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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

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**Please send corrections to Hansard Editor: [kate\\_covello@ntassembly.ca](mailto:kate_covello@ntassembly.ca)**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Nahendeh)

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Box 10  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784  
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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Monday, March 3, 2025****Members Present**

Mr. Edjericon, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Jay Macdonald, Hon. Vince McKay, Mr. McNeely, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, Mr. Nerysoo, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Hon. Lesa Semmler, Mr. Testart, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek. Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):**

Please be seated. Thank you, Karen Mitchell for the opening prayer today.

Before we get into today's business, colleagues, I will now bring my ruling on the point of privilege raised last week. The Member from Yellowknife South rose on a point of privilege regarding a social media post made by the Member for Range Lake. I will not rehash the social media post in question or the debate in this chamber on the point of privilege. However, for those who participated in the debate, thank you. You have given me many things to consider.

When a point of privilege is raised, I must consider two things. First, was the point of privilege raised at the earliest opportunity. Second, on the face of it, is there is a question of privilege. This is also called a prima facie case of privilege.

I have decided that the Member from Yellowknife South did raise the issue at the earliest opportunity. However, this does not meet -- oh, sorry. Mixed up my paper.

However, the case does meet the test for a question of privilege. There is no prima facie case of privilege.

Colleagues, our privileges as Members of this Legislative Assembly are important. They are based on our parliamentary traditions and rules. These privileges protect us when we represent our constituents. We could not operate without these privileges.

In this case, I considered two privileges we enjoy as Members. The first is a question of freedom of speech. In our proceedings, we can speak freely. Only our rules limit what we can say. In this case, the words were not spoken in our proceedings. Had they been, they would have been out of order. If you were following our rules, your words in this chamber are

protected. Outside this chamber, including on social media, they are not. Remember, there can be real consequences to words spoken or typed outside of our proceedings. Although I did not find it in this case, statements made outside of this Assembly easily could have been found a question of privilege.

Should a similar situation happen again, my ruling could be different. In fact, my ruling in this case may have been different had another Member raised the point of privilege.

The second privilege I consider is our freedom from obstruction and intimidation in our duties as elected representatives. The Member for Yellowknife South was not impaired in her ability to carry out her duties as a Member. The social media post in question did not impact the Member's ability to move forward and advance the 2025-2026 Main Estimates. We continue to review these estimates in Committee of the Whole. Additionally, conversations continue between Regular Members and Members of the executive council, including the Member in her capacity as Minister of Finance.

Colleagues, this is the second point of privilege. I repeat this is a second point of privilege ruling in a short period of time. The previous point was ruled upon at the beginning of this sitting. This is concerning. I do not discourage you from rising on a point of privilege. If your privileges are being interfered with, I want to hear about it. I cannot stress how important our privileges are in this institution.

Colleagues, the points of privilege and points of order raised lately are concerning. The people we represent in this Assembly are also concerned about the behaviour that they are seeing, and I've been spoken to numerous times on the street here and in my own riding. I expect more of you as Members of this Legislative Assembly. The people who elected us do too. We are here to work together for the benefit of all people of this territory. We were not elected to quarrel and bicker. This isn't what our people expect or need. There will be times when you will not see eye to eye. That is to be expected. It is part of the healthy tension that exist between Regular Members and Cabinet. However, this tension is not an excuse to be rude or misrepresent information. We all

deserve to be given a fair opportunity to do our jobs representing our people.

Colleagues, as your Speaker, I am asking you to step up, do your part to ensure this institution is the respectful, effective place of debate it should be. I expect you to behave in a way Northerners will be proud of. In our consensus government structure, we hold ourselves and each other to a higher standard. As long as I am your Speaker, I will expect each of you to strive for this higher standard.

Further, I expect improvements in how we treat each other inside and outside of this chamber.

Colleagues, I'd like to thank you for your attention.

Before we move on to the orders of the day, I will provide my ruling on the point of order raised by the Member for Yellowknife North against the Member for Yellowknife Centre on a later date. Now, let's get down to business.

Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 104-20(1): 2024 TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS – A RECAP OF THE SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, investing in our roads, bridges, airports, and highways is critical to keep communities connected, improve safety, and support economic growth. Whether it is making sure families can travel safely, helping businesses move goods, or supporting emergency response, strong transportation infrastructure is essential for all Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, crews have already been working across the territory over the last year to improve road conditions and safety. And I have a few examples to highlight:

- Highway No. 1, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, received about 39 kilometers of chip seal overlay and work is underway to widen embankments and improve drainage.
- Highway No. 3, the Yellowknife Highway, received 89.5 kilometers of chip seal overlay and surface repairs to major dips that are scheduled for this summer.
- Highway No. 4, the Ingraham Trail, sections of the highway underwent

embankment widening and culvert replacements, and work will then be continuing in the summer 2025.

- Highway No. 7, the Liard Highway, extensive rehabilitation has work begun, including chip seal overlay, road widening, clearing, ditching, and culvert replacement. This multi-year project that continues until 2026.
- And finally, Highway No. 10, the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, crews focused on seasonal maintenance, including soft shoulders, wash-boarding, and culvert work. This season rehabilitation work will begin, continuing over the next few years.

In total, more than 150 kilometers of chip seal overlay was completed across Highways No. 1, 3, and 7.

Mr. Speaker, access roads are lifelines for smaller communities, and we continue to invest in their improvement as well. Significant upgrades have been completed or are underway in this area:

- Improvements to the Whati Access Road were completed this summer while the Rae Access Road received resurfacing and new chip seal.
- Rehabilitation work began on the Liard Access Road, including chip seal, road widening, clearing, ditching, and culvert replacement. This multi-year project will continue until 2026.
- And lastly, the Prohibition Creek Access Road, a key piece of the future Mackenzie Valley Highway, opened for year-round traffic this past fall.

Our bridges and crossings are just as critical. The Northwest Territories has 115 bridges and 247 bridge-culverts across our all-weather and winter road systems. GNWT bridge engineers regularly inspect all structures to ensure safety and reliability. Mr. Speaker, major bridge projects include the following:

- The Deh Cho Bridge, which received critical repairs to a broken cable and all connecting pins were replaced. The bridge reopened to regular two-lane traffic in early February.
- Replacement work on the Jean Marie River Bridge will begin in this summer and is expected to be completed by fall 2026.

- And work will also begin on the Redknife River this summer to replace culverts with a permanent bridge and should be completed by the fall 2026.

Beyond maintenance, we are investing in the future of our transportation network. The Mackenzie Valley Highway continues to advance with the Prohibition Creek Access Road marking a key milestone and, of course, we are currently undergoing an environmental assessment.

The Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge replacement project is also moving forward. We have recently held public engagement sessions in Behchoko, and we are using the feedback to help shape future plans. Construction is expected to begin this fall.

Mr. Speaker, aviation plays a vital role in the North, and investments in airport infrastructure are key to maintaining a strong, reliable transportation system:

- The Yellowknife Airport is developing a strategic plan to guide long-term sustainability and future capital improvements. This includes fleet renewal, accessibility upgrades, geotechnical studies on the airport's two runways and ongoing discussions with the Department of National Defence about potential investments through the North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, modernization project.
- In Inuvik, the Mike Zubko Airport is undergoing a federally funded runway expansion to support northern air sovereignty operations. The runway is being extended by 3,000 feet to accommodate modern military aircraft, including the F-35 fighter jets. Additional upgrades include widening the runway safety area and improving drainage to address permafrost degradation, modernizing lighting, navigation and military landing systems, and resurfacing of the existing runway pending funding approval. This project is expected to be completed by 2029, with paving and electrical work scheduled for 2027, following permafrost stability assessments.

Mr. Speaker, maintaining infrastructure in the North comes with unique challenges. Climate change, extreme weather, and permafrost degradation all impact our roads, highways, and airports, and that is why we continue to work with Indigenous governments and

Indigenous organizations, academic institutions, and federal partners to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to keep our transportation system resilient. These investments reflect our government's commitment to build a safer, more efficient, and better-connected Northwest Territories.

I want to thank the engineers, contractors, maintenance crews, and everyone who works hard to make these projects possible. Their efforts ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors can travel safely and reliably. Together, we will continue strengthening our transportation network today and for generations to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 105-20(1):  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EXEMPLARY  
SERVICE AWARD 2024-2025

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Mr. Speaker, effective emergency management and preparedness are critical to the safety and well-being of Northwest Territories residents. Today I want to recognize individuals and groups whose dedication and efforts have helped keep the NWT communities safe.

The Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award is a national recognition for outstanding contributions to emergency management. Federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers present this award to highlight efforts in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. This year's NWT recipients are the Department of Environment and Climate Change's Hydrology Team consisting of Shawne Kokelj, Ryan Connon and Anna Coles.

Since 2021, the Hydrology Team has played a vital role in flood preparedness by providing critical updates to the GNWT, communities, and residents. Using satellite imagery, hydrometric gauges, and live camera feeds, they monitor ice conditions and water levels, regularly reporting on risks to support emergency planning. Their expertise and commitment have been instrumental in responding to severe flooding events.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Hydrology Team on this well-deserved recognition and personally thank them for their above-and-beyond dedication to public safety.

Mr. Speaker, NWT community governments are on the front lines when disaster strikes, and the Government of the Northwest Territories

remains committed to supporting their preparedness efforts.

In April 2024, we updated the NWT Emergency Plan to better define the roles and responsibilities of community governments as they lead in emergency management. The updates confirm our mandate commitment to ensure that emergency management and preparedness initiatives strengthen our capacity to respond to more frequent and severe climate-driven disasters and other emergencies.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, a new Incident Command System, or ICS, training plan is underway, aiming to train up to 10 percent of the Government of the Northwest Territories workforce to assist during major emergencies. Additionally, we continue supporting community governments in updating emergency plans and preparedness activities.

The Government of the Northwest Territories also conducts an annual Be Ready campaign to educate residents on the risk, personal responsibility and practical steps to be prepared when an emergency is imminent.

Mr. Speaker, while progress has been made, there is more to do. Recent disasters have had lasting impacts, with recovery taking years. We must continue to enhance our efforts in mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery to help communities rebuild quickly and effectively. Success depends on strong collaboration at all levels: Individuals, non-government organizations, communities, Indigenous governments, and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the dedication of first responders, community governments, GNWT employees, non-government organizations, and all partners who work tirelessly to keep our residents safe. Once again, congratulations to the Hydrology Team and their well-earned recognition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 106-20(1):  
PREMIER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the honourable Member for Hay River North, the Premier, will be absent from the House today due to illness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

### Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 542-20(1):  
CRITICAL MINERALS DEVELOPMENT IN  
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES IN  
RESPONSE TO TARIFFS

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, Donald Trump's illegal tariffs on Canadian exports come into place tomorrow. We were optimistic in our hopes that diplomacy was an option, but, unfortunately, no matter how unlawful, unwarranted, or irrational these tariffs may be, they are the new reality for our country. After decades of friendship, the American President has betrayed our values of mutual benefit to initiate a bitter trade war where any cooperation between nations has become purely transactional. The United States has become a bully akin to Russia or North Korea using threat and intimidation to pursue their foreign policy. Therefore, we must now pivot as the Northwest Territories and Canada towards a new economic strategy that focuses on securing our future and markets elsewhere in the world.

While Northerners have felt left out of the great national debates in the past, on the topic of Canada's economic future, we find ourselves front and center because we have the critical resources the world needs. We have copper for electrical wiring, tungsten for hardened tools, nickel and zinc the steel industry could not go without. Recently, we have also discovered lithium and cobalt deposits vital for producing batteries and alloys and plenty of rare earth minerals which are highly sought after by specialized tech industries around the globe. These vast deposits of critical minerals will, once developed, grant Canada resource sovereignty needed for self-sufficiency and opening the door to new markets around the world. Most importantly, they will provide us with the strategic leverage required to negotiate better trade terms with the United States.

More locally, these industries will certainly kick start our economy back into high gear with employment opportunities our communities need and revenues the quality of our public services rely on. Yet, there are still many hurdles we must overcome as we set our future into motion. We've heard from Indigenous governments and industry are leaders that our regulatory system is prohibitive. Our permitting timelines glacial and consultations inadequate. The infrastructure needed to unlock our more remote regions is limited, and the capital costs to get these projects off the ground are high.



However, these challenges are not insurmountable. We just need to find the political will. The only question now is are we ready to take the lead to keep Canada's North true and strong and free, or will we let the moment slip by as many mines lay dormant for the foreseeable future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 543-20(1):  
ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, we've talked a little about energy initiatives in this House, renewable energy projects, opportunities for local gas development, but we hardly ever talk about energy efficiency; how we can help community members and local businesses avoid using so much energy in the first place. Too often, when we're tightening our belts, we consider energy initiatives as a luxury we can't afford.

