance Minister is asking Members to buy into, one that would see job cuts and increased expenses for our residents, while we, as the Finance Minister would say, get on firmer financial footing so that the government can make investments in the mandate later.

From where I sit, this is nothing more than a thinly veiled strategy that will allow the government to cut now and spend more money in the run-up to the next election. I have to hand it to the Finance Minister for his enthusiasm to eliminate the GNWT's deficit in the life of this Assembly. If he is going to practise what he preaches and run his government like he runs his own finances, then he ought to know that you can't spend all of your income on the mortgage at the expense of feeding, clothing, and educating your kids.

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, allow me to read you a quote: "Reducing expenditures to this degree when we are facing growing needs from our ever-increasing population and our very real social problems has meant that we have to make some tough decisions. However, these decisions have been necessary to bring our expenditures in line with revenues and ensure the sustainability for the system in coming years."

This message sounds not unlike the message we heard from our Finance Minister last week. However, it comes from the Budget Address delivered in this House in 1997, 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, if we are truly going to put this government on a sustainable course, we do not need approaches that are decades old and have been announced in this House again and again. What the people of my constituency need are investments in people and investments in the mandate we collectively developed and promised to fulfil. What my constituents and the people of the North need and expect is balance and moderation in government saving and in government spending.

This is what sustainability means to me. It means consulting with Members in a way that implies a willingness to listen, to accommodate the input that is heard, and to reflect it in the decisions made. It

means making strategic investments in the infrastructure projects identified in the mandate, which will power the engine of the NWT's economy. It means balancing these strategic investments with investments in people, ones that will significantly lower cost drivers associated with low levels of education, poor health, joblessness, and addictions, and will assist our residents to live happy, healthy, and productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has made important investments in critical infrastructure projects in recent years, including the Deh Cho Bridge, the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, the Canyon Creek Road project, the Stanton renewal project, to name just a few. Over the same time frame, many systemic social issues have gotten far worse, not better. Big-ticket infrastructure projects are essential, and I support the investments that are made in them, but not to the extent and pace that it leaves our people behind.

Mr. Speaker, as the budget is currently presented, I find myself unable to support it. We cannot afford to wait for some magic day in the future when the deficit is wiped out before making investments in our mandate that better the lives of the people we serve. I intend to continue to fight for balanced strategic investments in our mandate, both in this budget and in those yet to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Replies to budget address. Member for Nunakput.

#### MR. NAKIMAYAK'S REPLY

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the future of the Beaufort Delta is uncertain. My constituents know this, I know this, and the government knows this. Despite this knowledge, my constituents still have hope and are willing to work together for the future, but they need to know they have willing partners. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, from what my constituents hear coming out of Yellowknife these days, they aren't optimistic about what kind of partnership, if any, they can expect, but this is something that we can work on together, Mr. Speaker.

Many of my colleagues said they represent small communities. Mr. Speaker, I, too, represent small communities, and they face many challenges. Unfortunately, their concerns are often lost in the noise of the debate which has focused on the negative instead of looking for solutions and a way forward.

I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to my constituents and explain to them why I support this budget. I believe this is a financially responsible

budget that gives the government the right amount of flexibility to make serious investments in the long-term future of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, this budget isn't just about the future or about cuts. It's about \$1.7 billion in spending for the 2018-19 fiscal year, \$1.7 billion for a territory of 42,000 people. It may not be enough, especially for my communities that have the highest cost of living than any others in the Northwest Territories. My colleague from the Sahtu has communities with the second-highest cost of living. It's not a competition we want to be in, Mr. Speaker. We want long-term solutions to lowering the cost of living. We have to pass budgets that are smart and that will allow for long-term investments that will lower the cost of living.

I support the budget because it means my constituents will continue to receive housing, education, healthcare, income support, student financial assistance, medical travel, water, and sewer service, to name a few; and, yes, Mr. Speaker, even junior kindergarten.

There is a meaningful partnership in my constituency between junior kindergarten and the Aboriginal Head Start program. Without the cooperation of those two programs, there wouldn't be early childhood programming available to the children of Nunakput, Mr. Speaker, and that would be a shame. If we cannot agree that supporting our children is our most important task, then I don't know what is. Junior kindergarten will also give the children of Nunakput increased opportunity to get ahead, Mr. Speaker, a chance to begin their life's journey with hope and high expectations for what they can achieve.

I say yes to 911 service, as well, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I have not heard one single Nunakput resident say that the NWT shouldn't have 911. They are supportive of safety for all, no matter what size of the community.

I say yes to the NWT Child Benefit. That means all families who make less than \$80,000 a year will receive increased benefits. That affects over 500 families in the Beaufort Delta, Mr. Speaker.

I say yes to the \$3 million increase being invested into the Small Communities Employment Program. This means there will be \$4.3 million for all residents, including those in my constituency who gain employment skills and opportunities.

I say yes to the much-needed upgrades for Mangilaluk School in Tuktoyaktuk. The project will bring jobs and business opportunities during construction, but more importantly, it will give the children of Tuktoyaktuk the school that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents know hardship. They also know patience and forbearance, but how much more are we going to ask of them and other Northerners? This budget is the spending planned for the next fiscal year, and it looks at what we can do now and what we can do in the future, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in my Member's statement last week, the people of the Beaufort Delta want responsible economic development, oil and gas development that has been an economic driver since the exploration began in the 1960s. Interest in development has already dropped, and in 2015 Imperial Oil BP PLC scrapped their plans for drilling north of Tuktoyaktuk. The communities are struggling. Residents feel like their options for the future are very limited.

When we first met at the start of this Assembly, we talked a lot about the importance of doing government better. We agreed that changing the way the Assembly does business was one of our priorities. Strengthening consensus was one of ways that we said we would do that. Consensus is about hearing what matters to people right across the Northwest Territories and doing what's best for them. It isn't about getting a win for one side or for the other or for one point of view over another point of view. Sometimes, once we've heard and debated all sides of an issue, doing what is best for the Northwest Territories means setting aside our individual preferences and priorities.

