



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 22

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Pages 815 - 872

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker
Hon. Shane Thompson
(Nahendeh)

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland
(Kam Lake)
*Minister of Education, Culture and
Employment*
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and
Investment*

Mr. Richard Edjericon
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Robert Hawkins
(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Lucy Kuptana
(Nunakput)
*Minister responsible for Housing
Northwest Territories*
*Minister responsible for the Status of
Women*

Hon. Jay Macdonald
(Thebacha)
*Minister of Environment and Climate
Change*

Hon. Vince McKay
(Hay River South)
*Minister of Municipal and Community
Affairs*
*Minister responsible for the Workers'
Safety and Compensation
Commission*
*Minister responsible for the Public
Utilities Board*

Mr. Danny McNeely
(Sahtu)

Ms. Shauna Morgan
(Yellowknife North)

Mr. Julian Morse
(Frame Lake)

Mr. George Nerysoo
(Mackenzie Delta)

Ms. Kate Reid
(Great Slave)

Mr. Denny Rodgers
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Hon. Lesa Semmler
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)
Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. R.J. Simpson
(Hay River North)
Premier
Government House Leader
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous
Affairs*
Minister of Justice

Mr. Kieron Testart
(Range Lake)

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek
(Yellowknife South)
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
Minister of Infrastructure
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power
Corporation*

**Mrs. Jane Weyallon
Armstrong**
(Monfwi)

Mrs. Sheryl Yakeleya
(Dehcho)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Mr. Glen Rutland

Clerk of Journals
Mr. Michael Ball

Deputy Clerks
Ms. Kim Wickens
Ms. Jolene Saturnino

Committee Clerks
Ms. Cynthia James
Ms. Katie Weaver Charpentier

Law Clerks
Mr. Toby Kruger
Ms. Sandra Mackenzie

Box 1320
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
www.ntassembly.ca

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	385
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	385
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 46-20(1): 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY	385
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 47-20(1): STRENGTHENING GNWT SUPPORTS FOR NWT ARTISTS.....	385
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 48-20(1): UPDATE ON KEY STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.....	816
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	817
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 250-20(1): BLOOD CANCER SERVICES.....	817
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 251-20(1): CONGRATULATIONS TO GRADUATES.....	818
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 252-20(1): FOOD MAIL PROGRAM	818
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 253-20(1): SCHOOL ATTENDANCE	819
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 254-20(1): LIFE PROMOTION AND HARM REDUCTION YOUTH CONFERENCE IN TULITA	819
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 255-20(1): RENEWABLE DIESEL	820
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 256-20(1): INNOVATION IN HOUSING	820
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 257-20(1): HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO JACKSON BOWDEN.....	821
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 258-20(1): RETIREMENT OF CORINNE SASSIE.....	821
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 259-20(1): NUTRITION NORTH PROGRAM.....	822
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	822
ORAL QUESTIONS	822
QUESTION 251-20(1): BLOOD CANCER SERVICES	823
QUESTION 252-20(1): RENEWABLE DIESEL	823
QUESTION 253-20(1): FUTURE OF ROCKHILL PROPERTY.....	824
QUESTION 254-20(1): HIGH COST OF FOOD IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES.....	825
QUESTION 255-20(1): YOUTH SUPPORT FUNDING SOURCES	826
QUESTION 256-20(1): NUTRITION NORTH PROGRAM	827
QUESTION 257-20(1): ATTENDANCE RATES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES	827
QUESTION 258-20(1): BASIC INCOME	828
QUESTION 25-20(1): FEE HOLIDAY FOR DWELLINGS IN COMMUNITIES	829
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY (REVERSION)	830
REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES	830
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER	830
COMMITTEE REPORT 4-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER	833
COMMITTEE REPORT 5-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION	835
COMMITTEE REPORT 6-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OMBUD AND SPECIAL REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE OMBUD ACT	837
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	840
TABLED DOCUMENT 112-20(1): FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 163-20(1): SUPPORTS AVAILABLE FOR RESIDENTS OF ENTERPRISE	840
NOTICES OF MOTION	840
MOTION 33-20(1): MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP	840
MOTIONS	840
MOTION 31-20(1): CROSS-BORDER CRIME REDUCTION FORUM, CARRIED.....	840
RECORDED VOTE	843
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	844
COMMITTEE MOTION 15-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP, CARRIED	845
COMMITTEE MOTION 16-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – CULTURAL SAFETY PROGRAMMING OR TRAINING, CARRIED.....	845

COMMITTEE MOTION 17-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – TRAINING SPECIFIC TO MISSING PERSONS ACT, CARRIED 846

COMMITTEE MOTION 18-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – ANNUAL REPORTING OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION, CARRIED 846

COMMITTEE MOTION 19-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – TITLING BILLS, CARRIED 846

COMMITTEE MOTION 20-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – SIXTIES SCOOP, CARRIED 846

COMMITTEE MOTION 21-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – RECORDS RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION, CARRIED 847

COMMITTEE MOTION 22-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – PERSONS NOT WANTING TO BE LOCATED, CARRIED 847

COMMITTEE MOTION 23-20(1): COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS ACT – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE, CARRIED..... 847

COMMITTEE MOTION 24-20(1): TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025 MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT – INFRASTRUCTURE, CARRIED 861

COMMITTEE MOTION 25-20(1): TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025 MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT – FINANCE CARRIED 869

COMMITTEE MOTION 26-20(1): TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): 2024-2025 MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL OF BORROWING PLAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT REPORTING ENTITY AND ESTABLISHED BORROWING LIMITS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, CARRIED..... 870

REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE870

ORDERS OF THE DAY870

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, June 6, 2024****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Jay Macdonald, Hon. Vince McKay, Mr. McNeely, 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 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Please be seated. Colleagues, I'd like to thank Evelyn Parry for the opening guiding words.

Colleagues, before we get going, I'd just like to reiterate that during question and answer period, if we could be succinct with our questions and succinct with our answers that would be greatly appreciated moving forward. Thank you.

Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 46-20(1):
80TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY**

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, today marks the 80th Anniversary of D-Day. The landing at Normandy was a turning point of the Second World War. As Premier, and as a Canadian, I honour the sacrifice of all those who served in this war, the ultimate sacrifice of all those who lost their lives in the conflict, and the memory of the veterans who have passed on in the years since. While I was not able to join the Canadian delegation for the commemoration ceremony taking place at Juno Beach today, I am grateful for the efforts of all participating nations to ensure the lessons learned through the last Great War, and through the individual sacrifice of so many, are never forgotten.

NWT residents have long served in similar capacities, through times of peace and conflict, and today I wish to honour our own veterans, as well as our friends and neighbours who are currently serving, including those stationed at Joint Task Force North and with the Canadian Rangers. While many veterans are no longer with us, the memory of their service and sacrifice Achoes through generations. May that remembrance continue to guide us. Lest we forget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister of ITI.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 47-20(1):
STRENGTHENING GNWT SUPPORTS FOR
NWT ARTISTS**

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, art is powerful, and art is beautiful, but it is far more than a thing of beauty. Art is a personal, local, and global connector. It connects people to themselves, to one another, and to people living across the world. Further, it connects us to culture, land, and elders and it is critical to our well-being and to our shared and individual histories. Art is a conduit of healing. Art is foundational to how we educate our children, preserve traditions, feed community wellness, and build a strong and independent territory.

The arts sector plays a valuable role in the NWT, not only for its own sake but also by upholding a diverse economy that provides artists with employment choices and income opportunities. With such a vast territory, artists are supported across all disciplines, from fine craft to jewelry, from spoken and written word to film productions, all of which are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

As part of our mandate, this government committed to making GNWT programs and services more accessible to NWT residents through person-centered approaches that prioritize ease of access for residents over ease of administration. The decision to realign the various programs that serve the arts sector so that they are housed in one place, within the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, is one way to deliver on this promise.

This action brings supports for NWT artists of all types under one department for a single point of contact rather than spread between staff at different departments. I expect this work to build more capacity to deliver arts programs and result in a better service experience for all artists. Artists will no longer need to navigate multiple government departments to access funding, resources, and assistance.

To ensure a smooth transition for artists and staff, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment along with Industry, Tourism and Investment, are developing a structured change management process that ensures the full transfer of knowledge and processes. The departments are committed to advancing this change with input from all staff while maintaining open communication.

Mr. Speaker, this shift excites me, not only as it creates an easy-to-access single-service window for resident artists but also because it allows the government to more effectively leverage the economic opportunities presented to the arts sector. The arts sector represents a significant component of the Northwest Territories economy. Cultural industries added up to over \$100 million in gross domestic product in 2022. This number is likely an underestimate to the extent that some people involved in arts and culture do not formally identify as artists.

Promoting the arts within a unified voice is expected to create more opportunities for artists to showcase their creativity to the world. Indigenous artists are gaining recognition and demand worldwide as they reach new audiences and sell their work to new consumers online. The film sector, in particular, has great potential to bring the North to the world and the world to the North and shows the linkages between arts and tourism.

Partnerships between artists and the tourism sector can lead to innovative cultural experiences for visitors, while collaborations with the film industry can promote the NWT as a filming destination. Such strategic collaborations will maximize the economic and cultural impact of the arts sector in our territory, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by placing supports for artists in one spot, our government is empowering our public service to provide flexibility to deliver programs and services that work for residents. I look forward to sharing more details on these changes later this year. As we move forward, let us reaffirm our commitment to championing our arts sector to reach its full creative, cultural, and economic potential. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI.

Colleagues, before we get into the next Minister's statement, I'd like to recognize Major Karen Hoeft and her husband Allan Hoeft and welcome to our Assembly here. Thank you very much for being here.

Ministers' statements. Minister for Infrastructure.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 48-20(1):
UPDATE ON KEY STRATEGIC
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to address the Northwest Territories Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists at their annual professional development symposium. The theme for this year's symposium was Building a Resilient North, which underscores a collective commitment to overcoming challenges and fostering innovative solutions for a sustainable future for residents. Today, I want to highlight the pivotal role that strategic infrastructure plays in securing the future prosperity of the Northwest Territories.

The strength of our economy and our future prosperity depend on reliable supply chains supported by critical infrastructure. This includes roads, rail lines, ports, ferries, pipelines, airports, and electricity transmission infrastructure, all essential for transporting goods, services, and materials to both domestic and international markets. As we build for tomorrow, it is crucial that we leverage the best standards, tools, and technologies to create infrastructure that meets both present and future needs.

With this in mind, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to maximizing federal funding to help close the infrastructure gap with investments in green power generation and transmission, transportation and communications networks. Transformative infrastructure projects such as the all-season Mackenzie Valley Highway, the expansion of the Taltson hydroelectric facility and airport updates and expansions are significant contributors to the stability of the NWT's economy.

Enhancing our all-season highway system remains a top priority. The Department of Infrastructure currently maintains 3,856 kilometers of highways, with nearly 2,500 of those kilometers being all-season roads half gravel and half chip seal or asphalt. Our road network includes 115 bridges, 247 bridge culverts, and more than 3,000 smaller culverts, as well as four ferry crossings. This summer, Infrastructure staff will be busy with over 20 roadway projects in various stages of completion, including access road construction, multiple highway development projects and bridge and culvert expansion and construction.

We are nearing the completion of phase one of the Prohibition Creek Access Road near Norman Wells, which will further strengthen our transportation system in addition to providing

employment and training opportunities for Sahtu residents. During peak construction, the contractor hired 95 workers - 61 from the Sahtu and 12 from other Northwest Territories regions.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to advance strategic infrastructure projects such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the Slave Geological Province Corridor. Strong relationships with Indigenous governments and organizations are central to the success of these transformative projects, and we continue to work together on their advancement. The analytical phase of the Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessment is currently underway with technical and community information sessions anticipated this summer and fall. We remain on pace for a final report of an environmental assessment in 2025, and we also have extensive fieldwork and engagement planned for this summer, which will inform future regulatory applications for the Lockhart All-Season Road, the first phase of the Slave Geological Province Corridor project.

In addition to new roads, we are undertaking necessary repairs to cables on the Dehcho Bridge and progressing the planning and design of highways, bridges and culverts including Dehk'e Frank Channel bridge replacement.

Mr. Speaker, waterways, like the Mackenzie River and Great Slave Lake, have long been vital for transporting people and goods. Despite challenges such as low water levels, Marine Transportation Services and the fuel services division are adapting and planning to ensure essential resupply to northern communities. The ongoing Hay River harbour restoration project is a testament to our commitment to maintain these crucial transportation routes. I am pleased to share that dredging operations began as scheduled on June 3rd, and approximately 80,000 cubic metres of sediment are expected to be removed from the harbour by mid-September.

Extreme weather events linked to climate change, including wildfires, floods, low water levels, volatile wind, wave action, and changing Arctic Ocean ice pack have interrupted the supply of fuel to communities in the Northwest Territories. In an effort to minimize the impacts of these supply interruptions, the GNWT continues to explore funding opportunities with Canada to increase bulk fuel storage capacity of diesel, aviation and gasoline fuels in Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok, and Paulatuk. These projects will be critical to modernize, improve, and expand fuel storage facilities and to mitigate risks to the environment and achieve code compliance and when completed, would

allow for the storage of two years of normal fuel consumption in each community.

The future prosperity of the Northwest Territories hinges on our commitment to building and maintaining strategic infrastructure. Last year's evacuations and re-entries across the territory highlight the paramount importance of access and transport by air, road, and water. The GNWT's ongoing investment in transportation infrastructure aims to improve residents' peace of mind and quality of life, lower living costs, and support economic expansion and diversification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 250-20(1): BLOOD CANCER SERVICES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when a person learns they have cancer, their world turns upside down. In just one moment, they find themselves in the fight of their lives. Thankfully in Canada, we have a universal public health care system that is always there to connect cancer patients with the medical professionals they need. Unfortunately, in the North, that connection of doctor to patient is a bit more complicated. We can't offer every specialized treatment that southern Canadians take for granted and when that's not ideal, the added travel for medical care is a fact of life for Northerners.

However, there's a growing trend of health and social services becoming too reliant on southern-based medical services instead of working to keep as many of those services available here as possible. This burdens more patients with medical travel, increases service delivery costs, and adds pressure on the cooperation between northern and southern medical systems. This is a recipe for disaster, Mr. Speaker, diminishing the quality of care and increasing stress on patients.

It should be no surprise, then, we have ended up in a dire situation that we are faced with regarding hematology oncology services. With apparently little notice, the services were suddenly relocated to Alberta effective May 1st forcing blood cancer patients to travel constantly in and out of the Northwest Territories for blood work and chemotherapy. I have been in contact with Range Lake constituents, including one suffering from multiple myeloma, who expressed the anxiety and strain that this has caused on her and her

family. Apparently, this is because medical service providers in Alberta have grown concerned and frustrated with challenges to obtaining timely and accurate blood work from Yellowknife, coupled with an inability to access these results through the patient network. There are at least seven other Northerners suffering from multiple myeloma, and they have received no timeline as to when these services will be repatriated.

What are these patients left to do, Mr. Speaker, besides move out of their homes to be closer to the lifesaving treatment they need? Situations like these are urgent and require not only an immediate fix but also a serious review of the circumstances that have brought us to this place. I hope the Minister has a plan to support the well-being of cancer patients across the North. I'll be asking her that later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 251-20(1):
CONGRATULATIONS TO GRADUATES

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the 2024 High School Graduating Class of the Inuvik East Three Secondary School. Mr. Speaker, this year's ceremony is extra special for me as my son will be among the graduating class.

I would like to thank the incredible staff at East Three Secondary School, and I would like to congratulate the families and mentors who have helped the grade 12 students accomplish this milestone in their lives. Mr. Speaker, there are 27 students graduating this year, and they are:

- Andy Albert
- Livia Amos
- Kira Bretana
- Kaycee Campbell
- Jared Day
- Mila Eldridge
- Isabel Firth-Gruben
- Sienna Gordon
- Hope Gordon-Thrasher
- William Inglangasuk
- Tamara Kaglik

- Kaylyn Kayotuk
- Derek Lennie-Ipana
- Zaiden Maring
- Symantha McCarthy Adams
- Rowan McInnes
- Tatum Mistaken-Chief
- Dreydan Natsie
- Chase Nogasak
- Sami Rahman
- Will Rodgers
- Bianca Rogers
- Alexandria Ruben
- Charlie Snowshoe
- Connor VanLoon
- Race Vitrekwa-Blake
- Rylan Wainman

Mr. Speaker, I, again would like to congratulate all these students. I'd like to let the Speaker know and the House that I will be absent from the House tomorrow to travel home to Inuvik to attend the ceremony and give an address to the students on Saturday, June 8th. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 252-20(1):
FOOD MAIL PROGRAM

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned about the cost of food in my riding. Access to healthy nutritious food is essential for everyone. Nutrition North is a program of the Government of Canada in 2011 and replaced the food mail program. The Nutrition North program provides subsidy to retailers and wholesalers for the overall cost of food which is transferred to the customer when they purchase eligible items. It does not subsidize the transportation of food yet, Mr. Speaker. We know the transportation of food is a significant cost to stocking grocery store shelves in the NWT.

In my riding, Aklavik is eligible year-round for subsidization under Nutrition North; however, Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic are eligible only during periods of seasonal isolation. Yet, Mr. Speaker, in order to supply food to the

grocery stores in my communities, it first has to travel 3,200 kilometers from Edmonton to Inuvik. This is the longest food supply road network anywhere in Canada. And from Inuvik, it still has to get to the Mackenzie Delta communities.

Food is expensive, and yet many residents in my region are on income support. The average family in my riding earns \$50,000 less than the average NWT family. Paying for nutritious, healthy food is essential to our well-being, and this is something that many families can't afford in my region.