Mr. Speaker, wasting energy is a luxury we can't afford. In each year's budget, we devote more and more millions to energy subsidies, electricity rate subsidies, seniors' home heating subsidies, fuel subsidies for communities in crisis, such as Norman Wells. These offer much needed relief, but they don't address any of the root causes of high energy costs, leaving the government on the hook for ever increasing subsidies. We could reduce the amount of subsidies needed by ramping up our energy efficiency rebates and incentives.

The Arctic Energy Alliance has been busy delivering these kinds of programs in all NWT communities and can point to many successful case studies. For example, a family in Yellowknife took their 1970s era trailer and added insulation, sealed up air leaks, and replaced old windows, saving them over \$6,000 per year in utility costs and paying back their investment in only around six years.

The Arctic Energy Alliance also helped a family in Fort Liard buy an energy efficient washing machine which is saving them \$50 a month on water bills, plus lower electricity bills for the dryer.

AEA has worked with 13 communities, including Tsiigehtchic, Deline, and Gameti, to replace old wood stoves with more efficient ones that use 50 percent less wood. They're also way more convenient, and I know because I have one myself. They burn longer, so you can get up in the morning and it's still burning 12 hours later. A new wood stove represents about

\$3,000 a year that people don't have to spend on heating oil.

With sunsets in federal funding, we have significantly reduced our rebate programs, leaving more and more folks choosing inefficient furnaces, boilers, and appliances because they seem cheaper upfront but it's costing them much more in the long run. It's also costing the climate and costing this government. We are sliding backwards.

Mr. Speaker, failing to support our residents and businesses with energy efficiency is a luxury we cannot afford. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 544-20(1):  
ADEQUATE SUPPORTS FOR SENIORS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adequate supports for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, many elders want to stay in their homes for as long as they can. This is their right, Mr. Speaker. However, this can be difficult because the cost of living is high for Northerners and, especially, for seniors with limited incomes. Mr. Speaker, some GNWT programs already help elders, but these programs need to be revised to provide more financial support.

One example is the seniors' home heating subsidy which provides financial assistance to NWT residents who are 60 years of age or older who reside in a home that they own or are renting a self-contained unit. The program provides \$460 to \$750 depending on where you live. The amount of the subsidy is based on income. Mr. Speaker, I know elders who are receiving home heating bills in the thousands. The fuel subsidy is not enough. These people receive a fixed income and need more help.

Families are forced to consider moving elderly parents into a senior home for cost saving alone. This is not right, Mr. Speaker. We should have supports in place to help elders. It should not come down to cost saving. Many senior residents are still able to work and take on jobs for extra income, but this can be punitive, punishing, as it can disqualify them from GNWT programs.

Mr. Speaker, I think this government needs to look at how it is treating elders in the NWT and how they can provide better supports. I know the Minister of education is not here but when she returns, I will have questions for her. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 545-20(1):  
SOVEREIGNTY

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to share some words from Dr. Julia Christensen that hit me like a ton of bricks on the weekend. Dr. Christensen is someone I grew up with. We sang in the Yellowknife youth choir for many years. She is best known these days for her work in critical research of northern governance, especially as she is surrounding home and homelessness in Canada's North. These are her words that I share today with her consent.

Quote, I can be concerned about the current threats to Canadian sovereignty and also see it as an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the longstanding violence of refusal of Indigenous sovereignties by settlers colonial Canada. Canadian sovereignty has been built upon the disposition of Indigenous lands and the denial of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. We are at a critical point wherein our collective resistance to threats from the south of the border. We need to simultaneously reckon with how Canadian assumptions of sovereignty have been built upon \*tare and millus and the exclusion of Indigenous legal orders. We are standing in a place of incredible opportunity for solidarity building, land back, and decolonization if we are willing to take IT and do the work. End quote.

I urge this House to do this critical work together with Indigenous governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from the Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 546-20(1):  
MODULAR HOMES IN FORT GOOD HOPE

**MR. McNEELY:** Mr. Speaker, Assembly colleagues heard me speak on the Fort Good Hope construction centre on numerous occasions. Mr. Speaker, last week it gives me great privilege that a proponent, Ne'Rahten Developments of Fort Good Hope, seen deliveries of three modular homes over the winter road, for a total of six. This achievement produces results for two issues: Number one, the housing demand and meeting that demand; number two, costs for the modular homes including transportation. This data will help.

Mr. Speaker, this is wonderful news to see the private sector addressing the NWT's housing

crisis. This cost data will assist management with additional knowledge for local construction cost once the construction centre's up and producing modular homes up and outside -- comparable to outside costs of construction, particularly transportation.

Mr. Speaker, my mid -- my winter road mid-term season resupply review raises the questions on Housing NWT's Sahtu resupply. Mr. Speaker, critical to ensuring the Sahtu communities can feel in comfort knowing their community fuels, groceries, materials are delivered.

Mr. Speaker, as you can understand, the mild weather has created a high level of unease. Mr. Speaker, the Sahtu is on the last month of their annual affordable winter road resupply. The soft snow texture will see rapid road surface deterioration. This will extend the trucking turnarounds on the delivery of these materials. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions to the Minister of Housing NWT. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 547-20(1):  
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY CONDITIONS

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to reiterate my concerns for the Dempster Highway conditions between Rengleng River and Inuvik.

Since the fall of 2024, just before the ground was beginning to freeze, I brought up the concerns and safety of this section of the highway. I bring this concern up again because of the safety of the users. We have local traffic and semi-truck users on this section of the highway on a daily basis, and their safety, when driving that Dempster Highway, should be a priority to this government. As it is starting to warm up again, the highway conditions are starting to worsen, and I am starting to get calls about the upgrade and maintenance of that section of the highway.

Mr. Speaker, last week an empty tanker heading south jumped off the highway because of the condition around the Rengleng River. It is fortunate that the tanker was empty and there were no environmental concerns to the water or land or any harm to the occupant of the tanker. Local contractors were able to pull the tanker out after a few days. This section of the highway must be given priority for the safety of all users because tourist season is fast approaching, and the highway will be very busy this spring and summer.

Mr. Speaker, because the warmer weather is upon us again, the residents and users of this highway are starting to show their frustration and concerns towards myself and this government. I have residents with many years of experience out building roads, upgrading roads, and maintaining roads, giving me suggestions on what should be done and when these upgrades and maintenance should be conducted. This section of the highway, the section in question, is starting to get rough for the drivers again because it was not attended to in the fall of 2024 and froze with potholes, and it's making driving hazardous and damage to their vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, this government has to be more proactive to our concerns rather than reactive but for the fact that something tragic has happened. This is not only for the infrastructure within the NWT but to all the concerns that are brought to the attention of each department in this government. The safety and well-being of our citizens of the Northwest Territories is the utmost importance for me and hopefully this government. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 548-20(1):  
TERRITORIAL BUILDING STANDARDS  
CODE

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And happy Monday, happy Monday to my colleagues. I look forward to another exciting week of budget review.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak to building codes, or rather lack of building codes in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker. All GNWT buildings, as I understand, do adopt or abide by the National Standards Building Code. That building code includes the electrical code, the plumbing code, the fire code, the energy code, as well of course as the building standards code, Mr. Speaker. However, all other developments, there is no code, and, Mr. Speaker, we're the only jurisdiction in Canada without a building standards code. I've heard this in my riding. I'm sure others have as well from both builders and contractors, perspective builders, electrical companies up there as well as plumbing companies, Mr. Speaker. So today I'll be asking the questions of the Minister of Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, as to when will the GNWT create our own building standards legislation with full analysis, risks, and gaps, as well as funding for staffing, inspections, and

enforcement, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 549-20(1):  
HOUSING SUPPLY IN FORT RESOLUTION

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last May, an early morning fire burned down one duplex, one market rental duplex unit in the community of Fort Resolution. Thankfully, nobody was hurt, and the flames were extinguished before the house were impacted. Housing NWT acted quickly to find new homes for the families who were affected by the fires, and soon two new units were brought into Fort Resolution to replace the homes that were destroyed. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the homes which Housing NWT brought into Fort Resolution to replace those units which had burned down were already bound for the community to expand their housing capacity. Community leaders understood this as well. Now, one year later after the fire, Fort Resolution is asking me when their new units will be provided to them. It's not enough to just replace what was lost when they were promised new homes for families to move into.

Fort Resolution, like many other of my communities of Tu Nedhe and across the Northwest Territories, is suffering from severe lack of housing. Many who have homes are living in buildings that are aging severely. Many more are living in conditions that deserve better.

We passed a motion last year declaring housing as a human right. Sustainability, accessibility, and affordability of housing is a top priority of this Assembly. Our Article 21 of UNDRIP, which the previous Assembly passed, states Indigenous people have the right without discrimination to improve their economic and social conditions, including housing.

When I go back to my community after this budget session, I want to bring them good news that Housing NWT is listening and prioritizing their needs and rights. I will have questions for the Minister of Housing NWT at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 550-20(1):  
TRADES AWARENESS PROGRAM AND  
AWARDS RECIPIENTS

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, this past September I had to travel to Fort Smith for personal reasons when I ran into the trades awareness coordinator, and he informed me that their fall introductory program was taking place at Aurora College. As we discussed the program, he reminded me the purpose of the program was to provide grade 9 to 12 students with an awareness to trades occupations through a one-week hands-on experience at the College in trades such as carpentry, cooking, gairdressing, plumbing, electrical, mechanics, mining, welding, communications, and aviation.

A couple highlights of the conversation were:

- There are a host of success stories where northern students exposed to trades have gone on to pursue careers in the trade of their choice.
- The trades awareness program provides opportunities for high school students to explore and experience the world of trades in a college setting while considering future opportunities for a viable career.

After the conversation, he informed me that two young ladies from Liidlii Kue Regional High School won top student awards in their respective trades. After hearing this, he told me that the closing ceremonies were happening the next day and asked if I would be interested in attending.

The next morning, I went to watch as the trades awareness instructors celebrated 48 youth from the South Slave and Deh Cho who completed the program and witness seven students win top student certification and prizes. Before the awards ceremony, I witnessed the trades olympics. It was amazing to see the students use the skills they were taught throughout the week. The winner of the competition was Connor Landry from Dehguh School from Ft. Providence.

After the competition, we went to the concourse to hand out the awards. Much to my surprise, the two winners from the Nahendeh region were Addyson Erasmus, who was the top student in carpentry; and, my granddaughter Paige Isiah-Tanche who was top student in the mine training and equipment.

As well, I would also like to congratulate two participants from the Deh Cho riding, Chief Sunrise School, for winning their trade. Amy Norn was the top student in cooking and Emily Norn was the top student in welding. These trades winners represent the sometimes-un tapped potential that exists in our small

communities. Congratulations to all the participants and for the college for offering this great opportunity for our youth. Thank you.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from the Sahtu.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize Mark Heyck for providing services there and efficient means of programs and services to the Sahtu through the Arctic Energy Alliance program. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague beat me to the punch here, but I also wanted to just recognize executive director Mark Heyck from the Arctic Energy Alliance. Thank you for being here.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll get on the Mark Heyck train as well. I'd like to recognize former Yellowknife mayor and current Arctic Energy Alliance executive director Mark Heyck. It's good to see you here today. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. I thank you very much for allowing us this honour to represent the people of the Northwest Territories. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 570-20(1):  
FEDERAL INTERNET SERVICE PROGRAM

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to follow up with the Minister of Infrastructure. Last week, she issued a statement about the Connecting Families initiative, shared the exciting news that 1,870 households in the NWT are now eligible to receive internet services for \$20 a month.

Could the Minister just elaborate on this point. Which households will be eligible, Mr. Speaker?

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see the federal government finally extend this to the North. The eligibility is determined by the federal government, by ISED, so we don't have a lot of ability to control that. But it does extend to families who receive the maximum amount of the child benefit. It also extends to seniors, Mr. Speaker, or seniors who are receiving the maximum amount of their guaranteed income supplement. So with that, Mr. Speaker, that is where we get to 1,870 families or households in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, how do residents find out if they're eligible? How are they going to find out how to apply for this program or if they're eligible for it and how they go about receiving this benefit? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in sort of an unusual approach, perhaps, the federal government is -- they issue invitation letters. So anyone who is eligible does receive, in the mail, a letter from ISED, I-S-E-D. That's the industry, science economic development. So people do need to be watching their mail for these letters. Those letters were going out over the fall and into December of last year. If someone thinks they are eligible, so if they fall into one of those categories, there is a process. It's on ISED's website about what to do if you lose your letter. And so, Mr. Speaker, I won't read all that out here, but perhaps what we'll do is just make sure that we can share that on social media channels and would certainly welcome people to share that information. So it's not -- the matter's not closed if you've lost your letter or thrown it away, but there would be a process that folks would have to follow to get themselves back on the radar of this federal opportunity. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Final supplementary.

