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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, May 27, 2025****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer or Reflection

---Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):

Please be seated. Thank you, colleagues. Before we start, I'd like to recognize a very important person to this 19th Assembly, Ms. Caroline Cochrane; Rory, the other half of, so. So Shalene Woodward, Meredith Wilson -- okay, I am going to try this again -- Angela Gzowski and her partner Jeremy Bird. I would like to thank you very much for being here today and giving me the honour to recognize you. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 134-20(1):
STRATEGIC INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
MODERNIZATION FOR ENHANCED
SERVICE DELIVERY**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to talk about how the Government of the Northwest Territories is making improvements when it comes to our technology systems and online services. Our main goal is simple: We want to make government services easier to access and safer to use. We want people to be able to securely access services like applying for a permit, or accessing a marriage, birth or death certificate, no matter where they live in the Northwest Territories.

Residents can now access a wide array of services digitally, from applying for vital statistics documents or renewing driver's licenses and vehicle registrations, to managing apprenticeship profiles or obtaining fishing licenses.

Businesses benefit from the ability to apply for certain licenses and permits online, including those related to liquor sales or business operations outside of community boundaries, as well as submitting applications for electrical

and mechanical safety inspections. We are also making it easier for families to access health care by enabling applications and renewals for healthcare cards online. These additions reflect our efforts to consider online service delivery in our planning processes and ensure that individuals and businesses can obtain services securely and conveniently, no matter where they live in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we have improved how we plan for future technology. Instead of creating systems in silos, we now follow shared principles for every new system. These principles make sure systems are secure to talk to one another systems and can safely share information when needed. This helps different government programs get what they need without repeating the same work and provides a value-add.

To ensure these principles are followed, a group of officials from across government reviews major technology project ideas early on. Previously, they mainly checked budgets and timelines. Now, this group asks important questions such as will this system connect properly with our other systems? Will it keep information safe? Will it help us offer more online services in the future? Only projects that fit within these rules will move forward towards funding approval.

A key part of these improvements is a new program called information technology, or IT, planning studies. These studies help identify exactly what is needed, look at different options, and work out the costs before we spend public money. This year we started six of these studies. They are looking at replacing older systems used for case management, health information, inspections, and various registries. This approach helps reduce risks, saves time in setting up systems, and lets us choose systems that many different program areas can use instead of building separate ones. The plan for how these studies will work has been put together and will start being used this year.

Mr. Speaker, we are also making important improvements to our IT teams and how we manage technology project implementations. This means making sure we have the right

people and ways of working to build and handle technology projects efficiently. We have improved our process for planning projects, which will result in shorter, clearer projects with better funding plans, and this will improve the likelihood of projects being completed successfully. We have also spoken to decision-makers about how important it is to think about technology needs when they are creating new policies and programs. Good governance relies on secure, reliable, and modern technology systems.

Sound planning, improved management, and fiscal prudence is going to guide everything we do, and no technology project will be moving ahead unless it benefits the public, follows our IT principles, and the government department or program area is ready to move forward with that project. Simply put, we are treating technology systems like any other major infrastructure project: First we plan carefully, then we build.

Mr. Speaker, by taking this careful approach to our technology system investments, the government is getting ready to provide services that are modern, dependable, and easier for Northerners to use. We are focused on using public funds responsibly in this space and keeping information safe. I look forward to continuing to share updates with the Legislative Assembly as we work to make these plans a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 135-20(1):
2025 CANADIAN BIOMASS AWARD

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to recognize the outstanding achievement of staff at Housing NWT who were recently honoured with the Community Project of the Year award from Canadian Biomass. This award celebrates the district heating wood-pellet boiler system installed at Sissons Court housing complex in Yellowknife. I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the dedicated staff of infrastructure services at Housing NWT, as well as those from the Department of Infrastructure's energy, design and technical services group, for their support and commitment.

In 2022, Sissons Court's biomass heating plant replaced 45 aging fuel-oil furnaces and now provides renewable heating to 53 public housing units. This transition to wood pellets has lowered energy costs and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, advancing the Government of the Northwest Territory's

mandate to deliver affordable and sustainable housing. The project was a locally driven and supplied initiative relying on partnerships between government and the private sector. The system was designed by a northern consultant team, TAG Engineering, with assistance from a technical team at the GNWT and was installed by Hay River-based contractor Taylor and Company.

The Yellowknife Housing Authority, with assistance from the local contractor J&R Mechanical, are dedicated to the ongoing operation and maintenance of the heat plant to ensure reliable heat for residents.

