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The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Great Slave)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, May 29, 2017****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:29 p.m.

Prayer

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

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 179-18(2):
NEW TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS**

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories made a commitment in its mandate to capture opportunities by securing funding for three new transportation corridors. Investing in the Tlicho All-Season Road, Slave Geological Province Access Corridor, and the Mackenzie Valley Highway will support sustainable communities while strengthening our economy. Each project will create significant job and training opportunities, helping develop our northern workforce. As more communities are connected to the highway system, essential goods and materials can be delivered more effectively, and the cost of living will be reduced for these residents. These corridors will also support northern industry and businesses by providing a gateway for increased trade and development.

The Department of Infrastructure is working with the federal government to identify new opportunities to fund these critical projects under the 2017 federal budget. Our message to Canada is that the time to invest in these projects is now in order to maximize the benefits to Northerners and all Canadians. Earlier this year, we received positive news with regards to the Tlicho All-Season Road when the federal government announced conditional funding for project construction under the P3 Canada Fund. The road will replace the southern section of the existing winter road, providing uninterrupted access to Whati and increasing the window of access to Gameti and Wekweeti. This is particularly important as warmer winters caused by climate change have increased our challenges by building and operating winter roads in the region in recent years. Resulting reductions in the cost of freight will improve the standard of life in these communities by making it more affordable to deliver a diverse range of

essential goods, from food and fuel to the building materials for the houses and the construction projects. Lowering operating costs for local businesses will allow them to be more competitive in territorial markets. All-weather access will also help attract tourism opportunities and further interest from industry in exploration and development of natural resources in the region.

The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to work closely with the Tlicho Government and the community of Whati as the project proceeds through the environmental assessment process. Project construction will maximize opportunities for Tlicho residents as well as Northerners from other parts of the territory, providing employment and training for our people. A request for qualifications was released in March and closes on June 9th. Now that there is significant movement on the Tlicho All-Season Road, the Department of Infrastructure is focusing on securing funding for the Slave Geological Province access road and the Mackenzie Valley highway.

The Slave Geological Province Access Corridor is a transformative project for our territory, enabling industry to better develop the high mineral potential of the Slave Geological Province. The current lack of access into this region is resulting in additional costs for industry that impact the competitiveness of our territory and the ability of projects in the area to attract investment. The long-term vision for this project includes construction of an all-weather road in the NWT that would connect an all-weather road to the port of Nunavut. This would result in the creation of an important economic development corridor and a gateway for northern trade and a supply that could involve opportunities to collaborate with the Government of Nunavut, industry, and Aboriginal governments.

With the challenges being faced by our mineral development industry right now, the timing for this project has never been more critical. Climate change is limiting the existing winter road access to the diamond mines, resulting in additional costs to industry resupply efforts and other operational difficulties. This is due to a combination of warmer temperatures, more unpredictable weather, and the increased traffic projected to resupply the region's mining industry. An all-weather road to the Slave Geological Province will stabilize the resupply

system to existing mines while enabling new mineral exploration and development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Infrastructure has conducted numerous studies on this corridor over the last two decades. Based on the results of mineral potential and route option studies, a corridor has been identified that will provide the greatest economic benefit to the region and the NWT, while minimizing impact on the environment. The Departments of Infrastructure, Finance, and Industry, Tourism and Investment are jointly conducting a P3 business case assessment of the chosen corridor. This business case will allow the GNWT to better estimate construction costs for this road, as well as determine the appropriate funding model.

The Department of Infrastructure continues to focus on advancing next steps, including undertaking environmental studies and finalizing engineering and design work for the first phase of the project from Tibbitt to Lockhart Lake. The Department of Infrastructure is also working with caribou subject experts from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to identify ways to mitigate impacts to caribou and protect this important resource while the project advances.

The Mackenzie Valley Highway will connect several of our remote communities to the public highway system. The project provides an opportunity to reduce the cost of living by replacing the Mackenzie Valley winter road with an all-weather highway that is more resilient to impacts of climate change and allows for more effective delivery of goods to communities. Improved mobility will allow residents better access to services that may not be immediately available in their own community. Businesses will be connected to other markets, supporting economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, more than ever, we need to invest in projects that generate employment and reduce the cost of living in the Sahtu region. The Mackenzie Valley highway is critical to unlocking much of the still untapped resource potential of the region. Improved access will reduce costs for industry exploration and development, opening up new areas for mineral potential and increasing the attractiveness of continued petroleum production and the development in the Sahtu. An important incremental step in converting the existing winter road to an all-weather road is under way with the Canyon Creek All-season Road Project, a 14-kilometre access road south of the town of Norman Wells. The contractor started work clearing the right-of-way in March and construction will continue over the summer. The project, which is expected to be completed by the fall 2018, will provide employment opportunities in the region and result in access to granular resources and traditional Sahtu

lands, which may be used for recreation, tourism, and business development.

The Department of Infrastructure continues to lobby the federal government for funding toward the Mackenzie Valley highway and to pursue further engineering and environmental studies. Engineering work is also under way for the Great Bear River Bridge, which represents a critical project component and would extend the winter road access into the Sahtu. All three of these new corridor projects are at various stages in their development; but while the Department of Infrastructure is working hard to bring each closer to construction, we are nearing completion of another very important project. The Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway will open to traffic November 15, 2017, becoming the first public highway to the Arctic Ocean and achieving a Canadian vision of connecting our country by road from coast to coast.

The last winter construction season on the project consisted of completing the final two bridges, crushing and stockpiling of surface gravel. Construction this summer season will focus on grading, packing, and shaping the base of the highway in preparation for gravel surfacing. Signage and guardrails will be installed this fall. I believe we will soon be entering a new era of improved access for our territory by expanding the highway system to the remote regions of our territory. Through these projects we can help strengthen our territory and develop it as a land of new opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 180-18(2):
PROGRESS ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE: LEGAL
AID COMMISSION EXPANDS OUTREACH
SERVICES

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, as a government we have committed in our mandate to improve access to justice by making family law duty counsel services available to assist people representing themselves in court. Today, I would like to provide an update on how this government is meeting and exceeding that commitment with an initiative to assist residents involved in civil or family justice matters. As Members are aware, the Legal Aid Commission piloted an initiative to provide basic legal advice on civil matters. The outreach lawyer held weekly clinics in Yellowknife and delivered service clinics in 19 communities. Residents did not have to make an application, nor meet a financial means test for this service. Anyone who would benefit from speaking with a lawyer on issues such as housing, landlord and tenant disputes, disability or employment issues, child

protection, or elders' wills, was eligible for a limited consultation. This service proved to be very successful. It became clear that there was a greater need than could be addressed in the 15 hours per week available under the pilot project.

Based on this success, the Legal Aid Commission has launched a full-time Outreach Legal Aid Clinic. This new clinic now offers free confidential legal advice for up to three hours on any single legal issue through a staff court worker and an outreach lawyer. Additionally, for the first time, staff will provide duty counsel service in family law matters and coordinate public legal information on behalf of the Legal Aid Commission. Again, these new services are available at no cost and do not require a formal application. In Yellowknife, the Outreach Legal Aid lawyer holds three weekly clinics; one for child protection issues, one for family law, and one general clinic for other civil matters. Each clinic operates on a first come, first served basis. Clients can also make appointments at other times depending on their circumstances.

In-person clinics will be held in other NWT communities on a regular basis or, if need be, phone appointments may be arranged. Over the next few months a schedule of regional clinics will be developed in partnership with the communities and the court workers of the Legal Aid Commission. Throughout Canada and here in the Northwest Territories, courts have seen an increasing number of people representing themselves in both civil and family courts. Unfortunately, self-represented litigants face barriers, and many do not receive equitable access to justice. Many of these people are interacting with the justice system for the first time, and it is not surprising that they experience difficulties stemming from a lack of understanding of potential remedies or court processes.