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 571-20(1):  
ARCTIC ENERGY ALLIANCE PROGRAM  
FUNDING

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions today for the Minister of Infrastructure. So the Arctic Energy Alliance has experienced major funding reductions in recent years and struggle to meet the huge demand from NWT residents, businesses, and community governments for its programs and services. And as of October of 2024, they had actually run out of money for their energy rebate programs and were no longer accepting applications. So given the reductions in federal money for energy efficiency rebate programs, has the GNWT considered stepping in with territorial money to support those programs, especially where this could directly save the GNWT money in subsidy payments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we were quite disappointed to see the federal cuts to the low carbon economy funding that had a significant impact on the Department of Infrastructure and on our energy programs and particularly with respect to the funding that's provided to Arctic Energy Alliance. So it was a significant impact on our budget. We have not -- we don't have other or additional independent funds necessarily to come up with in areas where we could realign. Obviously the department's budgets are under review right now, and certainly I would look forward to answering some questions in that regard. But there was not a new source of funding identified, so we don't -- other than what is being presented in mains estimates that are before the committee, we don't have any new sources of funding from which to draw. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So there's also been a huge demand to Arctic Energy Alliance for home energy evaluations to find efficiencies that could save homeowners money, but there's been a huge backlog, especially since COVID, due to a shortage of certified energy advisers. So what role could the GNWT play in helping to train or bring in more energy advisers to help address this backlog? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, without being able to source some additional funding, it's difficult to come up at this point in time with a simple answer or simple solution. We certainly do look forward to continuing to work closely with Arctic Energy Alliance. They're a critical partner in terms of delivering programs in this space.

Mr. Speaker, I'd already actually spoken to the Member with respect to setting up my own meeting to make sure that we can do what we can to work directly with Arctic Energy Alliance, identify where the shortcomings are, identify if there's particular communities that have specific needs, and then perhaps, you know, firstly and certainly advocate more effectively when we are advocating together, and if there's an opportunity to work, even within schools or within our own training programs for our staff, certainly be open to do that. But if it's an independent budget line item, again, Mr. Speaker, what's in our budget proposal right now is on the floor, and it is -- it's unfortunately a bit what it is without -- with the significant drop in federal funding. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I mean, one area that the GNWT did manage to find funds in the last year was for Arctic Energy Alliance to work with homeowners in Norman Wells to look for energy efficiency opportunities. So I wonder if the Minister could explain what successes or lessons learned have come from that initiative which we were able to find funding for this past year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a bit of information with respect to some of the work that was underway in Norman Wells. I don't know that we have a full evaluation done or an analysis done, which would certainly be helpful in order to determine what that might look like for others. But there was a program that was undertaken with Arctic Energy Alliance staff for a winterization walkthrough. It really is an opportunity to help, particularly folks from low or medium-income households, understand some simple solutions. So examples in that regard would just be even insulating window plastic which can have a fairly significant impact on heating costs. Weather stripping around doors, similarly, was something that came out of this which, again, they're simple solutions, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes those simple solutions don't cost very much; people just need to be educated. So, again, happy to follow back up, see if there's other specific items that came after that initiative in Norman Wells, and we'll make sure to get that out so that others can benefit from that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 572-20(1):  
WAIT TIMES FOR ULTRASOUND  
APPOINTMENT

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I heard from a constituent today who had to wait nine -- or sorry, had to wait 11 months for an ultrasound appointment. He tells me that it's a 9 to 10 monthly wait for a routine ultrasound. We've recently changed the appointment system here in Yellowknife. It was supposed to speed this up. We heard early reports that we were getting more people into appointments, not less. Why are we continuing to experience such a great backlog for people who are just trying to get routine appointments like this? We're not talking about major surgeries; we're talking about an ultrasound. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of health provide an answer?

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that this has been brought to my attention, so I don't have any answers for the Member at this time on wait times for ultrasound. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, earlier when these changes were made, the Minister was able to provide some details on how many more people were being seen. It seemed like an improvement. Does she have any updated numbers for the House today? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have that level of detail for that specific area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, I'm also being told that people have to -- are being told in the departments when they want to change appointments or if they need to change appointments with the doctors, they have to call the central booking mechanism, whether that be a phone call or an email or something like that. Why are we making it more cumbersome? Isn't there a way to do this more or less on the fly; why are we adding extra steps for patients when they're trying to access health care? Should we not be making it simpler, let people talk to their doctors, they're health care providers, and change appointments as needed? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So for switching the line of questioning with how accessing the primary care clinic, there is a process that there -- that each clinic runs throughout the whole of the Northwest Territories. How it is in Yellowknife,

you know, the process of the accessing the walk-in clinic or creating a same-day appointment downtown, if it's primary care clinic you have to go through the primary care receptionist. If there's more detail or if there's a certain concern, I would have -- gladly have the Member bring that to my office and so we can figure out what the issue is. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 573-20(1):  
HOUSING AND REPAIR MATERIAL  
DELIVERIES TO THE SAHTU

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement there, my first question to the Minister for housing, can the Minister confirm the housing-related materials, or the inventory destined for the Sahtu over the winter road season. Mahsi.

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

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The volume of material being shipped over the winter road. So Housing NWT's contractor anticipates approximately six dedicated loads for two new housing construction projects that Housing NWT has underway in the Sahtu communities. The first is the Tulita seniors' duplex. This modular duplex is now on the winter road and headed to Tulita. The second project involves two hybrid modular duplexes for Deline. The construction materials for this project are now in the community. The hybrid core components will be delivered via the winter road shortly. So no delays are anticipated at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister. That's wonderful news here. It really provides comfort knowing that the end is in sight there for material delivery.

My next question there, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain how many home repair projects are reserved for the Sahtu and if the materials are going to be shipped on this winter road season? Mahsi.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. In terms of home repair projects for the Sahtu, I don't have those exact numbers on hand, but I can provide that information to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is more of a comment. I was going to say I look forward to working with the Minister on getting the information so that we can relay that information on mobilization of materials to the Sahtu leadership. So I will be working with the Minister over the coming days. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, it's oral questions, not opportunity to do Members' statements or follow-up. Please follow the process. Thank you very much.

Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 574-20(1):  
DEVELOPMENT OF TERRITORIAL  
BUILDING STANDARDS CODE

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my Member's statement earlier on the building standards code, can the Minister provide if, indeed, the department has begun to work on having their very own buildings standards code for the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an area of quite a lot of interest to me as well, and I was very pleased that the department was willing to undertake this area when -- beginning of this government. It is not only the Department of Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. It involves municipal and community affairs, housing, as well as infrastructure. I can say that we certainly have come together as multiple departments. There is a working group in place, and what the next step is is to really put in place some recommendations of what it will look like to bring all the different pieces together to have a consolidated framework from the National Building Code and one that can be made-in-the North and applied for in the North and relevant to the North. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that; that is excellent news. Can the Minister tell me in the meantime, I guess any guidance that is offered if you do have a developer certainly in one of the regions that are reaching out, looking for that kind of information, is there anything currently set up in place that can offer some guidance to contractors or even individuals looking to build. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly don't want people to think there's not something in place. As of April of 2021, the Good Building Practice for

Northern Facilities Fourth Edition was released by the department, and certainly would expect and consider it appropriate for all private developers in other levels of government and really any other non-GNWT bodies to be using this as their reference place. It does, in it, describe and explain what the model codes are and gives some guidance as to what we have found to be appropriate and workable for northern infrastructure. So certainly do want to point people to that document while we are working to have our very own set of codes in place. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you. And that's good news, if something. Certainly not something enforceable like I know we will have once the -- as the Minister's committed to, we do get our own set of building standards codes. Can the Minister commit to internally what kind of timelines they're looking at to hopefully have this completed? Is this something we can expect to have by the end of this legislature or what the timelines be on that? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how about if I commit to having a plan for a plan? I don't have a final date at this moment in time, but I certainly have asked that we, as the 20th Assembly, walk out of here with that in place. So that certainly is my goal at this time. Our next step is for the working group to put forward their recommendations of what it will look like and with that, I expect we'll have a more firm timeline. But, again, it's certainly my hope for this at this moment that we are walking out of the 20th Assembly with this in place. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 575-20(1):  
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY CONDITIONS

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement, I'd like to direct my questions to the Minister of Infrastructure.

With the warmer weather upon us and the conditions of the Dempster Highway worsening there, I applaud the Minister on her infrastructure improvements project but there was no mention of Highway No. 8 in the upgrades or regular maintenance. What is the department doing at the present time to ensure the safety of the users of the Dempster

Highway between Rengleg River and Inuvik? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do maintain a watch on all our highways, and members of the public can access that through the Drive NWT website. It is now being kept up to date almost immediately or instantly. So certainly do want to point people to that as a resource.

With respect to Highway No. 8, I have -- my latest update for the highway in its entirety is that it was in a fair state. We do have a grader out doing some ice blading from Tsiigehtchic to Rengleg River. And, again, Mr. Speaker, certainly do appreciate getting updates from folks who are driving. Again, we -- in addition to the Drive NWT website, it is always helpful to hear from folks directly. But, again, right now, latest is that it's in fair conditions and, again, a grader out on part of it. Thank you.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the tanker in question that went off the highway at the section around Rengleg River, there's signage on both sides of the river asking vehicles to slow down, and the signage is about 50 metres from the area where it's pretty bad, and the bigger trucks require more time to slow down but these signs are too close to the area. Will the Minister advise the regional department to make changes where these signs are further away from that section to give the bigger trucks more time to slow down? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's the first specific comment I've received on signage placement. I'm very happy to take that away. I'm familiar with this particular incident of this tanker. I've heard some other reasons as to what the potential cause of that might have been, but I'm also fairly aware that there's likely to be some investigation of the matter. So just want to temper that it may not have been the speed, it may not have been conditions. But absolutely, with signage, I will certainly take that away, and let's work with those who are on that stretch of highway and the region to determine the best possible placements for signage. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the regional department working with the Minister's department on daily inspections of the highway from the NWT border to



Tuktoyaktuk to give updates on where work might be required for safety reasons? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do conduct daily inspections on the highway network. You know, exactly where staff might be on any one given day, I don't want to be overcommitting. I would acknowledge that we don't necessarily have enough staff to be on every stretch of highway all the way from the border throughout the Beaufort Delta region, but there are staff out on those highways on a regular basis. So I believe I have suggested before we can try to keep Members better up to date in terms of where we're trying to be, and I'll try to see if I can get a specific schedule to the extent that we have one and at least share it with Members, if not publicly. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 576-20(1):  
DELIVERY OF NEW HOUSING UNITS TO  
FORT RESOLUTION

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, prior to the fire in May 2024, Housing NWT made a commitment to provide two duplexes for the community of Fort Resolution. But after the fire, these units were used to replace the two units that burned. My question to the Minister of Housing NWT is when can the community expect the two new duplexes to arrive to the community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The information I have from Housing NWT is over the past two years, Housing NWT has completed eight incremental and two replacement public housing units in Fort Resolution, including a four-plex for singles, a duplex for singles, a duplex for seniors, and a public housing replacement duplex. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we had that fire in Fort Resolution, we lost two duplexes - one being a public housing unit and the other as being market rental unit, and one unit burned down both units in that community but we already replaced that unit with the two units that were ready to come in in the fall. So my question to the Minister is now that we are anticipating two duplexes coming into the community, I want to

know where are they going to put them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the numbers that I provided, there are no plans at this time to replace the market housing duplex, and the public housing duplex has been replaced with the recently completed replacement duplex. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little confused because I'm just assuming that the NWT Housing Corporation has insurance in the event of a fire and the duplex that caught fire, I would just say that it's my understanding that that duplex should be replaced. But what happened now is what I'm hearing is that duplex has been replaced with a project from previous year onto that site. So what I'm hearing from the Minister is that it sounds like we're not getting no duplex. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** For the Minister.