In the mandate of the 19th Assembly, the government said that it will work with the Indigenous and community governments to make recommendations for improvement to the Nutrition North program. The Legislative Assembly also approved a motion for the GNWT to create a food security strategy. I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 253-20(1):
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll do this in Tlicho for the intro.

[Translation] 62@9:30

[Translation Ends]

Mr. Speaker, June is the month of high school graduations. On behalf of the Tlicho region, I want to congratulate all students graduating high school, especially those graduating from Chief Jimmy Bruneau school in Edzo, Mezi Community School in Whati, and Jean Wetrade School in Gameti.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that in general, all youth who graduate high school likely had good attendance throughout their schooling. It is sad that our territorial budget for some schools is decreasing due to low attendance rate. We had this attendance issue before COVID. We know that many families are still dealing with the trauma from residential school. Some hesitate to send their children to school. To overcome this fear, our government and school system must break free in colonialism and move forward. We were forced; now it is our choice.

Mr. Speaker, the only job for young people is to be in school, learn new things every day, and work hard to pass and move to the next level. With good attendance, there are many opportunities for people. With good attendance, a child can learn to read by grade 2 or earlier. But in the NWT, especially small communities, the literacy statistics are not good. This is at least partially due to poor attendance.

Mr. Speaker, we have good schools and staff in the NWT who work hard for students to achieve. Teachers are invaluable with special skills to teach youth every day. Elementary school gets young people ready for junior high. Junior high gets them ready for high school. And after high school, it's about growing and experiencing --

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi, your time is up.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Can I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement? Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Life after high school is a choice young people must make, whether to pursue higher education, training, work, living life off the grid, or to travel, but travelling requires money to pay for the trips.

Mr. Speaker, according to the statistics, between 2017 to 2021, small community attendance rates for grade 9 dropped by 10 point from 79 to 69, an even bigger decline is between 2012 to 2021 where small community attendance rate for grade 6 dropped by 21 points from 89 to 68 percent. That is an alarming rate. These are extremely trouble --

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi, your time is up.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I will have questions for the Minister of ECE.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Member from the Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 254-20(1):
LIFE PROMOTION AND HARM REDUCTION
YOUTH CONFERENCE IN TULITA

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. In my absence in the last couple of days there, I had the privilege and wonderful opportunity of attending the youth workshop in Tulita sponsored by the Sahtu Secretariat. Life promotion and harm reduction was the theme of the conference, and to listen to the youth, or the future of our territory. Developing our self-independence is

fundamentally critical as defining the cultural values and beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories living this reality is visiting and spending time in reference to the small communities. The reality of cost of living far outweigh the recreational and economic opportunities in remote areas of our Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the last two days I attended the youth workshop and experienced many discussions of those small communities and the challenge facing them in particular in today's society where there's so many addictions and temptations. Mr. Speaker, the Sahtu Secretariat took the lead in addressing the drug addictions by sponsoring this regional leadership addictions gathering in Fort Good Hope in early May last month. In recognition that there's a missing gap, leaders sponsored the youth workshop in Tulita so the audience and the gathering and the population is all attributing to the developments of the regional strategy.

Mr. Speaker, integral to addressing the drug addictions crisis we're experiencing, support and resources to implement the development strategy is one that's going to really make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, as quoted by Winston Churchill, we make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give. This institution, with the design of this room as a healing circle, stands for a model to support today's society, in particular investment in our youth, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi cho for sharing the time for me to address. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 255-20(1):
RENEWABLE DIESEL

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak about renewable diesel, which is a very promising clean energy technology that could be a game changer in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and in helping us keep up with the global shift away from fossil fuel technologies.

Roughly 80 percent of NWT emissions come from the use of diesel. Transportation, particularly transport trucks and mining equipment, account for almost half of our emissions. And it's just not realistic to think that we could ever electrify all transportation routes across our remote communities and remote mines in the North.

The GNWT commissioned a modelling study last year which found that if the NWT wants to set a goal of net zero, biofuels will be absolutely necessary to get us there. So what is renewable diesel?

To be clear, it's not the same as bio diesel. Renewable diesel is diesel made from vegetable oils and fats. It can be used in any existing diesel engine, furnace, or boiler; you simply drop it in. No retrofits, no need to buy new equipment or vehicles. You can also blend it in any proportion with conventional diesel fuel. So you can start gradually mix in small amounts and every little bit helps to reduce emissions.

It was first developed in the 1990s in Finland, and an Arctic grade has already been for sale in Finland since 2016 that can be stored down to minus 40. Global mining companies are also looking to this technology. De Beers is committed to be carbon neutral across all of its operations by 2030, and it has specifically committed to explore renewable diesel.

Renewable diesel does cost more than conventional diesel but if we compare it to other renewable energy projects we've already undertaken, the cost per ton of reduced emissions is two to eight times lower than solar, LNG, wind, or hydro grid expansion. The cost has been high because there's been very little production and little demand but in early of this year, in early 2024, Canada's first renewable diesel refinery opened in Prince George, BC, and another is planned for Strathcona, Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement; I'm almost finished.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Yukon government is already planning pilot projects to evaluate renewable diesel for transport, heating, and power generation by 2025. If we joined with them and other partners, such as large mines, we could create enough demand to start the renewable diesel energy revolution in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 256-20(1):
INNOVATION IN HOUSING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all agree housing is a challenge and sometimes we have to face the facts that we need to start doing things different by being innovative. Mr. Speaker, we cannot wait for others. That's the hallmark for failure. I say to the GNWT, to the Premier, it's time to be bold and innovative

because if politicians are acting like bureaucrats, you know, who's leading the public service?

Mr. Speaker, let's be fearless and be bold. Let's shake the system up and break free of this mediocrity. Mr. Speaker, stop pumping the brakes on innovation. I'm going to give two examples of how we can change the narrative or the story of housing here in the Northwest Territories.

For example Rockhill, back in October 2018, burned to the ground. It's an unfortunate experience that affected 13 families. Mr. Speaker, that property has essentially sat vacant for years. I say let's think outside the box. With some conditions based on public good, Mr. Speaker, I say give the property away. Let's be innovative. Let's create proposals and tell industry to come forward. Create an opportunity for people who do design of buildings, create homes, gives opportunities for families to live safely and grow. How could we do this? We could say things like, for example, in our proposal, you must show public good, you must demonstrate a certain amount to, say, public rent that's targeted at people with low incomes. Again, social responsibility. Let's not miss opportunities. That property has been emptied or flat and ready to go for at least the last five years. People want that property, Mr. Speaker, to build homes. There's our chance.

Mr. Speaker, the second idea -- and I want to stress not in isolation without consultation -- the GNWT could swiftly change its rules by eliminating permitting fees for buildings. And I say that because other areas in Canada have waived permit fees to stimulate the economy.

The other aspect is automatic approvals. Mr. Speaker, I've got a lot more to say on this one, but time runs quickly on the Member's statement. But the important part is we need to set up conditions that work to get people building. If a building or property is designed that meets engineering and architectural and, of course, municipal zoning bylaw rules, it should be automatically approved.

Mr. Speaker, these are just fresh ideas, but they're not new ideas. Let's be exciting and reach out and solve some of our housing problems by being part of the solution, not part of the problem. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Members' statements. Member from Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 257-20(1):
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO JACKSON BOWDEN

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was 22 years old when I learned I would soon welcome my first child. I was excited, anxious, eager for the journey to come, but was also terrified because I couldn't keep a plant alive and would soon be trusted to raise a human. And so on the 6th day of the 6th month of the 6th year at 6 minutes to 9:00, I met Action Jackson. I was in awe of him. He was fiercely independent, terrifyingly fearless, relentlessly curious, and oh so sweet. This past weekend, that baby graduated high school.

As we stood for a family photo, him in his cap and gown, he stretched his arms around his dad and I and said, we made it, guys. For almost two decades, we have worked hard to raise one another. Our kids teach us so much, like it's okay to have big feelings, how to be fearless, the importance of staying curious, that being stubborn and assertive can sometimes serve us well, and patience, dear God, Mr. Speaker, they teach us so much patience. Them simply being them shapes us. As parents, we want our children to be safe, to be kind, and to experience moments of profound deeply rooted joy. We want them to know it is okay to not know what you want to be when you grow up as long as you know who you want to be, that how you treat people matters more than what's on your business card, that it's okay to fall off our path, step off your path, or even start building a whole new path, and to always remember that this world needs you in it.

I stand here today, 18 years later still excited, still anxious, admittedly still a little terrified, but oh so eager for the journey that is yet to come. Stay stubborn, stay curious, and stay you. Happy birthday, My Boy.

MR. SPEAKER: Happy Birthday to Jackson. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 258-20(1):
RETIREMENT OF CORINNE SASSIE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleague, you know every once and a while, you find a person that loves a job and stays there for their whole career. I had a constituent from Fort Liard that did that. Mrs. Corinne Sassie had spent more than 35 years of dedicated service to the youth of Fort Liard at the Acho Dene School. I can imagine that she is looking forward to her well-deserved retirement. As the principal said, she leaves behind a legacy of unwavering commitment to education, her culture and tradition.

When you look at someone's employment story, you get a good picture of who that person is. Corinne began as a student support assistant at the Acho Dene School where her

deep dedication to the academic and personal growth of every student she worked with is evident. Over the years, she passionately pursued opportunities within the school, eventually rising to the role of Indigenous language educator. In this role, she was instrumental in preserving and revitalizing the Dene Zhati language, ensuring the cultural heritage remained an integral part of our educational experience.

Throughout her career, she touched the lives of countless students, colleagues, and community members with her warmth, knowledge, and tireless advocacy for the Indigenous language and culture. I can tell you her contributions have left an indelible mark on Acho Dene School and the community, which has helped shape the educational landscape for future generations to come.

Colleagues, her impact extends far beyond the walls of the Acho Dene School. In the community, she has fostered cultural pride and identity among the students, providing vital mentorship and support services. Regionally, her efforts have led to a greater recognition and respect for the Dene language and culture, creating a more inclusive learning environment for students across the region. Territorially, she has championed Indigenous education policies and practices, addressed systemic barriers and injustices faced by Indigenous students.

As she embarks on her new journey, the whole community of Fort Liard, the Dehcho region, and myself, we salute her remarkable contribution to education and the Dene culture. We wish her all the best and an enjoyable retirement and new adventures, knowing that her legacy of passion, dedication, and advocacy will continue to inspire us all. Again, I would like to thank her for her service to the youth, the community, and region. I hope to see you in Liard the next time I am there. Thank you, Colleagues.

Members' statements. Member from Dehcho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 259-20(1):
NUTRITION NORTH PROGRAM

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I see constituents in my riding struggling to put food on the table. In the 19th Assembly, the Government of the Northwest Territories committed to working with Indigenous governments and communities to make recommendations to improve the Nutrition North program. In 2021, the list of NWT communities eligible for the Nutrition North program increased by five, bringing the total number of communities in the NWT to 20.

Mr. Speaker, because the communities I represent are along the road system, we are not eligible for the subsidy or grant programs under the Nutrition North program. In 2018, the bureau of statistics showed that 26 percent of households in Fort Providence and 14 of homes in Enterprise are worried there's not enough money to pay for food.

Mr. Speaker, we also know income is the biggest determinant of food security. If residents in the NWT do not have enough money to pay for food, what subsidies or other financial relief can be provided to help them feed their families?

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the communities in my riding cannot access federal support programs to reduce the cost of living. There is support available through the federal government, but it's out of reach for my constituents. Is the GNWT advocating to the federal government to consider more NWT communities for eligibility under the Nutrition North program? How is the GNWT working with Indigenous leadership to address food security in the NWT? I will have questions for the Minister of ITI later today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Range Lake.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize one of my constituents, Nancy Bies, who not only a Range Lake constituent but a multiple myeloma survivor, and I'll be asking questions on her behalf today and the others who are suffering from that disease in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

For those other visitors here, we thank you very much for coming to your House and allowing us to represent you here today.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I just got a little note. Colleagues, including myself, please slow down; sorry about that.

Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

Oral Questions

MS. MORGAN: Sorry, go on to the next. My computer just died.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 251-20(1):
BLOOD CANCER SERVICES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of health clarify the rationale behind Alberta Cancer Care's requirement that all blood cancer patients from the NWT travel to Alberta for blood work and treatment? 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, in April, we were notified by Alberta Health Services that effective May 1st that they would no longer be providing virtual care and allowing for the hematology oncology patients here in Yellowknife to do their blood work. Under the standard of practice, they felt that their patients weren't being able to be serviced virtually, and so they made the decision to have all of the patients have to go to Alberta and be serviced through their oncology department. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It should come at no shock to anyone that this is a huge imposition on people who require this care. It's stress inducing. It is jeopardizing their health further potentially to make these trips. So what measure is the Minister taking to address the concerns raised by blood cancer patients regarding this anxiety, exposure to potential germs, and logistical challenges, and possible job losses associated with frequent travel to Alberta for cancer care? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to, you know, say to the Member I -- as soon as I found this out, this was a priority, this was something that I brought -- made sure that I had all the information as to what happened and to direct the department to come up with what the resolution is, and I hear the Member. I don't believe that it's -- you know, and I've heard from constituents and other constituents of other Members that, you know, this is not a sustainable -- for them already having to go through cancer treatment and going through this process, adding on having to travel, some of them -- and everybody is different -- weekly, this is not sustainable for anybody. And so that I made sure the department has come up with a plan. The plan is to work with Alberta Health because they are the drivers of what needs to be put in place, and that is being done right now with the department and Alberta Health Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to acknowledge the Minister has been responsive to my constituent and the other constituents as well. Is this -- I'd like to know more of the detail of work with -- is this bringing an oncologist to the North? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think what it is there are approximately -- there is about 50 residents that are impacted and 11 residents receiving active cancer care. All of their plan of cares are different and so what the ask is that because of the -- I mean, and we've all heard it in this House -- the process of transferring blood work and records down to Alberta Health Services, well, their system doesn't speak to our system. That way the oncologists don't have the information because when we send it down to them, it's not being entered into their system on a timely manner. So what they've done is they've asked to increase -- to have a dedicated hematology oncology and to have a dedicated oncology nurse for this program in order for it to be able to resolve the issue and then come up with a plan in how to make sure that we're running it again in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. That sounds like what we need and what we're looking for. What is the timeline for this plan, Mr. Speaker?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is the question that I keep asking the department, what is the timeline. This is what I heard from your constituent, from my constituents, is I can't sustain doing this. We cannot -- and, you know, put aside the medical travel, it's the -- like, the things that you said, the things that -- you know, the stress of having to travel, you know, the -- some people are still working and trying to do this, so there is recruitment, so, you know, the Alberta Health will have to recruit an oncologist and then we will have to recruit an oncology nurse here in the territory to support that oncologist to ensure that this program is up and running again. I have asked to have it done as soon as it can be done, but I cannot push Alberta Health Services on how fast they can go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 252-20(1):
RENEWABLE DIESEL

MS. MORGAN: Thank you for everyone's patience and to Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the infrastructure Minister. Has the Minister looked into what the Yukon is doing in terms of piloting renewable diesel and considered possibilities of working together with the Yukon to get a pilot project off the ground here in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in fact, I have actually reached out myself to my counterpart in the Yukon, Mr. Streicker. We had a brief exchange on what efforts they might be engaged in with respect to renewable diesel. They so far have run into similar challenges as we have here in the Northwest Territories, which is, for one, not being able to find Arctic grade to do a pilot on or when we find it, for a small volume, it is extremely expensive. That said, obviously, Mr. Speaker, if we can band larger numbers together, it would be easier, and so Minister Streicker and I, I expect, will speak again about this at EMMC, which is the Energy Mine Ministers of Canada Conference later this summer. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Department of Infrastructure been in touch with potential suppliers, such as the new Tidewater Refinery in Prince George, or Imperial Oil which is starting their refinery in Strathcona, to better understand current supply and pricing for different grades but also to explain the potential in the NWT in terms of our market and our needs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been outreach to a number of different suppliers. There was an effort, in fact, to run a pilot as I alluded to in my last response. But in terms of exactly which suppliers they've reached out to, I don't have a list in front of me. I can say again, though, that the challenge was, firstly, not even being able to find any supplier. If there are new supplies available, we can certainly go back, make sure that we do have the latest information. I'm happy to commit to do that and to report back. Again, I know I have followed up with the department actually quite recently and the challenges were still the same, which is what I heard from the Yukon. If there's new options, again, I'll commit to make sure that we are up to speed on the latest availability. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, and thanks for that. I mean, recognizing some of the challenges, has

the Minister had any conversations with the federal government regarding both the potential to fund renewable diesel projects or ways to incentivize the production of Arctic grade renewable diesel? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly have not had those kinds of conversations with the federal government, Mr. Speaker, nor do I -- nor can I say, really, how receptive they would be. The direction that we seem to be getting of late on areas when we do try to push the federal government for some awareness of the continued need for diesel in the Northwest Territories, in the North in general, tends to not be one that is received very favourably. So certainly can look at an opportunity to bring that forward, noting the realities of the North and noting the fact that some form of diesel is still going to be around here for quite a long time in terms of our redundancy if nothing else. So thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So has the department had discussions with De Beers or other mining companies about the potential for renewable diesel pilot projects in the NWT? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier, as was mentioned earlier in this government, the Member actually had put us in a room together with a number of folks who are in this space, and it came up that De Beers was looking at this, so we have -- the department has reached back out to them. I understand that while that may have fallen off the radar for De Beers, there's been some further conversations now with some of their folks. So as I said earlier, if there's a larger coalition able to look for Arctic grade -- not just winter grade and definitely not summer grade, but Arctic grade -- it may be that we can, A, find some and, B, find some at a better price. So we will continue those conversations with De Beers, possibly other large mines. I'll certainly commit to reporting back to the Member on that once we had a sense of whether the situation on this area has changed or not. Hopefully it has. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 253-20(1):
FUTURE OF ROCKHILL PROPERTY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my statement I talked about trying to be innovative, exciting, and maybe even in some ways courageous about trying to find housing solutions. I did point to two different types of Ministers, which is, you know, one could be municipal and certainly one could be housing. But I think I'm going to go to my favorite Minister today which would be the Minister of housing. I'm saying today.

