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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
**(Nahendeh)**

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*Minister of Industry, Tourism and  
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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Monday, May 27, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson):**

Colleagues, I'd like to thank Annie Goose for the opening guiding words and the blessing today. I hope everybody had a good weekend and prepared to get to work for the next four days.

Ministers' statements. Minister from Housing NWT.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 34-20(1):  
INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT  
PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the only way this government can effectively address the territory's housing crisis is through true partnership with Indigenous governments. As stated in this government's mandate, Indigenous governments play an important role in advancing housing initiatives that meet the unique needs of NWT communities, and we must work closely with them to ensure we are implementing housing solutions that have a real, positive impact on residents.

In this spirit of true partnership, Housing NWT has signed four formal agreements with Indigenous governments that support collaboration on housing projects. Mr. Speaker, agreements have been signed with the Tlicho government, Sahtu Secretariat, Deline Got'ine government and, most recently, I proudly signed the collaborative agreement on housing with the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

Building on the GNWT's existing partnership with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, this agreement provides a formal framework for intergovernmental collaboration on housing-related matters in Aklavik, Inuvik, Tetlit

Zheh, and Tsiigehtchic, which will primarily happen through the housing working group. Together we will prioritize community housing planning, coordinated program delivery, and joint housing delivery. Together, we will improve housing-related programs and services in Gwich'in communities.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT's formal housing agreements, memorandums of understanding and memorandums of agreement, are tailored to each Indigenous government and build on existing intergovernmental agreements currently in place, acknowledging the relationships that have already been built and work that has already been advanced. We look forward to signing more agreements with interested Indigenous governments over the lifetime of this Legislative Assembly.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, even where no formal agreement is signed, the GNWT has made it its priority to engage and work with Indigenous governments across the territory. The NWT Housing Forum, for example, is a body co-chaired by Housing NWT and an Indigenous government, currently the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Established in early 2023, this forum promotes coordination and collaboration among participating NWT governments in the housing sphere and plays an important role in promoting information exchange and cooperation between NWT governments on housing priorities. I appreciate having an ongoing venue to discuss housing priorities with Housing NWT and Indigenous governments as we work together to improve housing outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, being from a small community myself and having travelled to communities across the NWT, I have seen firsthand the territory's unique housing challenges and how they range from community to community. By collaborating with Indigenous governments, we can maximize funding, provide more training opportunities to residents, increase economic activity and build the capacities of Indigenous governments. Through partnership, we can implement housing solutions that meet the unique needs of the communities and build a

stronger, healthier NWT where residents are truly set up to thrive. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 35-20(1):  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
PREPARATION

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we're faced with another season of floods and wildfires, I understand that many communities and residents are concerned about the potential for disaster events. We have experienced a series of unprecedented disasters over the past four years, and as the snow melts, we are seeing dramatic changes in our landscape as a result of record low water levels. In light of this, I strongly encourage residents to check with family, friends, and neighbours, and especially the elderly who may not have access to the internet, to collectively take action to prepare for this year's high-risk season. We have learned time and time again, including during last year's historic wildfire season, that we are stronger together and that NWT residents will be there for each other during time of need.

Mr. Speaker, we learned many lessons from last year's disasters, and we are not waiting to make further improvements to our emergency management system. Ahead of this year's high-risk season, the NWT Emergency Plan was updated to better reflect its purpose and to make it easier to understand. We also clarified roles and responsibilities of communities as the leads for coordinating local emergency management in their communities, as well as how the Government of the Northwest Territories, Indigenous governments, and non-government organizations work within the NWT emergency management system.

As lead for the emergency management, community governments should have a local emergency management organization with participation of Indigenous governments and other community partners. We also want community governments to be empowered to involve Indigenous governments, non-government organizations, and private industry in the development of emergency plans knowing that updates to the NWT Emergency Plan identify what costs may be reimbursed to those should the Disaster Assistance Policy be applied.

Mr. Speaker, community governments should have community emergency plans that are reviewed periodically and practiced annually. The Department of Municipal and Community

Affairs has contacted all community governments to offer assistance with planning activities and provide workshops to support this important work. The department has also provided tailored supports to the community governments, including presentations, meetings, and practice exercises since the 2023 high-risk season. The department has facilitated emergency planning workshops in 12 communities. Our government has also been proactive with improving our preparedness and capacity to respond to emergency events.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' emergency management division, the emergency management organization, and all departments reviewed their procedures ahead of this year's high-risk season. We also issued a call for surge staff to support all the departments and agencies when faced with emergencies, compiled a database of available staff, and have proactively provided training. Each department is also responsible for updating their own business continuity plan for a wide range of emergencies that may occur and impact departmental business.

As part of this work, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has developed a shared resource on business continuity planning, including scenarios to assist with departments in identifying essential staff. An interdepartmental working group led by the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs is currently working to coordinate these plans.

In advance of this year's high-risk season, the department has also rolled out its annual Emergency Preparedness Week and Be Ready campaigns to promote the importance of personal and family preparedness. This year, the focus is on the importance of having insurance and making sure that people know that proof of insurance or prior refusal is required to be eligible for the assistance of the Disaster Assistance Policy is applied after an event. While overland flood insurance may be difficult to obtain in some communities, fire insurance is usually included in general insurance for residents and businesses, and all homeowners, tenants, business owners, and organizations should check their insurance coverage with their provider.

As Northerners, we know all too well that emergency events can be stressful, disruptive, costly, and potentially devastating. We also know that with better preparation, we can mitigate some of the damages, stress, and financial impact. Community governments can do their part by ensuring emergency and business continuity plans are up to date and thoroughly addressing potential risks. Similarly,

private businesses, non-government organizations, and residents are all encouraged to develop business continuity plans and emergency plans that consider their specific circumstances.

I urge all residents to be prepared as the 2024 high-risk season approaches. Practical things that we can all do to protect ourselves including developing workplace and household emergency plans that include plans for pets, preparing emergency kits, and a grab-and-go bag, and also getting insurance where it is available. I also strongly encourage residents to access information from trusted sources when emergencies occur, including your local authority leads and the Government of the Northwest Territories' public safety website where residents can find information and other trusted sources of information for more detail. Using this website, residents can quickly access all relevant safety information, including the latest wildfire updates, highway conditions, and information about outages, air quality, and much much more.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize all of the good work that our staff have been doing since last summer and extend my sincere appreciation to all emergency responders who keep the NWT communities and residents safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 180-20(1): MIDWIFERY SERVICES

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my campaign last fall, I took time out from door knocking to attend the Yellowknife International Film Festival to support local NWT filmmakers. I personally love film shorts and was pleased to attend the northern shorts program, which was world class.

One of the shorts screened that night was "She Gives Birth", a film that lays bare the anti-Indigenous racism in health services faced by many smaller communities across the North. When MLAs were briefed on the budget and told the midwifery program expansion was coming to a close, to better support our smaller communities and their needs for birth work, I was excited, Mr. Speaker. What was not relayed is that the program expansion coming to a close means the whole program in Yellowknife is theoretically done.

While this funding is targeted to provide services in the Yellowknife area, it ultimately makes midwifery services stronger across the territory by stabilizing a system that is currently fragile and offering viable options for local NWT midwives to be trained in a center with many births and to retain them over the long term. Midwifery services in Yellowknife were planned out for the next three years to provide outreach to small communities and support opportunities for Northerners to pursue midwifery education.

Mr. Speaker, no midwives were consulted on this decision. The program currently has two summer students, both of who are studying outside the territory to become midwives and desire to return to Yellowknife to practice. They told me on the weekend, quote, "if this program is cancelled, I'll have to work elsewhere and likely leave the NWT", end quote. They're also concerned that this means that they will have to pay back the funds they received from the NWT Health and Social Services bursary program.

Mr. Speaker, in less than 24 hours, the NWT Midwives Association had close to 70 responses to their survey seeking feedback from Northerners on midwifery services.

Mr. Speaker, why are we making shortsighted decisions that reduce service to folks who are giving birth and reducing options for students who began their studies in good faith that their work would help their fellow Northerners? I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 181-20(1): MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, the Department of Infrastructure are currently reviewing the operations of MTS. Mr. Speaker, the issues with low water and problems with our current transportation corridor are likely not to go away anytime soon. Mr. Speaker, I think it's time we started to look outside the box.

Logistically, it is the time, Mr. Speaker, to look at locating a significant portion of our MTS operations in a more northern region of our territory. The base of operations in Inuvik or Tuk could service upriver to Fort Good Hope and of course the communities in the Beaufort Delta region. Mr. Speaker, while as a government we are good at governing, that doesn't necessarily mean we're good at managing businesses. And, Mr. Speaker, this is by no way means a statement disparaging the important work we

do, or our bureaucracy does, but it is my hope that as part of this review an analysis will be completed to the merits of privatizing this essential service. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, there are private or Indigenous companies out there that may have some of the outside-of-the-box solutions to ensure that this important transportation infrastructure continues to serve our residents that rely heavily, Mr. Speaker, on its ability to deliver goods and services to our communities. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 182-20(1):  
EROSION ALONG AKLAVIK ACCESS ROAD

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every community within the Northwest Territories should be accommodated at the same rate. Aklavik is no different. For years, the community has been left out in major projects. The community of Aklavik and its residents are isolated from the rest of the region during the spring and fall months of the year. Due to climate change, the opening of the ice road is happening much later, and the closing stages are earlier than previous years. The only access the residents have to the outskirts of the community is Bickish Road. Bickish Road access gives the residents the opportunity to go harvest wildlife and firewood for their subsistence use. Due to climate change, the shoreline to the access road is eroding at a rapid pace.

Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, maybe around 15 years ago, the shoreline was around 20 feet from the road. Today it is less than 10 feet. The community and its residents would like to ensure that this road is kept safe and in good use for many more years to come.

Mr. Speaker, in other regions of the Northwest Territories, most notably the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, have been given assistance to save their shoreline from erosion. The community of Aklavik requires the same assistance because there's no room for expansion and once the access road is gone, so will some of the lakes that are adjacent to this road and that will have a negative impact on the aging infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the community's water source comes from the river that runs along the access road and when, not if, the road collapses into the river, it will have a detrimental effect on the quality of water. If we can save the road from collapsing into the river, the community and its residents may have the opportunity to continue with subsistence use and the health of the

residents, maybe safe for the foreseeable future. The infrastructure of the community has to be looked at for the long-term impacts that climate change is having on the community of Aklavik and its residents.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Aklavik and its residents have been left out of the government's major projects for a number of years compared to the rest of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community of Aklavik and its residents have been left out of the government's major projects for a number of years compared to the rest of the Northwest Territories. Let us, the government, continue to let the communities survive and strive for many years to come as the model of Aklavik is Never Say Die, and only with the collaboration of this government and the community of Aklavik, that we can keep this community safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 183-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE STAFFING TASKFORCE

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's clear that at our territorial hospital, Stanton, we have a crisis on our hands. Particularly since COVID, we've demanded more and more from our frontline health workers, staff have quit due to inadequate supports, services have been closed and relocated to Alberta, and we have increasingly relied on expensive agency nurses to keep services open. The staff that remain feeling increasingly taken for granted and undersupported. There's been a downward spiral in morale alongside an upward spiral in costs and inefficiencies.

Mr. Speaker, in my discussions with health care workers at Stanton, we have come up with an idea for a cost-effective solution that I want to present now for consideration during these budget deliberations. While it doesn't fix everything, it could help release some of the immediate pressure and set us on a path towards better staff retention.