**MR. EDJERICON:** My question, Mr. Speaker, is that I just want -- basically said that so what the Minister is saying is that we're not getting no duplex, and I'd like her to confirm that, yes or no. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure of Housing NWT's insurance obligations especially with a fire related to the duplex in Fort Resolution. I can check into the information for the Member and follow up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 577-20(1):  
ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have further questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. First, is there anything in the government's business plan that specifically speaks to energy efficiency goals or strategies in terms of buildings, appliances, or vehicles? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is. We do, of course, have commitments to advance the

energy strategy and to update that, and the energy strategy will -- is really the all-encompassing approach that we utilize to determine how a government as a whole is going to be approaching energy issues, energy efficiency included. The Department of Infrastructure is certainly the lead on that, but we're not alone. Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT also has commitments in their business plan, I understand, with respect to incorporating energy efficiency technologies. And Department of Infrastructure, again as I had just mentioned, we have within us the responsibility under EV technologies and also supports to Arctic Energy Alliance which delivers a lot of programs. So in short, the short answer is yes, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do understand that the business plan speaks to the energy strategy, and there are things contained within the energy strategy. One of those is a goal, at least in the previous iteration of the 2030 Energy Strategy, a goal to increase commercial, residential, and institutional building energy efficiency by 15 percent. But can the Minister explain what practical steps the government is taking to actually achieve that goal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a number of initiatives that are underway by the government. We have, if I'm not mistaken, in the last five years spent over \$60 million in different energy efficiency programs, including renewable heat, renewable energy and, for example, biomass boiler installation, LED lighting replacements in a number of areas. There's a push towards some solar energy and being able to interconnect those systems in to our existing energy infrastructure, so again -- and supporting communities in their efforts to move towards having, again, their own opportunities for district heating, for example, again boiler installations, and also other energy alternatives that can then feed into our grid and support the grid. So quite a number of things happening in this space, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister point to evidence that the work underway will actually lead us to achieve the goal of 15 percent energy efficiency reductions? Is that a path that is laid out and quantified, or we're just hoping that the investment will get us to the 15 percent goal? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are annual reporting requirements from both myself with respect to the energy side but also from my colleague at ECC with respect to our climate change framework. Mr. Speaker, I don't have them at the tip of my fingers here today, but we do certainly see as an obligation to report on the progress we're making in those two areas, and that is tabled here in the House annually. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 578-20(1):  
DRUG-RELATED ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC  
HOUSING UNITS

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my community of Fort Resolution, we had a couple incidents just over the weekend in public housing units where it's all been drug-related, and we had a tenant that was -- is afraid to go home now because of the drug dealers coming to their home and using weapons etcetera. They got nowhere to go. And we had another incident as well where a cocktail was thrown into the house and caught fire.

My question to the Minister of Housing NWT is that has -- sorry, Housing NWT, what are they doing to address the drug dealers in public housing units? Can the Minister provide an update on the progress they're making to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand the concerns coming from the Member about illegal activities in public housing units because this is happening across the territory, and this is something we're all facing in our constituencies and is in our ridings. So what's happening in Fort Resolution is happening throughout, and I just want to emphasize the need that we need to work together, and we need to work with the RCMP, we need to work with the communities, we need to report illegal activities. And there's an actual app that's available online that people can download. It's called P3 Tips. If you don't want to report, you know, with Crime Stoppers, you can report with this app, and it would be anonymous. So that's important for people to know.

In terms of Fort Resolution and their concerns, LHOs, one thing they must do is they must be able to prove the illegal activity to the rental officer to obtain an eviction order. So proving the activity can be a challenge. LHOs often rely on a submission of evidence from others who

may be too frightened to come forward. So that's why I was talking about this app that might be able to provide this evidence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that the wish to work together is key, and I agree on that issue. I'm just want to know if the Minister could work with the local leadership and the RCMP and myself after session is done so we can start looking at a way to dealing with these issues because these issues are very series, and we got to make public housing safer for our tenants and also for the community. I just want to see if I could get a commitment from the Minister on this. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And safe for staff because staff are going into these housing units and having to upkeep and maintain these units, and sometimes they can't even get into the unit. So illegal activities, they're barricading the doors, and it's difficult for staff. But with the RCMP, the RCMP and the rental office have met with Housing NWT, and they meet with program advisers, they meet with the LHOs, they have training with the LHOs. The RCMP regularly meet with Housing NWT officials to ensure information is shared and how improvements can be made. So the RCMP also encourage local detachments to assist LHOs by sharing whatever information is available that they could legally provide and that won't disrupt an investigation. So these are some of the ideas that are talked with districts, with LHOs, with RCMP, and with community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate those comments. I just want to know if I'm able to get a commitment from the Minister to work with local leadership and the RCMP and the rental officer, maybe perhaps we could have a public meeting in the community within -- sometime in March or April and start looking at ways as to how we can address this issue and work together on this issue. So I'd like to get a commitment from the Minister on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always happy to have discussions with communities for safer communities and expelling, like, illegal activities and in communities, so happy to have further

discussions about that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 579-20(1):  
TRANSFERABILITY OF VETERINARY  
RECORDS BETWEEN CLINICS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recently learned that it's the Minister of Health and Social Services's responsibility to regulate veterinarians in the Northwest Territories through the Veterinarian Medical Act. One of the issues that's come up recently with a closure of a clinic here in Yellowknife is vet records do not move with the vet if they open their own clinic. This is a concern for patients. They want to ensure that their pet care continues to follow their vet. Can the Minister let us know how she can help make that possible because currently our Act does not allow for that whereas other jurisdictions, they have Acts that permit the transfer and -- transfer of records without the need for a court order or voluntary disclosure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member has stated, the Veterinary Profession Act does fall under one of the -- under my portfolio; however, it does not speak to records. It doesn't -- and so what happens usually individuals in southern jurisdictions for the owner of a veterinary clinic to be practicing, the veterinarian -- and they usually are the ones that have control over all the records. So in the circumstances that the Member -- you know, unfortunately, we've all seen in the news and everything with the Great Slave clinic shutting down, you know, there is some uncertainty of what's going on. But our legislation at this time doesn't speak to any veterinarian records, and those would be the property of the owner is my understanding. So at this time, we are not looking at the legislation for this as we have many pieces of legislation that we are working on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the somewhat -- not absurd but unfamiliar territory we're in because this is veterinary medicine. But our Act it's six pages long. It's 12 clauses long. It hasn't been looked at since, I think -- beyond minor changes -- 1988. Is this something the Minister can put on the legislative agenda for the future? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think a lot of our legislation is old and, you know, as we prioritize getting through some of the legislation that we have, I will make sure that this is added to the list and to triage it as we do all the other legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate that. Is there any kind of a plan to expand veterinary medicine in the Northwest Territories? Currently we only have four vets, I believe, working and only two doing small animal medicine. Does the department have any programs or supports available that would ease in the recruitment and retention of veterinarians in the Northwest Territories?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, currently the Northwest Territories has 35 registered veterinarians, Mr. Speaker -- registered veterinarians which include those who visit the Northwest Territories to provide locum service when needed. I know that of 33 communities, our smaller communities are overrun, I hear from my colleague to the next of me, in her communities the dogs are, you know -- and so these services that are coming into our region are not just for our sick dogs but our dogs that are here that need just basic vaccines, neutering and spaying. You know, we have a lot of partners in the capital that have been doing big, huge work for this region. And I know in Inuvik, we have some dedicated veterinarians that keep coming back and returning. And, yes, there probably could be some more work around this; however, right now, unfortunately, the work that we have under the work that I have under my portfolio this is not, unfortunately, at the top of my list. But I will make sure that there are -- you know, we will take a look at it. We have it on the list as to what can be updated. If there is something easy that we can take from our neighbours to look at our legislation to review, if that can meet the needs of the territory. I'll just leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 580-20(1):  
REQUEST FOR MEETING IN FORT  
RESOLUTION CONCERNING HOUSING

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In collaboration, I just want to ask my question to the Deputy Premier.

You heard my statement a little bit earlier today in regards to the issues in Fort Resolution. I wanted to invite the Premier, perhaps in April, to a community meeting in Fort Resolution with the housing Minister, RCMP, etcetera. So I just want to see if we could get a commitment to plan a meeting together probably in April sometime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Deputy Premier cannot make a commitment for the Premier so if you're asking for the Deputy Premier to come and have that meeting, then she can answer the question. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Either the Premier or Deputy Premier. But in this case, the Deputy Premier. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had a very lovely visit in Fort Resolution last year when I was there, so -- and I can't make commitments obviously for the Premier or his schedule. I know I've already got a visit myself planned in April but certainly happy to see -- Fort Resolution is not that hard for us to get to. If we can work together and find a date in April, I'm happy to try. And if I can't, it may well be that the Premier's able to. But, again -- so let's try and see if we can make some dates work. I know that the housing Minister's nodding as I'm speaking, so at the very least I expect she may be planning something. So happy to try, Mr. Speaker. I don't have my calendar in front of me, so I'm just hesitating to commit before I know whether it's even within the realm of possibility. But as I said, happy -- happy to go back. It was a lovely visit last time I was there.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd just like to maybe also invite the Minister for --

**MR. SPEAKER:** Deputy Premier you were talking to, so you -- thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, you want to be put back on? Okay, I'll put you back on. Thank you. I'll put you back on.

Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 581-20(1):  
CABIN LEASES ON CROWN LANDS

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, previous Member statements, myself as well as other colleagues, have expressed concerns about cabin leases. Specifically for

me, Mr. Speaker, cabin leases on Crown lands in the Inuvialuit settlement region. It's my understanding that in the Inuvialuit final agreements that permits are required on Crown lands that will be provided at no cost. Can the Minister of ECC please give us an update on what's happened with those. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that people are still being invoiced for those cabins. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department has made significant efforts in this area across all of the NWT. We've reached out to all of the Indigenous governments and are currently working on a collaborative process to address the leasing of public land. And we also have a process where existing owners or lessees can apply through the department to have their current lease fees paused as we work through this process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister. So can the Minister confirm, then, if invoices are still being charged? I understand there is an opportunity to request to have a pause, certainly not everybody -- certainly traditional people that have harvesting cabins out there may not have the ability or the technology to actually require -- to apply for that request -- sorry, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister confirm that invoices is still being charged to members in the Inuvialuit settlement region that have cabins on Crown lands. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the individuals in question have not gone and completed the application to pause that process, then they could still be receiving invoices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** That's disappointing, Mr. Speaker. We had hoped given that, you know, this has been ongoing for quite some time that we had understood that all invoicing would be paused until such time as this work can be completed. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to when they're going to finally get this issue put to rest, a timeline on when we can see this proposed change put into place. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sort of a two-part question but happy to answer both of them.

So when it comes to the specific of no longer invoicing, this is a voluntary program that we put in place to address those concerns and it does not relieve the land user of the responsibility of the payment. This is not a forgiveness policy but a temporary pause of payment. So there may be some lessees or leasers that don't want to pause the payment the way it's going currently. So that's the first part.

On the second part, Mr. Speaker, we have sent out invitations to all of the Indigenous governments to come back to the department. We have engagement sessions booked for the spring and summer, one in the Beaufort Delta I believe, and one in Hay River, to start these conversations. And we're certainly, you know, happy to hear from all of the Indigenous governments. It's not a process that we as the GNWT or as the department was putting forward our expectations but really are anxious to hear what the Indigenous governments' positions are and how we can work together to find a solution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 582-20(1):  
REDUCING PRIMARY CARE WAIT TIMES IN  
YELLOWKNIFE

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try again with the Minister of Health and Social Services.

How have the changes to Yellowknife Primary Care reduced wait times for appointments in the capital? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am unsure right now what those wait times are. That's not something that I have here with me in the House. So if the Member, you know, wants to bring this questioning up again another day, then I would be more than willing to try and get those answers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we get questions on the fly and we need to ask them. These are important things.

Another question, how are these changes -- how many appointments have increased since the number -- have the number appointments available to patients increased since these changes have done? Are we

seeing more people since the changes have been done? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now I'm not sure if he's speaking directly to the primary clinic that's going on here in Yellowknife or as the primary care clinic that's going on in Fort Smith. If it's just in Yellowknife, I'll have to get back to the Member on the stats of the primary care since it opened not even a year ago. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Yes, Yellowknife is, of course, my primary concern because that's where I represent, but if the Minister that has the numbers territory-wide or by community, I'd take those as well. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Was that a question, Member from Range Lake?

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister provide the stats from the entire territory broken down by community at a future date? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we are rolling out primary care reform and we only are piloting it in certain regional centres, but those ones that we are, I will see if they have the stats available as this is within this last year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 583-20(1):  
MEETING TO ADDRESS SUBSTANCE  
ABUSE ISSUES IN FORT RESOLUTION

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Earlier -- I'm trying to figure a way how we could work together and combat the issue of the drug problems in our small communities, in particular Fort Resolution, and I would like to ask the question to the Deputy Premier if we could work together and look at sending out invitations to the head of the RCMP in G-division here in the Northwest Territories to come to our meeting and also the Dene Nation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. I'm going to turn it to you, Deputy Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I fortunately heard the Premier speak about this many times so I feel like I'm in fairly comfortable ground in referencing the work that's happening already in terms of the SCAN legislation and a suite of other legislative initiatives that are under the Department of Justice which is also under the Premier. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that the community policing priorities are an area that both the Premier takes very seriously and I've also heard the commander take very seriously as being an area where he wants to see real movement. So whether it's -- who exactly might initiate an invitation and to where that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest we want to -- perhaps I'll take a pause on that particular response and confirm and at least commit that I'll follow up personally with the Premier on that. Again, I know it's an area of serious concern for his community, so making sure that communities are properly engaged with the RCMP at the proper level to see that their community priorities are being followed through, I'm confident that we'll find a path forward. It's just exactly how that might play out, I think I would leave to the Premier or to the Minister of Justice to speak to, but I will speak to him directly about it. Again, I know it's an area of concern for him as well. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, madam Deputy Premier. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Oral questions. Written questions -- no, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

### Returns to Written Questions

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 13-20(1): PHYSICIAN STAFFING

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 13-20(1) asked by the Member for Range Lake on February 10, 2025, regarding Physician Staffing.