So that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to focus in on the area of my statement that talked about Rockhill. Mr. Speaker, the reason I specify that and this particular Minister is pulling the land titles, which I'm creating economic development -- I just spent the four bucks to get the title -- Mr. Speaker, it says NWT Housing Corp or Housing NWT owns the property. Mr. Speaker, does the department have any particular plans with the property at this very moment? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. Housing NWT does have plans for the property. They're working with a local NGO, and they've leased the property for the next few years with the local NGO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, in October 2018 there was that tragedy of the fire -- sorry, not tragedy as someone died but the sadness of the fire in general. 33 families have been without a home, Mr. Speaker, and I bet it's been at least five years it's been, say, construction ready in the sense of once it was cleaned.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister consider the options I proposed in my statement, which is be innovative, give the property away to industry, and have them create a social component that guarantees low cost of living for a certain element; in other words, create a public good opportunity and work with business to get a building built without delay? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Housing NWT is working with the NWT Disabilities Council on a project. They are working on a federal funding arrangement. NWT Disabilities Council is waiting on the proposal and the approval of the project. So we have to give it some time, but we're working in partnership with the NWT Disabilities Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as Speaker, whatever way you describe it is perfect.

That said, Mr. Speaker, my concern is, and this is not a strike against the NWT Disabilities Council, but I would rather see an agency that's designed to create leasing and housing opportunities to the core as their primary business and focus. B, take the opportunity to create something.

So I'm asking the Minister would she perhaps revisit this issue? And I can talk to her more about it, but would she be willing to revisit this issue and maybe create -- we'll call it a partnership where industry works with the disabilities council, or other types of appropriate NGOs, so we get an effective company or organization that runs it that's designed this is their business and format. Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to have that conversation with the Member, but I would not be able to revisit the issue until I talk to the NWT Disabilities Council and also to the president of the Housing NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for NWT Housing. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I would have obviously hoped for a yes, and I would have been fine as that my last question. But she did say something that did cause me some worry is, is there an agreement or contract or some type of formalization that they automatically get this property? Because I'm worried about not -- this being the first I've ever heard of it. And so if this has been worked behind the scenes, I'd like to know if this is formal, is there a contract, an agreement, that type of thing, or anything similar in place at this particular time? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And from what I've learned with Housing NWT, there is a term lease in place with the NWT Disabilities Council, and they have four years on that lease left. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 254-20(1):
HIGH COST OF FOOD IN NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the Premier.

With the high cost of living in the Mackenzie Delta and throughout the Northwest Territories, in my region there's the community of Aklavik who's isolated year-round, and Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic are seasonally isolated. The Nutrition North program is set up to help the customer with the prices of food. There are news articles that highlight grocery stores are recording profits while many families in the NWT struggle with food insecurity. Has the GNWT advocated for increased reporting under the Nutrition North program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have to get back to the Member with that information. That could have occurred in the last government, but I don't have that information at my fingertips. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier explain what work is happening with the Indigenous governments to address the high cost of food in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT has a number of food security programs that support Indigenous governments to help their members go out on the land. Through the anti-poverty fund, funds are distributed that go to food security programs often, often by Indigenous governments. The GNWT provides funding to schools, education bodies, to provide meals in the schools. I can provide the Member with a full list of all of our food security initiatives as well as the associated funding amounts, but I don't have that on hand right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the list that's going to be provided. Can the Premier explain the status of the GNWT Food Security Strategy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're in the process of assessing all of the strategies that we have here in the Northwest Territories. We have a number of them. Some of them sit on shelves, and they can be very labour intensive to produce and sometimes they're forgotten about. So we are looking at ways to limit the number of strategies we have and be more strategic with that, and I will get back to the Member with an answer to his question. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier explain what supports are available to subsidize transportation costs for food in the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'll have to get back to the Member on that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 255-20(1):
YOUTH SUPPORT FUNDING SOURCES

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement, I had the wonderful opportunity in working and associating and interacting with the youth at the Tulita workshop. The ages were 14 to 18. My question to the Minister of Health and Social Services, and I know we've had some questions previous, but adding to that, in talking to the audience, which has recently spoke out, can the Minister supply youth -- identify and supply some information on youth support funding sources there? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community wellness and addiction recovery fund is an area where that can be targeted for youth. Also, we do have the community suicide prevention fund, and that can also be targeted to youths or adults in any communities. And those are currently taking proposals for programs. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for providing that knowledge. As we always say in the private sector, no funding, no projects. So my next question is can the Minister share her support on the -- once the SSI has developed the drug and addictions strategy for the region, is the Minister willing to support a post-meeting between SSI and her department to look at the implementation of this strategy? Mahsi.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, Mr. Speaker, you know, with all of the work that I've been hearing from the Member that the Sahtu is doing to try to provide wellness and the workshops that they're doing and the collaborating that they're doing, I really commend them for that because, you know, we hear so many times that our leadership are not supporting our youth and our residents and, you know, here we are, we're trying to work together, and they're working together. So I

really appreciate that. And, you know, I know that we have a bilateral coming up with SSI and, you know, I can -- if there's further things that they want to -- with they're moving forward with what they want, we do have the -- as a regional, as SSI is a regional government, they can provide for multi-year funding. So if they have an action plan, the community wellness and addiction recovery fund with the regional governments could apply for multi-year funding agreements to probably, you know, if they want to roll out what they want to target in their region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Dehcho.

QUESTION 256-20(1):
NUTRITION NORTH PROGRAM

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT mandate in the 19th Assembly identified that recommendations would be provided to the Government of Canada to make improvements on the Nutrition North program. Can the Minister commit to providing this House the recommendations that were provided to the Government of Canada for Nutrition North program? Mahsi. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Dehcho. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll see what I can dig up from the last Assembly and provide it to the Member. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, and I look forward to that. Is the Minister aware of any further changes or improvements to the Nutrition North program to include other communities in the NWT? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Nutrition North is, of course, a federal program and they are currently undergoing an internal review, and so I am not aware of any changes that they may be making as a result of that review, but I look forward to the results. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. And the Nutrition North program also provides grants for harvester support and community food programs. But none of my communities are eligible for these programs. Has the GNWT advocated the Government of Canada to increase the eligibility of NWT communities for these grant programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have to get back to the Member on if

there's been any official level discussions on this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from the Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Can the Minister, Premier, describe how the GNWT's working with Indigenous leaders in my riding to address food security? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There haven't been formal conversations between myself and Indigenous leaders, but food security is obviously an issue across the North. At the Council of Leaders, there is very much an interest in the economy which, as was stated before, a good income goes a long way to ensuring food security, and so that's part of the interest in that area. But I look forward to having further conversations with Indigenous leaders on this. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 257-20(1):
ATTENDANCE RATES IN SMALL
COMMUNITIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just like what Mr. Hawkins said, to my favorite Minister, ECE, but housing is still my favorite. So, Mr. Speaker, so this is for the ECE. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, attendance rates in small communities for junior kindergarten to grade 12 is on the downward trend when you look at the data over the last ten years. Aside from COVID-19, can the Minister explain the reasons why school attendance rates are trending downward? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment. Yes, ECE.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, attendance has long been a concern for education bodies across the territory and have put in different mechanisms to try to address attendance over the years, but as the Member stated in her statement today, there is definitely a huge concern for attendance across the territory in today's world as well. And so this is really a situation and a challenge that is going to have to be addressed not only by teachers, principals, education bodies, but by communities as a whole and by a territory as a whole. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what

efforts that -- I mean, I'm going to -- her answer's going to be the same thing, but what efforts the Department of ECE has done over the years to help increase and maintain attendance rates of schools particularly in small communities? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, different education bodies have used different tactics because they see their challenges as being unique in communities across the territory. Many of our -- well, all of our schools have food programs to try and incentivize youth to come to school for that reason. Some education bodies send busses around the communities to pick students up from their home and bring them to the school. And, of course, teachers have come up with unique ways to try and incentivize attendance in schools and that could be anything from choosing subjects that are important to students. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain if the department has any plan moving forward to help increase attendance rates in schools, especially in the small community? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can confirm to the Member that this is a holding topic at meetings with the education bodies, with the chairs, across the territory and is frequently discussed. Mr. Speaker, I can also confirm for the Member that this is something that is very important to me because we can -- it doesn't matter how much money we invest in education, if students around attending school then we cannot improve our education outcomes as a territory. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to provide more departmental resources to and work with closely with district education authorities and divisional education councils across the NWT to help increase attendance rates in small communities? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I commit to working with education bodies to understand how I can support their needs to improve attendance across the territory. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 258-20(1):
BASIC INCOME

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week, the Standing Committee on Social Development had received a presentation from an academic on universal basic income which was, I think, informative for many members. This is something I've long been supportive of. One way we could make it work in the Northwest Territories is through a resource dividend. This is something they do in Alaska, something that we could make work and have an easy way of funding and providing financial relief to everyone in the Northwest Territories. Is the Minister of Finance open to developing -- exploring this idea in this Chamber today? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, if I'm understanding correctly I'm being asked if we would have a universal basic income, which a universal basic income means it's an amount paid to every single person regardless of their income status, regardless of their personal home household income, wealthy or otherwise, and that would then come from, of course, government coffers. So I just want to make sure that we're clear that universal basic income and guaranteed basic income are not necessarily the same thing. So let's start the conversation and make sure that we are talking about the same thing. Everyone, regardless of income, getting some money from the government, just because? Thanks.

MR. TESTART: I believe I'm being asked a question, Mr. Speaker, so I'll clarify. A resource dividend would be paid out to everyone in the Northwest Territories just like they have in Alaska. That's done through interest. Is the Minister willing to make changes to the heritage fund so we can extract interest from our investments and pay it out to Northerners? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we want to have a discussion, that means questions back and forth. So, well, if we're going to do that, Mr. Speaker, right now, I think it's also well-known we have, really, three large diamond mines that provide all of the royalties in the Northwest Territories, one of which is on the verge of closure; the other two are staying open for now but it's been pretty clear, and said many times here, that that shelf life is coming due fairly quickly. So in terms of what we do with that resource income, firstly, it's not perhaps as big as I would like it to be. But, secondly, it is one of the very few owned source revenues that we have in it the

Northwest Territories. Now as for what Alaska is doing, there's an awful lot of difference in terms of the regulatory space, political space, financial space, economic space, population space. So not sure that's going to be the right comparison. But if we want to take one of the few streams of owned source revenue of the Government of the Northwest Territories and just split it up into cheques for everybody, that is a much bigger conversation than just here. But I gather that that's where we're at. So I guess we'll have to see where the Member wants to go with that next. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Well, the Minister -- thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister makes it seem like I want to give free money to everyone, and that's not the point here. The point here is to get a return on our investments. The heritage fund isn't working. It's been losing money for years. What's the Minister's plan to fix it? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So now we're onto the heritage fund. Mr. Speaker, the heritage fund, in it right now, I believe, has around \$40 million. It's a fund that is, yes, meant -- well, it's meant to be where we put a portion of the resource revenues that we do get here in the Northwest Territories. It was never meant to be something that we would zero out or hand out dollars at a time or cheques at a time. There are jurisdictions in this country, for example Alberta, where they have at times of great wealth, due to their resource situation, essentially handed out money to residents, and there are different political beliefs as to the effectiveness of that as far as being a good use of public dollars. That is a much, again, larger political conversation in terms of whether that is an effective use of public funds to achieve the goals of equity and, you know, collective good, if that's a good way to ensure that people are having access to health care and education, which are done better on a large scale, or if, in fact, it should just go one by one by one.

Mr. Speaker, the heritage fund is coming up shortly in the Department of Finance. I don't know that it is losing money so that might be the response that I'll end with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the Minister for joining me in this impromptu debate. Mr. Speaker, if not -- if we can't do a UBI, can we do a universal -- can we pilot a guaranteed income program, which the Minister spoke of the differences between the two, so can we do that instead of UBI? She seems to be lukewarm on UBI. Can we get

guaranteed income in the pipeline as a pilot? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague from ECE spoke a little bit about this just recently in the House. It would certainly come likely to that department to consider this. And there's a lot of change that has happened quite recently to the income assistance policies that make that system more akin to what a guaranteed basic income would be, but not necessarily fully the types of pilots that are happening elsewhere. And there's an awful lot already that's underway, and hopefully those changes make a big difference for those people who are experiencing them and they can go through the process of an evaluation, which I think they might be on deck for through the GRI process, and we'll see how successful they are at this point. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 259-20(1):
FEE HOLIDAY FOR DWELLINGS IN
COMMUNITIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up on my Member's statement on the other side of the equation, which first I mentioned I was going to go to housing, now I'm going back to Municipal and Community Affairs with respect to the ideas of creating a fee or tax holiday.

So I proposed ideas in the statement to bring forward to NWTAC. And perhaps maybe the MACA Minister can help lead this initiative. I know tax themselves is for the finance Minister, but this is about working with initiatives for municipalities under municipal legislation.

So the question specifically is to the Minister is would the Minister be open to a discussion to explore the idea to help create housing opportunities by talking to NWTAC about generating a tax or fee holiday for appropriate builds to stimulate the economy to build apartments and multidwelling housing? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not a hundred percent sure if this fully aligns in my department, but I will definitely look into it and go to the department to see if we can reach out to NWTAC to have this discussion.

MR. HAWKINS: I guess the only other question I have, maybe just to close it off, is would the Minister be willing to sit down with me and some others to talk about what it could look like and maybe he could become the champion of the concept as we explore an idea? Whether it goes to fruition or not is something completely different. And as I stress, Mr. Speaker, as I finish, not in isolation, in other words, without good consultation. So would the Minister be willing to do that? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always willing on working with the Regular Members to come up with solutions for problems that we may be having, so open to the discussion and we can arrange something. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Written questions.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

Colleagues, before we get into the next one, I'd like to recognize the former mayor of the city of Yellowknife. Welcome to our sitting here today.

Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member from Frame Lake.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 3-20(1):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW
OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
INFORMATION AND PRIVACY
COMMISSIONER

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 3-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner, be deemed read and printed in the Hansard in its entirety.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

MR. MORSE:

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner (Commissioner).

The Committee thanks Ms. Andrew Fox, Information and Privacy Commissioner, for his appearance before the Committee on April 15, 2024. The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP) and the Health Information Act (HIA) require the Commissioner to prepare an annual report. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the report.

The Commissioner's 2022-2023 report includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the Act, a report on the Office's activities, and recommendations for consideration by the Legislative Assembly. The Commissioner's work and recommendations are reflected in Committee's observations.

ABOUT THE INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Information and Privacy Commissioner is a Statutory Officer of the Legislative Assembly. The Commissioner's primary functions involve:

- Receiving and reviewing complaints about breaches of privacy.
- Receiving and reviewing complaints about the adequacy of public bodies' responses to access to information requests
- Reviewing Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs), and
- Reviewing and commenting on proposed legislation regarding possible implications for privacy protection or access to government information.

ATIPP

The Commissioner made three recommendations in the annual report concerning ATIPP. Additional details about

each recommendation can be found in the 2022-2023 annual report:

1. That the government consider amending ATIPP to allow a public body to extend the time once for the period required to complete third-party consultation without authorization by the Commissioner. For subsequent extensions, public bodies should continue to seek authorization from the Commissioner.

2. That public bodies should review their legal obligations to respond to access to information requests and evaluate their capacity to provide responses within the legislated time periods. They should also ensure, either collectively or individually, that the GNWT's Access and Privacy Office (APO) is appropriately resourced so that it can reliably assist public bodies to respond to access to information requests within the legal time periods and to comply with the relevant procedural requirements.

3. That the government should consider amending ATIPP to expressly state the Information and Privacy Commissioner has discretion to extend the time required to complete a review. Such an amendment should include a requirement to give notice of an extension to all parties. Committee acknowledges and supports the Commissioner's recommendations concerning the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Therefore, Committee recommends that:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a timeframe for implementing the Information and Privacy Commissioner's three recommendations related to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Timely Access to Information

During the public review on April 15, 2024, the Commissioner spoke about the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) failing to meet the legislated timeframes to respond to information requests. The APO is responsible for accepting requests from individuals applying for access to information and correction of personal information. Once the APO receives a request, they work with the relevant public body to get the required records. The Commissioner believes that both public bodies and the APO are not sufficiently resourced to respond to access to information requests within the legal time periods.

The Commissioner committed to provide Committee with:

a. A flow chart or similar tool outlining where the bottlenecks are in the processing of information requests and

b. Suggestions to resolve the timing issues.

Open Government

In 2019, Bill 29: Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, updated Section 72 to obligate public bodies to identify categories of records that do not contain personal information and can, therefore, be made available to the public without the need for a formal access request under the Act.

Simultaneously, the GNWT committed to increasing openness, transparency, and accountability by embracing the "Open Government" movement and publicly released the Open Government Policy. During the public review, the Commissioner stated that he does not believe public bodies have done much work to increase public disclosures.

Committee found the Open Government Policy sets out actions to advance the GNWT's commitment to the principles of Open Government in three areas:

Open Information

Open Information means that government-held information is released proactively and made available to the public through a variety of means in formats that are accessible and user-friendly. The Proactive Disclosure Directive,⁷ signed in July 2023, identifies categories of information and guidance to public bodies on how to maximize the release of information.