With the introduction of family law duty counsel, residents who attend court for family law matters will receive advice when they need it most. Much like the duty counsel provided to those criminally charged, this will allow the outreach lawyer to attend as duty counsel for appearances on family matters in the Territorial and Supreme Courts. By providing expanded hours, and a dedicated court worker and outreach lawyer, the Legal Aid Commission is helping clients to access legal advice and referrals more quickly through the new Outreach Legal Aid Clinic. Through this expansion, we expect that the number of court appearances required to complete a case is going to be reduced. In addition, staff will be utilized more efficiently, and technology will be better leveraged under this new model. Finally, better legal education and information for residents will lead to better outcomes for all involved.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative not only continues to deliver legal outreach services to our residents, but it also represents a significant step in meeting our commitment to improve access to justice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Member for Environment and Natural Resources.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 181-18(2):
COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND FIRESMART
PROGRAM

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the FireSmart program is an important tool in mitigating risk and improving community protection in the event of a wildland fire. Applying FireSmart principles increases human safety, decreases property loss, and enhances wildland fire suppression success. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources continues to encourage communities, agencies, and home and cabin owners to promote and implement FireSmart principles.

Information on FireSmart for communities, cabin and homeowners is available from the regional and local ENR offices or at nwtfire.com. ENR headquarters and regional staff have been meeting with the emergency measures organizations, Municipal and Community Affairs, Lands, and Industry, Tourism and Investment to confirm roles and strengthen relationships to mitigate risk in the event of a wildland fire. The department is also finalizing its Community Hazard and Risk Mitigation Project with Municipal and Community Affairs, as well as working together on critical infrastructure assessment and resiliency planning.

Mr. Speaker, this project is expected to result in updated recommendations for communities to include in their emergency plans. Community wildland fire protection will now be integrated into existing emergency management processes. ENR is continuing to pursue additional funding opportunities to help advance community-supported wildland fire risk management objectives. Should communities secure funding for mitigation work, the department will continue to assist communities with technical advice.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for summer and another wildland fire season, I encourage all residents to make the effort to plan and prepare for potential emergencies. FireSmart works to help individuals and communities make our fire response more effective and increases the chance of saving property and protecting lives. Reducing risk increases safety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Colleagues, I'd like to draw your attention to people

in the gallery. We have with us here some of my constituents.

We have Ms. Alestine Mantla. She is a teacher at the elementary school, Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School, along with her grade six students here today. We have a couple of resource staff as well. I'd like to thank them for coming, exploring the Legislative Assembly. Also, with us, Mr. John Zoe. He's the bus driver for a number of years. I'd just like to say thank you for looking out there for our students. One more, Tony Rabesca, this year from Behchoko as well. I'd like to recognize him as well. Masi for coming. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the past four months, we've witnessed five tragedies that have deeply saddened the families, friends, our communities, and myself. Unfortunately, these types of tragedies happen across the world daily. I know it's very difficult to talk about, but it needs to be spoken about here today. Mr. Speaker, mental illness has long been misunderstood and unfairly judged. We need to strive to break this stigma. Mental illnesses are not a choice. They often make life difficult for those who suffer from them, as well as their family and friends. When looking at this topic, there seems to be some confusion between mental health and mental illness. People often think that the terms are interchangeable. However, mental health and mental illness are not the same thing, but they are not mutually exclusive.

A fundamental difference between mental health and mental illness is that everyone has some same level of mental health all the time, just like physical health, whereas it is possible to be without mental illness. Mental illness is extremely prevalent in Canada and around the world. However, the main burden of the illness is concentrated in much smaller proportions. Around 6 per cent, or one in 17, suffer from serious illness. It is important to remember mental health and mental illness are not static. They change over time depending on many factors. Some of the factors that affect mental health includes a level of personal and workplace stress, lifestyle, and mental behaviour, exposure to trauma, and genetics.

When a demand is placed on any individual that exceeds these resources and coping ability, their mental health will be negatively affected. Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to get more people trained in this area. The Minister for Health and

Social Services spoke about mental health first aid as a good step, and I agree with him. However, I'd like to encourage the government to look at other programs such as the program being offered by the NWT Recreation and Parks Association, Strengthening Children's Mental Health. This program provides tools and suggested activities to use with staff to help improve and understand interaction with people. We need to use all tools to help our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ROAD SAFETY ON THE INGRAHAM TRAIL

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, everyone can think of at least one person who has been seriously injured or even killed in a motor vehicle accident, or maybe as individuals, we have experienced such a traumatic incident first hand. I know I have. The recent fatality in a car crash on the Ingraham Trail is a stark reminder of the consequences of dangerous driving. My sincere condolences go to the family and friends of the individual who passed, those who were injured, and all those otherwise affected by this tragic accident.

This accident, and recent stats on increased drinking and driving, highlight the ongoing need to emphasize road safety and public education. The government has a Road Safety Plan and a Drive Alive program, encouraging drivers to take responsibility for their own safe driving, awareness of road conditions, and so on, but the Ingraham Trail is a far busier road than it used to be, with many more residents living there, tourists, and truck traffic, more than ever before. Last ice road season alone, there were seven truck rollovers and three cab fires.

Mr. Speaker, the department is to be commended for the improved road conditions on the trail, the Twitter updates, and mobile signs reminding people to drive safely, but ongoing steps to support road safety are also necessary. Re-engineering certain corners and the addition of guardrails would go a long way to improving safety and making Highway No. 4 more accessible to all users. If you have driven the trail in any season, you have likely encountered people driving too fast to stay in their lane, heavy equipment, B-trains and other large vehicles, and people towing snowmobile trailers, campers, and boats, all in variable driving conditions. Passing can be extremely hazardous and is only possible in a few sections.

Regular patrolling and check stops beyond Yellowknife city limits would help control drivers' speed on the trail, and would go a long way in discouraging people to drive while under the

influence. On our part, capital investment is needed to promote safe driving on the Ingraham Trail and, frankly, in all our roadways, but efforts to prevent drinking and driving cannot be overemphasized. Many more motor vehicle accidents can be avoided through an optimal combination of good driving practices and infrastructure that supports safe highway transportation. I want to see this government supporting both. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROCUREMENT POLICY REFORM

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the many businesses in my riding of Kam Lake, and many of these businesses rely on government contracts to keep their operations viable and create employment for our communities. This government has a responsibility to northern entrepreneurs to make sure government procurement is efficiently administered, easy to access, and creates a competitive edge for those companies that choose to do business in the North and call the NWT home. I have spoken on this issue in the House before, Mr. Speaker, and though the Minister of Infrastructure remains confident that there is no need for a reform or even a review of such policies on procurement, Northerners know that simply isn't the case.

There is no question the governments can always improve, and procurement reform is needed to ensure a strong and stable private sector exists in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses counts over 250 members here in the Territories. The federation works hand in hand with its members to understand the economic needs for small and medium-sized businesses in every region in the country.

In their most recent survey of northern businesses, the CFIB asked for the priority issues of northern business owners, and 86 per cent of respondents stated their most serious concern was government over-regulation and complexity of procurement, otherwise known as "red tape." For the average small business with fewer than five employees, annual regulation costs per employee in Canada is \$5,942. For larger businesses in the five to 100 employee range, the fee starts at \$3,133 and tapers off at \$1,456 per employee. With our already high cost of living, how can we expect our business community to get ahead under such high regulatory burdens?

Kam Lakers have an abundance of experience in dealing with the slow and inefficient pace of government procurement policies. In one case, a Kam Lake firm saw an approval for a manufactured project, ensured all their documents were correct, and then had to wait 15 months before the government responded to the application. Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear such a state of bureaucratic limbo is unacceptable. Even a rejection to the application would have been preferable to forcing our businesses to "hurry up and wait," when economic opportunities need to be accessed and are on the line. Mr. Speaker, I am going to have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure, and I hope his response will not be, "we don't have a procurement problem." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT ON CORRECTIONS

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through continued restorative justice programming, our Department of Justice and this 18th Assembly mandate on healthy goals to educate people, and safe, vibrant communities.

We contribute to achieving these goals by offering a wide range of programs and services that give individuals the tools and support they need to address the challenges and poor choices that often result in criminal charges and incarceration. Mr. Speaker, in a lot of ways, we are continuously looking to better improve our efficiencies on delivery. First, we must look at where we are, and reset on where we are going.

Carry the mace on corrections, Mr. Speaker. The 17th Assembly seen an Auditor General's report on the NWT corrections in the NWT system. The report seen 14 recommendations. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the appropriate Minister on the report. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AKLAVIK TO INUVIK ICE ROAD CLOSURE

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Aklavik ice road closed about one week earlier than normal this year. This raises major concerns about how supplies would get into the community, and also about the lack of consultation with residents.