The Member asked how many full-time physicians were hired by the Northwest Territories health and social services Authority last fiscal year. I can report that the Northwest Territories health and social services Authority hired three permanent physicians in the 2023-2024 fiscal year and one to date in 2024-2025 fiscal year.

The Member also asked how many full-time physicians left their employment with the Northwest Territories health and social services Authority last fiscal year. I can report that five permanent physicians left their employment and/or did not renew their contract in the

2023-2024 fiscal year, and to date in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, four physicians have not renewed their contracts.

The Member requested a breakdown of the reasons why full-time physicians left their employment with the Northwest Territories health and social services Authority last fiscal year, including resignation, term expiration, retirement, termination and for any other relevant reason.

Because the numbers are small, sharing details could risk identifying individuals. I can confirm that some physicians have chosen not to renew their contracts due to both retirements and resignations. It is important to note that the Northwest Territories health and social services Authority continues to conduct exit interviews with departing employees and reviews all feedback they provide.

The Member requested a breakdown of the full-time physicians who left their employment with Northwest Territories health and social services Authority last fiscal year by practice and specialty and a breakdown of locum versus resident full-time physicians who left their employment with Northwest Territories health and social services Authority last fiscal year.

The breakdown of those who left their employment, or did not renew their contract in the 2023-2024 fiscal year are:

- One Family Physician;
- One Obstetrician;
- One Pediatrician;
- One Internist; and,
- One Otolaryngologist.

A locum physician is a doctor who temporarily fills in for another doctor or a vacancy. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority hired 926 locum physicians through 1,865 contracts. These numbers indicate that we have many returning locum physicians helping us maintain consistent care across the Northwest Territories. For example, in the 2023-2024 fiscal year 56 percent of contracted locum Family Physicians were returning locums and 36 percent of contracted locum Specialists were returning locums.

Once a locum physician completes a contract, they are not considered to have resigned or left their role. They simply finish their agreed-upon term. Locums are always eligible to accept additional or future contracts.

We actively encourage new locums to consider opportunities in the North, which has been a successful recruitment strategy.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Got to go back to written questions. Written questions. 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. Tabling of documents. Notices of Motion. Motions. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 275-20(1), with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish -- I'm going to go to the Member -- or sorry, what is the wish of the committee? I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee would like to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates, Department of Infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, do you agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. We'll take a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 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, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers.

Okay, thank you. Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my left, Steve Loutitt, deputy minister of infrastructure. And on my right, Amy Burt, the director of corporate services.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the table document? Committee?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** All right, thank you. Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review of the estimates by activity summary beginning with asset management starting on page 267 with information items on page 270. Are there any questions? See no further questions, please turn to page 268. The Member from Great Slave, did you have a question?

**MS. REID:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. I was just trying to catch up to your page number; it took me a moment. I do have a question for the Minister, but I'm not certain if this is the right area. No, it's not, thank you. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. There are no questions. Please turn to page 268.

Infrastructure, asset management, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$18,744,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to corporate management beginning on page 271 with information items on page 273. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 272.

Infrastructure, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$8,695,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to energy and strategic initiatives beginning on page 274 with information items on page 279. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize if this is the incorrect section, Mr. Chair; you are going quite quickly. But in the department's business plan on page 7 of their business plan

update, there is a discussion of establishing a continuous improvement committee. Can the Minister please expand on what that committee is continuously improving. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am also quite excited about this. It is very much an internal committee though, so I'm going to turn that over to the deputy minister, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the deputy minister.

**MR. STEVE LOUTITT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm excited about this one as well. It's a committee that we're looking at all of our processes and determining which ones we can make efficiencies on. One of them was the reorganization of the Department of Infrastructure when we amalgamated with public works and services and transportation. There were certainly some opportunities to improve our workflows through that. Using some value stream analysis, we were able to look at those processes and look at how the organizational -- organization is set up for success. And we're making small changes, but it is one that's taking a fair bit of time. People are doing it off the corner of their desks, but it is one that we are making incremental changes and efficiencies on a regular basis. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I consider myself a pretty big nerd, and I don't really understand what that meant. So maybe if I could get the Minister to explain it a little bit further in plain English. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to turn to the deputy one more time. I know we do have a bit of detail here that we could provide. Let me start there, and perhaps we'll also bring Amy into the question -- Amy Burt into the answer before we are done. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. STEVE LOUTITT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So a value stream analysis is just basically how work and information flows through our department, how it comes in as a notional plan.



It comes into the notional plan, we go for funding for it, we do the engineering, we do all the planning work, all the permitting and everything. And without that, there are times where that work plan will sort of zigzag and go back and forth on some of the processes where it should be a steady line where each phase of the process is moving -- is advancing forward and not going back to a different department. So it's more taking it from, you know, it starts with environment -- well, it starts with finance, it goes to environment, and then it goes to the engineering, and then it turns to the project management. So looking at those type of efficiencies on a project front, it's just making -- just streamlining and making it easier for the process to flow through and to know where we are, where the chokepoints or on those processes. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So would it not be something that could be addressed with regular project management processes, like GANT charts? It's -- or is there just way too many moving pieces? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so some work that we do certainly does already include using things like a GANT chart or other strategic tool. This was really meant to be one that would look, again, at that process from a different lens. So, you know, you can say, for example, if you use that lens and you identify a process that's not efficient, this is the committee that would be then led or tasked with fixing the problem. So even a small example would be using eApprove for approving monthly variance reports that come through and obviously -- I shouldn't say obviously. But Department of Infrastructure does have a lot of variances on -- because there's such a large number of projects that are being monitored on any given time. So, you know, helps to coordinate that process as a whole. So it really -- you know, much like having the red tape production working group over in the Department of Finance, you could say it doesn't just naturally happen, and the reality is when, you know, folks are doing their day-to-day work and keeping the lights on, that doesn't necessarily lead to taking the time to evaluate whether or not what we're doing is the best way of doing it. This is meant to be a focused effort to do that. It's in the business plans focused effort to do that. It's a publicly reported target as part of that business plan that, really, we want to say this is an area that we know that we have some room that we could

do some work on, and this is that initiative. I hope that's a bit more helpful. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And when the Minister said eApprove, my whole body shuttered. Not a fan. But I understand why it does help projects move along more smoothly in theory.

Changing the line of question. I was hoping that the Minister could get into what budgetary implications can be expected from the department's commitment to get to net zero by 2050. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I'm expecting there may be some. I can't necessarily say with certainty at this moment, and the reason being that the energy strategy update is still being drafted. It is an item that I believe we will have something forward for within this fiscal year, and once we have the new updated strategy that outlines a bit more, that certainly puts us in a better position to be specific as to what areas of net zero will require funding. I mean, there's certainly with respect to any significant energy infrastructure changes, whether it's the Taltson Expansion, if that is an area that we move forward on, whether it's micro hydro projects in small communities, all of those will advance us to a net zero. Which one advances under which timeline, certainly that changes, but all of those items come with significant dollar value. So all of those, of course, are capital projects, Mr. Chair. Those are going to be the big-ticket items. But, yes, that's -- at this point in time, again, I -- what I can commit to is making sure we get that new updated energy strategy out as that will really outline ultimately where the budget will be needed. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that answer. So keeping that in mind, then, that you're expecting to see more through the renewed energy strategy, will there be a lens placed on some of these projects, the larger capital projects the Minister mentioned, that will provide information to both Members and the public around the sort of estimated spends that will help us get to net zero; will that be part of the information presented? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we already do provide certainly some information with respect to the amount of change or expected change that you would see in the capital planning process. The macroeconomic policy that we are looking to bring forward and to put -- apply a lens to will also include a consideration since there's obviously -- again, I shouldn't say obviously. Nothing's -- there's always open questions. But not having access to energy efficiency does, indeed, create risk of increased costs over time. So that would be part of that lens, and that is something that is coming through and will be part of the substantiation that we see for capital projects. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And with the time I have left, I guess I'll be -- I'll try and be a little bit more specific.

Could committee anticipate to see an estimated dollar amount attached to large capital projects in terms of how much of that spend would go towards net zero reductions? Obviously, I realize that might be very intangible in terms of, say, something like Taltson or -- but it could be something really tangible like increasing the spend through Arctic Energy Alliance on getting wood stoves into more small communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there certainly is a cost benefit analysis that does form part of the business case for any large project, and that would want to take into consideration O and M costs which, in turn, would reflect higher costs depending upon the source of energy or the volatility of the energy source. So Mr. Speaker -- or sorry, Mr. Chair, the short answer is I would think we would -- the answer's going to be yes, but maybe not on every single item or every single smaller project, but on larger projects it will be. Where I think this might -- the rub of the question, though, is on whether or not the information that we're doing or the analysis we're doing is meeting the request of the Member. I certainly heard different versions of this. So perhaps I can commit to sit down and just make sure that what we are bringing forward in our capital plan does meet the needs and requests, and certainly, if not, I'm only going to face more questions, so I'd be -- it's in my interest to have that resolved early. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member from Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is I'm kind of looking at the top of the list there for contributions advancing hydro public engagement, then has no more money here, and then looking down, energy corporation lease, lease agreement, energy, NWT energy efficiency projects. Is one of these, or maybe throughout the other pages, is there a program that is undergoing discussions and possible funding for the Deline hydro project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, none of -- these are broad funding agreements and some of them -- well, obviously, some that were -- are already have sunsetted with -- they were in the 2023-2024 line or 2024-2025. But for other areas, they are -- other grants and contributions, there's none that are necessarily specific to the Deline micro project. Now, that said, I know I have had outreach from Ek'Wahtide Gaudet in Roundup on this. We're certainly keen to examine and explore the possibility of micro hydro. I'm certainly very keen on it. So some of that is work that can be done within our department by the folks who are -- you know, by the proposed budget in front of you to continue to staff having a strategic energy division that will help allow for the staff who have the expertise to do exactly this kind of investigation. So while it doesn't have a specific line item, again, I'm quite confident that at least at this stage, we can work with the Deline Government to move this along. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to the Minister for that reply. The Minister had mentioned that some of the funding sources have sunsetted. I'm more specifically looking down at the low carbon economy leadership fund, and you got three sources there for a total of \$10.3 million. And the Minister had mentioned earlier, earlier in the day, about ongoing negotiations there for the Arctic Energy Alliance funding. Is that related to the numbers that we're seeing? Is that what is being lobbied by this government to reinstate those three line items for a total of \$10.3 million? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have certainly raised this both with Minister Guilbeault and Minister Wilkinson. It is quite frustrating as I understand that the federal government reallocated the money that previously was under this fund to areas that were not beneficial to the Northwest Territories, certainly not in ingrowth equal amounts, for example with respect to diverting it to heat pump initiatives that while we will certainly continue to investigate the ability and the applicability of heat pumps to the Northwest Territories, there are regions for which the current technology is not compatible. So as I say, I have certainly voiced that on more than one occasion, my frustration. We're not alone in voicing that frustration. But to date, I have not received any positive response from the federal government that they would re-examine this funding specifically. I think they were looking at changing some of the accessibility or eligibility on some of the other funds so that we can apply. But this stream, the funding, in particular these three streams under the LCLELF, have not been reinstated by the federal government. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to the Minister for that update there. And I look forward to a favourable reply later on in the year and wish the Minister the best of the lobbying efforts to reinstate those funds. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from now from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just wanted to first ask a question about -- the Member for Yellowknife North touched upon it today in her Member's statement, and I wanted to follow up, you know, during budget here. Certainly, it was unfortunate to see the discontinuation of the low carbon economy leadership fund, and I just note that there's a few projects that have discontinued funding also under the energy action plan, and I was just wondering -- you know, I see the electric bicycles rebate, any electric vehicles rebate. And I'm just wondering is there a reason why the money that was saved from these programs wasn't redirected to different programs in the energy action plan, particularly the low-income program to address energy poverty? I know during budget last year, we talked about the importance of that program and how it would be nice to see that program expanded. Can the Minister speak to that and why the savings that we've achieved from removing older programs -- or other programs -- sorry, is not

being used to move towards other programs in the energy action plan? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm going to send that one to Ms. Burt, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the director.