The Sissons Court project was funded in part by a federal funding program called the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and showcases the power of collaboration between Housing NWT and local contractors. It is expected to generate significant long-term benefits, saving approximately \$125,000 annually in energy costs and offsetting 300 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in its first year of operation.

Mr. Speaker, biomass energy in the form of wood pellets is an important alternative in the Northwest Territories where traditional fuels such as oil and propane are costly and prone to market volatility. As demonstrated by this project, biomass is a proven and practical solution to implementing the GNWT's commitment to net zero by 2050. This biomass award marks a meaningful step forward in Housing NWT's mission demonstrating that sustainable energy solutions can be part of how we build stronger, more resilient communities across the North. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 136-20(1):
2025 NORTHWOODS NWT WRITERS
FESTIVAL

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an important cultural milestone. The NorthWords NWT Writers Festival is celebrating its 20th anniversary: Twenty years of championing northern voices and building community through storytelling.

Launched in 2006, NorthWords was born from a vision to bring Canada's most celebrated literary voices to the North and to elevate the powerful stories already being told in our own communities. That vision was realized by dedicated literary champions, including Judith Drinnan, Cathy Jewison, Doris McCann, Larry

Adamson, and Richard Van Camp. With early support from partners like the Tlicho government and De Beers Canada, they created a festival that has become nationally respected for its celebration of storytelling, mentorship, and northern culture.

Over the years, NorthWords has welcomed major Canadian authors like Linden MacIntyre and Elizabeth Hay. These guests brought fresh perspectives and returned home with stories of the North's people, land, and creative talent.

NorthWords has also proudly amplified Indigenous voices. Esteemed authors and knowledge-keepers such as the late Lee Maracle, the late Richard Wagamese, Katherena Vermette, Duke Redbird, Niigaan Sinclair, and Rosanna Deerchild, have shared stories rooted in truth, history, identity, and cultural resurgence. Their contributions have fostered meaningful conversations and affirmed the essential place of Indigenous storytelling in our collective narrative.

Mr. Speaker, what makes NorthWords truly special is its ongoing commitment to northern writers. It has given a platform for authors from across the territory, like Richard Van Camp, Allison McCreesh, Fran Hurcomb, whose voices reflect the humour, complexity, and resilience of life in the North. Through NorthWords, these voices are being heard far beyond our borders. That is why the government has supported NorthWords over the years.

With that support, the festival has grown into a year-round literary organization offering mentorships, open mics, workshops, and publications like *Coming Home: Stories from the NWT*, which helped many Northerners publish their work for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, the anniversary is not just about looking back. It is a moment to recognize the role of the arts in building stronger communities, preserving culture, and helping people, especially youth, express who they are and where they come from.

I want to thank the organizers, the board members, and volunteers who have helped grow NorthWords into what it is today. NorthWords makes us as the North proud. As we mark this anniversary, let us celebrate the stories already told and commit to creating space for many more to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 137-20(1): UPDATES TO IMPROVING CULTURAL SAFETY AND ANTI-RACISM

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to update this House on the work that's being done by the health and social services system on cultural safety and anti-racism, one of my top three priorities as Minister.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, our government has a duty to confront the persistent health inequities faced by Indigenous residents. Our commitment to cultural safety and anti-racism tackles a difficult reality and that is that these inequities stem from a health and social services system founded on colonial values that have marginalized Indigenous peoples and excluded them from decision-making. Those foundations continue to influence our legislation, policies, funding formulas, and clinical standards, embedding racism in the very structures that shape and care we provide.

Undoing this legacy is challenging work. It requires us to rethink governance models, realign resources, and place Indigenous knowledge and legal orders on equal footing with public government approaches. We have begun a sustained effort to audit existing policies for colonial bias, co-develop new accountability mechanisms with Indigenous governments, and elevate Indigenous leadership at every level of the system. This is complex and, at times, uncomfortable work, but it is essential if we are to create a health system that serves all residents equitably and without colonial harm.

Part of this work includes offering training to all GNWT employees, Mr. Speaker, and I want to commend my colleagues for participating in the cultural safety and anti-racism training offered by the department. We will continue to offer this training, including to GNWT deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers in the coming year. I believe that any genuine organizational shift towards cultural safety must start with the commitment from leadership, and I am pleased to see the leaders of our public service fully engaging with this principle.