The idea is to establish a task force. The task force could be staffed by two to three people who would act as navigators and brokers of solutions for frontline staff to address the low hanging fruit causing the greatest frustrations amongst health care workers, especially when



it comes to workplace policies and procedures and labour relations. Who makes decisions about what can be exceedingly confusing within our health care system? A task force would direct staff to the person with the authority to address their issue and support concrete actions to address it.

Now, we currently have an office of client experience and a cancer navigator program focusing on advocating for patients and helping patients navigate the system. The task force I'm proposing would have a similar purpose, except it's for staff. It could eventually become a more permanent fixture in our system. Perhaps an office of provider experience.

The task force would need to be independent from management but with access to leadership in order to be able to broker solutions. It should have similar authority as a senior advisor. Importantly, we need to choose members with expertise about our particular NWT health care system but not pull existing staff out of other essential positions. The task force needs to be action orientated and, on top of addressing individual cases, it should identify common problems and recommend systemic improvements both in the short and long term. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So establishment of this task force should be accompanied by a commitment by the Minister and NTHSSA to take actions wherever possible to show that we truly value our health care workers and are responsive to their needs. I will be asking questions of the Minister at the proper time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 184-20(1):  
DETERIORATION OF FRONTLINE  
HEALTHCARE SERVICES

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, when I stood in response to the finance Minister's budget last week, my criticism focused on the government's failure to take decisive action on the priorities of our Assembly. One of the most urgent of those priorities, especially for my constituents in Range Lake, is the dire state of our frontline health care services, especially at Stanton Territorial Hospital.

The deterioration of our frontline health care services is rapidly becoming a full-blown crisis. Our nurses are increasingly burdened with

astronomical workloads as they try to provide adequate care in the face of staff cuts and unfilled positions. They often find themselves working short, and it is alleged that they are asked to take unsafe patient assignments that do not meet internal policies and the Canadian standards of practice. The ability for the hospital to manage at surge capacity is coming into question. The government's solution so far has only been to increasingly rely on private out-of-territory agency nurses, but this is only doing more harm than good.

Relying on agency nurses is incredibly expensive. These private agencies undermine the public nature of our health care system, and the agency nurses themselves come with little cultural sensitivity or training. Worst of all, they make our local nurses feel replaceable and undervalued at a time when their morale is already suffering.

Mr. Speaker, nobody knows health care better than the frontline professionals. They are speaking loud and clear. If the government wants to maintain quality patient care, they need to treat nurses and physicians with respect, they need to implement management structures that are flexible and responsive to their needs and, mostly urgently, they need to restore the competitive hiring edge the North once enjoyed so providing nurses with wages and benefits necessary to live in a region with such a high cost of living.

Nobody wants to imagine a North where these circumstances continue to spiral out of control, but we are quickly running out of time needed to turn this situation around. I have been meeting with nurses, physicians, and union officials for many weeks now, and many of my colleagues on this side of the House are on the same page - united on what needs to get done. The question now is when will this government get on the same page as us, nurses, doctors, and other health care professionals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 185-20(1):  
FORT RESOLUTION EMERGENCY  
SERVICES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, when MACA pulled the trigger last year to dissolve the elected government of Fort Resolution, they did so on their own accord. They put the responsibility on themselves to maintain the community emergency services and carry out all emergency planning. They have many policies and procedures designed to ensure

that their department could follow through on an effective and responsible local government. The community was told everything would be done by the book through appointed officials who would uphold the law and respond to the community needs. For a full year, I tried to work with the department to help them follow through on their policies promptly, respond to their needs of Fort Resolution. I understood that the department took over the community as one territorial government was replaced by another and was patiently and optimistic that their new government would get stronger and grasp the situation. It has also been my goal to see MACA follow the law and provide the best local government they can for the community until Fort Resolution can return to normal elected administration.

Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed to say that my constituents in Fort Resolution have been frustrated every step of the way, and so am I.

Fort Resolution still has no emergency plan for proper emergency services. There are consequences to this inaction. This weekend's fire destroyed four homes early Saturday morning. Emergency responders stepped up, but they were forced to rely on helicopters with backup buckets because their own intake lines no longer could reach the lake. For their efforts, several firefighters were also unfortunately injured with a broken hip and smoke inhalation. This is the second time in the recent months that the fires severely damaged homes in a community already suffering from a housing crisis.

I made the department aware of the fact that the receding shoreline has left the water intake lines high and dry long ago. The fire department has also been vocal about the lack of training that could lead to an unsafe situation. Now I hear that there's a wildfire burning 75 kilometers away from Fort Resolution. Time is running out for the community, and it's also running out for the families who saw their homes burn down this weekend.

What will it take for MACA to get its administration of Fort Resolution in order before more lives are put at risk? The community is anxious to avoid the fate of Enterprise, which is now full of burnt down homes that the territorial government has no ability to rebuild for uninsured homes. Mr. Speaker, I will have more questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 186-20(1):  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ELDERS**

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in this House several times about my concern for elders and the hardship they face to pay for their house. I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the elders in my region have signed into agreements with housing that, in many cases, they did not fully understand. People signed into agreements with housing as this was the only option they had to maintain their home. What is happening in my region is that as people age and are no longer in the workforce, they struggle to make their housing payments on the limited income they have.

Mr. Speaker, I value the work of Housing NWT to assess people to enter a mortgage so they can own their own homes, but there needs to be more care taken to ensure that people are not being tied into mortgages they cannot afford. Mr. Speaker, I know elders in my region whose wages are being garnished through the Court to pay for housing arrears, housing arrears that have been sent to collections.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that GNWT could be doing more to support our elders. For elders who cannot make housing payments or fallen behind on payments, who are on fixed income and can demonstrate financial hardship, there should be some relief, whether it's a pause on collections, a forgiveness of all or some of the debt, the GNWT has the tools to ensure our elders live in dignity. We want our elders to remain in their communities surrounded by their loved ones and not living in poverty. The Housing NWT collection policy state "arrears should be forgiven where collection is not possible", end quote.

The Minister of housing has stated that work is underway with the Department of Finance to address mortgage or rental debt on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Speaker, we need to see the GNWT come up with creative solutions. I will have questions for the Minister of housing. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre. For three; is that what you're asking for?

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'd like to go back to item No. 3 on the agenda. I guess in this case, I seek unanimous consent for doing this. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Yellowknife Centre has asked to go back to number 3, seeking unanimous consent.

Member, seeing no nays, you may go back to your Member's statement.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 187-20(1):  
FUTURE OF POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

”  
**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. And just for that, I'll be a little extra nice to Cabinet who didn't nay me today.

Mr. Speaker, De Beers might have said a diamond is forever, but I can tell you a diamond mine isn't, which leads to the question of what are we doing next to spur on our economy? The real question is -- and many Northerners are curious -- is what is the future of the NWT polytech?

Mr. Speaker, I support education. I believe we must work to support Northerners as we deserve the opportunities to teach our own, to train our own, to welcome the world. Mr. Speaker, higher education is a true investment into our economy. And as we all know, education can be one of the greatest equalizers of people. It can help raise families from poverty to prosperity, Mr. Speaker. But like many things, let us not forget a diversified economy needs to be foremost on our mind, and we can't just assume it'll show up here on its own.

Mr. Speaker, here is an unclear situation. Is the GNWT truly behind the polytech? If you ask Aurora College, it looks strangely unclear, because they have a different perspective on where the polytech initiative is going. So when you hear the government say it wants to do this, it needs to do this, all I see is it dragging its feet in terms of financial investment. They can talk all they want but where is the money?

Mr. Speaker, I've been here long enough to know that when we hear vague statements that go nowhere, it's simply just daydreaming at best. Mr. Speaker, this government needs to put some momentum behind the polytech initiative before it becomes too late. Mr. Speaker, we cannot stand by bureaucratic leadership. Do not let that be the hallmark of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, we need clear commitments from this government saying we will do this by when. We want to do this by now. Mr. Speaker, we are going to get behind this. We will, we will, we will.

If this government had courage, it would say something to the effect that we will create a hundred new social housing units. If this government had courage, it would say Mackenzie Valley Highway would advance by 150 kilometers, Mr. Speaker, or we'll raise graduation rates by 65 percent in four years. Mr. Speaker, my point being is that we need to

see bold and courageous leadership, and we need to see the money in the budget. Mr. Speaker, in talking to Aurora College, they are investing themselves to create this transition. They are marching ahead because this government is not leading. So I'll tell you, this is the opportunity for this government to get out of the way or get behind, but somebody must make bold action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 188-20(1):  
HOUSING NEEDS

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in February, I brought forward two motions on housing. The first motion moved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge and affirm housing as a fundamental human right and that the GNWT align its existing laws and policies to be consistent with international human rights' principles and obligations.

The second motion called upon the GNWT to enact a series of specific concrete actions that would effectively codify housing as a human right in our government. The second motion calls for amendments to the Housing NWT Act to enshrine the right into legislation, establishing the NWT housing forum, establishing a territorial housing advocate review, and evaluate the outcomes of the Housing NWT Act, and that the GNWT work with the new housing forum to implement culturally appropriate housing solutions in collaboration with Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, the state of housing in the North right now is in peril. Core housing need is at an all-time high, and it's much higher than the national average. And homelessness is a growing challenge for all communities. Addressing inadequacies of our housing stock and the increasing homelessness population are issues that every level of government must work on together. Our government must work closer with Indigenous governments and organizations, such as the Dene Nation and other regional community Indigenous governments, to get better results for our residents.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, our government must establish stronger wraparound supports for housing because it is important that we recognize the plaguing legacy of residential schools which drove many Indigenous people into getting stuck in a vicious cycle of being reliant on public housing and income assistance. People are trapped, and they can't get out. We must work to change these

outcomes as our present housing programs and income support system is not resulting in the outcomes we want. We need an overhaul of our service to help people break free of being dependent on public housing and welfare. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to meet with three individuals from the Canadian Cancer Society, and I'd like to recognize Andrea Sealy, the CEO, Angeline Webb and Fernanda Martens. Welcome.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my page who is here today from the district of Great Slave. That would be Oscar Mifflin. He is a student at Allain St-Cyr. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Member from Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize three pages I have from Kakisa School, Peyton Simba, Presley Simba, and Leah Simba; all from the Kakisa School. Welcome. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

For those other special guests that are up in the audience there, welcome. Thank you very much for coming here. Welcome to your House, and we appreciate having visitors here. Thank you.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Returns to the Budget Address, Day 2 of 7. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 178-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. And, as I said, I'd be nice, getting the chance for unanimous consent, so I'll be nice to this Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know what this government's doing about funding the transition of the college to a polytech university, and that specifically goes to the Minister of education. Where is the money and how much is the money? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. So in the life of transformation, Education, Culture and Employment has funded an Aurora College transformation team of eight public servants who helped do a lot of the work in conjunction with Aurora College getting ready for this transformation of which has three phases, and there are roughly 80 milestones in that project and 66 of those were completed by the transformation team. The federal government kicked in \$8 million for transformation, and, in addition to that, this government also put in \$1 million a year for approximately the last five years, specifically for transformation. And I know as well that Aurora College has been able to use their dollars for the Bachelor of Education program as well as the Bachelor of Social Work program towards transformation as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, where's the money to Aurora College specifically? They were before committee just over a week ago, and it sounds like they're self-funding the transition plan, and it would be nice to know that they were getting that money to do the work themselves, or is this strictly a paper exercise by the department of education, and they're going it alone? Please clarify. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the dollars I've just said, the million dollars a year are what Aurora College is currently getting. And then in addition to that, they do have their operational funding dollars that they're able to redirect towards that as well, which is the dollars that they would normally use for the Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Social Work program that are currently not running. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's talking about all of these, this and that, but the reality is the college itself says it's not being funded specifically for the transition. We can talk about the programming all we want but, that said, the transition policy going from the college to the polytech. Mr. Speaker, they're funding this out of their surplus. They have the

staff doing this project and initiative, and the board is completely going ahead without the support of the department. So what is the department not understanding versus what the college is doing to make it into a polytech? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's other programs within the government that I think would really welcome a million dollars a year in order to run a transformation and to run a program. So currently, the Government of the Northwest Territories is giving \$1.04 million to Aurora College. At this point, I have not had communication from the board of governors as to a requirement for additional dollars, but if they do provide me with that request, I would definitely sit down and talk to them about it.