Strengthening consensus, not trying to tear it apart, is ultimately something we all need to be responsible for. Whether people realize it or not, this budget was put together in the consensus system. MLAs have been involved from the very beginning in reviewing and providing feedback and comments to Cabinet. Not all their changes we wanted were included, but to vote down this budget means a vote against the very consensus system that allows MLAs such a significant role in developing this in the first place, Mr. Speaker.

I support consensus, not just because it was a system I believed in when I made my decision to run for MLA but because it's a fundamental way that decisions have been made for the North for thousands of years. Our survival has been based on what we could achieve together. We focused on our strengths and helped one another because we knew that our survival meant being part of a strong group. There was no room for egos, but a lot of room for leadership and just getting on with it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying thank you to the people of Nunakput for their continued confidence in me. Their support means everything to me, and I will make sure their voices are heard. I

have said it before, Mr. Speaker, but it bears repeating. Whether it is decisions about development, moratoriums, or budgets, nothing about us is without us. The people of Nunakput deserve to be heard loud and clear. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Replies to budget address. There appear to be no further replies to budget address for today, so we will return to item number 4, reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Reports of Standing and Special Committees

#### COMMITTEE REPORT 6-18(2): REPORT ON BILL 7 - AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVOLVING FUNDS ACT

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a report on Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act.

Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act, provides for the establishment of a revolving fund at the Yellowknife Airport to meet the airport's capital, operations, and maintenance needs. The bill received second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment on June 27, 2016. The committee reviewed the bill in conjunction with the draft business plan for the Yellowknife Airport that is essential to understanding the implications of amendments to the act and how the revolving fund will be used.

The committee received substantial feedback from the public on the proposed changes to the operation of the Yellowknife Airport that Bill 7 enables. A public hearing was conducted in Yellowknife on December 7, 2016, and was well attended. The committee thanks all those who provided written comment and made presentations at the public hearing. The committee has now concluded its review and is pleased to report to the House on Bill 7.

#### Enabling Legislation

Bill 7 amends the Revolving Funds Act to establish a revolving fund of up to \$36 million for the purpose of meeting the capital, operating, and maintenance requirements of the Yellowknife Airport. Public concern and debate is focused on how the legislation enables the airport to generate sufficient revenues to cover the cost of the airport operations and improve upon existing facilities and administration whereby users have a say in the operation of the airport.

The success of the new operating model requires the department to impose a \$20 Airport Improvement Fee on each southbound passenger departing from the Yellowknife Airport and a \$10 fee on every passenger traveling from Yellowknife to destinations within the territory. Existing aeronautical fees would also increase, in some instances by over 200 per cent. The increased aeronautical fees would add approximately nine dollars to each airfare. The combined total of these fees would increase airfares by approximately \$29 on each southbound ticket and \$19 on trips within the territory.

The Department of Transportation currently operates the Yellowknife Airport at an increasingly significant annual cost, and charges some of the lowest aeronautical fees in the country. At this time, resources for capital upgrades and airport operations are allocated through the government's capital and business planning processes, where the airport competes with all other Government of the Northwest Territories' infrastructure and program needs.

#### Public Communication

The committee notes that travelers from remote communities may be charged an additional \$48 for travel as a result of the new revolving fund. Arriving in Yellowknife on a regional carrier, these passengers would pay an extra \$29 to travel south, then an extra \$19 to return to their home community.

The committee suggests that the new fees are not well understood by the public. Members acknowledge the department's current campaign to promote the Yellowknife Airport and stress the importance of clearly communicating the introduction of the new revolving fund to the public.

#### Recommended Action 1

The committee recommends that the Department of Transportation enhance its public messages on changes to fees and other operational aspects of the Yellowknife Airport to ensure that airfares are well understood and that new charges are applied in a transparent manner on ticket receipts.

#### Economic Impacts

The committee heard serious concern that increased airfare would be detrimental to the northern economy, especially the tourism industry. NWT Tourism firmly believes that higher airfare will have a negative effect on tourism operators and other businesses. The organization highlighted that it was not aware of any analysis showing how the

Northwest Territories' tourism industry could absorb the impact of higher airfares.

Air North president, Joseph Sparling, cited Yukon statistics on the positive results of reduced airfares to the Yukon, including growth in the tourism sector, and expressed concern that increased fees at the Yellowknife Airport would result in a decline in visitor spending and a loss to the economy almost equal to the revenues generated by higher fees. Essentially, increased ticket prices would increase the cost of living and decrease residents' quality of life while reducing the number of visitors and visitor spending.

### **Cost of Living**

Introducing a user-pay system at the Yellowknife Airport increases the cost of living, and doing business in the North comes at a time when the economy has slowed, exploration and industrial activity in the Northwest Territories has stagnated, and the population of the Northwest Territories is declining. Reducing the cost of living is key to the mandate of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly. The committee heard that increased ticket prices would significantly impact individuals' cost of living and affordability of Northern residency as well as the cost of Northern business travel.

Considering the timing of the increased fees, the committee heard that a phased-in approach could help both individuals and the business community absorb the increased travel costs more easily and allow them to make resulting adjustments with less impact on customers.

### **Recommended Action 2**

The committee recommends that the department reconsider implementing increased fees over a period of time, and regularly reviewing fees to determine whether they may be reduced in the future.

### **Federal Responsibility**

The committee heard that transportation to and from the Northwest Territories should be as inexpensive as possible and that airport infrastructure is a federal responsibility. Residents want the Government of the Northwest Territories to urge Canada to act on the recommendations in the 2014 federal Transport Act review for greater investment in northern airports. The committee points out that the federal government provided a substantial contribution to the expansion of the air terminal at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund. The committee further notes that improvements to airports in the Northwest

Territories are not included in the Federal Engagement Strategy, which serves to guide efforts to secure further infrastructure investments.

### **Recommended Action 3**

The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories advance airport improvement projects through federal infrastructure funding programs, review its Federal Engagement Strategy to include federal investment in air transportation as a priority, and press the federal government to invest in upgrades to northern airports' infrastructure and safety as recommended in the 2014 Canada Transport Act review.