Committee believes that the GNWT is not proactively disclosing all information and documents outlined in the directive (for example, Committee is not aware of internal audit and evaluation reports being disclosed). Consequently, Committee is recommending that:

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide the date by when all information and documents identified in the Proactive Disclosure Directive will be released and updated.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and update the Proactive Disclosure Directive to maximize the release of information.

Areas of consideration at the least should include:

1. Recipients of grants and contributions
2. Summaries of briefing notes received by ministers and deputy heads
3. Material prepared for incoming ministers and deputy heads on duties and functions
4. Public body internal process and procedure documents.

Furthermore, Committee requests a date by when this review will be completed.

Open Data

The Open Data Portal (opendata.gov.nt.ca) is designed to make government-held data available to the public in accessible and user-friendly formats. The Portal includes the release of datasets, facts, figures, or statistics. The Open Government Policy calls for the establishment of specific directives and guidelines regarding the release of government data and information. According to the Open Government Frequently Asked Questions, the initial set of directives and guidelines were to be established throughout 2018 and 2019. Committee notes that, as of May 15, 2024, the Portal includes 339 datasets; however, it is not clear to Committee what information resources are to be open and released, what decision processes are in place for the release of open data, nor what activities departments have undertaken to maximize the release of data.

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide:

1. A Directive on Open Government to maximize the release of government information and data of business value to support transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement.
2. Departmental Open Government Implementation Plans that outline departmental direction, strategies, and initiatives undertaken to meet the requirements of the Open Government Policy.
3. Inventories of all data and information resources of business value held by each department with determinations of eligibility and priority, and the plan for effective release.
4. Periodic progress reports. If these directives and guidelines do not yet exist, Committee requests a date by when these directives and guidelines will be created and implemented.

Open Dialogue

Open Dialogue means that a range of engagement activities are made available to encourage meaningful engagement of residents, communities, and organizations in government decision-making processes. Committee acknowledges the 2022 Public Engagement Employee Guide⁹ as a strong step in ensuring a common approach and resources to support public engagement. Committee is interested in the success of Open Dialogue and recommends:

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide to Committee, and publish, all evaluation worksheets/reports from public engagement evaluation since the Public Engagement Employee Guide was released in July 2022.

HIA

The Commissioner made seven recommendations in the annual report concerning HIA. Additional details about each recommendation can be found in the 2022-2023 annual report:

1. That the Department of Health and Social Services should consider implementing a policy, or the government should consider amending the Health Information Act, to require health information custodians to report to the Commissioner regarding the implementation of accepted recommendations.
2. That the GNWT should review the need for privacy-protective policies and procedures to support a specialized emergency response such as the COVID19 Coordinating Secretariat and ensure it is equipped to operate within the bounds of the Health Information Act.
3. That Health Information Custodians should continue to reduce or eliminate the use of fax machines to transmit personal health information.
4. That Health Information Custodians should utilize secure electronic transmission measures when transmitting personal health information.
5. That Health Information Custodians should prioritize implementation of, and compliance with, the Mandatory Training Policy and ensure that appropriate privacy training is provided for new employees, returning employees, and for all employees annually.
6. That Privacy Impact Assessments addressing any new information system or communication technology that involves the

collection, use, or disclosure of personal health information should be completed and submitted so that there is a reasonable period for review by the Information and Privacy Commissioner and for any comments to be considered by the Health Information Custodian in the planning stages before implementation.

7. That the government should consider amending Section 89 of the Health Information Act to include similar provisions regarding Privacy Impact Assessments as mandated in section 42.1 of ATIPP. Committee acknowledges and supports the Commissioner's recommendations concerning the Health Information Act. Therefore, Committee is recommending that:

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a timeframe for implementing the Information and Privacy Commissioner's seven recommendations related to the Health Information Act.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Recommendation 7 The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

MR. MORSE: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 3-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a) that

the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days, or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 4-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 4-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried.

MR. MORSE:

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner (Commissioner)¹. The Committee thanks Ms. Brenda Gauthier, NWT Languages Commissioner for her appearance before the

Committee on April 9, 2024. The Commissioner's 2022-2023 report highlights the Office's focus on supporting recent updates to the Official Languages Act and public engagement. The Commissioner's work and recommendations are reflected in Committee's observations.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER

The Office of the Languages Commissioner is established under the Official Languages Act. The Act recognizes eleven official languages in the NWT and provides that the public has certain rights with respect to using those languages. The Commissioner is appointed by the Legislative Assembly to investigate complaints, make recommendations, and promote the use of Official Languages.

OBSERVATIONS

Review official languages service delivery Section 29(a) of the Official Languages Act allows the Official Languages Board to "review the rights and status of each of the Official Languages, including their use in the administration and delivery of services and communications by government institutions." The Commissioner has called on the Official Languages Board to action this part of their mandate, with a focus on the nine Indigenous languages.

Committee has previously endorsed the Commissioner's advocacy in this area. However, Committee notes that as of May 16, 2024, the Official Languages Board does not appear to have any active members, and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment ensure all official languages communities are actively represented on the Official Languages Board.

During the public review, the Languages Commissioner supported Committee's suggestion that the government should complete a government-wide inventory of Indigenous language speakers working for the Government and whether those speakers are being compensated for providing Indigenous language services. It is therefore recommended that:

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide Committee with a list of:

1. All Indigenous language speakers that work for the government.
2. Whether those employees receive the Bilingual Bonus for providing service in their Indigenous language.
3. What government services are being offered in an Indigenous language (and in which communities).

Compensate Indigenous language speaking employees

In the annual report, the Commissioner recommended that the Government of the Northwest Territories research and develop an assessment program for the nine Official Indigenous Languages to ensure that language speakers within the government are compensated for providing services in their language. In addition, the Commissioner felt that Indigenous language speaking employees are unaware of their eligibility for the Bilingual Bonus. Committee acknowledges the Commissioner's concerns and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop an assessment program for the nine Official Indigenous Languages.

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories launch a communications campaign to ensure all employees are aware of the Bilingual Bonus.

Review Indigenous Languages service offerings

The Commissioner has called on the government to mirror the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat (ILES) to the Francophone Affairs Secretariat. The Commissioner believes the Francophone Affairs Secretariat provides services that are not currently provided by ILES, including:

- Providing advice and support to Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) institutions.
- Developing orientation programs for French Language Service Coordinators.
- Coordinating French translations services for the GNWT.
- Liaising with the Francophone community.
- Ensuring systematic audits of French language communications and services.

Committee is interested in learning why the same services and opportunities are not provided by ILES as are provided by the Francophone Affairs Secretariat, and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide the same services and opportunities for Indigenous languages speakers through Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat that are offered to French language speakers through the Francophone Affairs Secretariat.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Official Languages Commissioner.

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee report 4-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days, or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 5-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few more of these. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee report 5-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

MR. MORSE:

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission (Commission). The Committee thanks Mr. Charles Dent, Chair of the NWT Human Rights Commission and Ms. Nicole MacNeil, Executive Director of the NWT Human Rights Commission for their appearance before the Committee on April 16, 2024.

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

The Commission's 2022-2023 report highlights its focus on accessibility and community

outreach. The Commission's work and recommendations are reflected in Committee's observations.

Committee has identified two recommendations brought forward from the Human Rights Commission that it wishes to bring attention to and seek additional information from the Government of the Northwest Territories – the first, to legislate accessible design standards; and the second, to prohibit genetic discrimination. Although the report references other important areas of interest, Committee is hopeful that a more focused approach can lead to positive legislative changes that support the important work of the Human Rights Commission.

ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The NWT Human Rights Commission is arms-length from the Government of the Northwest Territories. It is given legislative authority under the Human Rights Act. Most legislation in the Northwest Territories (NWT) has a Cabinet Minister responsible for the Act; however, this is different for the Human Rights Act. It says the Commission is responsible to the Legislative Assembly for the administration of the Act.

The Commission's role is to protect people from discrimination. They promote equality through education, research, and advocacy. The Act makes it illegal to discriminate or harass anyone based on age, disability, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, social condition, religion, political belief, or pardoned criminal conviction.

OBSERVATIONS

Legislating Accessible Design Standards

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

Committee previously endorsed the Commission's advocacy in this area. Since at least 2018-19 the Commission and Committee have recommended that the GNWT ensure building standards meet requirements set out in the NWT Human Rights Act.

In GNWT's most recent response to Committee (tabled February 2021), the Government

referenced encouraging examples of increasing accessibility requirements for the built environment. For example, Committee is happy to see the Department of Infrastructure's Fourth Edition of the "Good Building Practices for Northern Facilities" manual includes a process for determining accessibility targets for renovations of existing infrastructure.

Committee acknowledges that the work required to make buildings completely accessible is complex and requires a broad cultural shift towards expecting inclusivity in the built environment. However, Committee also believes that government has a responsibility to take the lead in the way our society approaches design and implementation of inclusive facilities.

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories enact accessibility legislation to facilitate the implementation of accessibility standards and regulations to help ensure people with disabilities can fully participate in their communities.

The federal government and several provincial governments offer funding for projects that make communities and workplaces across Canada more accessible for persons with disabilities. Some examples include:

- Federal Enabling Accessibility Fund provides funding for projects that make Canadian communities and workplaces more accessible for person with disabilities.
- BC's Capital Projects Grant provides funding to not-for-profit organizations to support the completion of inclusive, accessible capital projects.
- BC's Workplace Accessibility Grant provides direct support to small business employers to create accessible work environments.
- Manitoba's Accessibility Fund provides project-based grants to help municipalities, non-profit organizations, and businesses remove barriers.
- Ontario's Trillium Foundation provides capital grants for projects that improve community facilities and spaces.
- Newfoundland's Inclusion Grant Funding is available to non-profit, communitybased organizations to make their facilities more accessible. Consequently, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that

the Government of the Northwest Territories develop a grant or contribution program to support businesses and/or not-for-profit organizations in becoming more accessible for persons with disabilities.

Prohibiting Genetic Discrimination

For several years, the Human Rights Commission has advocated - and Committee endorsed - to add genetic discrimination as a prohibited grounds of discrimination in the NWT Human Rights Act. In 2019, Committee moved a motion to amend the Human Rights Act to this effect; however, government declined to make the change, citing reluctance to be the first province or territory to adopt such a ground.

Since that time, the federal government has amended its human rights legislation to prohibit discrimination on the ground of genetic characteristics.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take immediate action to add genetic discrimination to the NWT Human Rights Act or provide rationale and justification for why the Government is not proceeding with this recommendation.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission.

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 5-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're getting into a rhythm here.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a) that the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days, or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 6-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OMBUD AND SPECIAL REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE OMBUD ACT

MR. MORSE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud and Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 6-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories ombud and Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act, be deemed read and printed in the Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

MR. MORSE:

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud (Ombud) and the Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act. The Committee thanks Ms. Colette Langlois, Ombud, for her appearance before the Committee on April 9, 2024.

Section 33 of the Ombud Act requires the Ombud to prepare an annual report. The Speaker tables the reports in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the reports.

The Annual Report includes information about the Ombud's Office, administrative fairness, and their work performed over the previous year such as inquiries and complaints received, public education and outreach, and finances.

The Special Report provides an updated list of recommendations to update and amend the Ombud Act after Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act came into force on July 1, 2023.

ABOUT THE NWT OMBUD

The NWT Ombud is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly tasked with speaking up for fairness in territorial government administration and services. The powers and duties of the Ombud include:

- Investigating complaints from people who feel they have been treated unfairly by territorial authorities.
- Own-initiative investigations to help improve government services.
- Public education on the principles of administrative fairness.

OBSERVATIONS

Ombud's Reports The Ombud did not make any recommendations in the 2022-2023 Annual Report. Instead, she submitted a Special Report with ten recommendations for amendments to the Ombud's Act:

1. That the Ombud's jurisdiction be extended to hamlets, cities, towns, and villages.
2. That the provision restricting the Ombud from investigating human rights matters where there is overlap with administrative fairness be amended or removed.
3. That the Ombud's jurisdiction be extended to complaints about the human rights offices.

4. That references to "judicial review" be removed in section 17, and that consideration be given to instead including wording similar to what is used in other Canadian jurisdictions.

5. That the Ombud's power to obtain information from authorities during an investigation be strengthened and clarified.

6. That the Act be amended to include a new provision assuring public servants and authorities that they can provide information to the Ombud voluntarily.

7. That the definition of "administrative head" be amended to be more inclusive of heads who do not have the title of "Deputy Minister" or "Chief Executive Officer".

8. That a provision be added to protect the confidentiality of evidence obtained in the course of Ombuds processes similar to provisions found in other Canadian legislation.

9. That the wording "and any administrative policies of the Clerk" be removed from subsection 42(2).

10. That the French title "Protecteur du citoyen" be replaced with the title "Ombud".

Review of the Ombud Act

In October 2020, the Speaker tabled the Ombud's first ever-ever Annual Report, for 2019-2020. The Ombud's report made 14 recommendations for legislative changes to the Act. The recommendations were informed by the Ombud's review of legislation in other jurisdictions, advice received from other Ombuds and legal professionals, and issued that arose when the Ombud responded to individual complaints.

Committee at that time endorsed many of the Ombud's recommendations in their subsequent Review Report. That report was tabled in May 2021 and discussed in Committee of the Whole. The Legislative Assembly ultimately adopted seven (7) motions that recommended changes to the Act.

At the time, Members hoped the GNWT would put forward amending legislation in the remaining two years of the 19th Assembly and were disappointed when the GNWT declined to do so in the November 2021 response. Rather, the GNWT agreed only to consider Committee's recommendations in the context of a "future review."

In June 2022, Committee followed up on the GNWT's response in a meeting with the Government House Leader. Committee wanted to learn more about the GNWT's position and,

more importantly, make one more appeal for change to the Act in the 19th Assembly. Ultimately, the Government maintained its position and declined to make changes.

In response, Bill 61: An Act to Amend the Ombud Act, was tabled in November 2022 as a private members bill. The Member for Yellowknife North worked with the Ombud to address the most pressing issues, and the amended Act came into force in April 2023.

In the Report on the Review of Bill 61, Committee recommended that “the GNWT, in consultation with the Board of Management, lead a holistic review to examine and clarify the jurisdiction of each statutory officer of the Assembly.” In its response, the Government committed to undertaking a review of the Act early in the 20th Assembly.

Many of the recommendations in the Ombud’s 2024 Special Report are still outstanding from the Ombud’s first report tabled in October 2020. Committee is dissatisfied that efforts to craft recommendations that would improve government operations – which were endorsed as motions in the Legislative Assembly – were disregarded without meaningful and timely action. Therefore, Committee recommends that:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take immediate action to enact the ten recommendations of the Ombud or provide the rationale and justification as to why the Government is not proceeding with the recommendations.

Outreach and Public Education

During the public review on April 9, 2024, the Ombud spoke about the initiatives taken on by the Ombud’s Office to increase public education and outreach. The Ombud talked about the positive impact of in-person outreach and the success of the Working Together for Fairness full-day seminar offered to the public service. Committee is impressed at the steps the Ombud has taken to engage with both members of the public and public servants to raise awareness about administrative fairness.

However, the Ombud also expressed concern that the Office lacked capacity to fulfill its mandate. The Office’s current compliment of three staff, including the Ombud, manages between 150 and 200 case files per year in addition to initiating own-motion investigations and providing outreach and public education. Committee shares the Ombud’s concerns: there is evidence of increases in the volume and complexity of complaints reported,

combined with the increased demand for training and outreach.

Committee believes the Ombud’s Office should have the capacity and resources it needs to fulfill all aspects of its mandate, and consequently recommends:

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories, in consultation with the Ombud, identify and address any shortfalls in budget or resources that may inhibit the Ombud’s Office from fulfilling their mandate.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud and Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 6-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud and Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion’s in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m almost a little bit sad it’s about to be over.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a) that the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days, or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is passed.

---Carried

No longer asking questions -- or Member from Frame Lake.

So reports on standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 112-20(1):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 163-20(1): SUPPORTS
AVAILABLE FOR RESIDENTS OF
ENTERPRISE

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing that exciting like my colleague across there, but I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 163-20(1): Supports Available for Residents of Enterprise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 33-20(1):
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Monday, June 10th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that the Government of the Northwest Territories reallocate funding resources without delay to implement the revised municipal funding gap policies;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories balance the current discrepancy between communities regarding the percentage of the formula funding they receive;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories make the calculation of the municipal funding gap, by community, publicly available;

And furthermore, the Government of the Northwest Territories acknowledge the increased costs facing communities through public emergencies and natural disasters and allocate a new stream of funding for public safety and emergency preparedness into the municipal funding gap calculations;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Motions. Member from Range Lake.

Motions

MOTION 31-20(1):
CROSS-BORDER CRIME REDUCTION
FORUM,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

WHEREAS the Northwest Territories is facing an increase in drugs and related crime in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS the drug trade in the Northwest Territories is taking advantage of vulnerable people;

AND WHEREAS illicit drugs in the Northwest Territories are largely coming from southern provinces;

AND WHEREAS profits from the drug trade in the Northwest Territories are primarily benefitting southern organized crime groups;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada has worked collaboratively with the United States on a cross-border crime forum since 1997 to improve response to the drug trade and the safety of communities;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Mackenzie Delta, that the Government of the Northwest Territories initiate a Cross-Border Crime Reduction Forum that would involve the Governments of the Northwest Territories, Canada, Yukon, Alberta and British Columbia;

AND FURTHER, the focus of a cross-border forum will increase the response to violence and drug trafficking in rural and remote communities;

AND FURTHERMORE, the focus of the cross-border forum improve efforts to disrupt

the illicit drug network and drug-related crime and violence in Northwest Territories communities;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've spoken about it in this House, the Premier has spoken about it, other Members have as well, including the seconder of the motion, the Member for Mackenzie Delta. There is a drug epidemic in the Northwest Territories that has gone from being a public health crisis to a public safety crisis. Organized crime has been infiltrating the Northwest Territories and preying upon those suffering from addictions and trauma, since the year since COVID particularly, and it's reached an all-time high. We're seeing rates of violence that we haven't seen before, of sophisticated organized crime groups that we haven't seen before. The RCMP need additional resources that they're being given by this government. But more so than that, we need to ensure that there is political coordination on this. I have full confidence that our police have the ability to speak to each other and to coordinate these things across provincial boundaries, and I know that the Premier cares about this. This is giving the extra oomph to make this a priority on the national stage. We need to make sure the rest of Canada knows that our small territory is very vulnerable and hurting, and we need all of our friend and neighbours to support our efforts to tackle this wave of crime and to hold these organizations to account and prevent them from doing harm to our communities.