The other piece of this is when you are at arm's length and you are working your way into a polytechnic, one of the exciting things is it really opens your doors as to where you can get some of that funding. And a lot of institutions across Canada source third party funding in order to bring in extra dollars to be able to do more and bring in extra students to be able to do more. So I think it's a really exciting time for the polytechnic and for Aurora College and through this transformation and that there's a lot of opportunity that sits before them. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Minister to actually pick up the phone or send an e-mail to the college because they have a completely different view of how the transition is being supported.

Mr. Speaker, I guess maybe the only question, really, left of the day is will the Minister make that commitment to follow through so we can actually get a formalized commitment from this government in conjunction with the college that this is actually happening rather than these grandiose statements that aren't producing anything. So ultimately, will the Minister do that? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to say I have a very good working relationship with the board of governors' chair. I speak with him approximately twice a week. I spoke with him as well -- or I received an e-mail from him last night. I spoke with him last night again, carrying on with that twice a week timeline as well and following the meeting with

SCEDE, or with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, actually reached out and said this. And if there's something that you are looking for, I encourage you to put it in a letter from the board of governors and to send it over to me because I really want to maintain that positive working relationship, and I want to see this project through. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 179-20(1):  
MIDWIFERY SERVICES

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm excited that Health and Social Services and NTHSSA want to support birth work in our smaller communities. However, I understand that to build capacity in those smaller communities, work needs to be accomplished in the capital to sustainability grow midwifery capacity throughout the territory. Yellowknifers also need access to midwifery. So can the Minister please explain to me why this program is effectively proposed to be shut down? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Members, I will allow the question but, folks, you got to remember that anticipating a matter that's on the orders today of consideration of this sitting. So budget is in the committee. So if you can maybe reword the question so that it's not about a budget, we're not negotiating on the floor, that would be greatly appreciated. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** So I guess my question is the proposed budget is saying that positions will be cut, and I'm wondering why that might be.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify. The expansion of the midwifery service into Yellowknife has been proposed. Existing midwifery service in Fort Smith and Hay River are not affected. The health and social services system proposed this into Yellowknife but there has been years of recruitment and retention challenges in the Yellowknife midwifery area. Despite years of dedicated efforts, you know, advocacy, that we just -- there's just been a continuation of this. But I just want to make sure that, you know, the Members know, and the public know, in addition to this it's important to remember that the expansion of the midwifery service into Yellowknife is an enhancement to the existing birthing options that already exist. And, you

know, I -- I'm here, I've travelled, you know, to Fort Resolution on the weekend and, you know, and I hear from the community members in the small community that they don't even have basic services. You know, so when we're talking about doing the work that we are doing in this House, we're trying to make sure that we're not duplicating service. And I understand, and I fully am behind Indigenous -- you know, the work with Indigenous midwifery, but what's going on right now, this is a decision that's, you know, put before us, and I'm continuing to put the efforts in to making sure that the midwifery program in Fort Smith and in Hay River is supported and we can get those programs so they're not shutting down. We just announced that Fort Smith being just opened again after being shut down. So this is very important that we can get these two communities functioning properly before we can even consider expanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Colleagues, the main estimates are on the order paper for later today in Committee of the Whole. As per the guidelines for oral questions in Rules 1.7 -- is that 1 or d -- d.7(6), the question must not anticipate a matter visited on order paper consideration at sitting. You will have the opportunity to ask those type of questions during budget -- during Committee of the Whole. I apologize to the Minister and to the Member. So Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to break any rules, so I suppose I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. And I apologize, I should have called that at the beginning there.

Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 180-20(1):  
FORT RESOLUTION EMERGENCY PLAN  
AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on May 5th, 2023, the MACA Minister wrote to the Worship Mayor of Fort Resolution, Patrick Simon, citing the Hamlet Act for failing to meet their obligations, so they pulled the trigger to take over third party management of Fort Resolution. But at the same time, it's been a year, and MACA, they're still not taking responsibility of Fort Resolution with following their own rules and procedures, so that's concerning.

Mr. Speaker, MACA has been responsible for governing Fort Resolution for a year but still has not implemented an emergency plan nor have the proper support of the community emergency services. Another fire this weekend burned down several housing units. Mr. Speaker, we just don't want to have a repeat of what happened in Enterprise.

So my question to the Minister Vince McKay is will MACA work with Housing NWT to rebuild the homes lost in Fort Resolution this past weekend? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of MACA.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are well aware of the situation that happened in Fort Resolution this weekend. During the whole event, Cabinet was made aware of the situation and communication was constantly ongoing to ensure the safety of the residents of Fort Resolution.

To the question, MACA has engaged with housing, and they're leading the work in respect to the homes that have been lost in Fort Resolution. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. What are MACA's plans to deal with the nearby wildfire if it begins to move toward the community of Fort Resolution as there are no emergency plans in place? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildfires are the responsibility of ECC. When it comes into the community, the Department of MACA will be involved. Even prior to it coming to the community, the Department of MACA will be involved. We will have staff, a regional EMO, local EMO, involved during that time to prepare of any potential emergency. That being said, the emergency plan has been continually being worked on. It's been involved in the community to -- or it's been communicated to the community for involvement from NGOs and other agencies. And the draft plan is expected to be completed by middle to end of -- or early June, sorry. And once completed, it will be available publicly to all residents of Fort Resolution. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. As you know, I mentioned that water intake lines in Fort Resolution has been a problem for last year, and as the water is receding. And the fire over the weekend just added to the problem because the fire was drawing so much water, the water intake lines couldn't keep up with the demand. And so is the Minister going to address this issue so that whether we move the lines out further just so

that we could keep up with the demand? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The water plant was operating as designed. 60,000 liters is required for fire flow, and Fort Resolution has 129,000 liters capacity. The fire took an exceptional amount of water. Because of that, the Department of Infrastructure was notified, and a water tanker truck was brought in from Hay River to support the fire fight efforts. Also, we are going to work with the community to look at doing a fire flow bypass in the water intake for the community in the case of need of emergency, but also we are looking at other options for getting water off the lake in case of an emergency. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my next question is that we had a firefighter that had injuries, broke his hip, and the other one has problems breathing. Does MACA have anything in place or the Hamlet of Fort Resolution right now to look at how we could cover some of these injuries and his loss of work, etcetera? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are aware of the injury during the fire fight. That being said, the hamlet is reviewing the insurance coverage with the insurance provider for the incident, and MACA's also going to be working with the administrator to assist in the confirmation of the insurance policies for the fire department. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 181-20(1):  
AGENCY NURSING

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in February of this year, my friend, the Minister of Health and Social Services, had mentioned that she was going to raise the issue of agency nursing at the national level, in particular with the Minister -- the federal Minister of Health. So can she report back on what efforts she's made? I note that other provinces have now committed to banning or severely reducing the use of agency nurses. Where are we at? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was able to meet with the Minister of Health. I attended the meeting, alongside two members from the Council of Leaders. We discussed the issues that related to the Northwest Territories. Agency nurse was one of them. This is a discussion that is continuing at the federal level, and there is a Ministers' meeting that will be happening I think in the fall time and that is, again, on that agenda. But I would just like to make -- also aware that right now in the Northwest Territories, we do only have five agency nurses, which are working in obstetrics right now, to make sure that we can still provide those services in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it costs the government \$4.4 million last year in private agency nurses. That's equivalent to 31 positions. So I'm not sure if it's seven agency nurses to 31 public nurses, but that's a staggering ratio and the amount of money we're spending on these. So we need to put a stop to it. We need to wean ourselves off this addiction to private agency nurses. They're not working for our staff. They're not working for Northerners. I appreciate we want to keep the lights on in obstetrics, but there must be other solutions.

So can the Minister bring forward a plan working with the authority on staffing OBS without the use of private agency nurses, and can she bring it forward tomorrow? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, I can say that we are changing the staffing model in obstetrics, which is being done to support the obstetric nurses as per some of the concerns that have been brought up over the years. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, when we talk about the cost that agency nurses have cost, the cost that it cost the government for closing down the obstetric unit for two months was \$1 million. So if we were to close it down, that's 700 births in the Northwest Territories annually in the obstetrics unit in Yellowknife, those people would have to travel. Two months it cost us a million. So a year, and putting those families, displacing those families, if we don't come up with -- you know, if we can't staff it, that is a priority too. You know, we have to look at all different sides of it. And that's my job to be able to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we hired 84 nurses -- frontline nurses last year and of those 84, 69 left. Recruitment's become a revolving door. We must have a solution. We must staff these wards. So OBS worked just fine until it stopped working. What

was working at OBS that's not working now; can the Minister tell us. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like I said in the House before, we haven't used agency nurses. We've been able to recruit, retain. You know, the salary of nurses hasn't changed. And so the other territories and provinces are starting to compete better. There's lots of different things that are in place that is challenging us to recruit. COVID, many people left the health care field. That is the biggest impact on our health care system. And we're still trying to recover from that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just for -- if my arithmetic's right, that's 15 net frontline positions that we were able to recruit from last year. And I think that's a shame. We need to do something. I'm going to propose, again, that the Minister work on phasing out agency nurses within a period of time, so let's throw a date out there. Will the Minister agree to phase out agency nurses by the end of 2026? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not commit to anything that would impact our patients' health. And so if there are ways to get around this that we can increase our staffing and our workflow and maybe the changes that we're making in obstetrics right now will help to better. But it's not just obstetrics, you know. There's other areas in our small communities that we are struggling to get health CHNs, so community health nurses. Those health centres shut down, it's going to impact those communities greatly. You know, so there's so many things that we need to look at before we just discontinue the use of agency nurses. I'd rather not use them. I'd rather not use them. I'd rather use that money to keep it in the territory. And, you know, if there's more nurses that want to train in obstetrics or in community health nurses, you know, that's something that we're trying to develop. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 182-20(1):  
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES  
REVIEW

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my statement I spoke about MTS and the need to think outside the box with some

suggestions. One of those suggestions, Mr. Speaker, was looking at moving all or part of the operation further north to Inuvik or Tuktoyaktuk, and I know the department is currently doing a review. Can I ask the Minister of Infrastructure if part of that review will look at relocating some of MTS to the north? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the review itself at this point, which is quite close to being completed, doesn't consider, to my knowledge, whether or not to split the operations up, but really, rather, to look at what the different types of models there might be for the operations as a whole. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, again, I reiterate, I think that should be a part of what this government's going to do with MTS.