### **Public Accountability and Operating Model**

The operating model proposed for the airport created concerns related to public accountability. The committee is aware that the department reviewed a range of operating models, from status quo to a fully privatized airport. The revolving fund model was chosen essentially because it allows the airport to become financially viable while remaining within government control. It moves the airport away from operating at a net loss most quickly without privatization.

The committee heard that some stakeholders would prefer the creation of an airport authority under the purview of an arm's-length board of directors instead of the proposed special operating entity and revolving fund. The committee has drawn two recommendations from the issues of public accountability.

### **Recommended Action 4**

The committee recommends that the operating model implemented through amendments to the Revolving Funds Act be reviewed regularly with a view to increasing independence and establishing a publicly accountable airport authority.

### **Recommended Action 5**

The committee recommends that the department report annually on the performance of the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund.

The department plans to establish an economic advisory committee, a group of up to seven business community representatives appointed by the deputy minister of Transportation to advise on the commercial operation of the Yellowknife Airport. Standing committee members reviewed the terms of reference for the economic advisory committee and remain concerned about its accountability and oversight. Members believe it should be more representative of the people the Yellowknife Airport

serves, established under legislation, accountable to the Minister of Transportation, and that participation of the economic advisory committee should not represent undue hardship. Members pointed to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Waste Reduction and Recovery Committee as an example of an advisory body with broad public representation which is established in legislation.

### **Recommended Action 6**

The committee recommends that the department establish the economic advisory committee in legislation, as soon as possible, in conjunction with the revolving fund, under the authority of the Minister of Transportation; and that members appointed to the committee represent a wider range of stakeholders such as the City of Yellowknife and Aboriginal governments and business partners; and further, that the committee report annually to the public.

There is an apparent consensus that improvements are needed at the Yellowknife Airport and other airports across the Northwest Territories. Funding these improvements is a challenging issue. The committee heard that stakeholders want complete assurance that revenue generated at the Yellowknife Airport would be dedicated to the operation, maintenance, and capital costs of the airport and not used to support other government infrastructure. Yellowknife resident Wendy Bisaro also suggested that an airport improvement fee also be considered at other airports.

The committee heard that some travelers were willing to pay an additional fee in Yellowknife if they saw such improvements as greater efficiency for check-in, security, aircraft de-icing, and baggage handling procedures among other upgrades identified in the draft airport business plan. Airport employee Brad Enge offered the committee many practical examples of much-needed upgrades to existing airport facilities. The City of Yellowknife, Javaroma, and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce all highlighted business and growth opportunities as the basis of their support for the new operating model. While NWT Tourism disagreed with any additional costs to travelers, it supported proposed air terminal enhancements as a way to improve visitors' experience and create a sense of place.

### **Recommended Action 7**

The committee recommends that the department prepare an annual business plan for the airport for the economic advisory committee's review and comment, and make this information and the committee's input publicly accessible.

### **Additional Comments**

The review of Bill 7 also raises some broader concerns beyond the enabling legislation. While the legislation may be quite simple, its implications may be complex and wide-reaching. In introducing any future amendments to the Revolving Funds Act, the committee expects departments to accompany the legislative proposal with a full business case for revenues collected. In the case of Bill 7, legislation was introduced prior to the completion of the proposed business plan for the operation of the Yellowknife Airport. As a result, the committee was limited in its ability to consider the implications of the bill and the legislative review process was delayed.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, the committee highlights both the risks and opportunities that Bill 7 enables. The committee heard general support for further investment in the Yellowknife Airport and its improvement and enhancement. At the same time, Members are fully aware of the risk that the revolving fund may not perform as well as intended and that impacts on tourism, business, and leisure travel have yet to be quantified. Increased fees also raise the cost of government travel. Stakeholders and the public also expect a greater role in operations and accountability.

The committee has made recommendations in this report in an effort to mitigate risks and represent stakeholders' concerns related to operating the airport under a revolving fund. The Yellowknife Airport is a public airport and ultimately belongs to all residents. Associated user fees are an investment in this critical northern infrastructure hub. They should be regarded as such by those both paying and collecting fees and managed with utmost accountability to all Northerners.

### **Recommendation 1**

With that, Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that the government provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 6-18(2) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,  
CARRIED

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** With that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Committee Report 6-18(2) be received and moved into Committee of the Whole.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Motion is in order. To the motion.



**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The motion is carried.

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Committee Report 6-18(2) is received and moved to the Committee of the Whole. Masi. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Frame Lake.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if she is there anymore, but my wife was in the gallery earlier. She usually just has to hear about these things afterwards, so for her to witness me talking a lot today, that says a lot about that poor woman and her dedication to me.

---Laughter

I do appreciate her presence even if she's not here anymore. I can't quite see. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Thebacha.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Like the Member opposite, my spouse was also here, but she seems to have moved on with my grandson. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. They both saw you in action. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, acknowledgements. Members, before we move onto oral questions, I'd like to request a short recess. Masi.

---SHORT RECESS

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

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 523-18(2): JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to a couple of questions that I asked yesterday that I didn't feel I had satisfactory answers for, and they are questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, when the department briefed the standing committee at the beginning of December, the department said that the school boards would have to invest some of their own money in the implementation of junior kindergarten and that that would be no problem for them

because schools had been consistently funded above required legislation.

So when I went to the town hall meetings at the beginning of January, the school boards presented their budgets, or not their budgets but their sort of high-level plan for the year, and they reflected that they were going to have to contribute money to JK in order to have it implemented. So, in the case of the Yellowknife Education District Number 1 --

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Yellowknife Centre, what is your question?

**MS. GREEN:** Sorry. That relates to the question. As simply as possible, could the Minister either answer yes or no, will these internal reductions to implement JK still be necessary? Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, any decisions that the school boards do in their budgetary process is up to the school boards. You did hear clearly here earlier on in the Budget Address that we are going to be fully funding junior kindergarten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you for your patience. What I understand, then, is that there will be no need for the schools to cut their internal staffing in order to staff JK. Am I correct in understanding that?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I mentioned, the education boards and education councils make their own decisions. We provide funding, and those are decisions that are on the board.