Mr. Speaker, Aklavik's 85 kilometre winter road is a vital link for the community, connecting people, goods, and services to the region. Goods and services are very expensive in Aklavik, like they are in all our remote communities. The ice road is used to transport things like heavy equipment and fuel that cannot be brought in during the rest of the year. This year, government inspectors noticed open water on the side of the road and closed the road early, without advising or consulting the community.

Mr. Speaker, the department didn't listen to the contractor with years of experience or consider traditional knowledge of the area. The open water that inspectors saw is well known by the ice road builders who have dealt with it for many years. They know that there is a sandbar in this area and that, in the spring, the ice thaws faster in this spot. The ice road was still over four to five feet thick at that time. In that one little section, people just pulled further over to the side of the road when they passed by. There is nothing wrong with that, Mr. Speaker. Instead, the ice road was closed with very little notice. People were counting on the last part of the ice road season to bring supplies in from Inuvik. The hamlet also had supplies en route to the community, including a steamer that would be used to unplug culverts around the community. Mr. Speaker, ice roads will continue to be important in our region. The government and communities need to work together to sustain their operation in the best way possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FEDERAL FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES SUPPORT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Last week, a Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic, Michael McLeod, on behalf of Honourable Melanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage of the federal government, announced \$19.6 million in funding for the next three years for Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, the role that the government plays in providing resources is good. What is more important is being able to assist in ensuring that all levels of government and Aboriginal groups work together and make use of the funding resources effectively. We all need to revitalize, preserve, and enhance the Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. I look forward to possibly seeing initiatives such as these local Slave Research projects and projects like that, where young and old

work together and create a healing environment so that our languages can flourish. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CARBON PRICING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. It is another sitting of this House and time for my third statement on carbon pricing. The federal government released its backstop plan for a national carbon pricing scheme on May the 18th. It shows that a national scheme would see a carbon tax on the most commonly used fuels in the Northwest Territories at no more than about three cents per litre in 2018, going up to no more than about 16 cents per litre in 2022. The federal plan is laid out in a transparent and understandable manner that lets Canada meet its international obligations and make significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Some reports in the media quoted an unnamed federal official as stating that this plan will not apply to the northern territories, but there is nothing in the plan itself to indicate this. My reading of it shows that this is indeed a national backstop. The paper says, "The backstop will apply in a province or territory that does not have a pricing system that aligns with the benchmark." As a Regular MLA, I have no idea what our government is doing on the issue of carbon pricing because of the poor communications from Cabinet on this important issue. Little seems to be under way beyond continued resistance and some sort of a deputy ministers committee. The Premier promised on March the 1st to provide a carbon pricing report from a consultant hired by GNWT. Here we are almost three months later and we still do not have that report, let alone any indication of what our government is doing. I will have questions for the Premier, as the Chair of the Ministerial Energy and Climate Change Committee of Cabinet. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SENIORS DAY PROGRAM

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the mandate of this 18th Assembly commits the government to take action so that seniors can age in place, and this is also a priority of the Standing Committee on Social Development. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about aging in place, we most often talk about housing, particularly renovations that make it possible for elders to remain in their own homes. However, in addition to meeting seniors'

physical needs, we also need to consider how to meet their mental health and well-being needs.

Day programs, like the Elders' Circle at Avens, gave seniors who lived in their own homes an opportunity to socialize in a structured program, and it gave their families caring for them a break. Daycare for seniors and daycare for children is built around the same concept of providing a safe and stimulating environment that promotes socialization and skill development or, in the case of seniors, retention. It also provides vital respite for families. Unfortunately, Avens shuttered their program last December. The Yellowknife Association for Community Living stepped in for a few months, but that program was never meant to be more than a temporary solution. Now there is no program at all. A constituent of mine, who is 97 years old, attended the Elders' Circle for over 15 years. She made friends with other participants and staff, but now she spends most of her days home alone while her family is at work. Her friends are not able to come to see her, and she is unable to see them. She is lonely and isolated, according to her son. Of course, he is very concerned about her and the decrease in her quality of life. There were seven other seniors in the Elders' Circle program who now have nowhere to go. No doubt there are others who, as they age, would benefit from a program like this to promote their social well-being.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this kind of program to provide socialization for seniors and respite for their families is going to increase as our population ages. I do not want elders who choose to age in place to be lonely and isolated. Keeping elders in their own homes is a more cost-effective option for government than creating long-term care beds for them, as the Minister knows, but there is more to life than having a bed to sleep in. The government must step in immediately to ensure that there is daytime programming available for the growing population of seniors in Yellowknife. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Seniors. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPORTANCE OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Regular Members had the pleasure of meeting with the board and the executive director of the NWT/Nunavut Council of Friendship Centres. This is the territorial board that represents the seven friendship centres in the Northwest Territories, located in Hay River, Fort Smith, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, Behchoko, Yellowknife, and Inuvik. It was an opportunity for us

to learn about what these organizations do for our communities and about how much more they could be doing with just a little more support.

Some of us are very familiar with the good work that these centres do. In addition to regularly meeting with the executive director of the Hay River Friendship Centre, I actually served on the board of my local friendship centre just as other honourable Members and former Members of this House have, like yourself, Mr. Speaker, our Honourable Premier, and our Member of Parliament. However, Mr. Speaker, not everyone is aware of the services these organizations offer. I do not have nearly enough time to give you an exhaustive list, but I will name a few.

Many of the services that they provide just fill the gaps that the government does not cover. Sometimes it is something as simple as helping a client fill out a government form to apply for income assistance or attending court with an individual who is not equipped to do so alone. In addition to picking up the government's slack, the slack is often forced upon the centres. The GNWT often mandates that those convicted of a crime perform community service hours at a friendship centre. While well-intentioned, but this often means that centre employees are pulled from regular duties to help supervise these people. The income assistance office also mandates their clients to attend programs offered at the friendship centre. Mr. Speaker, these are two examples of the GNWT forcing clients on the friendship centres without compensating them for their assistance.

In addition to providing social programs and services, more and more friendship centres are providing training designed to put people to work. I can attest that, in Hay River, there have been dozens of individuals who have received training and employment as a direct result of these friendship centres. There are also common misconceptions about the friendship centres, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to dispel. The first is that they only service Aboriginal clients, and this could not be further from the truth. The friendship centres are mandated to assist anyone who walks through their doors. Another misconception is that the friendship centres are a federal organization and should be funded federally. While it is true there is some federal government money, this barely covers an executive director. There is no money for O and M. There is no money for future capital investments, and the fact is most of what they do is picking up the slack where the government cannot fill those roles. I will have questions at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize, from the Native Women's Association of NWT Training Centre, Ms. Kathleen Lockhart, Ms. Lillian Panalu, Mary Modeste, Tracey Woods, Trudy Zoe, and Natalie Makletzoff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Mr. Fraser Oliver, a strong Kam Laker who is taking an interest in our proceedings and also president of the NWT Teachers' Association. Welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize two residents from Inuvik, Mr. Paul Komaromi and Mr. Tom Zubko, who will be inducted into the Order of the NWT, I believe, tomorrow. Welcome to the House.

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

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my niece, Ms. Melinda Laboucan, from Fort Good Hope there. She is the community family awareness coordinator; and I think in behind her someplace there is Mary Modeste, originally from Deline. Mahsi.

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

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize, from the NWT/Nunavut Council of Friendship Centres, Tony Rabesca, Abbie Crook, Shari Caudron, and Kyle Bird. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a resident of Yellowknife North, and also with the NWT Teachers' Association, Amanda Mallon. Welcome.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very fortunate to have one of our longest serving victim service workers with us in the gallery today. Marie Speakman has been providing a valuable service to victims in Yellowknife with the Native Woman's Association for 17 years, and I'd

like us to take this opportunity to recognize her service here today.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are we missing anyone in the gallery? Thanks for being here with us. It's always great to have an audience as part of proceedings. Masi. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 768-18(2): SENIORS DAY PROGRAM

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for Seniors. As I am sure he is aware, there used to be a day program for seniors in Yellowknife, based at Avens, and the program was a safe place for seniors to socialize. It also gave caregivers a break, as I mentioned in my statement. Since February, there has been nothing. Can the Minister tell us what action he is taking to reinstate this program? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for Seniors.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Avens let us know on October 2016 that they were intending to suspend operations of the program. They also at that time expressed to us their intent to redesign the adult day program to better meet the needs of clients that it serves and to address any quality and safety concerns that were raised. A working group has been established with representatives from Avens, the department, the territorial authority, and they are conducting a review of the Avens day program, and they have been doing that since late January 2017.