**MS. AMY BURT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The energy action plan fund sunsetted in 2023-2024 so the contributions that you're seeing afterwards -- and that would be for community energy planning, the fast charger corridor, and then the low-income program, those were all kind of submitted supplemental. So in order to kind of reinstate the funding for those ones that were no longer continued, we'd have to go forward with a new submission. But the reason why the other ones were reduced was just as a result of sunseting funds. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, maybe the Minister or her staff could give us an update on kind of on progress that they've been making in advocating the federal government for kind of continuation of these funds or perhaps obtaining new funds. I notice that, you know, when we look at the revenue items on page 262, there's a number of different projects for which we got new funding this year or increased funding. I won't list them off, but I do see a number there. So I'm just wondering if we -- why we haven't made progress on getting funding for programs like this. Certainly, the low-income program in particular to address energy poverty, I would love to see us to get funding for or move funding around to make it possible to continue funding this program, because I do see it as critical. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the low-income program to address energy poverty, that does continue to have the same \$200,000 amount that is -- was in place since 2023-2024. That has not changed. The other programs, to the extent that there were federal funds available, I mean, Mr. Chair, you know, I -- I can only say, as I said to the other Member, I was surprised given what seemed to be the current federal government's interest in this space that this received such a drastic reallocation of funding. I say reallocation because as I understand it, the money that went to the low carbon economy leadership fund was

directed to other areas; one being in particular again, as I said, the heating pumps but there was a secondary one which, again, was around different fuel sources and, again, nothing that was necessarily applicable to the Northwest Territories or as directly applicable as this particular funding was. I don't know. It really does not strike me as intuitive as to why those changes were made. We have raised it. I suspect, given the state of affairs in shift or likely to be in shift shortly with our federal colleagues, that this is an area that we will have to re-examine once we know what the next government's iteration of priorities might be in Ottawa. But other than that, that I'm -- unfortunately, that's about as much as I can provide for right now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, you know, I just want to emphasize to the Minister that, you know, some of these programs -- even some more than others, particularly the low-income program, but there is a number of programs put forward under the low carbon economy leadership fund that were about more than just reducing greenhouse gases which, of course, is an important goal. But also these are some of the key programs that have been used in the territory to help people reduce their cost of living, which is -- it's something that politicians constantly talk about, and it's one of the areas that we have the least ability to affect things, except for this area, helping people to reduce their heating costs, helping people reduce the cost of operating their homes. So I personally think programs like this, that are geared towards those goals, really are important and need territorial funding even if we don't have the funding coming from Canada though I strongly encourage the Minister to come -- to go to Ottawa and demand funding for things like that. But areas where we're able to -- you know, these programs have been in every case oversubscribed. A lot of people are interested in getting this kind of funding. A lot of people are interested in doing upgrades to their homes which will help them, you know, reduce their carbon output and help them save money. So I just really want to make the case for that and would encourage the Minister to fund programs accordingly and just to understand that, you know, we put a lot of money into big infrastructure projects in this department, and I'm not denying that those are important but, you know, a little bit of money to each individual homeowner goes a long way to helping them reduce the cost to their pocketbooks, and that's the thing that people feel when you make changes for them. People aren't going to notice their costs go down, you know, because we put

a bunch of money towards this or that infrastructure project. So I do just want to make that case to the Minister. She can reply if she wants. But it's something that I think is an important area. I think it's important to residents. The fact that these programs have been oversubscribed year over year over year tells us this is something that is important to residents. So, yeah, any case I can make for continuing the programs, I will make it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's not a lack of understanding or, frankly, even disagreement. As I said, I was surprised -- surprise probably doesn't quite describe it. But certainly was surprised to learn that the federal government was cutting these programs that support communities that are most in need of being -- having alternatives to rely on fossil fuels that are least well able to find alternatives and because we are not connected to the grid, we are, you know, nonroad communities, so I'm more than happy to give all my reasons why I thought this was a not very intuitive choice. But I don't control the federal government or what they choose to fund or not fund.

I do want to assure the Member that under the Arctic Energy Alliance's series of some of the core programs, the alternative energy technologies program, biomass, commercial energy conservation, and efficiency as core funding to Arctic Energy Alliance, energy efficiency incentive program, energy rating services program, all of that funding is still there. It has -- the proposal that we have forward here is not to change that from 2024-2025. It's just that we are struggling in terms of finding the funding for other things that were previously funded under the low carbon economy leadership fund. And again, I certainly can ask but I -- right now, Ottawa is a difficult place to be going to do some advocating. There's obviously a bit of political change perhaps on the horizon, so we'll see what comes next and then adjust our strategy accordingly. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just pondering the answer a bit. Yeah, I hear what the Minister is saying. I know that it is difficult to obtain funding. And certainly, I did note that most of the core funding for Arctic Energy Alliance is still there, and I know it's tough when the federal government takes things away and

that we can't always continue every single program the federal government gives us money for. But, again, would just note, you know, if we have to use territorial money for something particularly related to climate change, what I want to see that money going towards is programs like this that have that twin benefit of helping, you know, low income, particularly families, reduce their cost of living and reducing carbon, just noting that, you know, these are the things that impact people the most, and I think -- when I think about, you know, the implementation of the carbon tax over the years, it certainly was imposed on us, I think the most just way to deal with that and to handle that money would be to put it back in people's pockets and put it towards programs that help them reduce their costs and get off of these expensive heating sources. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Sorry, I missed that last part. I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I was finished. If the Minister wants to respond, I mean, I was really just overemphasizing the point, but just wanted to, again, note my support for taking territorial money and using it to help territorial residents convert off of these expensive fossil fuels. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, again, Mr. Chair, for this year's budget, there's -- the core programs do remain there. With respect to future funding or future initiatives, obviously any future initiatives come through a business planning process for 2026-2027. And comments duly noted. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, my first question: The item called Northwest Territories energy efficiency projects, it looks in the description that this only funds the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to do, like, internal projects related to its power plants. I also note that there used to be a funding program that was delivered, I believe by Arctic Energy Alliance, offering community governments money to do retrofits and often increase energy efficiency in their buildings. Has the government considered expanding its funding for energy efficiency projects beyond power corporation assets? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I mean, yes, so this particular line item that was pointed to is specific to Northwest Territories Power Corporation to help integrate the programs and projects that may exist in communities. But, Mr. Chair, a lot of work does happen in the energy strategic initiatives division with respect to some of the planning. So, for example, the micro hydro that was mentioned earlier, the possibility of SMRs. You know, efforts in that space happen within this division, so the staff that are employed there through this proposed budget are the same staff that would be helping to do some of the initial scoping for projects like this. And, you know, the earlier and the more often that we can have conversations with communities, Deline's a good example, where they are -- they've looked to bring on additional assets which requires looking at what we can do at the power corporation but also can involve the department in terms of ensuring that when the pieces are being put together, what their energy requirements are going to be, what is available and, you know, what can the department do, what can NTPC do, what can NT Energy do, that does reside in this division. So, you know, it's not necessarily under individual -- these individual strings of programs or pots that you might find it. It may well be in the actual day-to-day functioning of the department and the staff there who are tasked with ensuring that we're advancing strategic and energy initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so currently, if there are community governments that want to maintain and upgrade their own buildings and assets, make them more energy efficient, is there somewhere that they can go for help finding money for retrofits? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I mean, as a first point of call, I would certainly suggest that this division of the department is certainly one to speak to. I would also suggest the NT Energy folks who are the sort of strategic branch of NTPC is also a good point of call. As for any particular funding, sort of a funding pot, if I may, I might turn it to Amy Burt and see if she can point us to something quickly and if not, we'll take it under a commitment. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the director.

**MS. AMY BURT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do have the community renewable energy program. That is administered by Arctic Energy Alliance, so there is a hundred thousand dollars worth of funding there. Yeah, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to turn the programs around electric vehicles. I know that one of the commitments in the business plan is to create, like, charging corridors, and there is still a little tiny bit of money under that line item for the electric vehicles fast charger corridor. However, this year, all of the money for the electric vehicles rebate program looks like has been eliminated. And, I mean, we -- committee heard previously that electric vehicle rebate program was one of the most effective programs for actually just reducing greenhouse gas emissions that we have. So I guess my question to the Minister is if we're not supporting people to change to electric vehicles but who do we expect is going to be using the charging corridor that we have spent a whole bunch of money and are continuing to prioritize if we don't have people with the vehicles to actually use the corridor? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there was certainly at the time that our main estimates were being prepared still a federal program to support consumer choice than to try to incentivize consumer choice towards energy or EV vehicles. Mr. Chair, what we did commit to in our business plan, and what we are providing, is the corridor so that people can actually charge those vehicles. And I can say that from Yellowknife all the way to the Alberta border and over all the way to Fort Smith, there is, indeed, going to be an EV charging corridor. It will be complete this year and so while I can't necessarily provide public dollars -- any additional public dollars in this budget to sway people if they don't want to spend the additional money on an EV vehicle, electric vehicle, Mr. Chair, what we can do ensure that for those people who are making that choice that they actually can charge that vehicle. Because that certainly was one of the concerns that had been raised is that, indeed, folks wouldn't want to make this investment if they were concerned that they wouldn't be able to drive. So we have completed that side of it. Again, with respect to,

you know, additional money, there's -- there are those -- you know, federal programs exist, and people making those choices regardless -- they may make those choices too if fuel prices remain volatile which is also out of our control. But, again, we have provided the infrastructure necessary to support those choices. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now, I know that owners of electric vehicles tend to be, you know, wealthier members of our communities, but I wanted to also highlight, so the program for the low-income program to address energy poverty, it's only \$200,000. First, I wanted to ask is this based on applications that, like, individual people have to apply to get something under this program, or is it based on a certain project or a certain community that the government decides, okay, we're going to allocate this money this year to, you know, one project and one community. Can the Minister just clarify how that money is spent, how decisions are made to spend that money; is that application or on specific projects? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So Mr. Chair, this is a program that is administered by the Arctic Energy Alliance. With respect to its individualized functioning at that stage, I'm not well placed necessarily to describe how AEA administers it. I'm happy to commit to getting that detail. We provide this fund, and I know there would be some expectations surrounding its use but, again, I'll have to make a commitment to bring that back here. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I would -- I appreciate that, and I would request too that the Minister helps us understand or finds out, you know, is the program fully subscribed. If it's based on applications, are we even coming close to meeting the demand, or is there a much higher demand but than we're able to satisfy with the \$200,000 allocation? I'd appreciate that information coming back to us.

I was going to turn to questions about some of the bigger strategic energy infrastructure projects that this government is undertaking that I don't see specifically listed here under energy and strategic initiatives. So, for example, the Taltson Expansion

pre-construction phrase, I know we see that we're receiving in revenues \$7.1 million, I assume from the federal government, to keep working on that. I don't see specific mention of it in the energy and strategic initiatives. So is there any GNWT money also being spent on the Taltson Expansion work, the pre-construction work? Does it -- you know, are there staff that are listed in this section who are working on that project, or is it completely separate from everything we see here under energy and strategic initiatives? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there certainly are staff within the division that are working on this from the assistant deputy minister through to folks who -- the director of energy, director of strategic energy initiatives -- I'll probably get his title wrong -- but folks have travelled recently with me to Lutselk'e to attend a steering committee. There -- I mean, when we see under the energy and strategic initiatives conversation benefits, those folks are working on the Taltson initiative.

With respect to money that is used to support the Indigenous governments from the watershed region and north and south of the lake with their traditional knowledge studies and assisting them with the capacity to attend steering committee meetings and to prepare for those steering committee meetings, that type of funding is fully funded by CIRNAC. That's the additional funding that we do see come in specific to Taltson. So it -- yeah, there's -- I guess in that sense, there's 100 percent funding from the feds to do the very project specific work, but staff within this division whose money -- or I mean whose functionality, if you will, does get funded here, and that is supporting the Taltson work as well as some of the other major capital projects. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any other Member that is have questions? I'm going to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, with the biomass here, biomass energy, I know there's a lot of communities -- with the high cost of living, there are some communities, especially fly-in communities that use diesel generator, it'd be cheaper in the long run. So I just wanted to ask the Minister if the department is working with communities, especially the fly-in communities where they would like to, you know, like or have an option to choose either the diesel generator

and/or biomass for heating source. Because I know there's -- we have that in one of our communities, and I heard that it is very efficient. So I just wanted to know if the department is working with other small communities that maybe would like to change from using diesel generator to biomass. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, yes, I can assure the Member, the House, that there is a lot of interest in this area. It is not only under the biomass energy line item which is a program, again, administered by Arctic Energy Alliance and which was fully subscribed.