Like any effective work addressing anti-Indigenous racism, our work originates from within, guided by a dedicated team of Indigenous staff from across the Northwest Territories. They bring rich insights rooted in lived experience and Indigenous knowledge reinforced by extensive professional expertise. This team is responsible for developing an Indigenous made-in-the-North approach to cultural safety that challenges the status quo by

identifying and addressing anti-Indigenous racism head-on.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to support equitable access to culturally-safe relationship-based care that tangibly improves health outcomes for Indigenous people. We are doing this through the Office of Client Experience, primary care reform, and by improving access to care in small communities. Our team, with staff from across the health and social services system, is piloting a new equity tool to generate deep reflection, relationship-building, and accountability, to Indigenous communities.

The work to date has been informed by community voices and our progress has been driven by the principle of nothing about us without us. Instead of top-down directives, we are listening to the advice and guidance of the health and social services Indigenous advisory body. Our leadership in cultural safety and anti-racism is gaining wide recognition and respect with other departments and jurisdictions now seeking our expertise. We are proud of that. Real progress means embracing discomfort and rethinking long-held assumptions about expertise and decision-making power. Our team is guiding these candid discussions, fostering safe, productive learning spaces and, most importantly, building relationships rooted in trust with each other and with the communities we serve.

Mr. Speaker, racism is more than individual acts. It is embedded in the way we do business, from the beliefs and values that we have as an organization to the policies, practices, and unwritten rules we adopt. Racism is often unchecked, and systemic. If left unaddressed, racism flourishes and spreads. We will continue to bring these systemic barriers to light, placing Indigenous priorities at the centre, and delivering a meaningful change where it is needed the most. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 661-20(1):
2025 NORTHWORDS WRITERS FESTIVAL

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to echo the words of our Minister of education in congratulating the NorthWords Festival on its 20th year.

The NorthWords Festival is a celebration of northern writers and storytellers, bringing

together authors, readers, and community members for readings, panel discussions, workshops, and special events. And one of the most anticipated event for the festival is tonight's book launch. It's called Book of Hope: Healthcare and Survival in the North, hosted by Hoteth Dega // at Yellowknife Books starting at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Book of Hope is written by Agnes R. Pascal, who is Tetlit Gwich'in, originally from Fort McPherson and now residing in Inuvik. Her book is a powerful collection of firsthand narratives from northern and Indigenous cancer survivors and caregivers, offering insight into the unique challenges of healthcare accessibility in our communities.

As much as we've been focused lately on supporting healthcare staff, I think it's essential that we keep coming back to the experiences of patients, their journeys, both their literal travel and their life journeys, to understand the ways that our system as a whole works and doesn't work well. And on that note, I also want to take a moment to express any appreciation for the NWT cancer navigation team at the health authorities which is doing incredible work supporting members of our communities going through some of the toughest times of their lives. I am hoping that session doesn't go too long this evening so that we can all go over and attend the launch of this important book of hope.

Mr. Speaker, the NorthWords Festival so much for everyone of all ages. Some of the events this week are free, and others do require the purchase of tickets, but they're incredibly accessible. So I encourage everyone to try to get out to at least one event this week before the last day, which is Sunday.

Finally, a big thanks and congratulations to the NorthWords organizers, volunteers, and all of the participating writers and storytellers. Happy 20 years, NorthWords. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 662-20(1):
2023 WILDFIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE
AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at my recent constituency meeting, I had a good discussion with Frame Lake residents about their reaction to the after-action review of the 2023 wildfire season. One of the key concerns we discussed was the lack of trust

and confidence in GNWT communications during the event, and I do want to take a second to acknowledge that the report made a point of noting that NWT Fires' regular updates were received positively.

My constituents were clear, Mr. Speaker, that it is important to them that the government rebuild trust with residents, as it's crucial that residents feel confident to look to their government for guidance during times of crisis. My constituents expressed concern that due to experiences of past evacuations, when there are future evacuation orders residents may not take them seriously. That concern in particular is one I want us to pay close attention to as its implications are very serious.

I know that the GNWT is in the process of preparing a response to the report, and I want to suggest that rebuilding trust should be a main theme which informs that response. Rebuilding trust and confidence in the public to look to their government for guidance and support first and foremost but also building stronger relationships and understanding with Indigenous and municipal governments and with the many NGOs we rely on to help deliver services to residents. Building trust and fostering confidence in the public and our partners that we are prepared and have solid plans and response structures in place is the key to ensuring future emergency response will be safe and successful. Just as critical as trust is ensuring that everyone implicated in planning is fully aware of their role and responsibilities from full-time emergency response staff to indirectly involved GNWT staff, all the way down to individual residents.