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, These staffing reductions are made necessary because the school boards are expected to fund 13 or 14, I guess, at this point, 14 grades with 13 grades of funding, so the kinds of internal reallocations that were made necessary by having to create another year of school. Will those in fact be paid for fully by the department, meaning that the school boards don't have to do any reallocations to make JK happen?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Any reallocations that the boards make are decisions of their own. We said in this House that we are going to fully fund junior kindergarten.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question has to do with the timing of making the funding available, or at least the announcement that the money is available and exactly what amount. The school boards need it by the end of March because they are told to create a

budget by ECE and it's due to ECE by the end of March. Will they have a firm idea, to the dollar, of how much money they're getting from the government for September by the end of March, yes or no? Thank you.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We are having those discussions with the superintendents right now on how things are going to be rolling out in the fall. We have still got to see what enrolments there are in the school boards. Those final decisions have not been made. I know they are going out doing the enrolments, trying to get students coming to their schools and to their boards. We do not know what those numbers are yet. When we do, we will be working on having that smooth transition for junior kindergarten in the fall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 524-18(2):  
SAFE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO HAY RIVER  
HEALTH CENTRE

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about the lack of signal lights, sidewalks, and adequate lighting at what has become the unofficial highway crosswalk to the Hay River Regional Health Centre. I keep an eye on all the RFPs that the government puts out, and last year I saw one stating that a crosswalk signalling system was supposed to be installed at that location by November 2016. We've seen nothing as of yet. For my first question, I would like to give the Minister a chance to explain why. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Public Works and Services.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the fall of 2016, on this particular crosswalk, we had an RFP out and we had a low bid that came in well over budget of what was anticipated as the cost of installing this stuff. We are reviewing that right now, how we are going to move it forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SIMPSON:** The Minister said they are reviewing it, so I am not sure if he will be able to answer this, but when can we expect some lighting to be installed?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Moving forward, we anticipate to have this resolved, hopefully with either another tender or else negotiating how we are going to fit this in within our budget restraints of what we have allocated for this project. When we do move forward, we are going to have to wait for the ground to thaw out to be able to install this set of lights at the crossing.

**MR. SIMPSON:** That is a shame because the lights are most needed when it is dark out, in the winter. It sounds like we are going to have to wait until the spring. In the interim, I know the Minister is the Minister of Public Works. He is the Minister of Transportation. With all the resources of these two departments at his disposal, can the people in Hay River South get some sort of temporary lighting system so that the Super Bs can see our grandparents crossing the highway on the way to the health centre? Can we get some sort of temporary measure in the meantime?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As the Member is well aware, there is a ton of signage at this crosswalk. As is stated, there is lighting along the side of the highway. I am not trying to water down this request, but I will have to look into what we can do to put some kind of flashing light there in the meantime.

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

**MR. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, Hay River was waiting a long time to get a Minister so we could get the kind of perks that Fort Smith and Inuvik have been getting.

---Laughter

So we are all waiting for that Minister to step up and make that happen. Related, like I mentioned, to get to the health centre you have to walk down a road with no sidewalks, not even any shoulders. When can we expect some other improvements in terms of sidewalks and controlled rail crossings at the health centre? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As the Minister of Public Works and of Transportation, I have to look out for the good of all Northerners, not just Hay River. So much for the perks. The town of Hay River is working closely with CN Rail to obtain a safe crossing at the railway crossing, as well. Plus, the Town of Hay River has also had in their minutes that they are looking after their sidewalk along that side of the highway to get to this particular crosswalk. We will continue to work with all stakeholders, them, the health authority, the RCMP -- the NTCL, no -- the community, on how we're going to proceed with this and get it going. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 525-18(2):  
SAHTU REGIONAL WELLNESS COUNCIL

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Health and

Social Services following up on my Member's statement. Can the Minister of Health give us an update on the new system that took place effective August 1<sup>st</sup> on the Territorial and Regional Wellness Councils which came in effect last summer? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member has indicated, the Territorial Health Authority has gone live. All the Regional Wellness Councils are in place. We've conducted training throughout the Northwest Territories with different members of the Regional Wellness Councils, including the chairs who formed the Territorial Authority. There have been meetings at the Territorial Authority level with the board, meetings with the Regional Wellness Councils at the local level, as well as training, like I said, across the Northwest Territories.

It's up and running. We're getting good feedback from the Regional Wellness Council members and we're looking to continue to enhance services across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MCNEELY:** I welcome that response from the Minister. Since they're established, Mr. Speaker, what are the changes that were given to date since the operation took effect?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Maybe I can get the Member to ask the question again. The changes that have taken place across the Northwest Territories with respect to the provision of health and social services in a single authority are pretty massive. There's job reorganization, design structure, there have been a lot of staffing actions to move people into the single authority. We've done our best to make sure that, you know, we haven't lost any of our front line provisions, but we are seeking, and continue to seek, input from our Regional Wellness Councils on local design.

There's a significant amount that's happened, and I don't think an hour is enough time to outline all the things that are happening at the authority, so is there something specific the Member is looking for?

**MR. MCNEELY:** With respect to local design, as mentioned, will the Minister commit to working with the Sahtu, the stakeholders, and the Regional Wellness Council, the administration, and leadership in general to hold a strategic conference on updating the strategic plan that was done on 2014 and expired in 2016?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** The Territorial Board, the Health Board, which consists of chairs from all the Regional Wellness Councils, has actually been

working on the development of a strategic plan for the Health and Social Services system. From that strategic plan all the Regional Wellness Councils would be expected to then in turn develop some plans at a local or regional level for the delivery of services and the required tailoring and adjustments made at a regional level.