The working group has completed the following components. They are doing a literature review of best practices of adult day programs available throughout the country, they have looked at the historical use and the policies that were in place, and they are doing a review of issues related to safety and quality concerns that were identified. They are currently compiling all of that information and looking forward to bringing it forward to their stakeholders shortly, and a draft report will be circulated once the work is completed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I am not sure if I'm encouraged or dismayed by the fact that there is now a working group working on another report and another deadline. Maybe the Minister could tell us whether

there is money in place to implement a solution when one is identified?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Core funding is provided to Avens to provide the wide range of programs and services that they have. I had an opportunity to meet with the board and the acting executive director about a week and a half ago where we were talking about a future expansion on the site of 48 beds. This topic also came up at the time, and at that time, Avens indicated that they would like to work with the department on an operational review to look at how they're spending their money to make sure that they are getting the dollars that are being allocated, and they are using them to maximum effect. We haven't committed to funding that operational review, but I have asked the department to work closely with Avens to come up with a mechanism and ways we could support them to do that operational review so that they can ensure that the money they are receiving is being spent to a maximum effect.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the answer from the Minister. Is the Minister open to solutions that may look for a new partner rather than Avens to provide this program?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I have said several times in this House, we are currently doing a continuing care review and a review of homecare services that are planned throughout the Northwest Territories to support residents to age in place as much as possible. We have talked about different models that might be used, whether it is family support or community support. Once we are done that review and we have an actual plan in place, we will be in a better position to figure out what, if new partners are out there, that might be able to assist us in supporting seniors to integrate and be part of their community, as well as age in place. I would say the answer is "yes," but we want to finish that review first.

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

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line here is we've got a group of seniors who are isolated because of their lack of socialization, and that's been the case now going on for six months. We have got various reviews, one of which, the continuing care review, is overdue. I guess my bottom line question is: when can seniors who need this program, and families who need this program, expect to see a solution? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the report that is being done by Avens now on this very exact topic is expected to be completed by Avens by mid-June 2017. At that point, they will have some ideas how they

intend to move forward to support day programming. The continuing care review, the homecare review that we have been talking about, has already been intended to be available to Members of this House in time for business planning so that we can have an informed discussion, and allocated resources to meet the needs of residents across the Northwest Territories moving forward in subsequent fiscal years.

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

QUESTION 769-18(2):
PROCUREMENT POLICY REFORM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has shown its appetite to work on comprehensive issues for the government. The Honourable Minister for the NWT Housing Corporation has just undertaken a very long and lengthy review of the Housing Corporation's policies and programs. The Minister for Public Engagement and Transparency is doing a very public process on Open Government Policy. Will the Minister responsible for Infrastructure commit to undertaking the exact same style of review for procurement policies without delay? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department which is responsible for procurement of shared services, which came into effect in 2014, was always looking at ways to streamline the process, to increase participation of local and northern businesses in the procurement and fair and open process of government goods in the Northwest Territories. I am always willing to sit down with the Member and discuss any ideas he has. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Well, the Minister consults with me; that is one person. I am wondering if he will consult with everyone in the Northwest Territories through a public engagement process, and then create a report that can come back to this House and be assessed by the standing committee and the government on its results and lead to comprehensive procurement reform in the Northwest Territories. Will the Minister commit to do that?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: No, I will not commit to do a comprehensive review across the Northwest Territories. As I have told the Member before in this House, I have been part of both sides of this equation, and I believe that the process in place is a fair and equitable one for all businesses in the Northwest Territories. Yes, maybe we have to tweak a few things to make everything better. It does not matter if it is from healthcare to education

to procurement, but I am willing to sit down and have those conversations. However at this point, I am not willing to do a territorial wide review.

MR. TESTART: Does the Minister agree that a 15 month wait for a procurement application is unacceptable, and that that issue needs to be dealt with right away?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: This is the first I've heard of this situation. I want to sit down with the Member after session today and get the details on it. I believe 15 months definitely is too long to hear back on an issue.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that commitment. I'll be happy to sit down with him and share my constituent's experience with our procurement system. Finally, I know that the department of procurement services through the Department of Infrastructure is undertaking some vendor workshops. Is there any opportunity for public engagement in the procurement process through those workshops, or is this merely an effort to tell vendors how to do business with government? Are we actually listening to them or are we just telling them they're doing it wrong? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, that's not how this works. We're always open to all types of feedback, good or bad, and we'll try to improve the system as we move forward.

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

QUESTION 770-18(2):

HEMOCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during the budget process, the Department of Health and Social Services received new funding to support enhanced homecare and youth in crisis. On Thursday, we received an e-mail from the Minister of Health and Social Services identifying a proposed plan to allocate this funding. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Social Services please provide further information on the plan to us here today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have already talked a little bit about the comprehensive review of homecare services that are being planned for 2017-2018, and this is going to help us make informed decisions in

the next round of business planning on how we're going to invest to support aging in place for seniors and persons with disabilities. However, Mr. Speaker, we do know that there are some pockets of documented unmet demands for homecare services in many communities through the Northwest Territories. Recognizing this, we truly appreciate the \$2.5-million allocation that was issued during the budgeting process. We're intending to use it to make some incremental investments to meet the demands for patient care that we know exists in several of the communities and our regions that have been previously limited by resource shortfalls.

With the new 2017-2018 homecare funding, I'm pleased to announce that we'll be strengthening homecare services in our three largest communities and introducing homecare services in six communities where there are currently none offered. We're looking at putting one additional nurse in Inuvik, as well as two additional home support workers. We're looking at putting three additional home support workers here in Yellowknife and we're looking at putting half-time home support workers in Wrigley, Jean Marie River, Sambaa K'e, Nahanni Butte, Kakisa, and we're looking at putting in an additional one-and-a-half home support workers in Hay River, with 0.5 of that being utilized to support enterprise where there are currently no home support services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: This is great news and I must publicly thank the Minister for sharing this information here today. I was very concerned during the budget process, and now I'm happier to hear this good news. I have to recognize the hard work that the department and Minister have done to this date. Can the Minister advise if this good news e-mail can be shared with the public?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, please share the e-mail with everybody you want to share. In fact, all the MLAs I would encourage to share the information. Mr. Speaker, this is a good news story and it shows us working together as an Assembly and that we recognize the need to invest in staff and home support positions to meet the needs of our residents across the Northwest Territories. Please share the information with everybody that the Member would like to.

MR. THOMPSON: I'd like to thank the Minister for allowing us to share this good information again out to the public. Mr. Speaker, with this plan in place, can the Minister explain the next steps to implement this plan and provide a potential timeline, like job descriptions and stuff like that, that have to be done?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am a little reluctant to speculate on a timeline. There is a significant amount of work that needs to be done. The position job descriptions need to be written. They need to be evaluated. They need to be incorporated into the complement of positions that are out there. Then we do have to go out and staff those positions and that can take a bit of time. Once we do have the positions filled it will likely require some training for individuals to make sure that they're providing the high-quality service that we want to make available to residents throughout the Northwest Territories. I can say that I have talked to the territorial authority and I have talked to the department. They are going to move forward as quickly as they can to get this upfront work done and get these positions filled and on the ground as quickly as possible. I have asked that we utilize the Regional Recruitment Program where appropriate so that, if there are people who meet the qualifications today, we can work to help train some local people for local work.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 771-18(2):
AKLAVIK TO INUVIK ICE ROAD CLOSURE

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to my Member's statement, I have a few questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, how was the community of Aklavik advised when the open water and the ice road was first discovered and the weight restriction was lowered? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this came up on a quick and short notice, the local superintendent out of the Inuvik region would have notified the mayor of Aklavik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: What plans were put in place to finish bringing in supplies that were supposed to come in on the ice road?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I don't know which plans would have been put into place once the roads was closed. That would be up to the local people. It's unfortunate the road closed in a quickened manner. That happened because of safety reasons, but now with the new purchase of the barge company, maybe we can use them.