Can I also ask the Minister as part of the review process as well, has the department engaged with Indigenous governments on how MTS is affecting everyone in the region? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process of the review did send out an invitation, I believe at the end of last year, to communities who rely on MTS so that they had the opportunity to participate. I don't have details in front of me confirming which communities did or did not. I know that some did, but I don't know that all responded to that inquiry to participate. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we're not committing to moving it to a location that would make absolute better sense. We're not sure what the Indigenous governments are saying about this. So, Mr. Speaker, maybe it's time we look at privatizing, look at Indigenous governments or private partnerships to sell this business and have someone run it outside of government. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Infrastructure comment on consideration for privatizing MTS?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly one of the questions that is part of this review, is what kinds of different governance models we might have for MTS. Not that long ago, MTS was privately owned, and it went into receivership. And when it went into receivership, all of the communities that depend on the resupply were put at risk and at that point is when the government decided to step in. From that point forward, I'm not sure it has ever turned a profit. So if somebody out there wants to take it off our hands, that might be very good news. My



concern becomes resupply, to ensure that we as a government are not leaving small communities in a situation where they can't rely on a situation for resupply. So, again, that is part of the review. Different governance models, Crown corporation, privatizing, maybe those doing the review, which hasn't reached my desk yet -- I think it's due only just next month -- maybe they've got those creative solutions that my colleagues across the floor are looking for. And I'd certainly look forward to that opportunity to discuss it with them as soon as we have those options before us. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 183-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE STAFFING TASKFORCE

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister, first, explain the basic rationale behind setting up the office of client experience and what have been its successes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the office of client experience was to improve patient navigation service and support a better interaction with the health and social services system. The outcomes for the OCE include better awareness of client rights and responsibilities, improved client and family experience, streamline access to supports and services, making culturally-safe care experience for Indigenous clients and families a priority, increase access to cultural and language supports for clients, and building staff capacity for Indigenous client centered care and perspectives.

We anticipate the work of this office will result in better understandings of Indigenous clients and family concerns and issues. This will be supported by data tracking and qualitative analysis. We want to see system level actions and changes to ensure our health care system is meeting the needs of residents, and the office of client experience is critical to us understanding the improvements we can make to support that change.

So it's been over a year that this office was established, and we've had over a thousand requests that have been supported to date, and 65 percent of those have been from Indigenous people who identify as First Nations, Metis, and

Inuit. And satisfaction survey results indicated that most people who used the service felt heard, respected, and culturally safe when accessing this service. The program is Indigenous designed and led with little staff turnover, and pathways have been established for building relationships with clients, families, and community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So does the Minister see any value in setting up an office, perhaps parallel to the office of client experience, but to advocate for health care providers in order to alleviate workplace frustrations and improve staff retention?

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I do see the potential is some of the work that we're doing, the employee satisfaction survey, we have just completed. We don't have the results yet, but a lot of that could help drive some of these changes that, you know, the Member might be talking about. While most care staff are represented by labour organizations such as UNW, NWT Medical Association, who also advocate on their behalf, I really appreciate the Member bringing this idea forward. And I have had discussions with the Minister of Finance, my colleague, on discussing this further with the Member as well as the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to examining the feasibility of setting up a task force on improvements for health care frontline staff? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I do see value in some type of a -- you know, something, whether it's a task force or whatever we call it, I'm not prepared to commit to taking this specific action today but I'm interested in, like I said, to continue this discussion and using some of the things that we have as well as I believe the work that needs -- that we've been doing with the engagement strategy for the health and social services system, and I believe this work needs to have an opportunity to launch and begin to have impacts as well. But we will also be renewing the health and social services human resource plan as the current plan has just ended. The next plan will give us an opportunity to refresh our understanding of what is needed to make some positive headway as we work to improve the recruitment retention of valuable health care workers in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my final question is, will the Minister report back to this House before the end of this sitting on whether she intends to set up a task force or some structure similar to what I've described today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to make that commitment for the end of this sitting as the Member -- we all know how busy we are during sittings and trying to be able to come with a plan within the next two weeks to be able to come to the floor. But I will bring forward to the Assembly a report of the health and social services system human resource plan that concluded on March 31st, and I will also work to ensure that dialogue begins on the new human resource plan which sets out the course in this area for the next several years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Clerk, can you pause the clock for a second.

Colleagues, I'm going to take a short break and I'll be back, because I have to make a phone call.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 184-20(1):  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ELDERS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Housing documented the reasons elders fall into arrears? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could she repeat the question, I missed it. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Has the Minister of Housing documented the reasons elders fall into arrears? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the MLA is asking about elders, and this is something she's brought up over the last number of months with many elders that

are falling into arrears. I'm sure there's many reasons why elders are falling into arrears, and she has kind of explained some of those reasons. And housing does some analysis with it and does work with clients into why they are falling into arrears. There is some counselling available to clients, especially those elders. So we can provide more information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are elders -- elderly people in my region and in other regions in the NWT who want to become homeowners but are not able to due to arrears. So what is the Minister doing to encourage homeowners for clients over 60 years old? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our district offices, as well as headquarters, Housing NWT headquarters, would provide information to clients that are interested in becoming homeownership clients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Can the Minister fast track the homeownership process for clients over 60 years old? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'd have to consider any application. There is a process for that application, and we have to follow the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason why I said -- I asked that question is because many of the elders are aging and time is of essence. So can the Minister of Housing write off the arrears for clients over 60 years old? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a number of clients that are on the arrears list for Housing NWT. Across the North, we have many clients that are on the arrears list. Housing NWT does review this file annually, so I'd be pleased to meet with the MLA to discuss a case-by-case for elders that have arrears with Housing NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from the Dehcho.

QUESTION 185-20(1):  
ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS AND  
HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I mentioned the two motions that I brought forward in February on recognizing housing as a fundamental human right in the NWT. It has been 90 days since I brought this motion forward -- these motions forward.

Can the Minister of Housing NWT advise when she intends to table a response to those motions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the accepted Legislative Assembly conventions, Housing NWT is completing its research and work on the motion and will table a response at the beginning of the next sitting of the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, former Premier Cochrane tabled, A Way Home, a Comprehensive Strategy to Address Homelessness in the Northwest Territories. Can the Minister speak to the status on how the implementation of that housing strategy is going and explain what has transpired since it was tabled? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT is supporting the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, who is the lead on implementation of A Way Home. Housing NWT is supporting the work of an interdepartmental working group to implement that strategy, and our work has included supporting statistical analysis on homelessness, preparing for transition of shelters, and some programs currently implemented by Housing NWT, as well as working on looking for partnership solutions to see housing built to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Thank you to the Minister for that response. Mr. Speaker, in reference to A Way Home, can the Minister explain what actions Housing NWT is doing in its engagement with other departments in establishing stronger wraparound supports for people living in public housing across the NWT? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as noted in today's Minister statement, Housing NWT has established four formal partnership agreements, as well as supporting many informal arrangements, with funding for projects and working on community housing plans. Although still under development, housing is supporting such ideas as supportive housing projects, tiny home projects, and other programs that will support vulnerable populations in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing. Final supplementary. Member from Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain what work has been done so far since the 20th Assembly in terms of working to create partnerships and increase collaboration with Indigenous governments to improve housing in newer ways? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as noted earlier, Housing NWT has signed a collaborative agreement with the Gwich'in Tribal Council since the beginning of the 20th Assembly. Housing NWT has also had meetings with communities, such as Fort Resolution, to discuss either formal or informal agreements to work together on housing priorities. We continue to work with housing working groups established in communities, such as Fort Good Hope, to support work of the K'asho Got'ine Housing Society. Housing NWT is also working with community organizations on community housing support initiatives to complete projects that are community priorities. Housing NWT has also amended that program to allow for it to be used for SEED funding to help organizations hire capacity to apply on funding programs being offered by Canada or other external organizations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 186-20(1):  
ADDRESSING EROSION IN AKLAVIK

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of MACA. Every community within the Northwest Territories should be accommodated at the same rate. Aklavik is no different. For years, the community has been left out of major projects with the Government of the Northwest Territories. I'd like to see the Minister and his department step up and assist the community

of Aklavik in saving the shoreline within its municipal boundaries for future use.

Can the Minister and his department look at ways to finance the restoration of the shoreline, whether it be with other departments, or give us direction through federal government programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of other communities that have reached out for funding for emergency remediation on banks, riverbanks, and berms and stuff like that, like that of Hay River. So I will look into it with the department and see what we can do for your community. Thank you.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister look at sending a team of engineers to the community to see how the road can be restored? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm just notified that the Department of Infrastructure is working with MACA to work with the community on getting some funds available to do some work. Thank you.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you to the Minister for that good response. Okay, I just deleted one of my questions there. Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister commit to joining other Ministers on a Mackenzie Delta tour scheduled for July 16th and 17th? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always willing to get out to the communities and see the regions, so I would be willing to work with the Member on a tour if need be there. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 187-20(1):  
COSTS TO ACCESS LAND TITLES AND  
RED-TAPE REDUCTION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions -- question or questions today will also go to the Premier who represents the Department of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed recently, on a visit to the land titles office, they actually charge for a person to access -- just to look at their own title. And it's representative of a bigger picture of the

fact that these are nickel and dime fees, and I suspect that they don't garner a whole lot of money to float this government. That said, my question specifically to the Minister is, is he aware that an individual, as in a singular person, goes to the land titles office and has to pay, I think it's \$5 or \$4 to see their fee. Is he familiar with that issue? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so I am familiar with that accessing some of the registries, like the corporate registries and land titles do involve a fee. I've never tried to access my own. I was actually just trying to do that, but I didn't get it in time for the question. But I would assume I would have to pay for my own information just the same way as anyone else. So I am aware. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to quote a fee number, but I think it's \$5 and if not, I mean, who cares. It's either \$4 or \$5; I mean, it's a moot point. The issue is the constant nickeling and diming of Northerners as we go about even just accessing our own personal information, and that kind of seems frustrating when you talk to constituents.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister go back and look at how many individual citizens are actually paying that over the last two years? Now, I'm not talking about corporations or lawyers who are trying to garner access. I'm trying to find out is the everyday person wanting to find a little bit about their own personal information, would the Minister look into that? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will look into whether or not we even have that information. I'm not sure whether that information is collected or not. But I can look into it and then, if possible, we can put that information together. But I'm not even sure it's possible. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the -- I guess I'll call it commitment because, I mean, it's tough to look into something until you know what you're looking into it.

That said, this speaks to the broader issue of the red-tape initiative which then bridges into these little micro costs that annoy the people from the day-to-day costs. So that said, if the Premier's able to look into that, or I should say the justice Minister, sorry, is able to look into that, I mean, what else is this government assessing with respect to these micro costs that eat at everybody's day-to-day lives? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When somebody needs some information and they want to go forward and get it, in some cases it probably is reasonable that that person pays. It's a user pay system otherwise everybody else pays for that person's access. And so that is something that we need to take into consideration. I understand what the Member is saying. It's some of these small irritants that, you know, impact people the most because they have to engage with those, you know, time and time again. But all the nickels and dimes add up, Mr. Speaker. We're trying to deliver serious services for people. We're trying to deal with climate change and natural disasters. And we want to make sure that we are not -- that we're putting our money where it's most important. And so am I fully committed to getting rid of fees if people want to look at their own land titles? I can't say that right now, but I at least understand where the Member's coming from. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've already accepted the offer of the Premier to investigate and then sort of take it from there. And speaking to my last question more about the broader sense of the red-tape initiative as we proceed forward, I do agree fully that nickels to dimes, etcetera, etcetera, it all makes a difference, but when we're paying -- we're barely paying anything for the service, it begs the question it costs more to process the payment than it actually did to do the work.