That work is part of the work that they're doing. It's part of the mandate of the authority. I think the Member is asking for a larger, broader meeting to take place with other stakeholders. It's certainly something that interests me, but I would certainly need to get more detail on what the Member is thinking of, and I would suggest that maybe the Member and I should sit down with maybe some stakeholders from the Sahtu to figure out exactly what we're talking about here so we can determine if this is something that we can actually move forward with.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

**MR. MCNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome that scheduled consultation dialogue back and forth so we can have a clear understanding what the move-forward procedures are and the targets. My final question to the Minister is: can the Minister's office provide us with the schedule so we can have that prior to scheduling a meeting with his office, and that's between my office and his, to discuss next-step procedures? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have my staff talk to the Member's staff in order to coordinate a date where we can have this conversation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 526-18(2):  
PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF AURORA  
COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I talked about the social work program being cut from Aurora College. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education what is the plan moving forward with the social work program at Aurora College, if there is any plan? Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it was mentioned, the social work program itself will continue to run for two more academic years. We aren't taking any new students in, but all the

students who are currently in the program will continue to get the support that they need to work on completing that diploma program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** My concern today obviously was with the students in the social work access program. So I wonder if the Minister could talk to Aurora College about what would be the implications, I suppose, of extending the program for one year so that people who have entered in at the access level at this time also have an opportunity to complete their social work diploma?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** The access program itself helps prepare students to get into a social work program or into other programs that Aurora College provides, or even other institutions. The students who are currently affected in the current access program who did show an interest into social work, the Aurora College staff have met with them and have come up with other plans, other career paths that they might want to take, and my understanding is that all five students have worked with the college to develop a new career path that they're looking at.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** I'm very glad to hear that. That was my next question, if somebody was going to assist these individuals moving into another program of their choice. So can the Minister advise me of what programs are these students targeted for?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** That's the Personal Support Worker Program. I believe one is going into the Office Administration Program and also applying at a southern institution. I'm not sure what the program is, but we do have another student who is applying to a southern institution.

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

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not expecting the Minister maybe to have these answers at his fingertips, but I was wondering if the Minister could advise me how many of the students had graduated from the social work program in recent years? I'm looking for what's happened and how people had progressed into health and social services, and I'm just trying to get a feel for whether or not there's a level of success with the program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** From my side of things, we have graduated 12 social workers in the diploma program over the last three years, so on average it's about four students a year, and I think we can get that information in terms of how many have gone into employment within the Department of Health and Social Services and provide that with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 527-18(2):  
AURORA COLLEGE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**MR. THOMPSON:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Friday we heard from the Minister that the social work program has had low admission and low graduation rates and this is why they are phasing out the program. Mr. Speaker, what doesn't make any sense is why the college is phasing out programs before their strategic plan is to be completed this June. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please advise the House why they're cutting these programs before the strategic plan is complete? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reductions were part of the GNWT's 2016-17 business planning process and were included in the 2017-2018 Main Estimates. As I mentioned earlier this week, ensuring that programs we offer and programs that we provide funding for are effective and are efficient, that is part of good management. We looked at some of these programs that were brought before us in terms of the 10-year strategic plan that Aurora College is currently undertaking. It is going to look at some of the needs of the NWT labour market that were identified in the needs assessment that we tabled in the House. As I mentioned, when we look at those programs, you have to make sure that we are spending our dollars as efficiently as possible so that we provide Northerners with the right programs that they need to succeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I would like to thank the Minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I spoke about the message the college is giving the students. It was about aligning the GNWT expenditures to projected revenues, how GNWT departments have been tasked with identifying expenditure reductions. This sounds like a reduction exercise for the college. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm this was the message that the department had given to them as they started their budget exercise?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Aurora College have worked together in identifying potential expenditure reductions over a three-year period to help ensure the long-term sustainability of Aurora College so that we can continue to provide good programming moving forward. The reduction decisions were made to ensure that Aurora College is operating in a manner that was cost-effective and efficient, as I mentioned before.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I would like to thank the Minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Minister spoke about how the college has autonomy to make their own decisions and where they are looking at moving forward with the programs that they provide. As well, the Minister spoke about the fact that the board of governors received a mandate letter, and it was reflective of our own strategic plan moving forward. With this information, can the Minister please explain how the college has autonomy when they are given a mandate letter from the department?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Aurora College currently receives \$36 million in base and contribution funding from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, as well as an in-kind contribution from other GNWT departments. College senior management, with direction from the senior board of governors, is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the college, including decisions around when and where programs should be offered. As the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I did provide strategic direction to the college through a mandate letter, and we continue to work closely with the college to ensure that they are providing efficient, effective programming.

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

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, in speaking with the students, they are not feeling cared about by the college. In fact, they feel like they are not important, nor are the residents of the NWT. To make matters worse, the college and the department are agreeing to a \$300 term increase, which works out to be \$600 per year. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister advise if this is the way for the college to recover some of the shortfall the government is proposing on them in this year's budget process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Currently, the department funds students through the Student Financial Assistance on their tuition up to \$2,400 per semester. Our increases are still way below that. Any student at Aurora College who might have concerns, they are still going to get the full tuition to move forward in their programming. That \$2,400 per semester will also cover the most expensive programs within Aurora College. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 528-18(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ENERGY  
STRATEGY

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Earlier today, I talked about this report from Alternatives North that provides a roadmap to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050. I am just wondering, as the department is going out doing its consultations on this energy plan, will that sort of perspective, of 100 per cent renewable energy, will that be reflected in what the consultations come up with? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report is being used along with input from other stakeholders across the Northwest Territories. We will take that report and use it for input for our energy strategy and development for what we need to bring forward for the Northwest Territories to get off of diesel in the long term. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister. It sounds like that will be one of the scenarios that will be looked at in this NWT energy plan, to get us completely off non-renewable energy. That is great to hear that. I am just wondering, can the Minister give us an update when we can expect to have this energy plan presented to this side of the House? I understand there are still some consultations going on. The latest one is March 8<sup>th</sup> in Hay River, but when would this side of the House and the public start to see some results?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** The consultation that is going on presently, we have two communities to finish up. We have Hay River and Fort Simpson, I believe, and then we are also probably going to try to meet with Behchoko and the Tlicho government. Once this stuff is all pulled together, we will put a report together and probably release it later on this year.