One of the key recommendations of the review that I think needs to be looked at closely, and taken seriously, is the recommendation to establish a dedicated territorial emergency management agency. This may be what's needed to ensure that trust and relationship building I have discussed above takes place. We have a lot of work to do, Mr. Speaker. I would like to explore more of the review's recommendations, but don't have time in a short statement. I wanted to highlight the primary concerns of my constituents today and will be following up comprehensively on the report going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 663-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINATION
PROGRAM

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to continue the line of questioning and talk a little bit about my constituency experience with the NWT nomination program.

The Minister yesterday expanded on some of what she is going to be going to Ottawa and advocating for on behalf of the program and our residents, including restoring the allocation to 300, engaging -- asking the federal government to engage directly with GNWT and NWT stakeholders, allow the GNWT to extend work permits for a two-year NWT-specific frame, and to enhance support for settlement services. These are all fantastic pieces, Mr. Speaker, but I am most crucially interested in the third ask, which is to extend those work permits for a two-year NWT-specific work permit.

Constituents don't want to extend their work permits right now, Mr. Speaker, because the way that the program is structured means that if they extend their work permit, they are then losing out on the ability to get into the allotment that it currently exists, and then they are ineligible to seek that permanent residency track from our program.

Mr. Speaker, it's really important for newcomers who are on temporary work permits right now, it's important for them to get clarity on whether the GNWT will continue to only consider applications of those applicant who are -- whose permits are set to expire within a year or less. There's a lot of anxiety and frustration, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken about this many times, and I will be seeking clarity from the Minister of ECE later today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 664-20(1):
COLVILLE LAKE SCHOOL

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Colville Lake school was a capital project approved in the later part of the 18th Assembly, 2019. Mr. Speaker, the residents, students, local DEA, and teachers of the community of Colville Lake was and remain steadfast on their new school's arrival. The completed procurement, construction, certifications, now the transportation.

Mr. Speaker, the winter road journey, after the highgrade at Fort Wrigley north, can be very challenging at best, creating difficulties on logistics and trucking companies.

Mr. Speaker, the journey, the winter road journey to Colville Lake is 645 kilometers with

three ice crossings. These crossings represent additional weight limitations. Prior to this challenging journey, the over-dimensional three-part modular buildings first must be transferred from Edmonton to Wrigley, a distance of 1,618 kilometers, a section with challenges of overhead structures and structural bridges. As you can understand, Mr. Speaker, there are many considerations when planning a journey of this mobilization.

This coming transportation season, we cannot afford to let our community and the children down. Mr. Speaker, I raised these questions on numerous occasions: When will these long overdue learning facility units be delivered? Investing in our community, describing, upgrading our education environment to suit the positive outcomes and bring smiles to the residents, in particular our students, is the right thing to do and our mandate. An example to that, behind the **dejishu**, there sits four classes in one cubical room. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 665-20(1):
CRIME LEGISLATION

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, drugs and the criminal activity associated with drugs are ravaging our communities. All communities large and small are feeling the effects, Mr. Speaker. We've heard that loud and clear from Members in this House many times. We have legislation being considered to provide additional tools in our fight to deal with this dire situation:

- The safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, allowing residents to make confidential complaints to investigators on illegal activity;
- The civil forfeiture legislation, designed to recover proceeds and instruments used to facilitate crime;
- Mr. Speaker, the trespass legislation to protect landowners from trespassers by deferring potential criminal behaviour or inadvertent damages that trespassers may cause; and, Mr. Speaker,
- Reviewing the Residential Tenancies Act give it the teeth required to assist in dealing with this illegal activity.

Moving this legislation forward as quickly as possible is paramount in our fight to deal with this problem. If there was ever a time to fast track legislation, Mr. Speaker, and put all the resources necessary to expedite our process, this is it.

This is no time to drag our feet, Mr. Speaker. We need to move timelines up. We need to pull out all the stops. This is a key part of the mandate of this government, Mr. Speaker, and all of us in this House. Let's get it done. Let's let the residents know we are serious about dealing with drugs and crime in our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 666-20(1):
STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Student financial assistance. Mr. Speaker, as another school year ends, I want to recognize the high school students graduating across the Northwest Territories. This is an exciting time for our young people, filled with hope and ambition, as they prepare to leave their communities to pursue post-secondary education. However, Mr. Speaker, the reality for Indigenous students in our smaller communities is more complicated. The education outcomes in small communities continue to fall behind those in our regional centres.