So I guess my only question, Mr. Speaker, at this point is based on that principle of what is the government going to do to evaluate the red-tape initiative concept in this government whereas in we're spending more in time than we're making in fees and hence it's costing the government money just to process payments. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we are -- if it's costing us more to deliver it than the fees, I'm not sure we want to increase the fees to cover the full cost. If we did that for ATIPP, it would be, you know, thousands of dollars everyone would have to provide for requests. But when the Member talks about reducing red-tape and this initiative, this is a conversation that I'm really excited to have with the rest of the Ministers because this is something that is across government. We had initiatives last year, the Minister of Finance has a nice little award sitting on her desk, a pair of golden scissors, because we cut so much red-tape in the last government. And this year, I want to see an even bigger pair of golden

scissors on our desks because we made advances. This is -- you know, this is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker. It's all of these little things that add up and that people have to deal with day after day so I really look forward to working with Ministers from different departments to figure out how we're going to go through policies, programs, legislation, and how we're going to create ways to develop legislation in the future that minimizes red-tape. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 188-20(1):  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ELDERS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a continue with my housing question.

Can the Minister of housing prioritize the transfer of housing stock to elderly clients over 60 years of age who live in their family home? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to look at the information with Housing NWT and follow up with the Member regarding the question of prioritization. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Can the Minister of housing direct new resources to work with elderly clients who are out of the workforce yet accumulating arrears on the housing unit? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What Housing NWT can do is we can look at the cases, again, with elders that are facing arrears and follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of housing modify the collection process to support elders to age in place? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I mentioned earlier, we are looking at reviewing the forgiveness policy with Housing NWT and that will be brought to FMB and Cabinet and for discussion with the Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 189-20(1):  
FIRE AND EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR  
TU NEDHE-WIILIDEH COMMUNITIES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be to the MACA Minister again.

In regards to Fort Resolution, I talked about the fire plan that is needed for that community because it's a hamlet, but in the community of Dettah, N'dilo, and Lutselk'e, can the Minister -- I'm not sure where they're at -- maybe help the community to get their fire plan in place? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As those communities mentioned have established community governments, they would be responsible for their local emergency plan. And if they require any further assistance with their local emergency plan, they could reach out to the Department of MACA for assistance in developing them or updating them. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know that we had lost four units in Fort Resolution this weekend, I just wanted to -- if I could ask the question to the Minister of housing as to --

**MR. SPEAKER:** (audio) second set of questions for another Member. So I'll put you back on the list. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 190-20(1):  
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, July 31st of 2023, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment approved Aurora College's request to become a polytechnic university. And now we're hearing that there's a concern that there's never been appropriate funding for this transition.

So can the Minister -- today's Minister of Education, Culture and Employment tell us does the department feel that that request -- there's enough support behind that request that they approved previously last year, and are -- yeah, let's just start there. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it would really be up to the college to let me know what their

needs are versus what they're receiving from the department. As I have not received a request for additional funding in any formal capacity at this point, it's hard for me to speak to whether or not they have the resources that they need and what those additional resources might be.

In addition to the \$8 million from the federal government, the \$1 million a year over the last four years as well from the GNWT, there was also the staffing of the eight positions that did a substantial amount of the work in conjunction with Aurora College staff in a team-based approach to be able to put together a lot of the material needed to go through transformation. So there still is a significant amount of work, though, left to do, and I want to make sure that the college has the ability to get through that. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess if the Aurora College has to come to the department to make a request, I would assume there's some evaluation that goes into that request before they sign off on it. But that's not this Minister's responsibility, so I will ask another question.

The new Act that would -- that will govern Aurora College is scheduled to come into force on March 30th, 2025. Are we still on track -- is the department still on track to bring that legislation forward and have it in force at that date? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like the opportunity to look at where all the deliverables are in the milestones for Aurora College and come back to the Member on that question so that I can make sure that I'm giving him the most up to date information based on some of the delays that have occurred. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I mean, are we on track to launch the new Aurora College on May 15th, 2025; will that happen? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this point there have been a few delays in the project, and it's anticipated that there will be a delay in the May 2025 launch date that was originally published. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is this government committed to ensuring the Aurora College transformation is successful? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm definitely committed because I see the great value in this project. I want to ensure that I am providing the support that I can provide to the board of governors who really is in charge of the operations of the college and the remaining work that remains to be done as far as transformation is concerned. I think it's really important, though, to note that the process of going through transformation is not just about a shiny new campus or anything like that. It also has to do with the programming that's being offered by Aurora College and being able to develop that and being able to make sure that we're offering degree programs at Aurora College and that the college is offering what students are looking for in the Northwest Territories. So it's also about the programming. It's not just about the bricks and mortar of an institution. And I think that those for me are what is really exciting for the evolution and transformation of the college. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 191-20(1):  
REPLACING HOUSES LOST IN FORT  
RESOLUTION FIRE

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question would be to the Minister of housing.

As you know that we had that fire just over the weekend, and I understand that there's a process in place, and you've probably been having some internal deliberation about where we go from here. My question to you is that the chief in Fort Resolution made it very clear over the years that they really don't want to have any trailers brought into the community because it doesn't provide jobs or economic benefits to the local businesses. So in your deliberation, can you consider looking at stick-built homes to replace these units in the community? Thank you.

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

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand where the chief is coming from in terms of local economy and local built homes. The situation is Housing NWT is facing a fiscal crisis where we need more than we have. We don't have the money to stick build homes. Modular units are much more affordable, and they are much more efficient in terms of timing into the communities. So that's the situation we're in at this time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister, for your response. Just so you know, that duplex that caught fire in Fort Resolution, it was stick-built, and the unit next door to that was a modular home and it caught fire. So there is concerns, that idea of -- I know the rationale behind it but, again, it's the stick-built homes are probably a way to go in the community because, like I said, the economic benefits to the community is important, so I just hope you could consider that in your deliberation. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the community's concerns and the situation that happened on Saturday with the fire in Fort Resolution. Over the next year, housing is looking at a building standards framework and hopefully this can be part of the overall discussion of how we build homes across the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the Minister of housing again, is that now that we have displaced families in the communities that were left out in the cold because of the fire, what are your plans to accommodate the families that are displaced right now in the community? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, there is a number of displaced families in the community of Fort Resolution because of the fire on Saturday. Housing NWT is working very diligently to ensure that all families have homes over the next couple of days. And the great thing is Fort Resolution had some vacant units, so they are looking at accommodating those families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Last final question, oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 192-20(1):  
NEW AURORA COLLEGE CAMPUS IN  
YELLOWKNIFE

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment talked about shiny new campus in Yellowknife. Can she give the House an update on the progress of the Aurora College campus here in the capital? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have any information at my fingertips right now as far as the -- you know, when these

things will appear in the capital. I would love to get an update on that for committee, and I can commit to doing so. But, really, there's a lot of steps that need to happen before we end up with a bricks and mortar institution anywhere in the territory in addition to what we have right now. I know that in speaking to the board governors, their prime focus right now is student housing. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's the point of the new campus, is student housing. So what does the Minister know about student housing here in Yellowknife? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the board of governors has identified that as their primary goal of how they'd like to start building some new infrastructure. They've identified that not just in Yellowknife but also in Fort Smith and also down the road in Inuvik. And I can also update this House that it is something that they're very focused on and that they acknowledge that it is a need in the territory in order to make sure that students have an opportunity to have somewhere to hang their head at night so that they can make it to class, and that place needs to, of course, be affordable. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's becoming increasingly obvious that there's a disconnect between the board of governors and the ministry. Can the Minister commit to working with the board of governors to better understand their needs at bringing a quantifiable, tangible, proposal forward to a standing committee of this House so we understand what they need to be successful in this transition? Because they are saying they are on a knife's edge, and I don't want to -- I, for one, don't want to see them teeter over. I want to see them succeed. I want to see our students succeed. It just seems like we're not at the same place here, and can the Minister commit to getting us -- to running the ship, getting us to where we need to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, I'm in a very interesting position where it's not really my story to tell. It's the Aurora College's story to tell. It's the board of governors' story to tell. So just like last time when I -- it's not my story to tell. So my -- last time when I was in front of this House, I recommended to committee that they have Aurora College in front of them. They have done that. And I recommend that they ask Aurora College what their schedule is as far as their master plan for their facilities and also for their housing and what they are doing in order to achieve those goals. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Minister gives that -- the institution \$32 million, and then some, every year, so this is very much her story to tell because she's the one funding it. So will the Minister commit to, if not exploring how we can improve this relationship, putting some accountability matrix on that grant, so if Aurora College isn't hitting these timelines, isn't making progress, then they lose their grant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that it's fair to say that given the investment of dollars from the GNWT into the Aurora College transformation, along with the investment of dollars from the federal government into the transformation, that there are many people that want to see this happen. There's also a number of people who are sitting on the board who have said they are passionate about seeing this happen. It's also worthwhile acknowledging that the positions through the Aurora College transformation also came from the surplus of Aurora College. Aurora College carries a surplus. And so, Mr. Speaker, there are dollars that are available, and I think, yes, that there needs to be a conversation about how those dollars are being used to see this transformation through. I absolutely agree with the Member that a significant amount of public dollars go to Aurora College and fund Aurora College, and those dollars are approved by this House, Mr. Speaker, so I look forward to seeing how that conversation evolves on the floor of this House. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister for Education, Culture and Employment. Colleagues, time is up for oral questions. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports on standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of ECC.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 96-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE  
REPORT 63-19(2): REPORT ON BILL 78:  
WASTE REDUCTION AND RESOURCE  
RECOVERY ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 97-20(1):  
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ACT ANNUAL  
REPORT 2023-2024



**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 63-19(2) Report on Bill 78: Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Act; and Environmental Rights Act Annual Report 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 98-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LAW  
FOUNDATION 41<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL REPORT FOR  
THE PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Northwest Territories Law Foundation 41st Annual Report for the Period Ending June 30, 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 99-20(1):  
2024-2025 CORPORATE PLAN  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HYDRO  
CORPORATION AND NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: 2024-2025 Corporate Plan for the Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation and Northwest Territories Power Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for NWT Power Corp. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Range Lake.

### Motions

MOTION 25-20(1):  
REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 67-  
20(1): MANDATE OF THE GOVERNMENT  
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 2023  
TO 2027, TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, whereas Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 -- I have the wrong motion, Mr. Speaker, hold on. Yeah, okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whereas Tabled Document -- no -- it's the same one. Okay, I'm just going to move to the operative clause, Mr. Speaker.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Frame Lake, that Tabled Document 67-20(1), Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories 2023 to 2027, be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Notice of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1), Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Minister's Statement 24-20(1), Tabled Document 93-20(1), Tabled Document 67-20(1), with the Member from the Dehcho in the chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Good afternoon. Colleagues, I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee?

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 67-20(1), tabled on May 23rd, 2024, in Committee of the Whole.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, committee. We will proceed with the first item.

Committee, we will take a short recess and resume with the first item. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, committee. We have agreed to consider Tabled Document 67-20(1), Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories 2023 to 2027. I will now open the floor to general comments on Tabled Document 67-20(1).

Any Member may speak for up to ten minutes and may speak more than once. Any Members wish to speak? Ms. Morgan.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Ms. Chair. I have to say I'm quite pleased overall with how the mandate for the 20th Assembly turned out. I

can't say the same about the business plans, unfortunately, but I will say lots more about that tomorrow.

First, I feel that the development of the priorities was a collaborative process that all 19 of us could support and while the mandate itself wasn't exactly collectively authored by all of us -- and that as an aside is a wordsmithing exercise that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy, done by a committee of 19 politicians. But there were numerous opportunities for both written and in-person feedback and discussion on the draft mandates.

One thing I appreciate, and I want to draw attention to because it was based on some suggestions by Regular Members, is an opening list of commitments about how the public service will do its work.