**MR. O'REILLY:** There are, I think, about 10 months between now and the end of the year. I was hoping you could be a little bit more specific here. In this plan, will there be a schedule for implementation? Is there going to be a budget, some resources identified to help carry it out and some public reporting? Is that the sort of thing that we can expect to see inside the plan?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** The short answer is yes. Those are the sorts of things that we will be looking at doing when we pull out this energy strategy and climate change strategic framework.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Great to hear that, and I really look forward to the next budget having some investment into renewable energy beyond what we have already. Can the Minister tell me, is part of that energy plan going to be a carbon tax or carbon pricing system for the Northwest Territories? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** We are still working on those sorts of things. There are all kinds of input from these themes going around to the communities from how we are going to support more biomass for communities, portability of energy moving forward, how do we implement some of these things going forward. Also, we have to look at what kind of federal investment we are going to get moving forward, and we are looking forward to the budget coming forward with the liberal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

QUESTION 529-18(2):  
ON-THE- LAND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS  
FOR YOUTH

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Back to my statement on on-the-land programming for youth, Mr. Speaker, my first question is: what youth on-the-land programs are available to students in the Beaufort Delta? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of getting our youth out on the land. As such, we have the Take a Kid Trapping program that we offer in all the regions across the Northwest Territories. As well, through the NWT youth core there is money that is earmarked for a lot of -- it is an application process, but it is distributed evenly across the Northwest Territories. The communities and the schools take advantage of the money that this government has to offer in offering these programs to their youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** I appreciate the response. Mr. Speaker, my second question is: what is the Government of the Northwest Territories doing to ensure ENR's on-the-land youth programming is a permanent part of NWT students' education?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** This year, ENR, we are actually going through the numerous applications

that we have right now from several schools across the Northwest Territories to try and access some of the funding that we have available. One of the ways that we continue to support on-the-land programming through the youth is through the budget and having the line item in it every year so that there is a defined pot of money that the schools can apply for. That has been going on for a while. Again, we recognize the importance of these programs to youth out there, so that will continue to be a line item in the budget.

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** I appreciate that response. Mr. Speaker, my final question is: what does ENR do to promote opportunities like Tundra Science Camp or Aurora College environmental programs in remote communities in the NWT?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** The Tundra Science Camp is available to all youth across the NWT, and it is actually promoted through our regional offices and local schools. Other youth ecology camps are also available for support, and it goes back to some of the funding I was speaking to in the youth core. I notice there are a few in here where, in the Deh Cho region, for example, they have an ecology camp that is funded through one of these programs. Through other regions, as well, they have ecology camps.

ENR will continue to support, with some of our other departments, these types of opportunities for our youth across the NWT, promoted through the schools. The schools know that the funding is available. As a Legislative Assembly, we have to ensure that we have funds that are earmarked for it, and that goes back to my comment before about having it as a line item in the budget, where we continue to support it every year.

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

QUESTION 530-18(2):  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIGENOUS  
GUARDIANS PROGRAM

**MR. NADLI:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Yesterday, I spoke of the territorial parks and the increase in visitor numbers to all of our parks in the NWT. Communities are interested in building upon that opportunity. Is the Minister aware of the Guardians program I discussed in my Member's statement earlier today and the Indigenous Leadership Initiative request for federal funding? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of ITI, I am aware of it only because I used to be the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

---Laughter

I can't speak on behalf of the Minister of ENR, but I know the department is probably supportive of this program. Well, there is a new Minister. I would probably ask the Member that he is going to have to direct his questions to ENR on this program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NADLI:** Yesterday, the Minister had stated in the House about the Deh Cho parks and its advances and its scope is for recreational and economic purposes, so I am trying to scope within my questions at least the possibility of trying to advance territorial parks so that communities could be involved with it. Therefore, I am asking those questions.

My second question is to the Minister of -- again, I don't think he answered my first question, but my second question: has the Department of ITI considered implementing the Guardians program in the Northwest Territories?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I am going to have to look into this matter with the department, but as I have said, when I was the Minister of ENR, this question was brought up. I believe that there have been some other people in the Northwest Territories, Aboriginal governments, and groups that are looking at how to implement this not just across the Northwest Territories but across Canada as a whole, I believe.

**MR. NADLI:** I did ask two questions. I wanted to ensure that -- the first question wasn't answered. The second part of the question that I asked was clearly not answered, too. My third question, again to the Minister: what would be required to launch the Guardians program as a pilot project in the Deh Cho?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Like anything, we would have to look at the costs of this, and we would have to probably engage with the federal government, what they could contribute toward this program. As I have said, Aboriginal governments in other jurisdictions across the country are looking at how they can possibly implement this. I believe the Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh has brought this up before. It is a program that has been used in Australia, if I remember. We would have to follow up with what I have mentioned.

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

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for his reply in terms of his interest in terms of the Guardians program and seeing it at least maybe having a glimpse of hope of seeing it realized in the Northwest Territories.

My final question: would the Minister commit to monitoring this issue and also write a letter of support and discuss it with other departments and Aboriginal organizations, how we might implement the Guardians program in the NWT? Mahsi.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will assure the Member that we will have a look at how we can access some of this stuff and look into it.

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

QUESTION 531-18(2):  
AURORA COLLEGE BUDGET REDUCTIONS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a number of the honourable Members on this side of the House have questions for the Minister of Education, continuing the line of questioning this week about the change of affairs at Aurora College. I, too, have questions.

A number of the discussions have been around streamlining program delivery so we can save costs and maximize benefits to students. My question then is: these costs that we are saving by cutting programs, are they being reinvested in the college in other program areas or in new infrastructure, or are we just cutting costs to reduce the contributions, which will help the government manage its debt? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The college always looks at the programs and evaluates programs. The programs that were brought forth in the reductions were a collaborative work between our departments, our department of ECE and Aurora College executive staff, to come up with these decisions that needed to be made. As I mentioned, when we are making those decisions, we want to make sure that we are getting the best bang for our dollar, that the investments that we are making, the dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Maybe I was not clear enough. Are the dollars we are saving from identifying these efficiencies being reinvested into post-secondary education, with Aurora College or any of our other post-secondary partners, or back into SFA? Is any

of this money going into post-secondary education, or are we just making cuts and the savings are going back into general revenue?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** In terms of any savings that we are doing, we are always working with the Aurora College board of governors, as well as the executive, on the programs and services that they provide, and we support them. We continue to support them with the dollars that they need to run these programs. So, when we look at the budgets, it is about budget process, and we work with them very closely in moving forward on those.