It's very hard to stop people from crossing our borders who mean harm, so we need to come up with innovative solutions and ways to do that, solutions that are going to take more than just the RCMP. So this motion calls on various governments to meet together and figure out how to do exactly that.

The motion makes reference to how the Government of Canada and the United States work together, because that is a successful model of inter -- of cross-border collaboration to decrease trafficking of illicit goods and substances and cross-border crime, and we hope that that will serve as a model and an example of how provincial governments and the federal government can work together to achieve this.

The motion also speaks particularly to rural and remote communities. Our small communities are the most vulnerable to these predators because we don't have the resources in them to respond quickly. So if there's an RCMP call in a rural and remote community, it takes time to get there. And we definitely need to keep that in mind and keep those of our residents in mind because they are the most vulnerable to this. And the drug dealers are getting there. The criminals are getting there. It may seem like this is a problem that's only going to hit regional centres and places with airports and communities connected on the highway, but I know from working with my colleagues here that there are very much rural and remote communities completely isolated that are seeing drugs and seeing crime and these people coming into their communities.

So like I said, we need all resources coming to bear to keep people safe. We have to draw a red line and make sure that things don't get any worse because if they do, this is going to have dire consequences for all of our residents and for all of our communities. So I encourage this House to support this motion and to bring awareness and collaboration where it's truly needed to tackle this scourge of organized crime from the southern provinces coming into the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seconded this motion mainly because it's having an effect on small communities, especially in my community. Fort McPherson is the first community you'll hit when you come over the border from the Yukon. There's a lot of trafficking of hard, illicit drugs coming from the Yukon and also from southern Canada. We've seen a lot of violence within our small communities. We've witnessed people, strangers in our communities, because within our small communities everybody knows each other, then when you see somebody wandering around the community in the evening or late at night, they start to get suspicious and they start calling people around the communities. But like my colleague stated the RCMP right now, they don't have the resources to deal with this crisis that we are in. We already have the marijuana that's already around the school-aged children, and my fear is these hard drugs coming right directly into the school. And if that happens, we've lost the battle completely because it's a fear that these children, they're in dire straits of, you know, they're going to be lost. I fear for the communities. We've already had an uprising in two of my constituency communities, one in Aklavik and one in Fort McPherson where the

community members decided to take this into their own hands and address the situation, and the police couldn't do nothing. They just had to stand by and watch. So I figured this would happen sooner or later, and it did happen. It's just fortunate the drug dealers didn't have any firearms, or it would have been very, very bad.

So the reason I second this motion is just for community safety, residents' safety, safety of all Northerners. We have to take our communities back, and this motion will get that process started. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, member from Mackenzie Delta. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too stand up to support the motion. It will not only send a message on passage and direction to the general public that we serve, but it will more importantly send the message if the cross-border meeting happens, it'll send a safety message and comfort to the public that we represent that we are actioning and addressing and notifying and notice the drug trade. And as mentioned, more importantly, send that message out we are doing something. I see it dramatically, not only in the capital here, but throughout some of the communities I represent. To some degree, I'm just shocked at the volume and the magnitude that this problem is creating in and out of the hospitals, in our health centres, tearing families apart. I heard shocking and emotional statements here at our recent couple of drug workshops we had in the Sahtu. So I applaud the leadership of the Sahtu, and I applaud the motion that, yes, enough talk, let's take some action. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief. You've heard me make comments in this House about the fact that these illicit drugs are destroying our communities. I support the motion. If I could support it twice, I would. And I think anybody in this House should feel the same way. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. To the motion. Member from Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I to am rising to support this motion. Since we have no -- since the ferry went out, the Merv Hardy ferry in Fort Providence and we now have a bridge, it seems like things are open 24/7. And this is not only impacting my

communities in my riding but also communities all along the road, the highway system, that have to deal with this drug issue. And the impacts to the community from illicit drugs coming into our communities, high rate of medivacs, we're having -- incarceration rates are going up because of crime. You have deaths and healthy families that are being affected by drugs coming into our community. So we need to do something so I'm standing up today to support a forum to bring people together to discuss ways that could help people to get -- so we have some solutions in how to deal with this and combat it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for the Dehcho. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also support this motion because this has an impact on my community and other Tlicho communities in the regions, and it also has an impact on the fly-in community as well. So there is an increase in drug usage, and it is affecting a lot of our community members, the vulnerable people, the vulnerable and the children as well. So I do support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ever so briefly, as the downtown Member of this Assembly -- and when I refer to downtown, that's Yellowknife Centre -- it's a very urban riding and it's impacted heavily by this. This is -- when I spoke to the neighbourhoods in the community, in the core of the city, you know, this was their number one issue. You know, it might be housing in a small community, and it might be health care on other people, but I can tell you the downtown core of Yellowknife, crime and the reduction of crime is foremost on their mind. There is, you know, nothing burdens them more than this, and I'm referring to en masse, Mr. Speaker. Obviously other issues matter too.

As said by my good colleague for the Range Lake, they are predators. I don't think we should ever give them any less of a title. I'd like to give them a meaner one, but we have parliamentary rules which don't permit me to describe them the way I really feel. They find ways to burrow themselves in communities, whether it's in a small community -- I won't name one because I don't want to single one out as a problem per se, but whether it's in the small communities or the regional centres, these people get in there, they rent, then they're gone tomorrow, they hijack lives, they steal souls from people

because they prey on their addictions. The addictions of vulnerable are the other piece of this equation. Let us not kid -- you know, it's not a sales job in the context of they just show up. I mean, they are responding to a problem and the problem is they're showing up. Yes, that's a problem, but addictions are something else we need to keep foremost on our mind, that we need to support to give people better opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, this motion also lends to the sad observation that we've had more murders here than anyone can think of, and that is a tragedy in on itself. With this type of predatory behaviour, they bring other things, such as weapons and guns to name just a couple points. And the fact is it destroys a community, and it destroys people.

As I finish up here, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that families leaving some of the buildings downtown and walking in their neighbourhood have said the culture of the community has changed significantly. And I can say between the addictions and the crime, that is exactly what they're describing when they're expressing their frustration.

So I put full support to the motion. I acknowledge the Member for Range Lake for moving it. I acknowledge the Member from Mackenzie Delta, which I want to put on record, has been relentless on this issue about fighting for community safety. The Mackenzie Delta Member has, at every chance, pointed out that these are problems in his communities and region and the territory. So he isn't just fighting for his town; he's fighting for the whole people of the Northwest Territories and he's been a heavy advocate as well and deserves credit. So, again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be fully supporting Member of Range Lake on this initiative. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Members for their impassioned statements. I, as well, have spoken about this many times in the House, the impact of drugs. I didn't hear a lot of comments about the actual motion and the potential efficacy of this motion and so as a Cabinet, we are going to abstain so that we can actually take this back, look at the substance of the motion, look at how it might play out in the real world, and then provide a response back in 120 days. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues, who spoke in support of this motion. I want to just reassure the Honourable Premier that this motion has some -- has realism to it, and I look forward to the government's response and to see them move forward with this forum. And we can start -- as the seconder of this motion said, we can start to take our communities back and address this problem with the resources that we need to get it done, keep our communities safe, and fight these predators when they show up in our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. So Member from Range Lake has asked for a recorded vote. For all those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Dehcho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Colleagues, those in favour, ten. Zero, no. And seven abstentions. Motion has passed.

---Carried

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

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, bill 2, Committee Report 2-20, 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).

Colleagues, by the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize

the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House, with the Member from Dehcho in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Now I call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Committee Report 2-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 2: Missing Persons Act, as well as Bill 2, Missing Persons Act, and Tabled Document 93-20(1), 2024-2025 Main Estimates, the Departments of Infrastructure and Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with the first item.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. We have agreed to consider Committee Report 2-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 2: Missing Persons Act. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development for any opening comments. Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 2, Missing Persons Act, was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development on February 26th, 2024. It was important to the committee that the bill be reviewed thoroughly but also with urgency as the committee has heard strong feedback that this legislation needed to be in place as soon as possible.

Throughout the committee's review, the committee consistently received feedback that reflected two sides to the issue of missing person cases:

On one hand, it was expressed to the committee that everything needs to happen as quickly as possible in a missing persons investigation. On the other hand, it was emphasized as equally important to take the

time to consider the privacy of people who are missing, especially in the event that some people might not want to be found if they are fleeing an abusive situation.

The committee also heard consistent feedback on how to make sure missing persons investigations can be more effective, especially in small communities.

Finally, it was made clear to the committee that all those who interact professionally with missing persons cases, be they justices, police officers, shelter workers, or other roles, should be operating in a fashion that is trauma-informed and culturally responsible.

The committee has made nine recommendations to reflect the valuable feedback that was shared with the committee throughout the review.

The committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the review. I would like to thank committee for their work on this review. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Monfwi. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 2-20(1). Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Madam Chair. This bill is very important to the residents of the Northwest Territories, particularly the family of Frank Gruben. He went missing and still haven't heard any -- have any leads on his whereabouts. The Committee on Social Development went to the community of Aklavik and Inuvik. We've heard testimonies from the community and the family of how much it's hurting the community. Not only the family, it's hurting the community. And more than anything, the family wants closure. They want information from the RCMP on the investigation process but due to privacy, the family's unable to get that information. So this bill will give the families and the RCMP more tools to deal with missing persons, how to deal with the family directly on other measures that will take in finding people who are missing.

Frank Gruben's case went national. Everybody from the southern parts of Canada have been responding, pleading for any information that someone may have that they come forward, but nobody has come forward. And hopefully this bill will give the RCMP and the authorities more tools to open up a wide range of proper investigation. So I'm real happy that this bill came forward and like I stated, the community of Aklavik and the family expressed great remorse. The mother Laura spoke and she ended up in tears. And I know at one time I saw

his brother Steven posted on social media that he's not getting any information from the government, from the RCMP, from any authority just to give them a little closure. Not complete closure but a little closure just so they can feel at peace and feel as a family again. And they weren't getting that, and he resorted that, you know, they may take different action, legal action against the authorities, even against the government. And the views that he got and the responses that he got from the general public was overwhelming. And we're just hoping that this bill will bring closure to the family and the community. I'm happy to be a part of this government that's going to try to bring this bill to life. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Mackenzie Delta. Are there any other comments from Members? Thank you. I'm seeing no further comments. MLA for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, Bill 2, missing Persons Act received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on February 26, 2024, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

Throughout the committee's review, the committee met with the Minister of Justice, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and over 55 members of the public in three public hearings held in Aklavik, Inuvik and Yellowknife. The committee also received five written submissions on the bill.

On May 28, 2024, the standing committee held its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Minister of Justice. The committee amended three clauses in the bill with the Minister's concurrence.

I thank the committee for their efforts in reviewing this legislation. I would also like to graciously thank the courageous family members of missing people who also spoke to the committee to inform the committee's review of this bill.

Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 15-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND
INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Committee motion. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with Indigenous governments and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to establish a committee of local and community Indigenous leaders when a missing persons investigation is underway to aid with search and rescue operations, including the involvement of traditional knowledge, and facilitate communication with the affected family and loved ones. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 16-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – CULTURAL SAFETY PROGRAMMING
OR TRAINING,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and justices to evaluate any cultural safety programming or training being offered to Royal Canadian Mounted Police Members and justices to ensure it is trauma-informed and otherwise responsibly addresses those working with missing person cases in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Thank you.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 17-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – TRAINING SPECIFIC TO MISSING
PERSONS ACT,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories establish training specific to the Missing Persons Act and its responsible, culturally appropriate usage for justices, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, non-profit staff, and shelter workers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 18-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – ANNUAL REPORTING OF
STATISTICAL INFORMATION,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that in the formulation of regulations for the Missing Persons Act, the Government of the Northwest Territories require the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to include a schedule in the annual report referenced in the Missing Persons Act that outlines statistical missing persons information in the Northwest Territories;

And further, that the regulations state where the annual report will be published. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 19-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – TITLING BILLS,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the House refers the matter of titling bills to the Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges to review and consider the current conventions in the titling of bills and if those conventions should be expanded. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 20-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – SIXTIES SCOOP,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the federal government in establishing legislation specific to the Sixties Scoop and creating programming to assist those impacted by the Sixties Scoop in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 21-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – RECORDS RETENTION AND
DESTRUCTION,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories include specifics on record retention and destruction in the development of the regulations for the Missing Persons Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 22-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – PERSONS NOT WANTING TO BE
LOCATED,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories incorporate the consideration of information that suggests that a missing person may not want to be located in the development of the regulations for the Missing Persons Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 23-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-20(1) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 2: MISSING PERSONS
ACT – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to Committee Report 2-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 2: Missing Persons Act, within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 2-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 2: Missing Persons Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 2-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 2: Missing Persons Act.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 2, Missing Persons Act. I will ask the Minister of Justice to introduce the bill.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present Bill 2, Missing Persons Act.

Bill 2 proposes new legislation that will provide additional tools to assist police in investigating reports of missing persons.

The Government of the Northwest Territories committed to developing this legislation in response to Call for Justice 5.8 from the National Inquiry of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

In missing persons cases where there is no evidence of criminal activity, investigations can be slowed or completely halted. Missing persons laws in other jurisdictions across Canada allow police to seek court orders to access records and to enter premises to search

for missing persons as well as to make emergency demands for information.

Bill 2 operates similarly and would allow police to move more quickly in their investigations while at the same time providing for oversight and accountability to protect individual privacy when police are utilizing the powers provided for in this legislation.

During the public clause-by-clause review of Bill 2, the Standing Committee on Social Development brought forward three motions to amend the bill informed by their engagement with the RCMP and other stakeholders. These changes were focused on providing greater clarity that the RCMP not be inhibited when utilizing the legislation. The department concurred with these changes, and I would like to thank committee for their review. This concludes my opening remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: With me today, I have Brad Patzer, assistant deputy minister with the Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development and the committee that reviewed the bill for any opening comments on Bill 2. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Bill 2, Missing Persons Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on February 26, 2024, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

Throughout the committee's review, the committee met with the Minister of Justice, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and over 55 members of the public in three public hearings held in Aklavik, Inuvik, and Yellowknife. The committee also received five written submissions on the bill.

On May 28, 2024, the standing committee held its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the

Minister of Justice. The committee amended three clauses in the bill with the Minister's concurrence.

I thank the committee for their efforts in reviewing this legislation. I would also like to graciously thank the courageous family members of missing people who also spoke to the committee to inform the committee's review of this bill. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Monfwi. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 2.

Does committee agree that there are no further comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. I will call the clauses in groups.

Clause 1 to 5, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clauses 6 to 10, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clauses 11 to 15, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clauses 16 to 21, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, we will now return to the bill number and title, Bill 2, Missing Persons Act. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): To the bill as a whole, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Does the committee agree that Bill 2, Missing Persons Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 2, Missing Persons Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 93-20(1), 2024-2025 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Infrastructure.

Does the Minister of Infrastructure wish to bring witnesses into the House?

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, on my left is deputy minister Steve Loutitt. On my right is Amy Burt, who has a very important title -- I'm sorry, I've forgotten it -- director of corporate services. Every time.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Order. Does the committee agree to forego general comments on the Department of Infrastructure?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Seeing no more general comments, does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with asset management starting on page 263, with information items on page 266.

Are there any questions? Page numbers are page 263 with information items on page 266.

Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to clarify that under division management, there's a huge jump in the budget line from 2023-2024. Well, the original main estimate's \$361,000, and then by the end of last year, we had \$6.5 million, and now this year we're looking at \$7.265 million. Can the Minister clarify what was the cause of this big jump in funding.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was funding that was appropriated for the purpose of the Hay River harbour restoration. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I understand that that is a very important project. How many years does the Minister expect that we will need to be expending this level of funds to complete the restoration? And is it best housed under division management? Like, if this is a long term -- longer term project, is this where it will continue to be found or will it be managed in some different way? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this phase of the project is expected to be completed in September of this year. There may be future phases. This is something where, for quite a long period of time when the federal government stopped providing this service, nothing was done, and it put us into the situation we found ourselves in. So, as I say, there will be some continuation of the work going forward but this particular phase will end in September. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Member from Yellowknife North. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: That's fine. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): No further questions, please turn -- sorry, Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, can the Minister please speak to -- and

I'll let them open up their business plan, I've got page 183. Can the Minister please speak to whether or not the new highway conditions map and recording system Drive NWT, which is an initiative spoken to in the business plan, will that piece be included in the NWT Alert mapping program? Is there any desire to see that come together under one piece under the NWT Alert? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that's an excellent idea, not one that I can say I can speak to whether or not right now. Actually, well right at this moment that was not the scope of the work but let me take that one away. That may be an opportunity to see that we do, in fact, combine those systems. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I think my questions with the Minister of MACA previously in this session is really just pointing to trying to align, wherever we can, services that are in a one-stop-shop sort of style for the public to understand when there are issues, and that includes obviously egress from various places in evacuations. So thank you, Madam Chair. More of a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just quickly, I wanted to note that there actually is already a meeting set up with MACA to have exactly this conversation. But I appreciate it being brought up, and I appreciate the Member's comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Any further comments? Thank you, Minister. Any further comments? No further questions, please turn to page 264.