MR. BLAKE: The ice road conditions are no different than they were last year. Just this year, the department seemed to get a little too - I don't know, they just got a little carried away this year, but how does a department incorporate traditional

knowledge into ice road construction and other infrastructure planning?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Road safety is our number one priority, particularly on the ice road. As I've said in this House a number of times, climate change and things have had a number of impacts on the condition of our ice roads and winter roads in the Northwest Territories. It's unfortunate, like I said, that this happened in Aklavik this year due to safety matters, but if we look at the incident that happened at Deline two years ago, we certainly don't want this type of situation happening particularly on the Beau-Del, where there's great resource for fish in the Northwest Territories, and to have an incident like that would be catastrophic. I'm not an engineer and I'm not an ice profiler, but on recommendation of our superintendent and our people that go out there and profile the ice, this road was closed in that time.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister does specialize in signs and, you know, we could have put signs up in this area. Also, put a berm on half of the road. That could have helped in this area here. What lessons could be learned from this year's closure of the Aklavik ice road that could be applied in the future especially as winter conditions become more variable? Thank you, Ms. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are always lessons learned in every season. This one in particular, I guess I would say that the lesson learned from this is we're going to have very close ties with the community on a day-to-day basis as spring comes to the region, being that it's the only ice road left up there; we're not going to Inuvik anymore. We'll have better communications around how we're planning on closing of the ice road.

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

QUESTION 772-18(2):
FEDERAL FUNDING FOR INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES SUPPORT IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, in light of the federal government's announcement in terms of funding Aboriginal languages for the Northwest Territories. First, of course, we have the federal government making the announcement of four-year funding. The GNWT is involved with Aboriginal governments, as well, so I wanted to ask the Minister: how could these three

partnership arrangements ensure that there is a strong community involvement with the preservation, enhancement, and revitalization of ongoing efforts to ensure that our languages flourish and are used every day? Mahsi.

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just recently tabled the official Aboriginal Languages Strategic Framework that we are going to be working with and building on, but we also have really great partnerships with all of our Aboriginal governments. Since 2014, we have given them funding so that they can develop programs, regional Aboriginal languages plans, and we support them with this additional funding that we did get through the agreement signed with the federal government.

We are getting increased contributions to these Aboriginal governments, as well as creating a territorial linguist position that is going to help with professional development, and help these Aboriginal governments move forward to address and get their Aboriginal languages plans into place and have action on them. There are many other things that we are doing with the communities. In terms of working, I can sit down with the Member and let him know what some of these things are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NADLI: In the residential school experience, there was no place for Aboriginal languages or culture. Some might say that the pride and personal responsibility that a person takes to take ownership of our Aboriginal languages is not there. How does the GNWT envision that healing and wellness can play a part in preserving and enhancing our Aboriginal languages?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has made this call to action for all provinces and territories. We are stepping up to the plate. We are working with our Aboriginal governments to ensure the future of Aboriginal languages. Preservation of culture and traditions is a priority, and we are going to work to increase our efforts, as well as working with the federal and Aboriginal governments to ensure this is done. At the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, we have made it mandatory. With Northern Studies 10, we are implementing the residential school curriculum, and in the future, with Northern Studies 20 and 30, working on implementing our land claims and self-governments, as well. We are doing a lot of things with this increased funding. We are going to be able to increase the resources to adjust some of these calls to action.

MR. NADLI: I would like to at least acknowledge the efforts of the department in terms of ensuring that we take steps to ensure that, indeed, our languages are preserved and enhanced. There is a lot of good work that is going on, and I think that has to reach the ground level, at the community level.

My other question is, this is a four-year funding announcement. I think last year, it was part of a transfer of dollars, so one year of a full four-year program has passed. I wanted to ask the Minister: at the end of this funding period that has been committed \$19.6 million, at the end of the process which could probably take us to the year 2020, what does he think would, by that time, all the partnership achieved in terms of preserving, enhancing, and ensuring our languages are in a state of flourishing, at the same time, successful, and our use in everyday society, of Aboriginal communities throughout the North?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Obviously, there are a lot of indicators that we can identify. We want to see the outcomes of these investments that we are doing in the Northwest Territories. Our end goal is to have revitalization, preservation of our languages, our culture, and increase the amount of our NWT residents speaking their Aboriginal languages.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister had stated very clearly that there will be a position of a linguist established, and that is very good. One thing that I have observed over the years is we have made a lot of great effort in terms of preserving the stories of elders. A lot of them more likely are archived with the various Aboriginal groups and communities. Would part of the strategy consider establishing, perhaps, a central bank? A lot of those interviews of elders who have passed could be safely kept. At the same time, maybe they are in analog form. They could be digitized for future reference, at least to preserve those historical stories as we might describe them.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do know that some of our Aboriginal governments are already in that process of digitizing the stories that have been told over the years. That is something that we want to continue to support, and I think the Member has a really good idea in bringing this forward so that we can preserve our culture, languages, and the stories of our elders and our ancestors. I want to thank the Member for bringing that up.

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

QUESTION 773-18(2):
ROAD SAFETY ON THE INGRAHAM TRAIL

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the Minister of Infrastructure spoke at length about the three roadways that we have coming to the Northwest Territories sometime in the future, and he knows that he has my support for that, for obvious and various reasons. Most important to me is the safety of our current and future roads. I would like if the Minister could start, first of all, by describing for us and the public exactly what the department is doing to promote road safety across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member alluded to in his statement there, we have Drive Alive, but Infrastructure has an improvement safety plan that we work on continually for all highways. We also follow the TAC program for our guidelines for all highways in the Northwest Territories, along with all our other public outreach that we have between Twitter and Facebook and those sorts of things. We are always promoting safety. We have our speed signs that we put out and, as we all know, there is a number of bump signs between here and Behchoko. Our staff is working regularly and daily to at least communicate to the public the areas that are of concern out in the highway system throughout the Northwest Territories, on a daily basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you to the Minister for his reply. Earlier, I spoke in my Member's statement about the need to potentially redesign some corners and add some guardrails. On the May long weekend, sadly, there was an accident on a corner that I myself, in fact, had an accident on, that very same corner, a number of years ago. It does not have guardrails. I am wondering if the Minister and his department could give any consideration to improving Highway No. 4, the Ingraham Trail, with some consideration to redesign certain corners and install guardrails?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Infrastructure is investing roughly \$8 million from 2015 to 2019 on the Ingraham Trail. A lot of work has already been done in the years leading up to now, which was chip sealing, embankment work, installing culverts, and such. There is a multi-year contract on road widening and structural engineering and drainage improvements, as well as surfacing, an ongoing challenge on that road. As far as guardrails and such go, there is some guardrail installation that is actually going to take place in the 2017-2019 calendar years. Which sections those exactly are, I couldn't give the Member that exact location at this

point. The other point I want to make today is any time there is an accident on the highway, we have all our engineers go there and review the critical incident that happened and see if there are improvements that could be made to that section of road moving forward.

As I have said in this House a number of times, climate change has proposed significant challenges for the department as the roads are continually changing. They are continually sinking and changing and cracking from climate change, and those challenges will continue. They will continue going forward on Ingraham Trail specifically, just due to the amount of traffic that is out there in the summertime and the amount of winter traffic that we have serving the mines. We will continue to review everything going forward and pay close attention to this section of the highway.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you to the Minister for the commitment, I suppose, from the department to go and review this particular corner. It is good to know that, after accidents such as this, they do take the time to go and reassess the potential need for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, what is the department doing to work with regard to highway patrols itself? We have highway patrol within the territorial government, but not just our own highway patrol. Are we working with the City of Yellowknife's Municipal Enforcement Division? Are we working with the RCMP to take best advantage of patrolling our highways? Are we working on collaborative programs such as check stops, et cetera, to reduce unsafe driving?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As the Member said, we have our own highway patrol that goes out there continually, specifically in the wintertime when truck traffic is at its peak. We have our superintendent who patrols each highway section that they are in charge of on a daily basis to make people aware of potential hazardous areas and the condition of the highway and report back to the department on that. As far as us working with the City of Yellowknife and the RCMP on the sorts of things that the Member has alluded to, I am not quite sure how that works. I would have to check with the department if we have collaboration with the city and their municipal enforcement and the RCMP on a regular basis on some of the challenges around that.

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

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for his reply. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to know if the Minister can inform this House at this time with regard to any

update on the investigation or assessment that was going to take place around the winter ice road season out on the Tibbitt to Contwoyto highway that was stemming from all of the accidents, the rollovers, the cab fires that had happened? Can the Minister inform us if there is anything he can share with this House right now to let us know what has come of those circumstances? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I committed to getting back to the House on that communication that we would have, particularly with the contractors of the winter road, and I have not got that to date. I will follow up and get back to the Member.