One of the most common messages I heard when I was campaigning last fall was the profound frustration with how the GNWT operates and the general workplace environment. In my opening speech last November, I said we will not accomplish any ambitious priority we set for ourselves in this Assembly until we get our House in order. So in the mandate, while it may be tempting to skip straight down to the bullet points under each priority area, I encourage folks to carefully review the opening where it states the public service is the GNWT's greatest resource and must be supported and respected with an environment that fosters a sense of purpose and well-being and empowers performance excellence and innovation. Our highly trained and dedicated public servants deserve to work in an environment that allows them to contribute to their fullest potential, that values and supports them in providing services with empathy and efficiency, and that encourages or rewards creativity and flexibility.

Now, Cabin Radio observed that some of the language used in the mandate would not be out of place in a wedding vow. That could spark some long and interesting discussions with the public and civil servants about the depth and steadfastness of anyone's love for the government. But there's no need for that debate today. I actually appreciate the tone of this mandate document. For me, it reads in an engaging, clear, and direct way, with language that humanizes what we're trying to do instead of the usual jargon and bureaucratese.

One of the commitments is to empower the public service by ensuring they're provided the flexibility to deliver programs and implement policies in ways that best serve residents. So that sounds simple, but if taken seriously it could be a profound shift in the way our

government works. The government often retreats into the safety of focusing on processes, policies, frameworks, plans, strategies, and it measures its success by checking off the boxes when we've completed those things. The idea here would be to measure our success by whether we've actually helped people, made their lives better. So people would come first at the end of the day, not the letter of the policy.

In that same Cabin Radio article, the Premier related that commitment to putting people first to the need to increase the government's risk tolerance. So I agree that we should be talking more openly about risk tolerance in government. And that is unfortunately something that is missing from that list of commitments. I believe we need to enshrine a commitment to always consider, in every decision, not only the risks of new options but also the risks in maintaining the status quo. We're often biased towards accepting or just taking for granted the status quo, even when it is unjust, expensive, inefficient, while we exaggerate the risks inherent in any change. So we have to train ourselves to examine the risks and costs of the status quo first.

Another commitment that I would have liked to see more detail on is the last one around openness, transparency, and accountability by engaging with partners, the public, and the public service. So this is a major source of public frustration, and I believe we should be explaining how this government is going to do it differently. I believe we need to commit to share information as early and as freely as possible and to publicly admit when we make mistakes and communicate how we will learn from them and do better.

Now to the main priority areas, starting with housing, the emphasis in housing is on partnerships, including Indigenous, federal, and community governments, and by working to encourage private investment. I understand and appreciate that emphasis because the scale of housing needs in the NWT is vast, and the GNWT simply does not have the resources to be making billion-dollar ribbon cutting announcements about new housing. So we have to be strategic and try to leverage federal and private investment. That being said, we need to be open about -- or come to terms with the fact that public housing is going to continue to fall squarely on the GNWT's shoulders. Indigenous governments are accessing significant federal funding for housing, but my understanding is they do not want to or intend to take on public housing. But I haven't seen this government articulate anywhere our vision when it comes to public housing, what we're actually committed to accomplish in public

housing over this Assembly. How are we planning to maintain our current public housing assets, repair and improve the quality of existing housing -- plenty of which is currently boarded up -- and what is our plan to try to prevent vandalism and damage going forward?

On economic foundations, one of the big reasons I pushed us to include the word "foundations" with this priority, of course, was to highlight the importance of JK to 12 education and basic literacy. And, currently, these are entirely missing from the mandate and business plans.

Now, I understand that the district education authorities rightfully maintain a lot of control over education, but this government has an important role in setting goals and expectations. The last Assembly set a goal of increasing graduation rates, which was not successful. And I believe that that goal misses the point. I think we need to set clear goals around literacy and allocate resources inside and outside the formal education system to give us a chance of meeting the goals.

Another important foundation of the economy is energy, and the mandate talks about investments in green power generation and transmission. I just want to point out that often people associate green energy and reducing emissions only with electricity, but we need to remember that transportation and heating, including those associated with heavy industry like mining, are our biggest sources of GHG emissions and also carry high costs. So we need to think more broadly and strategically about our energy transition than just electricity.

In terms of health care, I support the ideas in this section and the emphasis on primary care. But I do think there's not enough recognition of the need for a new approach to retention of health care workers.

Now, we always hear the phrase recruitment and retention spoken in the same breath, but we're actually doing quite well in recruitment yet we're losing staff faster than we can hire them. Retention requires a significantly different strategy than recruitment. So I think we need to start separating them in our thinking.

With regard to addressing the effects of trauma, one thing that's not explicitly mentioned is the need to address the root causes of family violence and gender-based violence and support survivors and their families in breaking the cycle. We do have a significant amount of federal funding to do this work, but I don't want that work to be done in the shadows.

The mandate emphasizes that Indigenous governments will need to take the lead on

culturally appropriate trauma treatment, mental wellness, and addictions programming. Now, I understand the value in this; I'm just not sure how well Yellowknife can see itself in the way this priority is worded in the mandate. Yellowknife, obviously, is where almost half of our population resides, including many people from small communities who are struggling the most with addictions and mental wellness. The work of serving these folks often falls on non-profits in Yellowknife, but they are usually not eligible for the same sorts of federal funding opportunities as Indigenous governments. So it's not clear to me how they're supposed to take the lead on developing and delivering new programming when they can't even access basic sustainable funding to keep their doors open. Beyond capital or startup funding, the non-profits in Yellowknife need ongoing operational support, support from medical professionals, outreach services. Outreach nurses and social workers usually work for the GNWT. So we need to see these kinds of partnerships reflected in the mandate and the business plans.

This also relates to the mandate item around public safety, which emphasizes the need for working together with law enforcement. So often it falls on law enforcement to deal with noncriminal social issues, but I think the RCMP themselves would be the first to tell you they should not be doing that, and their resources should be reserved for criminal issues.

While there's still -- while there's renewed emphasis on on the land healing and wellness supports and aftercare support, there are still significant gaps in the spectrum of mental health and addictions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Is there anybody else, any other Member that would like to speak? Seeing no more comments. Thank you, committee. Do you agree that -- Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, I'm sorry, I was just waiting to see if some other Members -- oh, thank you, Madam Chair. I was just going to see if other Members wanted to speak up but in absence of them, I will definitely share some thoughts.

Yeah, I have a bit of prepared comments here and will try to go off the cuff a little bit also. So I'm going to do my best here to speak to the mandate specifically and not the business plans, because they are separate documents, we are looking at them separately, but at this point I do think it's difficult to separate the two because anything measurable is contained in the business plans and lack of measurable targets and tangible action was one of my main

concerns with the draft mandate when it was first presented to us. And certainly I shared that sentiment in comments to my colleagues in caucus and also in a follow-up e-mail.

I appreciate the government tabling the business plans publicly, and I'm hesitantly open to the idea -- to supporting the idea of putting measurables in the business plans if the plan is to make the documents public going forward, which it is as I see right now. We can discuss the level to which measurable goals have been sufficiently included in the business plans when we discuss those specifically.

For the mandate, I would say that for the average citizen and, indeed ourselves, the disadvantage with this new approach is that we have made figuring out exactly what the government is doing and when it plans to achieve it a much more difficult and convoluted task.

So the business plans are a 280-page document. So currently, there isn't a place where a person can quickly look to the mandate and determine what the government is specifically working to achieve under each mandate statement or item. The mandate statements are quite broad, and I think could be criticized to be saying a lot of things the government is currently working on. So it's hard to say that this is particularly visionary.

I think that this is a gap which the government should work to address in its public communications and suggest it would help both the public and Members to better track and hold the government to account for mandate progress if we did have a place where we could access the mandate and the very specific measurable items that are associated with it. I realize that's going to be in the business plans but, again, it's a 280-page document and we can't quickly go through those and sort of identify targets.

So on one hand, we have created much more focused priorities, which I was a strong advocate for and I'm glad we achieved, but the government has taken those and expanded upon them to the point where they are now attached to a document which is hundreds of pages long and, as I can personally attest, takes days to pour through in detail.

So the mandate itself. The mandate as tabled speaks to challenging status quo and driving positive change. When I look at the 2024-2025 Budget as proposed, I found myself questioning how much are we really challenging the status quo and, particularly, questioning the government's understanding of what the process of priority setting truly involves. I'll

speak to that sentiment more in response to the budget itself.

To the mandate itself, I will say that for the most part, I agree with and appreciate the sentiments shared by the previous Speaker, the Member for Yellowknife North. I do see myself, particularly in the priorities that were set by caucus, by the 19 Members, I am pleased to see housing at the top, strong economic foundation, access to health care. Those are things that I specifically campaigned on and committed to residents to bring to the table as priorities and so I'm very happy to see those in there. So I think that we were focused in our priority setting, and I am pleased to see that those priorities are being spoken to throughout the business plan. So I do think the government has done its best to focus on the priorities when implementing the business plans. Again, I'll speak to those more in specific tomorrow.

So the difficulty with the mandate, of course, is the lack of measurability in it. And I think that it remains to be seen if the process of attaching mandate to business plans is going to be an effective way to track progress and hold the government to account. So I think that probably how I can most helpfully provide comment here is just to speak to each individual item and what it means to me, because I haven't had a chance to kind of speak to the mandate itself.

So housing. What did I mean when I brought housing forward as a priority?

To put it quite simply, what that meant to me is that we were going to be increasing housing stock available to residents in the territory, making it more affordable to get into housing in the territory and, in particular, also investing in operations and maintenance of housing in the territory, which we have fallen woefully behind upon. And we simply have not been funding O and M of housing at the level to which we need to over the past number of years, focusing more on capital projects. And so the difficulty with that, of course, is that housing stock is slowly decreasing in quality and needing repair and falling out of repair and having to be taken offline when what we need to be doing is kind of maintaining what we have and building more. So that's what I meant. And so we've said that we're increasing housing availability. Whether we have, as the Member for Yellowknife North mentioned, kind of a solid plan for doing that, I think we have not yet quite articulated what our long-term plan is and what we're really trying to achieve. So I'm hoping that we can get there with the business plans.

I am going to speak to the economy -- it's amazing how quickly we run out of time here. Speaking to the economy, I think the one that I

want to speak to the most here is growing and enhancing the northern workforce by investing in skill development and attracting skilled workers to the NWT. I very much appreciate that this is the top item in economy. And I have more to say on this topic when we get to business plans and perhaps a reply to the Budget Address. But the bottom line, I'll say, is that the foundation of a strong economy is people, and the reason for building a strong economy is people. And so investing in people through housing, through education, through health, I think is how we build the foundation for a strong economy. And that's mostly what I meant when I was speaking to that.

I think that the other items that are in here are things that I contributed to and agree with also. I think I agree with the comments made by my previous colleague there on power infrastructure and just acknowledging that there's a little bit more to this than just green power generation and transmission.

Access to health care. I'm quite happy with what we've put in here. I think it's simple. I hope that it's achievable. And certainly what I was saying during the election, and what I brought forward as a priority, is focusing on access to primary care in the NWT. And that is at the top of the list here. So I am pleased to see that.

As for the next ones, addressing the effects of trauma, emergency management, I think I am pleased with what's in there. Again, whether we can be measurable in what we're doing, I have some comments specific to emergency management that I think I'll save for a statement because they're quite specific, and I'm quickly running out of time.