Infrastructure, asset management, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$24,275,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Moving on to corporate management, beginning on page 267 with information on page 269. Are there any questions? Page 267 with information items on page 269. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 268.

Infrastructure, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$8,614,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Moving on to energy and strategic initiatives, beginning on page 270 with information items on page 272 to 275. Are there any questions? Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. The community access programs, there's nothing in this budget for this program. It's really effective way of getting money into small communities and creating local economic activity. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has called for this money to be restored. Will the Minister restore this program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there have been some challenges in terms of the funding in this program in terms of, for example, whether or not the programs that have been funded or the projects that have been funded are the right scope in size or whether they're perhaps not delivering as we all would hope them to. So at the very least, this is likely a situation where there would need to be a review of the program done and some supports put in to ensure the money would be spent properly. Now, as to whether it goes back in or not, that will be a question, I think, for the finance Minister to speak to when we are ready to move the entire budget out of COW. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. So that's a yes, then? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I wouldn't want to steal the Minister of Finance's thunder and, in general, it's not been our practice to have that kind of a budget discussion or negotiation on the floor of COW, so I am going to refrain from taking any position on that further at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. It still sounds like a yes to me. But that's all right, we'll have that discussion later.

This also contains the energy programs for -- sorry, yeah, the energy programs that are funded. Can the Minister speak to the overall energy strategy and where the -- how the GNWT is moving ahead with its energy plans, especially in the advent of mine closure? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am happy to do this although I'm conscious that we are trying to be a bit more mindful of our time. The energy strategy is up for a renewal, and last summer some significant progress was made in terms of having, for example, a large forum of engagement and significant other opportunities for engagement over the summer of last year obviously with some challenges. There's work being done right now to draft up what that might look like. I know Members of the Assembly have had a significant amount of interest in this particular area. I think we are expecting to be ready to go on this roughly in 2025-2026 -- well, certainly the fiscal year of 2025-2026. But, again, I expect that there's a lot of interest. I expect we'll be coming back to committee before anything is finalized.

I mean, in broad terms, the energy situation in the Northwest Territories is one where we have over 20 disconnected micro grids. We are heavily reliant on diesel still, certainly for all redundancy. We have some hydro communities. We have independent hydro grids. So this is a space where there is an opportunity for much. An opportunity -- lots of opportunity, let's put it that way. But without taking some pretty significant actions, we would be in a difficult situation going forward. We'll be in the same situation in the next 25 years as we have been for the last 25 if we don't make some significant changes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. Will the Northwest Territories be in the -- be net-zero by 2050 and meet the Canadian net-zero goal -- or targets? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that's exactly the kind of question that does need to be answered in this strategy, and it is one that I hope there's a lot of significant public interest in. I appreciate that there's political interest in it. Because that will be -- if we decide to move the needle on what the goals are and make them bigger and bolder, it means significant investment in energy infrastructure to achieve them, and it means being on top of new technologies and emerging technologies. So, for example, this afternoon speaking about renewable diesel but up to and including what storage capacity for LNG might be like including what kinds of new capacity there may be. I think, Madam Chair, in your own community, they're doing some work to see whether or not there could be kinetic storage energy. We have to be at the front of the technology. We have to acknowledge that that technology comes with costs. It's probably going to cost more over the course of my children's lifetime if we don't do anything, but where do we go next? Again, that's exactly the kind of question that has to be in this strategy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. The community government retrofit program is being discontinued. Can the Minister explain why? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, let me put that to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Deputy minister Loutitt.

MR. STEVE LOUTITT: Sorry, Madam Chair, we misheard you. It's the community government retrofit program. So at this time, Madam Chair, there is actually now federal funding that is available to support the funding of that program. So previously, it would have been Government of the Northwest Territories dollars that were being utilized to help support that. There are now federal funds that have been announced. So even at the same time, while some of the other funds we've relied on from the federal government in this space have been -- right now we're waiting to see whether they will come through or not, this is one where there's been some change. So I'd be happy to provide the information and link so that

community governments who may be interested can begin to access that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Yes, thank you. I would encourage the Minister to do that. The association of communities is quite keen to see this funding, or something like it, restored and provided to them and is concerned about this cut. So if it is being offset by other sources, best to communicate that to them without delay.

So the issue seems to be with the low carbon leadership economy fund. That's what's been in the headlines at least, and what's been communicated to us. The other smaller cuts, electric bicycle rebates, electric on the land vehicle rebates, electric vehicles fast charger corridor, electric vehicles rebate program, and youth energy mentorship, and energy auditing capacity, why are these funds being cut? Or are they being sunset? Can the Minister explain if it's related to those low carbon leadership issues or is this another source of funding we're losing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there are a significant amount of sunsets that are taking place, and that is where the cuts are coming from.

There has been some funding, \$433,000 in funding, for new initiatives. So it just reduces the scope of what can -- what is possible under the Energy Action Plan right now. Obviously subject to perhaps seeing a renewal, hopefully seeing a renewal of the low carbon -- or the LCELF funding that the Member was mentioning but, yeah, thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Does the Minister believe that we have sufficient resources behind EV charging stations and associated infrastructure to support the transition away from fossil fuel powered -- from combustion engines -- or standard combustion engines? We're making this transition nationally, globally. Is the Northwest Territories in a position to keep pace, or will we be left behind and have no cars to drive? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, given the uptake to date on EV vehicles, we do believe that we are in a position to have sufficient amount of charging stations. So there's charging stations in -- and I'll double check the year here; I'm sure someone's going to send it to me as I say this. But there will be sufficient charging stations to create a corridor from here to the border. And so, again, in terms of ruling out that by -- in 2024, a fiscal year of 2024. So with that, that provides that ability for hopefully more people to then begin to buy the vehicles, EV vehicles, since that does appear to have been a barrier to this time. As more people will buy it, it certainly helps to support the idea of a further investment in those charging stations. So, again, we hope we're going to get to a place where the corridor, as I said, will go as far as the border. You know, for anyone that's going to ask the next question, we're going to have to burn diesel to have a charging station but if that ultimately gets more vehicles off the road, then the net benefit is greater and, again, as I say, as we move forward with this, if there's greater uptake of the EV vehicles because of those charging stations has -- continues to have greater benefits and to put us on that path of being not in a situation of not having cars. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, perhaps we could burn reusable diesel -- renewable diesel, or other forms of bio diesel. There are so many options out there right now. Okay, that's good.

I'm concerned, though, that there are still some issues with, like, our local power grid. I know my colleague, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, has brought this up but Naka, the newly rechristened Naka utilities has -- basically tells consumers they have to pay for their own infrastructure when they want to have high capacity or high -- fast charging for EVs in their garages, things like that. Our power system's not attuned for that. So how are we -- I don't think that's fair. I don't think anyone thinks that's fair. So how are we assisting consumers to get those tools and those utilities into their homes, so they are not left footing the bill for their entire neighbourhoods? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly can't speak to the practices or policies of Naka Power. I can say with respect to, again,

you know, if folks are having to make changes to their own home renovations, you know, that's not necessarily something that we would be in a position to subsidize. There are certainly going to be some distribution challenges. If people are trying to get an EV charging station in their home because you have to go and -- from different step downs of power but, you know, again, how to best support that, our response has been to make available EV charging stations in communities from here - Behchoko, Fort Providence, Enterprise, Hay River, Fort Smith - and then at the junction as well. If folks are making decisions for their own home needs or home use, again, that's, at this point, not necessarily the focus or the thrust of subsidization with public dollars. But as stations are becoming available in those communities and along the highway, hopefully with greater command comes a reduction in the costs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I'm glad there's some willingness to reinstate the community access program. I've seen firsthand a lot of growth in that area. And for me, coming from and going to small communities, it's really comforting to see the value on TPR. So TPR would be your taxpayers return of public funds. So when I see it in the book here and I go out to the community and I see it out there, okay, it's happening. And it makes me feel good that the government is doing something right by providing meaningful benefits.

And looking at the business plan, the business plan on page 175 in our mandate is compliant to, say, building relationships with Indigenous groups and partners on major projects. And when I see some of these -- let's call it the in-value capital projects. So when I go downtown Tulita and I look at the solar panel and I think of the millions of dollars that was spent on this piece of infrastructure in terms of the piling put in there and the gravel hauled there and the solar panel itself, the mounting stations, and I wonder are we seeing a return on that? Are we seeing some sort of benefit? If we can measure the benefits compared to maximizing other programs that this money can go towards.

So when I look at the -- keeping that in mind, I just hope that priority is given to applications as we move throughout the year on this fiscal budget that more meaningful programs would be looked at favourably, not just another capital asset that ain't going to prove any benefits. We can say okay, yes, it is providing a benefit, there's cost reductions on the energy rates

going to the clients of Tulita. Then I can say, yes, it's working. But I yet have to hear of any benefits of that capital cost. Maybe that money could be better directed to other energy saving initiatives, the Arctic Energy Alliance subsidizing NWT energy efficient projects.

Are there any carryovers from the whole area of the bilateral agreements that exist today into this budget? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I just want to make sure I was clear. Carryovers reflected on capital projects in here? There wouldn't be. This would be only the operations. So there wouldn't be any carryovers reflected here. I'll just stop there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll use one example. The 18th Assembly signed a bilateral agreement with the federal government for \$570 million payable over ten years. Is that reflected -- or I guess, first of all, is there any money left in that bilateral agreement? If so, is it going to be identified and entered into these statements? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Madam Chair, that sounds to me like that is likely in relation to Mackenzie Valley Highway or one of the associated projects, Great Bear River Bridge for instance. So if that is the case, then that would not be reflected in -- certainly not in this particular instance. Or on this particular page, sorry. It would -- yeah, it would come in under the capital planning process for any -- any of the large-scale funding for large scale capital projects will be in there. The smaller scale programs that are here aren't subject to the same sort of carryover process. They typically are one year at a time funded. And, I mean, that was sometimes some of the challenges of those small-scale projects is still getting the permitting in place and to get them done in a year. But yes, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe I'll rephrase that. As I mentioned, there was -- I'm just using that one example. There are several bilateral agreements that I'm -- I'm still doing my research, but it's in the neighbourhood of \$1.5 billion that exists with these bilaterals. I don't know whether it's five bilateral agreements specific to the target of the application applied for. In this case, I'm just using the 570 bilateral payable over ten years. That'll be \$55 million -- or \$57 million per year. And that was signed in 2018, I believe, or 2019. So there should be some existing capital in these bilaterals, but I have no idea how many bilateral agreements exist to this day. I've requested that information to try to comprehend and see how we are going to position ourselves moving forward. So can the Minister tell me how many bilateral agreements are out there between the federal government and the territorial government? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. Infrastructure Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, there's -- there are quite a number of capital funding federal pots that exist right now that we are part of. The Disaster Mitigation Adaption Fund is one. Investing in Canada Infrastructure Project, people I think hear us sometimes say ICIP. That's a big one. And that, I think, may be the one that the Member was -- has the numbers there for 570. I think it's actually closer to 580, but that's Canada's portion. And that is right now funding quite a large number of projects, including projects in the Sahtu region, as well as the National Trade Corridors Fund. That's another big one. And finally, although this one, I think, is coming to a close soon, the New Building Canada Plan. There's certainly some new programs that are coming online as well. So REACH, for instance, is an area with respect to transmission technology and transmission line work that is coming in. That's a new one that we now are participating with the federal government on for electricity transmission. Those are all the ones that I have in front of me. If I've missed any, I would certainly be happy to get back to the Members. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thanks to the Minister for that. I think if we can work in collaboration with each other, we can -- or everybody in the Assembly. If we can put our heads together, I think we can face the challenges that are out there. It's so significant,

it's unbelievable. I'm actually scared personally for some of the communities on the resupply. As we all know on the publications through social media and, in reality, going to Fort Providence and witnessing the low waters. And I'm afraid that we still have anticipation on resupplying Fort Good Hope, but I'm not confident that our ships will pass Little Chicago.

Little Chicago is swamped with sandbars, and one of the ships stopped there or got stuck last year. So I don't think we can afford to jeopardize our fuel and cargo resupply with the assumption that we are still going to go on that river. So I think we should prepare financially for the worst, and if this includes looking at the existing bilateral agreements that exist and incorporating into the budget to support these programs and pursue the intent and terms and conditions of the bilateral agreement itself, I think we can be further ahead in accomplishing both reductions and capitalization from existing agreements. So I point that out now, and I'll probably have further questions in other areas. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. There was no question there. I didn't hear any question there. So unless the Minister wants to respond.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, just to note, I think I realize now. When there's -- these large funding pots, when they are already committed to capital projects, they'll show up in the capital budget. Sometimes you'll see them coming in under the operations budget but not when they're already tied to the capital projects. And but still happy to draw that distinction here. It's a -- people don't necessarily -- wouldn't -- outside this Assembly wouldn't understand the division, so I appreciate the opportunity to clarify that. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. So on page 7 -- or sorry, 272 -- I need new glasses -- the line item for Arctic Energy Alliance, can you confirm that's a transfer for their O and M operating budget? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a contribution agreement with them. In terms of the exact usage or specifics, I don't -- I mean, there's a number of things they deliver on our behalf. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thanks for that clarification. I guess my follow-up question would be that number has remained static, and I understand a little bit of static throughout time before what's actually reflected on this page for several years now, and I notice too that it's going down by about \$112,000. Can the Minister speak to why that is. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Arctic Energy Alliance is one area where we were looking at what options there might have been for some reductions in line with other opportunities looking for reductions in other programs and projects, and this is one there has been a slight reduction as a result of that review. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I recognize that. I recognize we're in fiscal sustainability. And, you know, it's just -- it's unfortunate to hear that we're reducing funding to such a well loved and well subscribed program. I realize they operate arm's length from the government. They do rely quite heavily on the pieces the GNWT funnels their way. So more of a comment than a question, but, I guess, I just -- I would like to -- if the Minister would be so kind as to elaborate to what she sees is the value for our investment on Arctic energy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify the point there that this was targeted for a very -- and you can see from the number -- a fairly specific reduction, and it was reflective of an operator surplus that was seen to exist, and it doesn't reflect on, you know, the fact that there is good work that is being done, but if there is an operating surplus in an organization that is a non-profit, it considers an opportunity in the course of this obviously bigger -- bigger concern around the ability of the government to continue to deliver all of the programs, including energy programs, of what we could do. So it was really related to an operating surplus and not an intention to take away. But, again, yes, I mean, the value it provides, well, I mean, it does, as I say, quite a

large number of activities, everything from providing incentives directly to residents for various energy renewal systems or efficiency systems to education around Arctic renewable and GHG reductions and climate adaptation to providing energy efficiency analysis and so on and so forth. So we're certainly -- I'm certainly happy that it continues to exist, even without a surplus. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I just wanted to I think perhaps repeat a question. Just starting with Arctic Energy Alliance, just it's being reduced by \$104,000. That's the operating surplus? Is that the answer to that question? Okay. I'll just move on.

The low income program to address energy poverty, that one sounds interesting. I don't know much about that one. Can the Minister or staff describe what that program is for, what it does.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, let me turn that one to Amy Burt, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Ms. Burt.

MS. AMY BURT: Madam Chair, that's to help lower income households reduce energy costs.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, director of Infrastructure. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you for the answer. I was maybe hoping for a little bit more information on what that really means. What does the program do? What, does it provide people cash; does it provide people rebates to replace heating systems in their homes; what are we doing with the \$200,000?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It does have a program to support folks with wood stoves or wood stove replacements. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So that one, I mean, the issue I want to highlight is I've got a lot of constituents who are effectively, you know, on an older oil burning furnace paying exorbitant amounts of heating costs, aren't in a position where they can afford to switch to something more high efficiency or off of oil altogether to get out from under carbon tax payments, etcetera, etcetera, and just the general cost of oil. So I'm just wondering is this program geared towards that? It's only \$200,000. I mean, personally, I'd love to see us providing a lot more support for people on this, just recognizing, you know, we're collecting a fair bit of money related to the carbon tax. The government hasn't entirely accounted for where all that money's going, and I think this is something that could be expanded. I think it would be a great program. I know it's something that a lot of people would be able to subscribe to if they were given assistance to upgrade their heating systems and make their homes a little more energy efficient. So I'd be -- I guess I'm really just encouraging the Minister on that one, but maybe if I could get a response on that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we are right now spending what we're -- I mean, in terms of talking about energy savings and energy rebates, the Government of the Northwest Territories spends almost \$8 million a year in terms of supporting territorial support, power supports. There's several million dollars a year that goes to seniors' home heating subsidies. There's \$30 million a year that we've put to keep power rates low just recently, notwithstanding others. So I mean, I don't disagree that getting folks to a position where they're not as reliant on diesel is certainly one that, I think, we all share. But getting there, you know, in bits and pieces is hopefully not what we're going to have to do and hopefully we can do so on a much larger scale. I don't yet have actuals for this program, and it's one that -- to the extent that it's run through Arctic Energy Alliance, I would have to see where those actuals are at. Is this money getting out the door? Is it getting out to those that need it? Where is it going? Again, because it's administrated by a third party, and I have confidence that they're trying their best to get it out the door, but I don't have that information so I just can't speak to the degree or extent to which it's effective. I hope it is. I share the Member's concern. You know, if it's fully subscribed, then certainly then I welcome an opportunity to have a look at whether it's something that we do think has value. If it's not

fully subscribed, then we want to look at, in the course of fiscal sustainability, if this is the right place to put public dollars. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's definitely something I want to dig into a little deeper in the future.