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

QUESTION 774-18(2):
CARBON PRICING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The Premier has made statements in the past resisting any form of carbon pricing but later signed on to the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. Can the Premier tell the public and the Regular MLAs the Cabinet's current position on carbon pricing for the Northwest Territories? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have had briefings with committee. There is another briefing scheduled with committee on Wednesday, and we have been very clear in our briefings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I appreciate the briefing that we are going to get, but it is not public, as I understand it. I guess we will wait and see. As I said in my statement, the federal government recently released a technical paper on its backstop carbon pricing scheme that will apply to all provinces and territories. What is our government doing on the issue of carbon pricing, and when will that be shared with Regular MLAs and the public?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As I have said many times in this House, we will be doing what the people of the Northwest Territories tell us to do. We have been holding roundtables throughout the Northwest Territories. We have been inviting people from the smaller communities to attend these roundtables, and we will be tabling in this House a report on what we heard, so that all of the people in Northwest Territories will know what we heard. Also, we will be releasing an NWT carbon tax

discussion paper in June, so that we will have another round of consultation with the people of the Northwest Territories. We feel that it is very important for us to have a very clear understanding of what the people of the Northwest Territories want us to do in this regard.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Premier for that. I appreciate that we are finally going to get a discussion paper going on carbon tax here in the Northwest Territories. Can the Premier just give us any sort of insights into what will be in that paper? Will it discuss different forms of carbon taxing and what we actually do with the revenues? There are a couple of different ways of looking at the revenues. One is to rebate part of it back. The second is to invest some of it into renewables. Can the Minister explain whether that discussion paper will consider the issue of what to do with the revenues raised through a carbon tax?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: My expectation is we will take into consideration all of those aspects with regards to a carbon pricing mechanism. We certainly have been given assurance from the Government of Canada, directly from the Prime Minister, that we are going to work together on a solution. It will be very important for us to fully understand the implications of carbon pricing before we make an actual decision on how it will be implemented. All of the areas that the Member raised, it is my expectation that the discussion paper will raise.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Premier for that commitment that those items are going to be dealt with. On March 1st, the Premier promised to provide a carbon modelling and pricing reports of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. Can the Premier explain why this report has not been shared and when he intends to provide it to the committee and to the public? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do know that we have been doing modelling on the various implications of carbon pricing. The Member quoted two cents per litre, 18 cents per litre over five years. I can tell you that it is higher than that, but we have been doing that work. I will check in to see where that report is at, and if it is ready, we will release it.

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

QUESTION 775-18(2):
AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT ON
CORRECTION SERVICES

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, I addressed the issue that the last Assembly, the 17th Assembly, had seen the Auditor General's report on corrections in the NWT tabled March of 2015 followed by a committee report dated June 4, 2015. My question to the Minister is: what is the status of this report and the recommendations? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2015, the Auditor General of Canada completed an audit on the NWT Corrections Service that focused on the North Slave Correctional Centre here in Yellowknife and the Fort Smith Correctional Complex male unit, of course in Fort Smith. The Department of Justice responded by accepting all of the recommendations in the report, and I understand to this point 95 per cent of the recommendations have been completed. Thank you.

MR. MCNEELY: Those are high numbers. I understand that the Auditor General's report produced 14 recommendations, and the action plan items introduced by the committee for the department was 105. Those are high numbers to address the small amount of recommendations by the auditor. However, there was some oversight neglecting to be addressed in the report in the area of court services, sentencing decisions, community in custody programming. Those are just a few that are not addressed in the Auditor General's report. What is the status on those items that weren't addressed in the Auditor General's report?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I'm not entirely sure what programs of corrections the Member opposite is referring to. We are always trying to improve in all areas. As I mentioned, 95 per cent of the recommendations have been completed. That means there's still 5 per cent to be completed. The items that he has referenced today, however, are not those as I understand it which were included in the Auditor General's report. Obviously, issues of sentencing and rehabilitation are always ongoing concerns of the department and corrections.

MR. MCNEELY: Can the Minister provide a commitment or a briefing to look at the issues that were not completed with the Auditor General's report and provide a briefing on those neglected items?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Just because some of the items have not been completed doesn't mean that they were neglected. It may be that it has simply

taken more time. Included amongst them, I can advise, are our changes to the Corrections Act.

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

MR. MCNEELY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to providing this side of the House with a briefing on the Auditor General's report of 2015? Mahsi.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly be pleased to meet with the Member opposite on an individual basis. I don't know whether a full briefing is really required at this stage. The Auditor General's report is now more than two years old; 95 per cent of the recommendations have been completed. I would be certainly pleased to meet personally with the Member opposite to discuss those items that are still outstanding. I can advise that even those outstanding have not been neglected in any way. They simply have not been fully completed.

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

QUESTION 776-18(2):
DEDICATED SPACE TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today we had Marie Speakman here. I'm not sure if she still is here, but she is well-known and well-loved for her support for victims of sexual violence. It's my understanding that she has initiated some discussion with police around having a private space for sexual assault victims to receive services of support and the sexual assault kit that is used to collect evidence. I'm wondering if the Minister can tell us whether he is taking a role in this initiative to create a private space for this purpose. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly like to hear more about this private space. I've heard a small amount today, and I think last week. I certainly would be prepared to discuss the matter with the RCMP. I don't think I can make any financial commitments as to whether we would be in a position to provide such a space. Thank you.

MS. GREEN: I know the Minister hasn't had a lot of time to consider this, but would he agree that privacy is currently a problem and a dedicated space may be a solution?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I certainly concur that privacy would be an issue and a problem and I

certainly would be willing to meet with the RCMP to discuss solutions to that problem.

MS. GREEN: May I also suggest that the Minister of Justice talk to the Minister of Health about whether there could be a dedicated space or whether there is already planned a dedicated space in the new hospital for the use of the sexual assault evidence collection kit?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I certainly don't know whether there is any dedicated space in the plans for the new hospital. I will, however, be pleased to speak with the Minister of Health about this issue.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can I get a commitment from the Minister to follow up on these questions when he does his other follow-up to oral questions from this session? Mahsi.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you. I'd be happy to make that commitment.

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

QUESTION 777-18(2):
PROCUREMENT POLICY REFORM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for putting such great confidence in me that a one-on-one meeting together will represent all the stakeholder interest in the procurement process and the government. Alas, Mr. Speaker, I am only one honourable Member of this House, and I'm going to ask if the Minister will reconsider his position from the previous sitting of this House and establish a special advisory panel on procurement that will draw expertise from public servants, NWT businesses, and procurement experts to make a better procurement system for the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think much has changed since last session. I will not commit to doing that. I'm willing to sit down, as I said, with the Member and discuss the problems that he's having with one of his constituents. I believe we have a very robust system in place for procurement in the Government of the Northwest Territories. Is it perfect? No, but we are working on that on a daily basis and trying to make things better for all residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: I'm a bit disappointed. I know the Minister is fond of advisory committees. He's established one for the Yellowknife Airport, so I was hoping he'd consider doing one for this issue as well. If not a committee, then, or a panel, would the Minister be willing to hire a consultant who can issue a comprehensive report that looks at government procurement policies and then we can take action on that report? Is the Minister willing to make that commitment?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: No, I am not willing to commit to do that. As I've said in this House, I believe we have a good system in place. Is it perfect? No. We will continually work to improve it for residents in the Northwest Territories and businesses in the NWT.

MR. TESTART: I'm a bit disappointed. I know the Minister's very fond of consultants and helping the government do its work. What I'm trying to do by offering these suggestions is improve our procurement in a more public, transparent, and substantive way. If not any of these options I present on the table today, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to coming to a constituency meeting or community meeting in my riding of Kam Lake that has many businesses and hearing the concerns directly from my constituents about the procurement? Will he make that commitment? I'll even provide the refreshments.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: No, I will not go to a constituency meeting with the Member. We just did a tour with a number of MLAs and deputy ministers of his riding, particularly around manufacturers in the NWT. We have a public process to participate in procurement process in the Northwest Territories. We can allow input to there. People can write letters to me, as I've said, or contact me. As I've said in this House before, I believe the last time I spoke, I did not have one complaint around procurement in the Northwest Territories and, since the last session, I maybe had one or two complaints about procurement in the Northwest Territories. I'm not about to spend public money on a full-scale review of procurement in the Northwest Territories because a Member's constituent may have a problem. Maybe it is our fault and we will look into it, but I'm not going to spend public money in that matter.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've made progress today. The Minister has received two complaints. That's way better than zero complaints, but that's still just the tip of the iceberg. I appreciate that the Minister doesn't want to make this an expensive and an ineffective process, so I would suggest that we can work together to

develop terms of reference that would ensure we streamline this process and make it work.