On public safety, on this item I definitely asked some questions during development of the mandate that I put to Cabinet and want to speak to those a little bit and just want to note that there is a strong connection between public safety and addressing -- and the items that we have in addressing the effects of trauma and access to health care that I think I would like to have seen us create some better connections between. And that is just to say, quite simply, most of the social problems that we are facing in the Northwest Territories are not problems that we can police our way out of. And scientifically, and behind -- research behind these topics has shown time and time again that you can't police your way out of social issues. The way out of social issues is poverty reduction, treating addictions, mental health, wellness, ensuring that there's -- that everybody has equal ability to participate in the economy. That's what truly helps societies get over social ills. It's not something that you can

just take people and put them in jail and expect that the problems are going to go away.

So I've got 20 seconds left. I had a bit of a comment that I wanted to make but I guess I'll have to include that in either tomorrow's or in a reply to the Budget Address. So I'll leave my comments at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Mr. Testart.

**MR. TESTART:** Oh, thank you, Madam Chair. I was just reminding colleagues that you may speak twice to an item if the chair allows. But once my time is sorted out on the clock, I will begin.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, who likes ice cream? I think you'll find most people do. It takes a real curmudgeonly character to not enjoy a sweet treat. And much like that sentiment with this mandate, there's a lot to like in here. It's an aspirational document that speaks to how the government is going to take the priorities of this Assembly seriously and deliver on them. What it's short on is detail and tangible outcomes, and that is largely my issue with this document. I look to the business plans, which the previous Speaker, my friend from Frame Lake, spoke to is 280 pages. And within those pages, you will find concrete and tangible outcomes. There are some spending targets and commitments identified. There are timelines for legislation. There are numbers of houses to be built, those kind of details. Without that, this document remains comfortably in the stratosphere of an aspirational document, which is fine to have. I think these kind of documents are important, this kind of language is important, and to remain hopeful and collaborative is important as well. But is it useful as a priority setting document? I don't think so. I think it's pretty clear we have -- we worked collaboratively to develop those priorities, and what we want to see is tangible outcomes to make them a reality so we can go back to our constituents and say this is what this government did. If I go back to someone now and say, you know, we've increased investment certainty and create opportunities for the private sector by streamlining administrative processes and ensuring regulatory systems and decision-making are consistent, efficient, and predictable, that's a nice principle to have, but how do we do that? What is the what? You know, that's the objective; how are we going to get there? And we still don't -- and the answer is in those business plans, and that's what requires more scrutiny, I think, from this House to really see if we're achieving these things. And I guess when we speak to process, because process is important to any

government and any governing institution and certainly legislative institution as well, we have to -- I have to ask, is this the best process for this Assembly? If this isn't a really useful accountability tool, if it's not a useful tool for setting mandates, because you can already -- we're already setting mandates through business plans and mandate letters, then what is it really? And I think we could have skipped this step and gone straight into the business plans or straight into the mandate letters. And I'm just concerned that if we continue on this path, you know, we have this commitment to take more risks, we're going to see a government that creates a risk secretariat that's going to evaluate risks and give the government policy guidance on what risks to take and what risks not to take, and we're going to establish a new process for that. We need to just govern. We need to just give, you know, a clear Budget Address that has these priorities in it that shows how we're going to invest in them, and then, you know, ask Members to support it. And yeah, so I just wish we would be a little less cautious in even how we go about the business here. It's taken us a long time to get to this point and, you know, we're still waiting to pass our first real budget that's going to have tangible outcomes. And I don't think everyone's happy with that budget. So it's going to take negotiation. It's going to take back and forth. I think we're slow on that process as well. And, you know, the clock is counting down, not just on my time but on our time in this Assembly as well. So I want to see us succeed. I want to see us work together to succeed. But I also want to make sure we're maximizing our time effectively. And I think sometimes we get bogged down in process like this when we could just be moving forward with something more concrete and tangible.

So that being said, I support everything that's in here a hundred percent but I do want to see the how, the why, the what, how we're going to achieve these things, and that -- for me, this document leaves more questions than answers. So I look forward to tomorrow's review of business plans and we'll have more to say about that. But until then, I think I've said everything that needs to be said from my perspective on this document. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Is there any other Member that would like to speak? Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, Premier and Cabinet, for the mandate, issuing the mandate, tabling the mandate. I appreciate the work that's been done on it. I concur with some of what's been

said with my colleagues in that, you know, it's great to have the mandate, I support the mandate, it is a good document, it's a high-level document, but as we know where the rubber hits the road will be in the business plans. And that's where we -- as we said, we have things that are deliverable and measurable and things we can look to do to what we need to do to get our work done. And, you know, I get it, like everyone gets it. There's only so much budget to go around. There's only so many things we can do and, you know, we all -- there's many things in there that we know we need to get done, and I appreciate that we're looking at that over four years. I appreciate that the Premier has his 50-year plan as well which, you know, I know we want to look to where we have to get in the future.

You know, having said that, I mean, the government -- I mean, to set that path to prosperity, I guess, we need to continue to look outside the box. We need to continue to look at different solutions. I like that in there you see a lot of working with Indigenous governments, with NGOs, and municipal governments. I think it's so important, as I've said previously to, you know, to look at redundancies and where we're spending our money and where money can be spent otherwise. Look at, you know, opportunities to access funding that maybe we would not have been able to access, you know, without that. So I think that's also very important and that we continue that. We sat around as 19 of us before we sat in this House, and we talked about those things. We met for two days with the Indigenous governments, and we talked about those things, about how we can look at redundancies and how we can think outside the box. You know, so I think it's -- and I've stated that many times.

I've spoken many times about our whole-of-community approach. Well, I think that also, you know, translates in the whole-of-government approach, not only us working together as a consensus government and doing what we need to do and working with other governments as well within our territory. You know, and we'll touch on this in the business plans a little more tomorrow but looking at the economy, we need revenue, we need to grow. You know, we need to look, again, outside the box, ways we can grow. And, you know, one of my colleagues talked about people. It's very important, about recruitment, about getting people that -- getting people to work in the territory and getting people that are working outside the territory potentially back in the territory. And I think that's so very important for us. And not just for -- you know, people talk about the transfer payments but for the other things, the income tax, the work that -- you

know, the work that people do, the rent they pay, the groceries they buy, the hockey coaches they provide, those things are all important to us as a territory as well.

As I said previously -- sorry, I just lost my thought. One second. Yes, that whole-of-community approach.

Anyway, Madam Chair, when we do get to the business plans tomorrow, we'll be able to discuss some more of that and we'll look at, again, talking about the economy. You know, we don't touch on things that are happening in the territory. We need to focus on, things that what's happening in my region where the Inuvialuit are leading the charge on developing natural gas up there. And as we know, you know, we have the third largest reserves of natural gas in the world and, you know, we rarely -- that's kind of something we hardly hear spoke about here. We talk about the mining industry, which is super important to us, but there's also other industries full of potential here. The world still needs natural gas, you know, we still need that product yet for a while so it's important, I think, that we look at that. We look at the Inuvik satellite station in Inuvik and the things that are going on there, things like that, outside the box, thinking that can provide some of that revenue for our government.

So, yeah, I think I will leave it at that. Again, thank you. As my colleague from Range Lake has said, I support this document. I appreciate the document, but much work to be done, and I look forward to going through the business plans. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Any other Members? Seeing no more -- Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I was trying to decide if I wanted to speak to the mandate or not. I mean, you heard largely what my colleagues had said and -- I mean, just working backwards, I mean, it's really tough to disagree with this. I mean, because the statements are so high -- high level. You know, I often feel that the public wants more and expects more, and this is the fault of consensus government, which is we can't be specific. And the only reason we can't be specific is because it's us. We choose to be that way.

If I was in charge of a mandate by myself or was able to sort of, like, pry my Members -- colleagues to agree, I mean, we'd say simply, as I said earlier today in my statement, which is, you know, we would mandate a hundred new homes for social

housing. You know, and we'd work towards that goal. We would commit the forces, like a team, an army, to meet these challenges. We'd say, for example, today we're going to -- we're going to work to get 150 kilometers of the Mackenzie Valley Highway done by the end of this term. And to me, those are the types of things that the public's looking for.

I mean, if I was to quote President George Bush, I mean, I'd say mission accomplished with this little chuckle, because the mandate itself looks like it's largely completed already. And the problem is the Cabinet's hearing this as a criticism, but it's not a criticism. The problem is these things are written as so wide. I mean, you know, better streamlined admin process, engage public, I mean we do that every day now. You know, sometimes better, sometimes worse. But in all fairness, we do this, you know, open transparent government. I mean, we try those things. We do those things. I mean, none of this is new. That's the problem. I mean, every government, including the ones, the 21st Assembly, etcetera, and on and on and on, will be struggling with the same phrases. How do we break free from the static position of -- you know, of -- the static truth of mandates, which is they're just -- they're statements that, you know, nothing is groundbreaking. I mean, I -- I'm not advocating for party politics but, you know, when a government comes into force, I mean, it says I'm going to make highways, or I'm going to set up a bottle depot in every community, or -- in the sense of recycling. And -- or we're going to build more houses. And this is how many we're going to build. And that's the problem with this process, is we don't -- you know, we're almost afraid of our shadow to make those commitments. And I don't know why that it continues to be this way. I mean, I can keep advocating for more, be specific, and I will -- will continue to advocate. But it's an unfortunate symptom of the way we do work. I mean, I believe in empowering the Premier to lead the Cabinet, but we don't do it that way. I believe, and they should be able to make decisions, but yet we -- we tie ourselves up into these ball of yarns that are fought over by kittens so they're quite a mess, unable to follow a line of decision-making and process and getting free. I mean, it's such a tangled web of confusion sometimes. And what do we do? We further hit ourselves with more policy and process.

I mean, the general public, I find in my experience, you know, wanted to hear things like we're going to build two more addiction centres by the end of this term. Like, I'm serious. That specific. You know, they would like to hear that. And I know we can't do everything for everybody, but that's the reality

of government, which is you try your best, but at least try to -- try.

I don't think my point on another 150 kilometers of Mackenzie Valley being built -- you know, if we only did 149, I don't think people would be angry with us. I think they would be inspired by our blaze and trail of call to action, you know. I mean, when I hear deliver equitable access to sustainable primary health care, I mean that is every day. I mean, I can't imagine someone not attempting to deliver equitable access to sustainable primary care. I mean, it's just -- it's hard to imagine that that isn't the case. And it's frustrating because, like I say, when I talk to people, they want to hear specifics. They want to hear that there is a call to action and one that they can measure us -- every one of us against. And for better or for worse, it at least helps inspires us. Because, I mean, if we said we were going to build another hundred public housing units to help people and, you know, that would be an easy way to rally behind because, I mean, we'd be looking to the left of us and saying how do we help and get this darn thing done, and we'd be looking to the right and say how do we get those things done, and, you know, you do your part because we're all going to do it. But now it's just, well, we're going to work together. That's the mandate. And that's really what it says.

I mean, the last two speakers are right. I mean, of course they support this. I mean, who doesn't support working on addressing the effects of trauma. But, you know -- as an example, or emergency management. Who doesn't support any of these things? I mean, it's impossible not to support them. But, again, Madam Chairperson, you know, the challenge, like I say, is that I think it's -- it largely would be -- it shouldn't be taken personal, and it's not intended to be personal, but, I mean, the public really is frustrated by these challenges, which is what does it really say? And what does it really mean? And what does it really deliver? And for me to go back to them or speak to them at my constituency meeting -- which, by the way, is at 6:30 tonight for all those listening, at Javaroma -- until 8:30. And I mean, the reality is they want to know and be able to sink their teeth into something. And to that, I see the ultimate frustration of, you know, what are politicians really saying, what are they accomplishing, what are they doing? I have nothing to measure them by. And then when it comes polling day, you know, they just -- they're rating you on your personality basically as opposed to the government. Or they're mad at the government and blaming Regular Members, which is often I've seen the case. The government doing this, and it must be your

fault. But if you read this, I mean, we've already done it, I mean --

So Madam Chair, yes, I support the public safety initiative statements. I support all the statements. I can run through them all but I don't think I'll do that. So I just say I support them all. I mean, it's hard not to. And that's the frustration about the mandate, is that we've waited over six months to see statements that don't have specifics. And I know if I had my way, like I say, I mean, the government would pick five or six areas, target them very precisely, and show the public we're going to rise to the challenge and if we don't rise, we're darn -- we're going to darnedest do our best. And to that, I suspect every one of us in this room will be rewarded with either the big cheers or good support, at least emotionally, with our communities for having the best interests -- their best interests in our hearts. And that really in some ways is a lot of the work we do here.