**MR. TESTART:** So last budget, we supported them to the tune of around \$33 million in direct contributions, and this year we are reducing that, we are supporting them \$3 million less. That's what I am talking about. That \$3 million in support, where is it going? Is it going back into post-secondary, either through the college or through other groups, or is it just being cut?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Those decisions are going to have to be made as we look at the strategic review that is currently under way. We are in an academic school year right now. As well, we continue to provide a lot of great programming through Student Financial Assistance to support our students going through the programs and services that Aurora College currently provides.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister has laid out his position on this, and what it really hinges on is that strategic plan. I again call on the Minister to table that at the earliest convenience and give a firm deadline to this House. It is of great interest to the public.

My final question, Mr. Speaker, the strategic plan seems to be predicated on the labour market analysis that ECE has done. In fact, they have moved their Aurora College operations or support into the labour division within the department. My question is: is this strategic plan that the government is assisting with, is it being refocused solely on a labour market position? Are we redesigning Aurora College for that labour market analysis, or are we allowing Aurora College the academic freedom to determine its own priorities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the avenues. We also did a lot of stakeholder engagements with key stakeholders across the Northwest Territories to get their input in how do we look at redirecting the Aurora College program services. That is one of the avenues that we have used. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 532-18(2):  
AURORA COLLEGE MANDATE AND PROGRAM  
EVALUATION

**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in the House I asked some questions about a mandate letter from the government to the college. Will the Minister commit to this House that he will actually show us what this mandate letter was? We have seen other deputy ministers' mandate letters, but we haven't seen the Aurora College one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was the first year that a Minister has given the board of governors a mandate letter to go out and do the work on behalf of residents of the Northwest Territories in working within the Aurora College system. We can get copies of the mandate letter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his commitment on that. In regard to the social work program, we have heard about low enrolment in that. What has the government or the college done to find out why we are not having success? Has the government or the college actually done an assessment of it and found out why the students have not done that? I would like to ask the Minister if he can provide any information.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I mentioned earlier, the college does review its programs, evaluates its programs. We also engage our students who have taken the program or who have left or haven't successfully completed the program and ask them those specific questions, what is working in the program, what hasn't. We will continue working with Aurora College to address the reviewing of any of their programs that they provide in the Northwest Territories. Yes, we do look at those programs.

**MR. THOMPSON:** I thank the Minister for his answer. I guess this leads to my next question. Will the college be willing to share with us over here the results of this study or this evaluation, so we can look at the programs, so we can make an informed decision?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** I will be meeting with the board of governors. I will bring up the request on behalf of the president, and I will get back to the Member.

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



**MR. THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for his commitment. I have heard a lot of stuff about the social work program in the last couple of weeks here and leading up to it. In regard to the social work program, can the Minister confirm that, once a student finishes this program, they can be hired by the department as a social worker? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yes. It is an accredited program. After they have finished the diploma program, we do work with the Department of Health to try to get these students into the department, and we also work on helping them support and finish their full degree so they have a better chance of getting a job within the GNWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 533-18(2):  
PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF THE TEACHER  
EDUCATION PROGRAM

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a couple of questions on the Teacher Education Program, trying to get a feel for what the plan is moving forward with the elimination of this program. I want to ask the Minister if there is a plan to replace this program with something of that type of level of professionalism that is required. When you finish the Teacher Education Program you have opportunities to get decent-level jobs. I am wondering what will replace that? Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make it clear that both the social work program and the Teacher Education Program are being phased out. I mean, the students that are in both programs are still going to get the support that they need to complete the studies that they are currently in. The teachers are going to get the support they need so they can support the students for that success. We are still going to be waiting on that strategic plan coming out, but this was one program that was identified. When I mentioned earlier, are we getting the biggest bang for the investments that we are making in certain programs, that is something that we are looking at and something we are working with our board of governors and our senior staff at the Aurora College to identify those reductions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Is the Minister telling me that there will not be something to replace the Teacher Education Program?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** No, I am not saying that. I am saying that we are going to have to wait until April when we are able to see that Aurora College strategic 10-year plan, working with the board of governors, our staff, as well as the senior management of Aurora College. Once we get that report, all that information will be shared with committee and Members.

**MR. BEAULIEU:** One of the programs, obviously, that must have stood out as a program that was failing to meet its effectiveness would have been TEP, since it has been phased out. The phase-out period is going to be from now until 2020. I would like to ask the Minister if he could advise the House how many actual employees of Aurora College would be affected by that phase out?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** I don't have the exact numbers right now. As I mentioned, I will be meeting with the board of governors this weekend. We will be looking at bringing some of these concerns forward. They are obviously listening this week very closely, and we can get the numbers for the Member.

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

QUESTION 534-18(2):  
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, junior kindergarten is going to be a grade like no other within our school system for several reasons. It has to do with the way that this program is funded. In the first case, the government has committed to providing inclusive schooling to help children who are falling behind within the school system, but this inclusive schooling funding is not extended to junior kindergarten. When is that going to change, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, our staff is meeting with the superintendents right now on the roll-out of junior kindergarten. We are listening to any concerns that they may have had, as well as what we have heard from residents from across the Northwest Territories. Those discussions are going on right now. Once those meetings are completed, we can get better updates to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** It is my understanding that ECE sends draft budgets to the school boards on almost a daily basis. In the most recent budget that was sent last night, there is no money for inclusive schooling. My question is: this is the Minister's pot

of money to spend; when is he going to include JK in the inclusive schooling funding?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Junior kindergarten itself is a play-based program. Inclusive schooling is focused on helping students who need that extra assistance from the K to 12 system, and right now as we're implementing it we're continuing to evaluate the program and we'll see what comes out of these discussions with the superintendents and the boards.