I'm disappointed that, even if I pay for the meeting, he's not willing to come to it, but I'll put it this way, Mr. Speaker: did the Minister hear the complaints from those vendors when we went on that tour together earlier this year? Did the Minister hear those complaints and is he taking action on them? Because several complaints were levied against the procurement system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we've heard certain challenges from certain people in the manufacturing sector in the Northwest Territories. That's why we're coming forward with a manufacturer's strategy and, in the life of this government, we will address those in particular. As I've said, we have a very robust procurement system in the Northwest Territories; probably better than any province or territory in Canada. We will continue going down that road to help northern businesses meet the procurement to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 778-18(2):
MACKENZIE DELTA FERRY SERVICES

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also have questions for the Minister responsible for Infrastructure. In follow-up to my questions last week, I would like to ask the Minister: are the ferries in Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson ready for launch? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of the latest information I had, we are still going through some refit stuff. There is actually some painting going on both of the ferries in the Member's riding. There is ongoing work and also site preparation to launch the ferries. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: Last week, as I kind of figured, the water dropped significantly in my riding of Tsiigehtchic and also in Fort McPherson. Is the department starting the work on the landings and making everything ready so that, once a ferry is launched, they are ready for service?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I said last week in this House, I think we anticipate the launching of the ferries in a timely manner, as it normally is the first or second week of June. Like I say, we are doing some painting. We are doing inspections. We are doing some maintenance on the vessels. I do not know if the loaders and stuff are out fixing the

approaches right now, as they could be soft still from the water levels just recently receding. I can check into it and update the Member.

MR. BLAKE: You know, it is different every year, as the Minister just explained, but usually as early as the 1st or 2nd of June, the ferry is usually ready. As soon as we have no ice on the river, they usually launch the ferry and build up the landings, start operations. We have a graduation this coming weekend. Does the Minister think that the ferry will be operating by then?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I will have to check with the department to see where we are with a number of these things. Like I said, with the painting and the repairs and stuff going on and the site preparation, I cannot commit to this House if it is going to be ready or not for graduation this weekend. We will see what the department comes back with about how things are going on the ground.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask the Minister: is there anything that is holding back the ferries? Are they waiting for any parts or anything at this time, or are they just doing the final preparations for the ferry? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I believe there have been some challenges around accessing parts and stuff, but I believe that, going forward, with all the other work that is happening, I do not believe that will impede the delivery date of when we are going to put the ferries in during the first or second week of June.

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

QUESTION 779-18(2):
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I was talking about mental health and mental illness, and I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister please tell us what kind of training front-line workers are doing besides Mental Health First Aid? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mental Health First Aid is one of the programs that we offer throughout the Northwest Territories. It is recognized internationally as one of the best practice models

out there for tackling mental health issues, and we make it available to all residents across the Northwest Territories. In-house, we do have training for our staff about our particular programs and services they provide, but that is for staff that we have within the Health and Social Services system. As far as training we provide to other GNWT employees, I would have to check with the department to see what we do make available, if anything. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for that answer. I guess we are seeing too many tragedies out here in this world, especially in all of our ridings. As we move forward, will the Minister look at other alternatives such as the strengthening mental health for children offered through NWTRP as an opportunity for front-line workers to be using that course?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: When it comes to addressing mental health issues and challenges across the Northwest Territories, there are a number of stakeholders and partners involved doing really fantastic work. Bell Canada is doing a significant amount of work to create awareness and encourage people to talk about the challenges that residents are having, and there are other organizations like Sport and Rec Council that are delivering training as well.

I am not as familiar with the program that the Member is talking about today. I have asked the Member to provide me with some details on the program so that I can share that with the department, have a discussion with him on how it may fit within the current types of programs that we're delivering, but until I am familiar with that type of program, or that exact program, actually, I am not prepared to make any commitments to have it as one of the ones that we're delivering on behalf of Health and Social Services.

MR. THOMPSON: The Minister is right. He has asked me to get that information to him, and I will get that information to him. I guess the next question for the Minister: what kind of work has the department been doing to train other departments in working to help address this challenging issue?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a number of different things that we're doing. We have the ASIST training as well. That is available to Education, Culture and Employment. I know Education, Culture and Employment takes this very seriously as well and is looking at providing different types of supports in their school system. We are currently working on a Youth Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, which we are hoping will help strengthen us and the services we provide in this area.

I will go back to Mental Health First Aid, Mr. Speaker. This is, as I have indicated, a Canadian program. In the Northwest Territories, it is catered specifically to the Northwest Territories and some of the challenges we are facing. It is recognized internationally as one of the best practises, one of the best courses, for helping people get trained and aware and also, in the Northwest Territories, point them to where services are available for residents. We are encouraging people to attend this. I would strongly encourage all MLAs to attend this three-day workshop and help develop those skills, and non-Members as well, so that they could talk about this program and encourage others to attend from a point of view of knowing and understanding the course. I have had an opportunity to take it, Mr. Speaker. It is a fantastic course, and it is well worth the three-day investment.

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

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his answer. I, too, have taken the Mental Health First Aid training, but also have taken Strengthening Children's Mental Health as well, and basically, what I am looking at is: can the Minister make a commitment to work with his colleagues, the other Ministers, to have the front-line staff get some training out there? Because we are having lots of tragedies out there. We are seeing a lot of losses of lives, and it is really disappointing. Will the Minister work with the Minister of MACA and the Minister of ECE to get the front-line workers out there, just get that commitment to start working together on this issue for further training? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to action plans that are across departments, like the Youth Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan that is coming, we do work closely with our partner departments to make sure that whatever we are proposing is reasonable and feasible across the Government of the Northwest Territories. I do take the Member's point, and we do need to work to ensure that our front-line staff, including teachers, social workers, income support workers, and others who may have direct contact with individuals who are struggling are aware and can identify the signs and properly provide advice to those residents and point them in the right direction. I will certainly have some additional conversations with my colleagues about encouraging some of their staff members to participate in training like the Mental Health First Aid.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12,

reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 15:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE TOBACCO TAX ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed Bill 15, An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Tobacco Tax Act to permit the introduction of an excise-paid tax stamp to facilitate verification that the proper taxes have been paid on tobacco sold in the Northwest Territories, thereby reducing opportunities for the sale of contraband tobacco. The bill also amends the process for tax collection to the "purchase method," requiring the remittance of taxes owing by wholesalers to the government of the Northwest Territories at the time that tobacco is purchased from manufacturers. Finally, the bill eliminates the need for retail dealers to act as "deputy collectors" under the act and eliminates commissions paid to wholesale dealers.

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Government Operations held a public hearing on this bill in Yellowknife on April 6, 2017. At that hearing, the committee heard from Mr. Roger Walker who, as the owner and general manager of Territorial Tobacco Products, is the only tobacco wholesaler resident in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Walker raised some general concerns about tobacco tax collection that are outside of the scope of the bill. The committee understands that the government's Department of Finance has taken Mr. Walker's concerns into consideration and responded accordingly. The committee would like to thank Mr. Walker for his input.

A public clause-by-clause review of the bill took place earlier this afternoon. With that, Mr. Speaker, the committee wishes to report that Bill 15, An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act, is now ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 374-18(2):
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY:
PROGRESS REPORT 2015-2016

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Economic Opportunities Strategy: Progress Report 2015-2016." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

TABLED DOCUMENT 375-18(2):
APPENDICES FOR RETURN TO WRITTEN
QUESTION 19-18(2): POSITION VACANCY AND
OVERTIME STATISTICS

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table "Appendices for Return to Written Question 19-18(2): Position Vacancy and Overtime Statistics." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation.