Mr. Speaker, too many of our graduates do not meet the entry requirement for direct admission into the programs of their choice. Instead, they are forced to pursue academic upgrading before continuing their studies.

Mr. Speaker, we discussed this in the last sitting with the closure of the community learning centres. Our students do not want to return to high school or even Aurora College to complete their upgrading. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, our current Student Financial Assistance Policy does not support students upgrading outside of Aurora College. Students and families who want to explore other institutions are denied funding. It feels like we are holding them hostage to limited options in Fort Smith, Yellowknife, or Inuvik. We also lack financial assistance for part-time studies. Students on income support or those working full-time in small communities deserve access to programs like personal support worker training without financial barriers.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to create a strong workforce and reduce dependency, we must invest in flexible, accessible education for all

our youth, especially our Indigenous students in small communities. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 667-20(1):
CANADA HEALTH ACT COMPLIANCE

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, while healthcare administration is a territorial responsibility, the federal government still plays an important role in ensuring all provinces and territories comply with the Canada Health Act, an Act which guarantees universal, comprehensive health care to all Canadians based solely on their needs and not their financial abilities. While not an outright guarantee to a right to health care, it is compliance which determines the eligibility of provinces and territories to receive health care funding through the Canada health transfer and a cherished part of Canadian identity. Clearly, funding available through the Canada health transfer is not enough for our needs here in the North, and the Minister of Health and Social Services is always ready to press her federal counterparts in efforts to secure more resources to address the systemic challenges Northerners face. However, given that these systemic challenges have escalated into what can now only be described as an urgent crisis with no clear end in sight, it can be safely assumed that the Minister is gearing up for another round of lobbying when the point of failure is reached.

Before this Minister turns, however, to admonish her counterparts in Ottawa for their perceived inaction, we should first examine our own record as a government in upholding the very laws we are responsible for enforcing. Is the North's health care truly comprehensive without primary care? Is it universal when communities and small communities are serviced by hospitals, health centres, and health cabins that have no doctors, nurses, or other trained medical professionals on staff? Even on an operational standard, is it still a trauma bay if it is eventually run by the same staff who run a flu clinic?

Maybe we should stop calling this a health care crisis, and we should start calling this a leadership crisis. We have the same geography, logistics, and unique northern challenges we've always had. How can we turn to the federal government to ask for more when, to many, it feels like we aren't meeting the minimum standards required to be compliant with the Canada Health Act?

Mr. Speaker, nurses are asking. Doctors are asking. Northerners are asking. It's time that the Minister answer those questions with a real plan, not a work plan to a public administer -- administrator, but a real plan to fix health care in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 668-20(1):
TREATY 8 MEDICINE CHEST AND HEALTH
CARE ACCESS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When our ancestors entered treaty 8 in the spirit of peace and friendship, they also did so with the understanding of the "medicine chest clause" and how it would significantly lasting commitments to health and well-being for our people. Through our oral history, we continue to remember and uphold these rights which are now constitutionally-protected under section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. These rights have been further reinforced by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, UNDRIP, which this very House has adopted.

UNDRIP clearly affirms the rights of Indigenous people to the highest attainable standard of health. The truth and reconciliation also identified and improved access to health services as essential to reconciliation, a message echoed by the UNDRIP // final report.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous people of the Northwest Territories continue to experience substandard health care and inequitable access to essential services. Here in the NWT, only 59 percent of residents report having access to regular healthcare providers. In small communities like Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution, the numbers are even worse.

I have heard directly from the chiefs and my constituents in my communities who are calling for the creation of an intergovernmental working group to ensure Indigenous governments have a seat at the table in shaping health and social services. They are watching the innovative healthcare model being advanced by other First Nations across Canada, whether administered through Indigenous governments or through private First Nations run health centres, and they hope to replicate these successes here. It's time to work with leaders to build a healthcare system that truly serves all Northerners and uphold our treaty rights.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with Indigenous governments on this issue, and I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 669-20(1):
CONSENSUS GOVERNMENT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've never seen consensus government as frustrating as I've seen it today in my four terms. Mr. Speaker, I repeatedly ask and point out to this Premier to involve Members as part of the team. Let them feel part of the solution as we work on these problems together. Members needs wins. You know what his response to me was? Write a letter.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen this letter writing exercise, or even questioned exercise, which is they're just waiting for our comments to officially trigger their official disagreement why we're wrong. But don't worry, it's already drafted and in the queue.