Mr. Chair, there is also work that happens within our asset management division, and I know we'll get there at another point in time, but it is relevant to this question. There's that crossover here where this division does also support communities in their efforts. So we do have other funding that comes under the greenhouse gas grant program. We have our own capital asset retrofit. And so, for instance -- and the Department of Infrastructure, with our own forces, are able to support, for example, the Whati health centre, Behchoko's long-term care facility, for example, both switched over to biomass plants. So the short answer is yes, there's work happening in this space and that, again, there can be, then, the funds available through as to our department in kind and then whether it's with support to other federal funding arrangements that are working to support small communities with biomass. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you for that information. It says here forced growth, Tlicho winter road contract. It's not lots, but forced growth, but that's from last fiscal year. Is it due -- can the Minister explain why Tlicho winter road contract is on forced growth? Is it -- I'm not too sure. Maybe it's -- because I know last year -- last winter season, we had a slow start due to climate change, due to the environment, and this year I know Gameti winter road is open on time but Wekweeti is still not open. So I just wanted to know why the Tlicho winter road contract is -- there's forced growth which -- and there's another -- on another section contract services. Contract services, there's lists that -- money allocated, it's list this year than previous year. So if the Minister -- and here we're doing forced growth, and then it's -- there's a reduction in

contract services. If the Minister can explain why there's a difference between the two. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Before I go to the Minister, I just want to point out that we're on page 283, strategic initiatives. But I'll just go to the Minister, and then I'll remind the Member we're on page 283. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, happy to answer it, Mr. Chair. I realize that the question will come, so we will just keep things moving. The Tlicho winter road contract has seen increases in the last couple of years, and I think the Member was already getting to the situation which is to say ongoing climate change conditions, ongoing supply chain challenges, ongoing labour force challenges, all of which are leading to increase in the costs of building the winter roads. We do rely on the contractor which does exist under the Tlicho Infrastructure Cooperation Agreement, and we do work with the Tlicho government as a partner on this, but as they experience challenges with their own costs, then that certainly will impact the cost that it is -- fall to the GNWT. And that -- if it's things that are unavoidable that meet the definition of forced growth, then that would be where this comes in.

There was a previous contract. That contract came up for renewal, and that's why you will see a change. So from what was under the previous contract to now, if there's a change in time -- and at times, when the contract is three years old and towards the end, if changes have happened, you can obviously also see it could come through for a supplementary appropriation. But when it's a forced growth, when there's an update to the contract, you'll see it come through as forced growth. Hope that's helpful, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you. So with that in mind, with the climate change it's not just in my region, but it's all over where there's winter road exists, I -- yeah, winter road exists. So I want to ask the Minister if they are working with Tlicho government or community government of Gameti for a possible all-season road. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This has been raised now on a couple of occasions. There's not an active plan underway at the moment for any all-season

roads beyond the Whati all-season roads that came in -- or the Tlicho all-season road that came into use just a few years ago. So, again, at this moment in time, no. But, again, I know it's been raised. What I would say the next major road in that area is probably with respect to the planning around the SGP, the Slave Geologic Province area, and I've heard suggestions that maybe there'd be a spur off of that, but this is all very much really just an initial planning stage or initial scoping stage. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. And then in -- according to the budget here that we have, staffing reduction. Can the Minister explain where is this -- is it in all the -- is it -- where is this being taken place at? I mean, like, especially the staffing reduction, is it in Yellowknife, or is it in small communities? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, all positions that were reduced within the Department of Infrastructure were in Yellowknife with one exception. There was an airport manager position in Hay River that had been vacant for several years, and that has also been eliminated for these main estimates. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. I have no more questions for this section now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? Okay, seeing none, we'll continue on. No further questions, please turn to page 281. Yes, sorry, please turn to page 275.

Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$10,290,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to programs and services, beginning on page 280 with information items on page 283. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 281.



Infrastructure, programs and services, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$12,641,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to regional operations beginning on page 284 with information items on page 286. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And just so the Minister knows, I'm going to ask her this every year. Will the Minister please consider opening the DMV in Yellowknife on Saturdays? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I suppose someone has to ask it, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the issues surrounding there -- yes, with respect to more ensuring that we have staff available to undertake that request, and I can take it back away and look again at what some of those challenges at staffing were. What we have done and continue to do, Mr. Chair, is that there are more and more services coming available for E-services. I recognize before I even turn this back over that some folks will not be able to access E-services or won't be comfortable with E-services, but that certainly is an area that is taking a lot of the pressure off of the in-person times that are available. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for committing to look at it a little closer.

Mr. Chair, the Minister is right, there are lots of people who might not feel comfortable doing those services online, but I also want to recognize that I very much enjoy the ones that -- the services that you can do online for your vehicle. They're very helpful, indeed, for the folks who can use them; however, we cannot get a new driver's license online, and there are services that newcomers need to extend driver's licenses in the sense of their work visas expiring and then being put into maintenance by the federal government. So I would urge the Minister to consider those in her deliberations.

But getting to questions, I will change topics. I was very pleased when the folks from Yellowknife Airport gave a presentation to SCEDE in, I believe, the last six months or so.

The revolving fund is a success story, I think by all accounts, and the surplus continues to grow. So does the Minister and her department have plans for the \$52 million surplus budgeted for 2025-2026? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there's, I know, some movement in this space with respect to a capital plan coming out of the airport in -- well, I think in just the next couple of months or next few months anyways. I'm not sure. Perhaps Mr. Loutitt may have -- or deputy minister Loutitt might have more details on whether or not or to what extent that includes the revolving fund. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I'm going to go to the deputy minister.

**MR. STEVE LOUTITT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we do have a list of projects that we are undertaking under the capital program with the revolving fund. There's -- actually, I don't have them right at my fingertips, but the accumulated surplus is not as large as it does appear. A lot of it is the assets, and some of it is an accumulation of funds. So while it says that there's \$37 million -- or sorry, \$37 million are the assets involved with the airport, so they're not -- it's not money that can be spent on anything, but we are doing quite a few things to improve both the customer experience and the -- I guess work continues for the airport. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was wondering if the Minister can commit to providing a more detailed breakdown to committee on the surplus and its activities that are planned. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, happy to do so. Again, that work was -- is due back this spring, and it would normally follow the process of going to committee. I'm happy to ensure that we are there as early as possible. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Nothing further from me. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at page 290 on the MTS revolving fund. We're going to be projecting a loss here again. Having the experiences of several years and in losses, what types of actions of recovery or reduction measures are being taken by the MTS operation? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there certainly has been several years of challenge in this space. There's, you know, obviously when the water levels are low, not only does it impact on the revenue that we would normally bring in but we then also wind up incurring the higher costs to ensure resupply still is completed. So a bit of a double hit in that respect.

Some of the things, though, that are happening in this space, Mr. Chair, there has been a governance review completed, and I know we've had the opportunity, as mentioned, to be in front of committee on this. It's examining what kind of structure would best help deliver the services that MTS provides, wanting to ensure that those services remain available and that even in times where there would be losses, that those essential services are provided, but also trying to see if there's a path by which we can do so that will hopefully find some efficiencies, increase the opportunity to bring in revenue. And, again, I think over the next year or that the hope is that we will over the next year see that governance -- those governance changes put into place and hopefully some resulting economic benefits. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** I'm glad the department is looking at the governance review. And I would probably subject what types of downsizing measures -- is land disposition being looked at? Are you downsizing the assets, the land, the footprint, to shrink your operating costs? Is some of the redundant assets being looked at maybe on the international community as selling them off, those types of actions on reductions there? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, at this point in time I'm going to have that take that one away and just commit to getting back to the Member. But it

may not be me. It might actually be as this -- as the governance changeover takes place, our hope is that as that unfolds, part of that will look at what makes the operations more efficient and, really, that might be an opportunity to do some downsizing or to change assets. But, Mr. Chair, part of the governance review is to question whether or how to have the right people there making those decisions. And I -- you know, I'm not trying to be vague, Mr. Chair, but simply just that there's going to be some changes in the next few months in this space and want to give the right latitude for those coming in to make those strategic decisions. Again, happy to come back and continue to update committee so that folks who are in the regions can provide their feedback and updates as sort of some leadership comes in and steps in and make sure that they're -- that leadership in the MTS space is continuing to be engaged with opportunities for those -- again, those who know that space well. So I think, really, it's a matter of -- well, I will just simply commit that we'll continue to come back as the leadership at MTS is confirmed and solidified. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that reply. Although I really want to see this operation continue on a break-even point, I really need the barge in my areas there too but we're all subject to climate change and the impacts and implications of that action. So I look forward to the continuing governance review. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Next on my list I got the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this may be a bit of a stretch. I'm not sure if this is the proper department -- in the House in my Member's statement around the new -- a new buildings standards code for the Northwest Territories or a -- not a new one, a one, because we don't have one. And I thought that I guess it is kind of a -- is delivering capital, Mr. Chair. So I don't know if the Minister or not if she has her A-Team here with her would like to maybe elaborate a little more on the -- on where we are with that and anticipating getting that work done, funded and done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to turn it to the A-Team. Let me start with deputy minister Loufitt, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. STEVE LOUTITT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is a project obviously -- the Member's correct that this is a project that needs to happen. We need to get the standard in place. So we right now have a working group, and we're looking at how we're going -- what kind of funding we're going to need to accomplish this, and we're hoping to do it in the life of this Assembly. It's one of the -- but at this point, we don't have the financial resources or the HR resources to tackle it, but we're in the planning stages for the program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from the Sahtu. Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's okay, we're very similar, close, a lot of the same issues.

Any estimate -- estimation, Mr. Chair, on what kind of financial resources this would need as well as maybe what kind of staffing requirements; how big a department this would be. I guess not a department itself but how big this would be. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** At this point. And, Mr. Chair, no, I don't have that yet but, again, really creating -- this is something where there's already these existing pieces of framework of the National Building Code that exists that we already apply in the GNWT, so bringing that in and making it one that can be put into legislation that can be applied more broadly really should be manageable at this point. We're hopeful within the capacity that we have to put it in place. And then, as far as putting our inspectors out, Mr. Chair, again, inspectors already are out inspecting buildings but they're doing so without the benefit of having a unified and singular piece of legislation. So, you know, hopefully this doesn't necessarily require new -- it may require some training once we are rolling out, but hopeful that it won't bring about a significant increase in budgetary demands. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that. I appreciate that work is ongoing, and I appreciate the -- as the deputy minister said, that there's a firm commitment to getting this work done, and I'm sure a lot of contractors and a lot of builders in the territory would be happy to see that.

Just switching for a minute on some of the capital work, and I -- again, if I'm stretching, that's fine, someone can tell me. But on the -- at MTS, I know we did have that one-time contribution, \$14 million. I know that that's not budgeted now. Are we happy; are we confident with the number going in considering what happened last year with low water that we are adequately funded here through infrastructure to make sure that we're able to deliver this important service? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that was a one-time contribution because of the losses that arose from having a low water season. Now, we are planning this year around low water from the perspective of our fuel services division and ensuring that we bring a full 100 percent value of fuel into those communities that would have otherwise depended upon resupplying, certainly in the Sahtu, from having the barges on the anticipation that we may face, again, a low water season. The High Arctic communities are not expected at this point to require anything other than barging and so in that sense, we would have the adequate resources planned for similar to the last couple of years where we would rely on coming either around the top or up the Dempster Highway.

As for what might befall us this summer and whether any barges will get through and/or if not, again, without knowing that in advance, Mr. Chair, I can't say for sure. We are -- you know, I know that the director of MTS has had some discussions with mayors who are impacted to make sure that we've got an awareness of the needs and a plan to service them. Whether it will cost more than what is planned for, unfortunately, Mr. Chair, beyond saying that we will commit to making sure those communities have their resupply, in advance without knowing what we face from Mother Nature, I can't give a definite -- effectively whether we're going to be back for a sup or not. Our hope is not. Our hope is that by providing the hundred percent resupply of fuel, that we won't be. But, again, we'll have to unfortunately wait and see what's thrown at us. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate we can't unfortunately see into the future. As I say, hope and pray. I opt for the pray rather than the hope so let's -- hopefully we'll pray we get there.

Just one final one on the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. And I know that there were some issues there around some of the low areas on that highway. I know it did cause some grief, and it wasn't the only reason, but certainly some grief with the additional snow that we had had up there. And I know that the Ministers were working with the contractors up there. There is a contract in place to ensure. So are we, again, now comfortable going into this season that we're able to get those -- that road adequately repaired so we don't deal with those low areas through -- that caused both flooding and additional snow build-up there, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is, indeed, a capital project that I am happy to say, after quite a bit of effort on both sides, Mr. Chair, we do now have contracts in place both for the operations and maintenance as well as to undertake the much waited-for and anticipated capital upgrades. That was -- both of those came in the fall of 2024 which means that by this construction season, we will see the upgrades beginning. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Ministers and the deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, for those answers. Certainly appreciate that. And wish Mr. Loutitt good luck in his retirement when he's not having to sit here and deal with us anymore. No more questions, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Here, facilities management, there was an increase -- I mean, from 2023-2024, the increase in the budget has been consistent. So if the Minister can explain what is causing these -- why there's increase in these costs. So what is causing it? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair, let me see if the deputy minister wants to take this and if not, we might -- let's send this to Ms. Burt, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the director.