TABLED DOCUMENT 376-18(2):
2017-2018 CORPORATE PLAN NWT HYDRO
CORPORATION AND NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "2017-2018 Corporate Plan NWT Hydro Corporation and Northwest Territories Power Corporation." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

TABLED DOCUMENT 377-18(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
403-18(2): SENIORS SPORT AND RECREATION
PROGRAM FUNDING

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 403-18(2): Seniors Sport and Recreation Program Funding." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 24:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE CORONER'S ACT

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Coroner's Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is on the floor. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Bill 24 has had its first reading. First reading of Bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 25:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Bill 25 has had its first reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Infrastructure.

BILL 26:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVOLVING FUNDS ACT, NO. 2

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act, No. 2, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Bill 26 has had its first reading. First reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, with the Member for Hay River North in the Chair.

Consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good to see you back. Committee wishes to consider Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will consider the act after a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I will now call the Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. I will ask the Minister responsible for the bill to introduce it. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We thank you for the opportunity to present Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, to the Committee of the Whole. This bill responds to our commitment approved in the 2016-2017 budget to provide further financial assistance to low and modest-income families to raise their children through an enhancement to the Northwest Territories Child Benefit.

The amendments to the NWT Income Tax Act will allow us to enhance the NWT Child Benefit by providing a total of \$2.2 million in direct support for children in families with annual income up to \$80,000. This enhanced program supports a number of priorities in the 18th Legislative Assembly's mandate, including lowering the cost of living, fostering healthy families, and supporting the well-being of children so that they can develop to their full potential.

The new benefit amounts start at \$815 for the first child under six and \$652 for the first child six years of age and older. This per-child benefit is reduced for each additional child and as family income increases, but will provide benefits for children to every family with income under \$80,000. This is a significant enhancement to the current program that completely eliminates benefits as early as \$41,000 in annual income for a one-child family and \$61,000 in annual income for a five-child family.

Bill 17 also includes the following technical amendments to the Income Tax Act to:

- incorporate provisions of the federal Income Tax Act on withholding of tax refund;
- update names of federal agencies;
- remove duplication of the Consumer Price Index determination;
- apply the federal penalty provisions for false statements, omissions, or gross negligence to the NWT Child Benefit program;
- eliminate the territorial Overseas Employment Tax Credit; and
- remove reference to the federal Education Tax Credit. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister McLeod. I will now turn to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations. The committee can consider the bill for any opening comments he may have. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Standing Committee on Government Operations concluded its review of Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, on April 6, 2017, for the public hearing held here in the Legislative Assembly building. The bill amends the Income Tax Act by facilitating the provision of additional financial support to low- and modest-income families by:

- adjusting the formula for the NWT Child Benefit;
- incorporate provisions of the federal Income Tax Act that relate to the withholding of tax refunds;
- updating the names of some federal agencies;
- clarifying the definition of the Consumer Price Index;
- applying federal penalty provisions relating to false statements, omissions, or gross negligence in income tax returns;
- eliminating the Overseas Employment Tax Credit; and
- retaining the Education Tax Credit.

Members may have additional comments or questions as we proceed with the consideration of this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I would, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses to the Chamber. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses to the Chamber.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to my right, I have Mr. David Stewart, deputy minister of Finance, and to my left, I have Mr. Ian Rennie, who is the legislative counsel.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 17. Any general comments? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to state my strong support for this bill. I think that it creates a very effective way to support modest- to low-income families through the enhanced NWT Child Benefit. It's a very progressive piece of government policy. It's income-tested and it's going to apply to I think the total number is 2,000 families after it is implemented. The only regret I have is that it's not a mandate commitment, and I believe it should be. It directly speaks to our support for lowering the cost of living. It directly speaks to our support for families in need. It's a very good piece.

The other parts of the bill, although less significant, are certainly required in order to modernize the legislation and update it vis-a-vis federal statutes. The committee did take its time to properly understand the NWT Child Benefit. There was a bit of confusion on how the bill was initially presented, but I'd like to also thank the department for taking the time to work with us to clearly express our concerns around how this bill was going to roll out.

I think the Minister, again, is deserving of some praise for effectively communicating both the policy objectives and the funding for this very important measure to alleviate poverty and give Northerners a leg up. With that, I will close my comments. Again, I state my very strong support for this bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Any further opening comments on Bill 17? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the review of this piece of legislation was unnecessarily hampered by not just poor but dismal communication by the Department of Finance. It took a very considerable amount of work by our research staff to understand where the money was and is to pay for this benefit and how taking money out of income assistance for food and clothing was

not at the detriment to the people who need it most. Income assistance, as you know, is not over the poverty line. I have to say that this is another example of very poor communications within the Department of Finance. They are trying to communicate information to people who are interested in hearing it, very motivated to understand it, and yet, as I say, it took an inordinate amount of work to get to a point where we could understand where it's at.

We've had these challenges as well with the public accounts. I understand that the Department of Finance doesn't have a communication staff, and I would just like to say to the Minister that it is urgently needed that the staff in his department are able to communicate clearly with the committee about the plans that they are making. There is no question that this bill will benefit 1,600 families who have not previously benefited from this NWT Child Benefit and that is undoubtedly a good thing, but the struggle to get to that clear understanding was just completely unnecessary and I believe can be remedied by proper communications help. I don't have any doubts about supporting this bill. I think it is the right thing to do, but I really would like to hope that the next work with the Department of Finance is better guided by communications. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I want to echo my colleague's comments on the need for improved communications. This is very complex area. It was sort of triggered by the Canada childcare benefit being brought in by the federal government, and then our government decided to follow up with the NWT Child Benefit, so the relationship between the federal program and the new territorial program and income assistance took a lot of time and effort on the part of both the department, I guess, and Regular MLAs to understand this.

I think there's a lesson learned there in terms of how to improve communications. As difficult as it may be for us as Regular MLAs to understand what was happening, I'm really much more concerned about what it is for the person on the street and how they can understand these changes. Really, you can only take full advantage of these changes when people actually file their income tax. I'd like to know from the department and the staff what extra effort are we going to do to encourage people to actually file their taxes? We're just finished that season now. You know, I don't pay attention to every piece of media that I see here, but I don't recall seeing a sustained media on the part of our government to encourage people to file their taxes to take advantage of this kind of benefit.

In any event, like my colleague who just spoke from Yellowknife Centre, I have concern around the communications of this, the complexity of it, and how we communicate this to the average person in the Northwest Territories so they can take full advantage of it and encourage people to file their taxes. Those are my opening remarks. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. I see no further opening remarks. Does committee agree that we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will defer the bill until after the consideration of clauses. Committee, please turn to page 3 of the bill. I will take a short break. Thank you, committee.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I will now call Committee of the Whole back to order. I believe that in the opening statements Mr. O'Reilly posed a question that he would like the Minister to respond to. Mr. O'Reilly, would you please restate your question, and I will allow the Minister a chance to respond.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess there are two items that I am hoping I can hear from the Minister or his staff about. First off, like my colleague had mentioned, I understand this is a complex area, but we have got to find a way to more effectively communicate this in general. Secondly, how are we working with people to try to encourage them to file their taxes to take full advantage of this? I didn't see any campaign around this during the last tax filing season, so what are we doing to encourage people to file their taxes to take full advantage of this new benefit? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to the first point, and that goes to Member for Yellowknife Centre's question as well on the communication. We do have communication people on staff now under the corporate shared services, so communication efforts should improve. To Mr. O'Reilly's question, we work with CRA. CRA had a bit of a promotional campaign. We worked closely with them to try and get people to understand that they need to file their income tax because this is based on their income tax filing. The fact that there is an opportunity for more money in their pocket, I think, would be encouragement or incentive enough, but our improved

communications and the fact that there is an opportunity for people to access more money, I think, will be incentive enough. We will continue to work on that. As we go through the next tax filing system, we will ensure that we do our part to get the information out there as to the importance of filing your income tax return. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. We can now proceed to the clause-by-clause review of the bill. Would committee please turn to page 3 of the bill. We'll go through this one clause at a time. Clause 1.

---Clauses 1 through 14 inclusive approved

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Committee, to the bill as a whole. Does committee agree that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Bill 17 is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Thank you to the Minister and your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Testart.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. I would like to report that Bill 17 is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

---Carried

Masi. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Legislative Assembly Board of Management in Conference Room A at the rise of the House today. Orders of the day for Tuesday, May 30, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Coroner's Act
 - Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act
 - Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act, No. 2
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act

- Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Health and Social Services Professions Act

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 30, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:00 p.m.