Moving to the low carbon economy leadership fund, or the LCELFF I think we're calling it, I won't reiterate comments made by the other Members, but what I would like is an update from the Minister. I know there's kind of active negotiations and discussions going on with the feds. I'm wondering if there's any updates on that. I do want to encourage the Minister to really pursue this one. It's one that a lot of people are benefitting from in helping us kind of move in the direction of our climate goals. So I was hoping to get an update from the Minister on how we're doing securing that large amount of funding. Just, I see a huge reduction between our grants and is contributions and transfers between 2023-2024 and this year, and, you know, this was good money that was going to good places from the feds. So hope to hear some exciting updates from the Minister in the near future on this one. That is also a question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we made the initial application process last summer when the call went out from the federal government. We understood that was accepted back in September. Now, you know, yeah, why -- or sorry, yeah, so this summer I guess last year now and then in the fall, and we continued to follow up with, frankly, the assumption and expectation that given that the, you know, focus on the need for lower carbon initiatives, the focus and need and understanding on climate change and the need to be at the forefront of taking steps to address climate change, to be, again, doing everything we can, whether it's GHG reductions or other forms of response, this, I agree, has some items here, whether it's Arctic Energy Alliance, whether it's greenhouse gas reductions, so on and so forth, that seems to align with what sound to be priorities coming out of the federal government, to jurisdictions such as ours, where we are at the forefront of climate change where we are paying huge amounts to run on diesel, in a situation where no one wants to run on diesel but we lack significant investment to make change. It was a

surprise to me that here we sit in our budget sessions and still don't have a response on this. There has been communications at the ADM level, deputy level. I mentioned it directly myself to my colleague -- or counterpart. I understand that the deputy minister -- or assistant deputy minister is following up -- I want to say weekly, and I hope I'm not lighting too much of a fire under him, but at one point it was weekly because we had hoped, quite frankly, to not have to put our main estimates forward without this money in them. Here we are. I'm honestly surprised. It doesn't really make sense. I'll keep at it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Range Lake.

MR. MORSE: Frame Lake, thank you. It's okay, the other chair get that one mixed up too. So does the Speaker, for that matter. There's a lot of lakes in Yellowknife.

Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'll just say, you know, if the Minister needs some comforting words, it can just be that, you know, MLAs are putting a fire under her and so if she's feeling like she has to transfer that to the federal minister, I just want to kind of provide my encouragement also on that one. This is something that's important to our communities and our response to climate change. So thank you, Madam Chair. That's my comments on this page for now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Energy poverty, I could show my heating bills for the last two years if you want to talk energy poverty. But thankfully, thankfully, IRC is taking a risk in developing some natural gas up there, so we may get some relief in the near future. That's not my question, and I'm not trying to do a Member's statement. But it popped in my head when I saw the term energy poverty. I'm like, yeah, you know, I got ten minutes.

MR. HAWKINS: It's all yours to use. All yours.

MR. RODGERS: I wish we had some clean natural gas somewhere near Inuvik we could access. That's not my question, I apologize. It's late, it's been a long week.

I'd like to ask the Minister, the \$70,000 for the ARI energy projects. Is that a sunset clause, or are we just done studying wind in Inuvik given the magnitude of our last windmill project up there?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think there is still work happening. It's still in the budget. So I'm just trying to see if I have a detail on what the current -- I don't have detail in front of me on what the exact programs or projects might be for the coming year, but there is still money in the budget ongoing for academic research related to -- well, it would be related to the 2030 Energy Strategy. I can certainly get details. Or sorry, Madam Chair, I just want to make sure I'm looking at the right alternative. Is it the top line?

Oh, there we are. Sorry, Madam Chair. I had the wrong one here. Just give me a moment.

Aurora Research Institute, that one is -- yes, that one is not currently here, but I don't know that we're entirely done any of the work under the energy strategy. It's just a question of figuring out what the best usage of the funds would be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. Sorry if I wasn't clear in my question, Minister, I apologize. No, it does say that it was to the testing of the wind potential of specific sites of interest to the GNWT. I guess is what that specific funding, that \$70,000, was used for. So I guess my question was is this out of the budget, I didn't know if it was a sunset clause, if it was a grant, or if it was just we're done studying wind in Inuvik because it's expensive to build windmills up there?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, Madam Chair, that misunderstanding's definitely mine but I appreciate the kind words. So this is a reduction at this point in this area that there have been quite a number of studies over the last many years at a number of different locations, to study wind in particular. Some projects obviously have moved forward, some have come back positively and others have come back to indicate that there's not a capacity or potential. And so at this stage in time, this one is slated for a reduction. And obviously if there's opportunities that come up specific to other projects, there continues to be planning dollars in our capital fund in order to look at the potential with either the studies that exist or,

again, moving forward with the energy strategy, moving forward with other capital projects, they could probably find themselves within the planning and studies and scoping studies. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. No further questions on this initiative -- or activity, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Inuvik Boot Lake. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Well, now that I have the mic and I have nine minutes and 45 seconds -- no, no, Madam Chair, I'm going to pass, in all seriousness, on this page. And I'll raise it as needed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So a quick opening comment, a little bit earlier the Minister mentioned that she doesn't necessarily believe the solution to reducing our diesel dependency is through bits and pieces. I think there's a larger argument to be had here over, you know, the effectiveness of the big mega projects versus the small projects, and it's not necessarily black or white certainly. But I think a lot of the work that, for example Arctic Energy Alliance is doing is, you know, bits and pieces, but it can be incredibly both cost effective and empowering to people and communities in terms of them being able to take back more control over their own energy supplies. And you know, even if it's one wood stove at a time, I think it does make a difference. And I would encourage the Minister to, you know, have further conversations with Arctic Energy Alliance and others about, really, the effectiveness of those programs that they're doing, even the bits and pieces ones.

But on that subject, so Arctic Energy Alliance is an arm's length organization. And, you know, we heard earlier from the Minister of ECE, when she was talking about the process with Aurora College, that, you know, that budget changes were done in consultation with the college, and certainly she was sort of asking them to propose something. Were these budget changes done in consultation with Arctic Energy Alliance? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there was discussion at an operational level with the chair of Arctic Energy Alliance. And, Madam Chair, I know this wasn't part of the question per se, but let me just walk back a little bit in saying that there's -- you know, we don't want to do things in bits and pieces. As a government, we want to be strategic, but being strategic does include things like even putting in the single EV charger that has to run on diesel for now, it still has a value. So I do see that. I don't want to -- I wouldn't want people to think that it's hopeless to go and replace their own wood stove, to have more, you know, energy efficient appliances and, in fact, find it very frustrating that the federal government wouldn't necessarily share that view. So I certainly don't want to leave with that notion. And Arctic Energy Alliance does do a lot of very good work. But, yes, there was an understanding that there was some surpluses, so there's areas of surplus, and that was really what was the primary focus of any reductions in this area. I do agree that that is an opportunity with the energy strategy coming out next year renewed to see both small scale, medium, and large scale what are we going to do in this space. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So one of the very popular programs that Arctic Energy Alliance was running or implementing was the community government retrofits program, which is -- was \$190,000, and it's been proposed to be eliminated in this budget. Now, the Minister earlier mentioned that there is some federal funding that she believes will replace this program or the need for this program. Just to clarify, are we talking about a federal funding program that would be available to all communities across Canada, that any community in the NWT would have to compete with all other communities for, or is this a funding pot that's specifically for NWT communities that would be carried out through the GNWT or through Arctic Energy Alliance? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I actually purposely didn't try to say the name of the program earlier because I think I'm going to mispronounce it. But let me try. Wah-ila-toos is the name of the federal initiative. So this has come out even while we're waiting to see if the low carbon economy leadership fund will get

renewed -- or well, when it will get renewed. Still hopeful on that. But this is what we've been directed to in the interim. Because that actually was, again, a significant source of funding that was helping the Government of the Northwest Territories to support programs, including the community retrofits fund. But while that one hasn't come out yet, this other one has. And my understanding it's a federal program -- not mine, but my understanding is that it's something available to communities northern -- particularly northern and Indigenous communities and brings together a number of federal departments so that, you know, whether it's under an Indigenous -- the Indigenous departments, whether it's on community departments, rural, northern, that they've come together, put some funding together, and that that is where communities can go. I'll certainly can post it out myself on social media. But it is -- again, it's available if folks wanted to try Googling W-a-h i-l-a t-o-o-s. I'm sure I'm saying it not correctly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I am concerned -- you know, I don't know much about this new federal initiative, but it sounds like it's something that would be opened up to northern and Indigenous communities across the entire country and that there's no guarantee that any of our NWT communities would, you know, get funding approved or, you know, we're just another applicant. And one of the big advantages in the community government retrofits program that Arctic Energy Alliance was delivering is they were able to do some project management, project coordination, they were able to do energy audits for community governments, and it was helping community governments make upgrades to their buildings and facilities that could really save the money in the end and make them more energy efficient, which everyone wants, right; it's an extremely popular program. And so I'm concerned that by losing Arctic Energy Alliance as the hub of that and helping communities make these projects happen, it would, you know, just be one more thing that's lost in the shuffle in the hundreds and hundreds of federal programs and applications and things that are out there. I wonder if the Minister can comment on what -- if she sees an advantage in having a specific territorial-run program to provide these kind of community government retrofits over sort of more widespread federal initiative? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Madam Chair, let me just say, first of all, that the loss of the low carbon economy energy fund was a significant amount of money. It was significantly more than just what is shown here. I'm inclined to put it at -- yes, so it's closer to \$5 million in total that we're losing. And I say that in that when we have had a loss of funding in that magnitude and there's some -- a program dollar that can be accessed through the federal government, yes, I am going to point people to go to the pot that exists elsewhere rather than take from the pot that has now been reduced by \$5 million. You know, it's valuable to have energy efficiency reductions. It's just -- at the same time, we are struggling to pay for all the things. So if the federal government has put something out while taking a big thing away, I am pointing people back to that program. Would certainly want to know if folks, communities, governments in the Northwest Territories are being denied, because there may be political levers that we can pull to help support them and be happy to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do understand where the Minister's coming from. I would just also point out though that -- I mean, this project had a budget line of \$190,000, which is not going to change the world, but it's also not going to break our budget if we stepped in to avoid that the feds are leaving, hopefully temporarily. I would also point out, you know, we're seeing an elimination of the rebate program for electric bicycles. And it's only \$10,000. And you could say that okay, well, it wasn't creating a huge impact because it was only \$10,000, but it's also a very small amount of money, and it's been extremely popular, at least in Yellowknife and in my riding, and this, I think, fills a niche where, you know, we have a relatively small municipality where you don't necessarily need to drive everywhere but if you're pulling loads of things or you're pulling your kid around, it's really hard on a conventional bicycle, but the e-bike sort of fills that gap where for much of the year people actually can manage to get around this, you know, manageably-sized town without having to get in their car, and, you know, it makes life manageable and honestly more -- increases quality of life. And it does make a difference in reducing emissions, especially when transportation is one of our biggest sources of emissions. So I'm going to leave it at that but, you know, it was a small amount of money in the first place, and I think it does have value. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Members. Thank you, Yellowknife North. If we have no further questions, we'll turn to page 271.

Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$9,158,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Moving on to programs and services beginning on page 276 with information on page 279. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 277.

Infrastructure, programs and services, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$14,575,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Moving on to regional operations beginning on page 280, with information items on page 282. Are there any questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So under the highway operations budget, we've got \$108 million for this coming fiscal year. Is any of that budget offset by federal funding? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I don't believe so, Madam Chair. Let's go with no.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. And so I believe that we get a significant amount of money from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, the ICIP program. Is that all capital funding, or does any of that funding, which I believe is about \$55.4 million, does that go into operations and maintenance of infrastructure?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: We're on our own in the operations and maintenance, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance -- Infrastructure, sorry.

Member for Yellowknife North. Apologize for that, sorry.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was just the clarification I needed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Any further questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And just for funzies, I'm going to ask the Minister if she'll consider opening the DMV on Saturdays. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I mean, I can certainly consider it, but it's probably not going to happen.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Got to keep things lively.

I also just note that we're up ever so slightly from the previous mains, so I was just hopeful that maybe that was a little bit of extra of, you know, human resource dollars paid for on Saturdays but if that's not the case, I'll be quiet. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I just want to point out there's an awful lot that can be done online now. And so I'm hoping to continue to improve the online services that folks have available to them so that they can do their DMV-related work any time, any day. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Seeing no further question -- Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I appreciate that answer, and I think that's fantastic that more licensing opportunities are available online, I do not believe you can get your first NWT license online. So until that is the case, I'll keep asking for Saturdays in memory of the previous Member for Yellowknife North. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I don't see a question there so I'm going to go to Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Madam Chair. With the climate change and winter roads going in later and closing earlier, is there any significant savings in this department?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, unfortunately not. If anything, it's actually the opposite. It winds up that to get those roads in, even for the shorter season, is also costing more. And then to maintain them through those seasons, through the season with the more volatile weather and greater number of storms, again is actually also costing more. And, in fact, I don't have numbers for actuals for this particular fiscal yet, but it is significantly more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Okay, how many winter roads do you fund within the Northwest Territories, whether it's just an access across the road or the one from Inuvik right to Aklavik; how many roads do you fund in this category here? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to say all of them but that's not, I realize, an actual number that I can point to. So I'm just trying to see quickly if I can pull that number at my fingertips. If I don't find it and no one else does instantly, we will make sure and provide that to the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Member of Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Are there any additional questions? Items on pages 283 to 291, are there any questions? Thank you, Members.

Please turn now to the departmental summary found on page 257, with information items on pages 258 to 262. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Summary found on page 257 with information items on page 258 to 262, are there any questions? Seeing no further questions,

committee, I will now call the departmental summary.

Infrastructure, operations expenditure, total department, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$307,147,000. Does the committee agree? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 24-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1):
2024-2025 MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL
OF DEPARTMENT – INFRASTRUCTURE,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the main estimates for the Department of Infrastructure at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditure, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, total departmental, is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Committee, we will now move on to the next department. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 93-20(1), 2024-2025 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Finance. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, please.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, with me on my left is deputy minister Bill MacKay, and on my right is Terence Courtoreille, the deputy secretary to the financial management board. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Does the committee agree to forego general comments on the Department of Finance?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, we'll defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with directorate starting on page 156, with information items on page 159. Are there any questions? No further questions. Please turn to page 157.

I'm backing up here. Starting on page 157 with information items on page 159, are there any questions? Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you -- well, I'm just waiting for the clock. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I just want to look to the Housing Northwest Territories contribution, \$76 million this year. Of that contribution, how much of that was spent on capital for new builds or upgrades to existing buildings, maintenance, etcetera?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I don't have operational level of detail regarding the housing corporation's work in front of me. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you. If the Minister doesn't have the information, there's not much point in me digging further so I'll defer that one, I guess, for now. What? I'm just stating the obvious. Thank you, Madam Chair. That's it for me.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member. No further questions there. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to couch this question very much in the fact that I do not want to speak about bargaining. I understand the bargaining process has to go along its merry little way. But I do want to understand for the Public Service Act LT, how far along is that towards completion? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's as far as along as it can be in the context of knowing that we certainly would never want to bargain in bad faith and in a situation of then changing, you know, you don't change the Act when you're in the midst of bargaining. That would not be the appropriate thing to do. So it's as far as it can be in the circumstances and then, yeah, whether it can be advanced further, subject to conclusion of the bargaining process, again I'll have to just go back and see where that's at specifically. But it's certainly front of mind to me to see that it makes -- we make some movement on it this Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Well, I note that the Minister and her department has aimed to see this bill passed during the life of the Assembly and look forward to further updates when the bargaining is complete. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): I don't see a question there. Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. There on page 157, the contribution to the NWT Power Corporation, maybe I can ask a little bit more detail on the increase. Is it related to the Taltson hydro repair? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, Madam Chair, it's not. This is very much directly related to the fact that there's been significant challenges. I mean, low water being probably top of mind on this one. It's not a capital -- it's not related to capital. It's not related to the operations, really, of the organization. It was either that there's -- and I don't have the numbers top of mind. But there was a significant amount of diesel that was burned over this last while because of low water and with high fuel costs, we had a pretty unfortunate combination of needing more diesel and high cost of diesel and that has resulted in a situation where if the -- if our government, the GNWT, doesn't step in and provide this funding, then that gets disbursed on to people's power rates, which obviously at this point in time, there's, I think, little capacity for folks to be paying higher and higher power rates. So this is the government basically stepping in to provide this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: I got nothing further there, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. No further questions. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's the evacuation travel support program, it's being sunset. Hopefully for good reason. But is the Minister confident that everyone who needs help from this fund has been helped and there are no -- there's nothing in the queue or things that are going to be harmed -- or going to not receive support by the sunset of these funds? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the last update of data that I have dates back now to February, so I will have to go back and reconfirm. But as of February, there were already well into -- almost 5,000 applicants who had received their funding. There was still at that time, which, again, I acknowledge is several months ago, but there was still at that time about 112 evacuee income disruption applications that were in process or being reviewed, and another 120 or so on the evacuation travel support that were in progress or being reviewed. Often the same households or same applicant in these cases. The reasons for review can be anything from someone not having completed the application form or not having provided a document that may have been requested. Sometimes we had instances of people giving the wrong bank numbers and so funding being, you know, not deposited or not able to be deposited. So that was the first part of the question.

The second part of that question concerning if there was someone who was still in progress at this point and I, again, expect those numbers have gone down. Then would they be subject to not having money? No, Madam Chair, I'm fairly confident that at this point, if there's only a handful left after the many thousands processed, that this could be funded somehow internally and they would still get the funding if it was -- if there is, in fact, someone that still has an outstanding claim. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, finance Minister. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Nothing further. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. No further questions. Please turn to page 157.