**MS. AMY BURT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to confirm, we're looking at page 285, and we're talking about facilities management. So in 2023-2024, there was actuals of \$28 million, and then for our budget this year it's the \$33 million. Is that what the Member is asking about? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, there's increase from 2023-2024 up to the current. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the director.

**MS. AMY BURT:** Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The increase that the Member is seeing there is related to the UNW collective agreement. There is a number of employees for Department of Infrastructure that report in under the facilities management division. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, then, you know, in small communities we have lots of aging infrastructures, even in Behchoko. In Edzo, we have waterline issues while I was still there, when I was part of the community government council, and it was over -- estimated it was over \$10 million to replace the waterline. And then we have lots of other infrastructures that are aging, like due to wear and tear and climate change. And I'm sure there were other community governments, they might have highlighted that. So that's why I'm asking why, you know. So with that in mind, I just want to ask the Minister of how much of that is being spent in Tlicho region. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, first, Mr. Chair, with respect to what this is funding, it is specific to GNWT assets and GNWT infrastructure, so that wouldn't necessarily extend to infrastructure that is specific to a community, a community government infrastructure, or anything owned by an Indigenous government for example. It would really only be infrastructure or for GNWT owned.

A breakdown. I know I have provided with respect when we do the capital planning, we do provide some breakdown by region, including by Tlicho region, but I don't have that here to identify how much of these facilities specifically are within the Tlicho region. I think we may be

able to get that. I'll certainly make a best effort, and if I can I will then provide it to the Member. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes. And then -- okay, to regional projects as well, there is an increase from 2023-2024 too. So the Minister can explain what those projects are in the regions, like even for example, start with Tlicho region. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the regional projects, Mr. Chair, these are -- the changes that you're seeing to the 2025-2026 Main Estimates in particular is simply with respect to adjustments due to the collective agreement. There's -- yeah, that's for 20 -- between 2024-2025 and 2025-2026, the increases is due exclusively to collective agreement changes. Thank you.

Oh, and sorry, and again with respect to the staff employed in the Tlicho region, Mr. Chair, under regional operations we have nine full-time equivalent staff in the Tlicho region. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Yeah, that's it for this section. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions are related to highway operations. We see an increase from 2023-2024 actuals of \$107 million to \$109 million. How much of this is geared toward the upgrade or maintenance of the Dempster Highway between, let's say, Tsiigehtchic and Inuvik? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we -- I mean, the money -- I'd have to take that away in order to ensure that I'm breaking it down by the right dollar values. I'm not sure if anyone would have that available here. The change -- sorry, let me start by actually answering the question.

The change in budget, again, is related to the change in the collective agreement. So it's

increased through forced growth because the collective agreement went up and, predominantly, that is the main source of change here. And then I'd be more than happy to provide the specifics of -- and sorry, I'm trying to find it as I'm speaking, but I don't know that that's the most efficient way to do this. So let me make sure that I can provide a breakdown of what we have in our budget year over year for that particular highway -- stretch of highway. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I'll go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Carrying on with highway operations, in the fall of 2024 they didn't have much time or they did not complete the upgrade or maintenance of the highway section between Rengleng River and Inuvik. But specifically talking about Rengleng River where there's that danger zone there, was there a carryover from last year's -- fall of last year to this year's estimates to -- so that work can be conducted this year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there is, indeed, now some money there that is available for this stretch of highway. There's -- tender packages are being prepared to be ready in time to be out for this construction season and we -- there's about \$18 million in total for this entire stretch of highway between now and 2027 and 2028. So it's over a course of a number of years that this -- that really from the border through on the entire stretch of the highway. So as far as breaking it down beyond that, I -- again, I would perhaps want to just ensure that we are doing so in a way that, you know, aligns up with the timing of the contracts and doesn't interfere with the procurement process. But, again, we do, at this point, have an expectation that we'll be going out in time for this construction season to start to see some of that money flow out the door. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Going on to winter roads, I see I notice increase from 2023 to 2024 actuals to 2025-2026 Main Estimates. In my region, we have one winter road that goes from Inuvik to Aklavik, and the access roads from Tsiigehtchic and the Peel River Crossing, has there been some -- due to climate change and, you know, the opening of the roads at a later date and closing earlier, has

there been any reference to this in the increase in the budget to the actuals for the main estimates? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, at this point, these -- the changes in the winter road budget at this point in time related to the Mackenzie Valley winter road stretch and the Tlicho winter roads. In no small part, the Tlicho winter road, for example, that contract was for three years and came due for its renewal. And so with that, that new process of contractual review and engagement, that would then lead to the change here. There is, if I'm not mistaken, a contract in place right now for the winter roads within the Beaufort Delta regions, broadly, so when that does come up, it may well be, and frankly almost certainly seems to be, that when that contract comes due that we would then have to look at whether or not there needs to be a change. And, you know, again, not wanting to presume the conclusion or encourage, but the fact of the climate change impacts is making it more difficult for contractors to provide those services and that then does impact the contract that we come forward with which you then would see for next year. I believe that contract will be up by next year, so you -- if there's going to be a change, it will show up on the 2026-2027 operations budget. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Regional projects, there's an increase from 2023-2024 actuals to the 2025-2026 Main Estimates. There's an increase there. Mackenzie Delta -- the Mackenzie Delta region has seen very little in terms of big capital projects. Is there anything to look forward to within this area here, for any of the three communities in my riding? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this increase is fairly modest, just over \$300,000 here. And it's, again, related only to the collective agreement. However, Mr. Chair, with respect to our capital plan that we are expecting to be delivering over the next year, we do have the James Creek maintenance camp rehabilitation project that is coming out of Fort McPherson region, and that one is expected to move forward over the next coming year. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member from Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Complementary of this budget, when it gets passed, and it's such a huge department with a lot of benefits, and as we are approaching or going to be approaching our summer student hiring season, can the Minister, not at this point in time but at some point in time and when time permits, provide a student summer employment program with all positions. I see in here there's, you know, not including the subcontractors or the contractors, you get 280 part-time and full-time positions. So it's a huge department to look at shadowing positions, SNAP positions, summer student positions. So if we can get a labour market plan to explain the summer employment benefits and apprenticeship benefits of this budget.

And I also must join my friend from Inuvik Boot Lake in wishing Steven Loutitt, the deputy minister, a happy retirement. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the summer student call I believe has gone out already and very happy to have the chance to encourage potential summer students, who may be eligible, to reach out to the department. It's a bit of a two-part process where obviously departments create these summer student positions and can then go to the Department of Finance and access the bank of names of persons who have contacted and put themselves forward. But to the extent that a student may have an area of interest, an area of expertise, an area of training, an apprentice, if they were talking to the folks in the Department of Infrastructure and can certainly say, look, I have these skills to bring you, it can help make it easier for us to say, look, that we know there's a project that we can open to a student. So it's a bit -- people can certainly apply. Just putting their names forward to finance, they will do their best to match and, indeed, we tend to have over 300 students in the last couple of years, if I recall correctly. But making those connections earlier and often is also helpful. So, you know, through MLAs is also a good opportunity to identify what projects are underway.

I -- you know, I took the Member's question with respect to being a bit beyond that and a labour market plan for the department. I would reference our Indigenous recruitment and retention Indigenous employment plans. That does show some of the different types of positions that we were hoping to bring in more Indigenous employees, and certainly some of the communities tend to have a higher proportion of Indigenous persons eligible and interested and available to join the public service. So it's a lot of opportunities here to see where we see those numbers availability, but then also as I said, to try connecting under the summer student program. So can certainly pull up directly if there's some more information I can provide about what kind of projects there or if there's some information we can get out to the community, to students, to summer students, to, you know, incoming apprentices, all of it, the more we are making those -- as I said, we'll see what we can get to the Member and really to the House to help encourage people to apply. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Okay, thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few questions about the business plans, and I feel like this is as good an item as many to address them in. They probably touch on several.

But one of the goals in the business plan is to undertake regular evaluation of programs and services to ensure cost efficiency and to have a mechanism for regularly reviewing and updating infrastructure fees and roles, and it looks like the goal is to review two programs each year. Can the Minister explain what are the two programs that have been chosen for review this year and why those were determined to be the highest priority programs to review. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll perhaps turn to the deputy minister in just a moment, but let me at least give a bit of introduction that the two for this year, for this fiscal, are the deferred maintenance programs. So that is where we undertake ongoing repairs to GNWT assets over the life of that particular asset or building. It's more under our capital estimates program, but we want to ensure that, of course, we are maintaining those assets on an adequate life cycle. Right now they tend to be between somewhere 30 and 50-year life cycle, depending on the type of building or type of

asset. So wanted to make sure we're doing that in the most efficiency way to, you know, expend the money that we have and, you know, maintain the assets that we have for as long as.

The second program, Mr. Chair, the driver and vehicle licensing services. So perhaps this is the space where someone might ask me again about weekends openings but this is, again, a review of what kind of services we offer to residents - ID cards, licenses, registrations, etcetera, the -- you know, the online services that we're moving to in-person services, what's working and what is not and what we could potentially do better. But, Mr. Chair, again, these are very operational so I just want to make sure I haven't missed anything with the deputy, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. STEVE LOUTITT:** So thank you, Mr. Chair. At this point, we haven't determined which programs we're going to be looking at under for 2025-2026. We're going to have to review our program inventory and prioritize on the matrix kind of by MDS. We also still have work to do on our two. The Department of Infrastructure has approximately between 22 and how you count it -- 22 to 30 business lines. So we have a lot of different areas that we'd like to focus this on, so we have to figure out -- when you're only doing two a year and with limited resources, we have to figure out which two are going to make the biggest impacts to the public. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you to the Minister and her staff for that. And perhaps if Members have suggestions or ideas, we could communicate that to the Minister as to what programs can be evaluated next. Very exciting. We know what one Member would pick.

Just to follow up on my colleague's questions about the SNAP students and apprenticeship opportunities, I just -- I know that we have goals in the business plan of I guess the department itself or maybe the department-funded projects hiring ten apprentices and five SNAP students. Is there something different in terms of a requirement that's been applied now than has happened in the past? I know, you know, the department has had students occasionally in the past working. Have we done something different in order to ensure we're, like, able to find more apprentices or students or create more opportunities for them, or are we just sort

of carrying on and still hoping that we'll be able to meet these targets? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the challenge with SNAP students specifically -- which is an area that is, you know, has an opportunity for growth -- is that these students are under casual contracts which means that they can't be -- that they have to be rehired after a period of time. But I think there has been some recent movement on that. I'll perhaps suggest I'll turn to the deputy to speak to that a bit further, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the deputy minister.

**MR. STEVE LOUTITT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this -- we are meeting next week with ECE, and we've been talking to finance as well, HR, to determine how we're going to be able to fund this. I think it's something that's a very important project. The SNAP students, like our apprentices, are investing in Northerners so it's something that's very dear to our hearts. And then perhaps making -- we're approaching the UNW with an MOU on how we're going to deal with casual employees so we don't have the break in service and can continue educating. I think that's something obviously that UNW would probably be wanting to help support us on, and I think it's something we all believe is good value for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, no, thanks for that update. That's great to know what some of the barriers are but also what work is being done to move through it as I think we can all agree that getting more people into the workforce is one of our highest priorities in this Assembly, and apprenticeships and things like the SNAP program can be great ways to do that. I'll leave it there for now.

I have a question about a few of the information items, but I'm hoping we'll have a chance to ask a few questions about that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? No further questions, please turn to page 285.

Infrastructure, regional, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$258,033,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. There are additional items on page 287 to 295. Are there any questions? Thank you, Members.

Please return now to departmental summary found on page 261 with information items on page 262 to 266. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, we will now call on the departmental summary.

Infrastructure, operations expenditure summary, total department, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$308,403,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, I'd like to turn over to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, some of my colleagues have already taken my thunder away here a little bit, but I did want to point out that I have had the pleasure of working with deputy minister Loutitt for some time and he has, for the last several days or weeks, been counting down his very favourite time of the year, which is session, but unfortunately this year he's counting it down because after 29 years of public service, Mr. Loutitt is retiring next Friday.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I just want to say that I want to wish the deputy minister as well a happy retirement, and when we were young and good looking, we used to play hockey together. And so anyways, now we'll just watch it on TV. Thank you very much.

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

I want to wish the committee -- sorry, the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will rise and report -- oh sorry, yes, the motion's in order. The motion's non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Nedhe-Wiilideh.



**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 275-20(1) and would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder, please. I'll pick my favourite Minister today, Member from Yellowknife South. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carried unanimously. There was no recorded vote.

Reports of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Minister of Infrastructure.

### Third Reading of Bills

BILL 11:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The Minister has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. 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 Thebacha.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please stand. All those abstentions, please stand. Colleagues, the recorded vote: 14 in favour, zero opposed, and zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 11 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Tuesday, March 4th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 530-20(1), Senior Envoy to Government of Canada
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motions
16. Motions
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
  - Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 4th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Unedited Hansard