So I am going to say that's all I have to say right now. But, of course, I reserve my right to reflect differently in a different direction as I spur -- as the moment spurs or as other Members inspire. So thank you, Madam Chairperson. And good luck on measuring these things. Cheers.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, when Premier made his speech at the beginning, you know, balance the budget and to build good working relationship with Indigenous government, settling outstanding land claims, etcetera, I liked that. You know, and I'm sure I'm not the only one that, you know, was pleased with that statement. There's a lot of other First Nations that didn't settle their land claims were also pleased as well, you know. So which is a good start. I like that. You know, but this mandate here, there's nine pages, and they are right, it is very vague. You know, here, access to health care, deliver equitable access to sustainable primary care in all NWT communities, not in all -- you know, like, I mean, there are going to be some communities -- like, how would you accommodate for a community like Wekweeti, you know? So not every one of them. It's -- there's not going -- we're not going to have this equitable access, you know. So it's just that how they're going to do this is one of the things that kind of missing in the mandate. But I know it's in the business plan, but it's very long. And, you know, something like this, where the mandate, like, nine pages, but it's just that it would have been nice if -- you know, if it was more explanation and details of how they're



going to do it. So I have no issues, it's just that it's -- I know this turnaround, this government is doing something different, which we didn't have this mandate, we didn't have this business plan, but we had the main estimate. So main estimate, that's where we ask all those questions. But I guess now that, you know, tomorrow it's -- tomorrow we're going to be discussing that tomorrow and we'll look into it more.

But even with the housing, you know, like, I mean, to -- to end homelessness, especially in small communities -- in larger centre, yes, there's -- more of our people are moving to larger centre because to have a better life. We can have that in small communities if we were -- if we had access to more program and services if we had more housing, you know, because there's not too many people in the small communities where homelessness should not be an issue. And it doesn't say that in here too, you know, that -- they talk about the homelessness, but it's mostly in regional centre, not in small communities. So I do have issues with that.

And mental health services, you know, like, we do have lots of issues there.

And public safety, it talked about here, law enforcement, you know. In small communities, like Gameti, they don't have RCMP. They've been asking for -- to ensure public safety, they do need an RCMP or law enforcement, any kind of -- or law enforcement, some form of law enforcement in that community, and Wekweeti too as well. It's not just them, but there are other communities that are lacking that services. So it would have been nice how, you know, like, they're going to be focusing on crime prevention.

In small communities, there's lots of issues. There's lots of -- we lack a lot of recreation activities. There's not much to do for our young people. So all they do is just -- you know, the only activities that most of these community have is the school activities. There's nothing outside of school in some of the communities. So we do need more, and it would have been nice if that was identified in here too as well, you know, because -- and lately, the crime has been happening due to drug related. So it's just that -- I do like what I see here, but it's just that it would have been nice if it was explained more in detail.

I don't want to talk down the clock, but I think I'm sure there are other Members here that want to talk as well. But I do like what the Premier -- you know, the Premier said in his statement before that, you know, Indigenous government, Indigenous people, having good

relation -- good working relationship with them is more important for us, especially from the small communities. So that's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Member of Monfwi. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And thank you, everyone, for the comments; I do appreciate it. I know that this is a departure from previous mandates of this government and of other mandates that you would see in a system where there's a political party who can bring together their apparatus, come up with a plan, and lay that out on day one.

The reason that this mandate is sparse in terms of actual deliverables is because I've seen two mandates prior to this government. I've been involved with the Assembly for two previous terms, and each of those mandates had hundreds -- I think the first one had hundreds, the second one had maybe 170, commitments in there, and they were specific commitments. And I did not find that to be a great way to -- I guess to govern. I didn't find that to be the most useful document. As a Regular Member, I rarely ever referred to that mandate. If there were issues in my constituency, I would speak with businesses or constituents and, over time, I would determine whether or not things had gotten better by how people interacted with the system. If people's problems were never solved, then I knew things weren't getting better. You can really get a sense of how things are operating and how the government is doing just through the day-to-day business of being an MLA. So I wasn't too concerned about deliverables in here -- or sorry, measurements in here. But as the Members point out, it is in the mandate -- or in the business plans.

In terms of, you know, these areas being broad, yes, some of them are very broad. So it was mentioned the health care commitment to deliver equitable access to suitable primary health care. And that's one of only four commitments under that area. And so what that does, to me, it says if you're going to bring forward something about health care, you want to -- you bring forward a program or an ask, it better be focused on ensuring equitable access to primary health care. So it's a way to filter out some of the other things that the government does that perhaps don't focus on the priorities of the Assembly.

Similarly, there's comments in there about streamlining administrative processes. So if a program is coming forward, it better have streamlined administrative processes. If there's an initiative, it better be reducing a regulatory burden.

So as much as what we're going to do, this is a signal to the government of what we're not going to do. We're not going to do the same things. We're going to bring forward initiatives that are in line with this mandate. And so it is different. I didn't want to do the same thing. I didn't want to tie this government to initiatives that were created within the first month or two after the priorities were developed because it was only three months ago that the priorities of the Assembly were set. So I know we've been here six months, but it hasn't been six months that we've had the priorities to develop this mandate.

So I won't say much more, but I do look forward to working with the Members and Cabinet and Indigenous government partners, as was pointed out, to really flesh out what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. And we're going to do it by working together. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Premier. Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do make a daily goal for myself of not going over my time limit, and I failed once again. Maybe tomorrow. I just had a few sentences left.

So I was just going to say that I appreciate the renewed emphasis under addressing the effects of trauma. On the land healing and wellness supports and aftercare support, but there are still some significant gaps in the spectrum of mental health and addictions supports that I think we need to talk more about, including harm reduction and stabilization, including managed alcohol programs, and also medically supported detox facilities, which there's not nearly enough a capacity for in this territory.

And just to conclude, when we embarked on this process of setting priorities, I, like many others, wanted to see a strategic plan type document with measurable and outcome-oriented goals. Now, we didn't get there with the priorities or with the mandate, and you could argue that a strategic plan was not ever going to be part of these documents. It turns out that there are many stages along the way, which is fine, as long as it all nests together and leads us ultimately to that strategic plan. Unfortunately, so far I see a major disconnect between this mandate and the business plan but I'll speak more to that tomorrow. So thank you, Madam Chair, for letting me finish my statement.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Frame Lake, Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for indulging a second round. And I just wanted to quickly kind of provide my closing comments here. So just a couple more points.

I mean, as I spoke to earlier, I appreciated Cabinet kind of listening to our comments, and I certainly saw mine reflected in the updated mandate document, so I appreciate them listening. And I wanted to highlight just a few things.

One is the statement on page 2 about strengthening collaborations between departments. It goes on to talk about fostering a sense of purpose and well-being and empowering, performance, and excellence and innovation in our staff. There's another bullet point, on page 3, empowering the public service by ensuring they are provided the flexibility to deliver programs and honouring the GNWT's commitments to openness, transparency, and accountability. So those statements, I just wanted to highlight those because I wanted to note that some of those things, I think, some people would say are a pretty monumental shift in how the GNWT does business. And that is something that I was advocating for. I noted in my comments on the mandate that I wanted to see us speak to -- let's see here.

I was talking about things like implementing results-based management systems, program measure measurement, a reference to changing management structure and practice to better facilitate employee empowerment and engagement. So I was hoping to see specifics like that. And also a commitment to improving workplace morale and employee satisfaction. I would note, unfortunately, that workplace morale and employee satisfaction has been noted to be fairly low in recent surveys of staff. So I just wanted to point out these statements and say that they're very nice to see and hear, and it remains to be seen that we are going to remain committed to these and ensure that we actually implement them with policies, with changes to how things are done, with shifts in the way management is done at the GNWT. And I think those, as I said, would be quite monumental shifts, and I think they'd be very appreciated by a lot of people, including myself, because I think these shifts are one of the keys to ensuring that these mandate commitments actually get implemented.

So I'm just going to share some closing comments that I shared with Cabinet when we were in caucus. I wanted to make the comments publicly also.

Let's be bold. Let's take risks. I think we all know that we're facing major challenges during the term of this Assembly and that status quo is

not acceptable, nor will it get us where we need to go. And so I want to encourage Cabinet to take those risks. You've spoken to it in the mandate, and I want to see you do it on the ground.

With regard to the relationship between Regular Members and Cabinet, I think that we often see the differences between our two sides, but the distinction is much less significant for the public who put us in here. I think people judge our success as an Assembly based on the successes and operations of the government. So your success is our success. And I want us to be working together, like you've said, to achieve that.

I also want to speak to kind of just the specific work of MLAs. I want as much as possible our committee projects to align with the mandate and help investigate and make recommendations as to how we can improve our ability to achieve it. So that's my commitment back to Cabinet, is that when working on the Regular MLA side, we'll be scoping out our projects and doing projects that relate to either mandate or business plan items, things that either we have expertise in or we think need an extra lens on to ensure that we are actually making good on some of these commitments, because this is a very ambitious list of tasks and we have a very short period of time to achieve them.

What I want to see from Cabinet is strong leadership to ensure that the bureaucracy is implementing what we're talking about in this room on the ground, particularly with regards to working collaboratively, helping people, ensuring that people perceive the change we're talking about here in their communities and in their interactions with the government.

So that's pretty much -- that's pretty much it from me is -- and when I speak to strong leadership, what I mean is are we seeing change that we're talking about here actually implemented. And so some of you will notice that I haven't been providing questions ahead of time as much as I was in the first session, and that's -- I was saying to one of the Ministers earlier that one of the reasons for that is I want to know what the Ministers are bringing to the table in terms of leadership to these departments. And so I do want to hear the Minister's voice, not just the department's voice when we're asking questions. And so having taken five minutes already, I think I'll leave my comments at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Seeing no more comments, thank you, committee. Do you

agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 67-20(1)?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 67-20(1). Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I'll call this House back to order. Member from the Dehcho, can I have the report of the Committee of the Whole?

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 67-20(1) and would like to report progress.

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for the Dehcho. Do I have a seconder for the report of Committee of the Whole? Member from Frame Lake. Thank you. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion has been carried, and the report of Committee of the Whole has been concurred with.

---Carried

Thank you. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Tuesday, May 28th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

5. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 3 of 7
6. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
7. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
8. Returns to Oral Questions
9. Acknowledgements
10. Oral Questions
11. Written Questions
12. Returns to Written Questions
13. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
14. Petitions
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
  - Motion 26-20(1): Referral of Tabled Document 94-20(1): 2024-2028 Business Plans, to Committee of the Whole
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season
  - Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation
  - Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a Day Child Care in the NWT
  - Minister's Statement 24-20(1): Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention
  - Tabled Document 93-20(1): 2024-2025 Main Estimates
22. Report of the Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 28, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:02 p.m.