Finance, directorate, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$113,351,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Moving on to human resources beginning on page 160, with information items on page 162. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in the department's business plans on page 97 -- I'll give the Minister and staff, to flip to that, a moment -- one of the -- oh, gosh, what are we calling them -- actions under the mandate commitment of engaging the public service to identify opportunities to improve efficiency, coordinate processes, to support long-term fiscal sustainability is the development and implementation of a Employee Satisfaction Action Plan. That includes information gathering and policy initiatives.

So I can see kind of why that was slotted under there. I guess my question to the Minister is, is a more satisfied workforce a more efficient workforce? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm not sort of a technical expert, but I don't think it's going to take technical expertise to say yes. More satisfied is more efficient, more productive, you know, easier to recruit, because you want people who will want to go and work at a place that reflects those kind of values. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll see what the next question is.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member of Great Slave.

MS. REID: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. And I don't necessarily disagree with the Minister on that answer. I'm very keen to see what this action plan will look like once it's developed. I think the Minister is quite frank in her assessments and I'm certainly am quite frank in what I experienced in the public service since the pandemic, and what I hear from former colleagues across the GNWT, the morale is not good. And I guess how does the Minister envision an action plan that will really truly address morale? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yeah, this is

something that I thought a lot about in the last few years, had a lot of hope that there would be an improvement in morale over the last Assembly, and then somewhere between multiple waves of emergency events and lockdowns and evacuations, that became very challenging and folks became even more stretched. And we wind up in the last while with employees either unable to do their jobs because they can't go into their workplaces, then, you know, publicly getting maligned for that, and then in other cases being asked to do even more even when they are in their normal work environments. So it's -- you know, and then being told they're not doing enough. So it has been a challenging few years. I am live to that. There's even, you know, survey fatigue. Although I am -- I want to say I'm very grateful people do continue to fill out the surveys. I had asked why we had to do a second employee engagement and satisfaction survey when we had still not really rolled out a response to the first -- the first one was delayed because of COVID, so here we are.

There are things that can be done. We did start to do the town halls. I've had town hall again since being in this role of this Assembly. You know, I want to do more of them. I think the Member, in fact, has had suggested to me that we should do some in person. I think that's a great idea. Yeah, there has to be, you know, across the board a number of things that can happen but, you know, engagement and hearing from folks at the frontlines, showing them that when we hear from them that we actually act on what they say. If I were to pick a few things as top choices, those would be them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for the Great Slave.

MS. REID: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. And, you know, I do appreciate the push and pull that I have had with the Minister of Finance on this prior to my even being an MLA. I do know that she genuinely cares about the public service and I do want to, you know, remark on that publicly because it's really refreshing to see, honestly. What I would suggest is more initiatives where you're seeking employee input. Like, the 1800, 1900 suggestions I think that you got is a good place to start. And, really, you know, having the direction that you're giving filtering down through to line positions that are frontlines, that are middle management, just it's -- it means a lot when people see you and they know that you're genuine. And I hope the Minister does do those in person pieces with staff. Thank you. That's more of a comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Any further questions? No further questions. Please turn to page 161.

Financial, human resources, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$22,134,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Moving on to management board secretariat beginning on page 163, with information items on page 167. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair, and just getting my time back. This is my favorite department, apparently.

So a real quick question for the Minister. The item for the bureau of statistics, I understand it's static since the last fiscal year, but prior to that there was quite a significant reduction. Can the Minister speak to why that might be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There was a temporary increase as a result of the need to do some survey work and therefore there was some unfunded positions that were being -- that was what resulted in that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And kind of continuing along those lines but on a different line item, the management board secretariat itself is seeing a reduction, and I believe it may be due to a position reduction. But can the Minister please confirm.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, let me put that to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Deputy minister McKay.

MR. BILL MCKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The decrease is due to, as the Member mentioned, sustainability reductions, and that included P3 projects. So there was a person in MBS that was responsible for P3 projects, and that position has been eliminated. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, deputy minister. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I'm not sure of the full complement of folks working for the MBS, but could the Minister, or the deputy minister please, explain how many folks in MBS are working on GRI, please. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance. ADM Courtoreille.

MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. For the government renewal initiative, we have three dedicated positions at the moment, not including the director or the ADM that also work on this file on a part-time basis. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Mr. Courtoreille. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And how many of those three positions are fully staffed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. ADM Courtoreille.

MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. All three are staffed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, ADM Courtoreille. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And because, you know, I know the department is familiar with my interest in this area, I'm curious how the evaluatory capacity across the GNWT will play into how quickly GRI can be fully envisioned. So I believe I asked the Minister of ECE the other day how many folks worked for their pre-unit. I think it's seven, if memory serves. And I believe the pre-unit in ECE is the only dedicated evaluation unit in the GNWT. And I'm just -- yeah, I'm just wondering what the vision for GRI expediency looks like in the Department of Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe that is correct, that ECE is the only other department that has formal evaluators. I may be in error, but. So what we are doing with respect to GRI is in -- you know, where needed in order to maintain the schedule and the timeline that we have is relying on contract dollars and having support from outside in addition to the internal staff that we've already mentioned. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And can the Minister please tell me approximately, it doesn't have to be an exact number but, like, within the tens or dozens or whatever, how many programs the department wishes to evaluate formally in the life of this Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, let me just correct myself that Health and Social Services does also have an evaluation separate and apart, and ECE is starting to look at that, which really is part of the vision of GRI, is to create that so that as programs have gone through a significant formal evaluation they can then begin to do that on a more regular basis rather than having to do the large-scale the first time. So that's some good news.

We're looking at formal fuller scale evaluations of two per each department. I do have a list of what is slated in terms of those priority areas by department. So for Department of Finance, for instance, under procurement shared services the vendor complaint process is what's slated for us, and then secondarily, information security. I'm happy to provide the full list to committee. And the first round -- or rather the full round of evaluations are expected to be completed by went of 2026, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thanks, Madam Chair. I look forward to that list, and that's all I have for right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): No further questions. Please turn to page 164.

Finance, management board secretariat, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$107,733,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. With this, we will take a 30-minute break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, and welcome back. Moving on to Office of the Chief Information Officer beginning on page 168, with information items on page 170. Are

there any questions? Seeing no questions, please turn to page 169.

Finance, Office of the Chief Information Officer, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$23,731,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Moving on to the Office of the Comptroller General beginning on page 171, with information items on page 174. Are there any questions? No questions, please turn to -- Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the territorial power subsidy program, that's \$7.15 million for this coming year. It says it's a subsidy program for residential electricity consumers outside of Yellowknife. Is that a subsidy that's given directly to NTPC, or is it given directly to customers? Can you explain how that power subsidy program works.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'll get ADM Courtoreille to answer that, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): ADM Courtoreille.

MR. TERRENCE COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The TPSP program is a program that's applied directly to utilities, customers bills, so it's a subsidy that's paid to NTPC. And it subsidizes customers whose electricity rates are higher than Yellowknife. So it basically brings everybody back to the Yellowknife rate for the first thousand kilowatt hours of consumption during summer months, and 700 -- sorry, 700 kilowatt hours during summer months and a thousand kilowatt hours during winter months. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, ADM Courtoreille. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. And so is the subsidy rates for each customer, is that determined in collaboration with the Public Utilities Board or is it completely separate from the Public Utilities Board's role -- their role in determining rates?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance. ADM Courtoreille.

MR. TERRENCE COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It doesn't really have much of a relation in determining what the community rates are. This is a GNWT subsidy that is provided to the benefit of all ratepayers. And so the level of subsidy would differ depending on what community you live in and how different that community rate is relative to the Yellowknife rate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, ADM Courtoreille. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay, this is something that I'm interested to look into further, but I'll leave it there for now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Any further questions? Please turn to page 172. Sorry, Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at medical travel assistance here. In previous years, it was a lot higher, and we're anticipating a lower number here. I'm hoping that maybe some detail on explanation could be provided. Are we getting better at booking travel than we were? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, Madam Chair, just first for any members of public who may be -- just want the explanation, just to be clear, this is medical travel for employees. It's an employee benefit, just as other private sector employers might provide benefits of some nature or another, this is the benefit that is provided to public servants. And we are -- let me just say first there has been a modest increase that's been proposed in the department for this line item from the main estimates of 2023-2024. So in the actual base budget, that has gone up by a couple of million.

There was a fairly significant backlog of medical travel after COVID. So in 2022-2023 and in 2023-2024, backlog due to surgeries having been cancelled, dental not happening, so on and so forth. We are hoping that that number will not be as high as it has been those last couple of years coming out of COVID. And as such, hoping and expecting, projecting that the number therefore doesn't need to be as high, again, as the numbers you're seeing, but some additional from what the original base budget was.

As far as the actual booking of travel, I mean, again, the process does reside in financial employee shared services. We do track how

quickly things get -- how quickly people are able to be serviced, and, you know, again, hoping that if there are issues, I would be happy to hear about them. I certainly do hear about them but there are service standards in place, and we do track to them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My last question is on the entry there for environmental liabilities. And whenever you see the word liabilities, one cringes. Is this a one-time cleanup that happened a couple years ago and it's over and done with; there's no repercussions to this environmental liability? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for the Sahtu. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there was a change in 2022-2023 as a result of a change in accounting standards and the way in which we were then being required under public accounting standards to consider what was an environmental liability and where to account for it. It's not a cash item today per se. It is a projection that when a government asset at some point in its future no longer is in use, that you have to account for what potential costs there might be to remediate that asset. So for historical assets, that's, you know, classic case of asbestos or led paint, but even more modern assets do continue to have some amount for clean up that has to be accounted for. That's what this is. And when there was a change in asset retirement obligations, that change is reflected there as to what we now -- yeah, the change in how we account and what things we have to account for. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for the Sahtu.

Okay, Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. So just because I want to get this out to the public, could the Minister please elaborate as to why the interest on both long-term debt and short-term interest we saw quite a large jump from these budgeted dollars in the main estimates from 2023-2024 to the revised estimates of 2023-2024? And although I'm sure the Minister of Finance is possibly happy that the interest rate has dropped slightly lately, I'm curious as to why this is being budgeted for so much lower in the mains. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I think this is actually a fairly important series of accounts to look at or numbers to look at in the main estimates. This is money that is paid on debt. So this is the money that we pay to the banks. This has no asset in the Northwest Territories, no program or service that is being serviced. It's just money that we're paying on the debt.

And well, yes, I am happy that there has been a small reduction in interest rates that had not -- you know, in the last couple of years, we had to come back when rates were not dropping as quickly as what was at times being projected, in addition to the fact that then when you wind up taking on additional short-term debt, particularly, for example, over this summer when we wound up in a situation of having to burn through what money we had for relief and recovery and emergencies, you then wind up taking on more short-term debt. That comes at a higher interest rate. So between needing to take on more and the costs of debt being higher, we wound up requiring more.

As far as projections for 2024-2025, again, you know, everyone can read the financial news and there's been ideas that the interest rate would come down, and so the folks are doing their best estimate of what interest rates will be over the next fiscal year and what the impact of that will be over the next fiscal year and then building that into the main estimates here. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Any further questions? No further questions, please turn to page 172.

Finance, Office of the Comptroller General, operations expenditure summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$91,458,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Are there additional information -- there are additional information items on page 175 to 180. Are there any questions? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just because I'm new and I'm interested, on the heritage fund, the \$62 million, who manages this fund?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: CIBC Wood Gundy manages it on our behalf. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Is there an investment policy that -- I don't know if it would be -- if that would come to Cabinet or how -- is there an investment policy and if there is, who sets that up?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is. It is a financial management board policy. I don't have it in my main estimates briefing binder, but I can certainly try and pull it up if the Member's interested to hear more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: I am, but you don't necessarily have to pull it up now. It's something I can get from you. I'm just interested on the policy, whether or not how -- I understand if Wood Gundy is managing the fund, then obviously they would manage it based on our policy and whether that we're looking at if -- how it's tied to the indices, whether or not we look at ethical/unethical investments, so on and so forth, I assume that would be in the policy? And, yeah, if the Minister could commit, I would -- if it's a document I can see, I would absolutely love to see the investment policy.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Just a reminder, when people are talking, can you just wait until your light turns on before proceeding. Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, let me also note there's the Heritage Fund Act and heritage fund regulations that go with this. So let me put some information together and see if that can provide the kind of clarity that the Member's looking for. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yes, I'd appreciate that, to be able to see that to have a look. Thank you. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Any further questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, under the technology service centre chargeback, it details each department's chargeback recoveries to the TSC, currently estimated at -- in 2024-2025 at just shy of \$41 million. So I recognize, you know, part of this is how we pay our hardworking TSC folks, and I'm totally happy that we do, but for the remaining approximately \$28 million, that's quite a jump from the last main estimates. And I was wondering if the Minister could speak to why it's gone up by just close to \$6.3 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, one of the significant areas -- or significant reasons for change is simply the fact of the growth in the public service. So as there are more public servants who require various items or technological items, that requires almost inevitably more work from the TSC on those items. So that is a significant reason for the growth.

Secondary to that, there has been some growth in terms of the licensing fees that are also spread across these dollars and, particularly, in regards to cyber security and the services that we rely on to maintain cyber security. That has become a little more expensive but probably money well spent in that particular regard. Well, it's all money well spent, Madam Chair. But particularly with cyber security, I do want to emphasize that there's -- you know, again, we need to look at the headlines, it's easy to see the importance of having that as a government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, I don't disagree with the Minister on the importance of cyber security whatsoever. However, I think, you know, if there is a way to find some economies and savings in this line item, I mean, it would mean more money for programs and services delivered to the public, not that not having technology for our public servants isn't important but just, you know, I'm hopeful that the department can take a look at that and square that away. Thank you, Madam Chair. More of a comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, the reason I stuck my hand up quickly is that in going through the fiscal sustainability exercise and the feedback that was received

from employees, I do want to highlight that this is an area that we also heard feedback from public servants themselves. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Any further questions? Thank you, Members.

Please turn now to the departmental summary found on page 153, with information items on page 154 to 155. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the departmental summary.

Finance, operations expenditure, total department, 2024-2025 Main Estimate -- sorry, I'm going to go back, sorry. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: I have a question on the overall active position summary. So when I was looking at records -- it was actually a CBC article -- about the growth in the public service since about 2018, I noticed in particular the Department of Finance, in 2018, had about 357 staff and then it grew to about 490 staff, and now it's sitting at -- well, for this coming year, 563 staff.

Can the Minister give some explanation of why the Department of Finance has grown from 357 staff in 2018 to 563 now? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair, I can. So one of the earliest amalgamations that is involved here is that of the human resources, which was previously out on its own and then joined in the Department of Finance, I think, right at around 2018. Information shared system services was the next, so that was -- which is now the office of the information -- chief information officer and now has grown further with -- by bringing TSC's folks from Infrastructure over to be all in one umbrella of information shared systems services, so information technology essentially, all under one umbrella but all under the umbrella of Finance. Procurement shared services then came in around 2020-2021, thereabouts. So, yes, there was those incremental numbers because since 2018, there has been these different bits and pieces now put into all the Department of Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, Madam Chair, I will leave it there. But the search is just beginning. I would love to have a deeper dive into how the public service has grown so dramatically over the past five years but that will be an investigation for a future time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Any further questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the departmental summary.

Finance, operations expenditure, total department, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$358,407,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 25-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1):
2024-2025 MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL
OF DEPARTMENT – FINANCE
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the main estimates for the Department of Finance at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of Department of Finance, operations expenditure, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, total department is deferred.

---Carried

Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress. What, no?

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? Members in favour raise hands. All those opposed? Yes, all those opposed? Motion is defeated.

Members, before we move on to the next Minister and department, we will consider the borrowing plan, which can be found on page XX of the tabled document.

The borrowing plan is separate from the estimates but is required by the Financial Administration Act to be presented with the estimates.

Further, the borrowing outlined in the plan will be included in the forthcoming appropriation bill that will be presented to the Assembly.

Members, please turn to page XX of the tabled document, Borrowing Plan for the Government Reporting Entity and Established Borrowing Limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Are there any questions?

Seeing no further questions, committee, I will call the page Borrowing Plan for the Government Reporting Entity and Established Borrowing Limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories, total consolidated borrowing, \$1,616,110,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 26-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1):
2024-2025 MAIN ESTIMATES, DEFERRAL
OF BORROWING PLAN FOR THE
GOVERNMENT REPORTING ENTITY AND
ESTABLISHED BORROWING LIMITS FOR
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the Borrowing Plan for the Government Reporting Entity and the Established Borrowing Limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of Borrowing Plan for the Government Reporting Entity and Established Borrowing Limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories, total consolidated borrowing, is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thanks to the witnesses for appearing before us.

Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

What is the wish of committee? 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): The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 93-20(1), Committee Report 2-20(1), and Bill 2, and would like to report progress with 12 motions carried, that consideration of Committee Report 2 is concluded, that Bill 2 is ready for third reading. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Dehcho. Do I have a seconder? Hay River North. All in favour? To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Close vote, motion passed.

---Carried

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Friday, June 7th, 10 a.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

6. Acknowledgements
 7. Oral Questions
 8. Written Questions
 9. Returns to Written Questions
 10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
 11. Petitions
 12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
 13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
 14. Tabling of Documents
 15. Notices of Motion
 16. Motions
 - Motion 32-20(1): Increasing RCMP Response in Hay River
 17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
 18. First Reading of Bills
 19. Second Reading of Bills
 20. 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
 21. Report of the Committee of the Whole
 22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 2: Missing Persons Act
 23. Orders of the Day
- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

This House stands adjourned until Friday, June 7th, 2024, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