**MS. GREEN:** The Minister can't have it both ways. He can't have junior kindergarten as a grade of education within the school system paid for by the school budgets and then say it's somehow exempt from the standard programming that applies to all the other students there, especially something as important as inclusive schooling, which is already being reduced in this budget. So my question once again is: when is the Minister going to include the money for inclusive schooling to extend to junior kindergarten?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** When we are implementing junior kindergarten in the fall in the schools, students in the JK system will have access to all programs and services provided in the school, so there will be some supports there for them.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister just said there would be some supports there for them. Could the Minister please elaborate? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Mr. Speaker, support for students in the JK to 12 system that focus around inclusive schooling, they'll have access to those services and supports as well as even more teachers in the school system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 535-18(2):

SAFE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO HAY RIVER  
HEALTH CENTRE

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I spoke about the lack of lighting and signage signals at the highway crossing to the health centre in Hay River. The Minister said that there's, "A ton of signs." I just sent a scout out. There is one sign.

---Laughter

This is a description of what the sign does, "To warn road users making a turn that they will encounter a highway/rail grade crossing soon after

making a turn." It says nothing about pedestrians. There are actually two signs. There's another sign indicating that's a new sign. There's one of those coming from each direction.

My point is there's really nothing you can see from a distance. There's not this barrage of signs that the Minister indicated. So can we get something? Can we get one of those solar-powered signs with words indicating, slow down, there might be pedestrians crossing here? Can we at least do that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Public Works and Services.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I remember correctly, I said earlier today that I would look at putting some kind of lighting up there. So I will look into and get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SIMPSON:** When can the people of Hay River expect to see their new signage installed?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Do you mean signage or do you mean lighting? Lighting, we've committed to having up here as soon as the ground thaws out. I have never said I was going to commit to new signage. I said we would look at putting up a temporary light to get us through until we can put the lighting system in once the ground thaws out, Mr. Speaker. Any relevant signage that would be imposed on the highways is based on the Traffic Act that we have to impose and put up traffic signs there, so whatever needed signage is there will be in place when the lights are put up.

**MR. SIMPSON:** I'm glad we got a commitment to put some lighting up there. Now I'm looking for a commitment to put some additional signage up there so that people coming down the highway are aware that there are pedestrians possibly crossing?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As I said, we'll have to look into the Highway Traffic Act and, whatever signage is required to have with a lighting system that crosses the public highway, we will install it.

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

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So is the Minister content with inadequate signage at this point and the bare minimum signage at some point in the future as he's committed to installing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friendly times. As I've said, I've committed to putting up a temporary lighting system there. We will look after any signage that is needed

as per the Highway Traffic Act, and we will make sure that is in place as soon as possible.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Members, I would like to draw your attention to members in the public gallery. We have David Krutko, a former Member, former Speaker, former Minister. Welcome to our Assembly. Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 536-18(2):

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the ways that junior kindergarten is different from the rest of the other grades in school is that busing needs to take into account the fact that some of those students are as young as three years, eight months. They're very little. So the school buses need to be equipped with seatbelts and they need to have additional staffing on them. That means the cost of busing children to attend junior kindergarten is going to go up. Will the Minister of Education pay for those extra costs? Thank you.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, those discussions are happening right now. We're working with the superintendents and the school boards to find out how we address some of those concerns that are being brought forward. We'll wait until we get the results out of that meeting and how things are going to be progressing, and we will give updates to the Members on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** It's my understanding that the school boards have asked the Minister to fund the busing of the junior kindergarten students. They anticipate that the cost could be up to \$500,000 here in Yellowknife to accommodate those new 250 students who are going to be in school. Will the Minister pay for the extra costs of busing?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We did commit to fully funding junior kindergarten this fall. As I've mentioned, we also fund school boards throughout the Northwest Territories over \$150 million, and they make the decisions on how those dollars are being allocated and spent as well.

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, my question at this point is: if funding doesn't include inclusive schooling and busing and funding for Aboriginal activities, then what is the definition of fully funded?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We made the announcement that we're going to be funding the remainder of the communities in the House here.

With inclusive schooling, we're still funding inclusive schooling above the legislated percentage that we do. Funding models haven't changed, and we are looking at a revised approach where we are clarifying rules, expectations, and processes with inclusive schooling; but we're still funding it above what we're legislated to do, and that hasn't changed at all.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about here is making school systems sustainable, making them friendly to the use of children and to help them to be successful there, and that starts from the time they get picked up at the door to the time they come back again and everything that happens in between. So, once again, I am going to ask if the Minister will include the additional costs of JK as he does with all the other grades when he is having his famous meeting with the superintendents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** The \$5.1 million to implement junior kindergarten to the rest of the communities is focused on the operations of junior kindergarten moving forward. We still haven't heard the results of what the decision or some of the discussions that have been going on, and also I've got to let the Member know that junior kindergarten is going to be optional for families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 12, replies to budget address. Item 13, petitions. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of Bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Member for Nunakput.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 266-18(2):  
LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA  
FROM THE HAMLET OF TUKTOYAKTUK AND  
THE TUKTOYAKTUK COMMUNITY  
CORPORATION

**MR. NAKIMAYAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the following document, it's a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada from the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk and the Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 29-18(2):

APPOINTMENT OF TWO MEMBERS TO THE  
HUMAN RIGHTS ADJUDICATION PANEL

**MR. VANTHUYNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 9, 2017, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Mr. Sheldon Toner of Yellowknife be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for reappointment as a member of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel effective immediately for a term of four years.

And further, that Ms. Emerald Murphy of Yellowknife be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for appointment as a member of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel effective immediately for a term of four years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Notices of Motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MOTION 30-18(2):

EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO  
FEBRUARY 14, 2017

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 9, 2017, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 9, 2017, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, February 14, 2017.

And further, that any time prior to February 14, 2017, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Notice of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Member for Sahtu.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What are the wishes of the Committee? Mr. Beaulieu?

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

---Carried

I will now rise to report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Sahtu, may I have the report?

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report progress, and Mr. Speaker, I move that report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Do we have a seconder? The seconder is Member for Nunakput.

---Carried.

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

### Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the priorities and planning committee at adjournment today.

Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 8, 2017, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
11. Replies to Budget Address (Day 6 of 7)

12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act
  - Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 8, 2017 at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