Mr. Speaker, some people are saying we were here to be sent to work together. That is true. There is some truth in that, Mr. Speaker. But what I've noticed and seen is the informal expectation that you are not allowed to challenge the government, Mr. Speaker. And if you don't agree, then you're defined as being disagreeable. Mr. Speaker, it leaves me to wonder, are Members just members of the Simpson-ettes? I don't know.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, there are many other concerns. So when Members like myself are questioning the \$440,000 envoy appointed to Ottawa, it's because it's a bad decision. Premier says, it's my decision. Mr. Speaker, when you challenge these things, you know, you expect a little more discussion. But no, it's his decision, too darn bad.

Mr. Speaker, I feel like it's no longer consensus government; it's more -- it feels more like akin to an ill-reputed regime by being able to make these types of decisions without them really being fulsomely discussed.

Mr. Speaker, has this government become drunk on power because they can? Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier on his own getting to appoint a \$440,000 employee?

Mr. Speaker, because he can, because others do so? Well, Mr. Speaker, by way of example, Ontario does it. That's not a good answer. Quebec does it. That's a terrible answer. Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, that's almost like the

beginning of a bad dad joke. Oh, what one lemming said to the other? Well, because they did it.

Mr. Speaker, the envoy in Ontario costs around \$140,000 per year. The envoy in Quebec costs \$140,000 a year. How does ours cost more than twice as much? Mr. Speaker, are we getting more than twice as much value? Mr. Speaker, there's so much more to talk about but I'll tell you, when I'm holding court in the coffee shops and in the communities, in the grocery stores, no one likes this position because they don't see a stinking element of value. They want transparency, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 670-20(1):
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SPORT

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, equitable access to sport is fundamental to creating inclusive communities where everyone can experience the physical, social, and mental health benefits of athletic participation. Barriers like cost, equipment, and lack of safe spaces prevent many from participating, particularly affecting low-income communities, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups. Sport creates safe spaces when people find the right spaces, and a new volunteer-led organization is working to do just that.

Northwest Territories Equitable Sport Access, affectionately referred to as NTESA, connects youth with sport mentors, hosts teams in Yellowknife's leagues, and organizes accessible pop-up events where donation dollars raised are turned around to help all NWT residents access sports. NTESA is fully volunteer-based, an organizational pillar that upholds the importance of adults investing in youth and community without expecting pay. These volunteers don't just run programs; they shape lives and they save them. They create welcoming spaces that make sport accessible to all, including a sold-out dodgeball tournament this past Sunday that saw a diverse roster battle for hours, raising hundreds of dollars for NWT youth, sport, and recreation.

Mr. Speaker, you've made it clear where sport sits in your priorities, and our perspectives have always aligned on the court, field, and ice. Sport isn't just a game. Teamwork builds trust, game setbacks teach resilience, and discipline develops character.

The impact is measurable: high school athletes have 40 percent lower dropout rates and are

twice as likely to graduate. Youth in organized sports are 50 percent less likely to experience depression and 25 percent less anxious. Sports participants are three times more likely to do community volunteer, 50 percent less likely to use drugs, and have higher adult employment rates. Beyond individual benefits, sport strengthens communities by reducing youth crime and creating connections that truly last a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, access to sport and recreation saves lives and builds stronger communities. Those aren't my words but those of NWT residents who participated in multiple Standing Committee on Social Development reports in the 19th Assembly. Every dollar and hour we, as residents, invest in sport and recreation changes our territory's trajectory one athlete, one volunteer, one community at a time. If you want to get involved in NTESA, it's as easy as showing up. And, together, we can ensure sport remains a bridge to opportunity rather than a barrier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 671-20(1):
HUNTING IN THE DEHCHO - JONATHAN
ANTOINE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, this past December, I had the opportunity to chat with Jonathan Antoine about his recent trip to Los Angeles. He explained that they were able to announce the debut of the short documentary Hunting in the Deh Cho, directed by himself at the prestigious LA Skins Film Festival on November 24th at 12 p.m. This significant event took place at the iconic Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles, California.

He explained that this remarkable experience would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of the festival organizers, and sincere gratitude is owed to them for selecting this important work to be showcased. This is his second time showcasing his films in Los Angeles.

He explained to me that he extends his heartfelt appreciation to Ricky Tsetso and Errol Villeneuve whose courage in sharing their invaluable stories is pivotal in highlighting the rich cultural heritage of Dene people of Liidlii Kue. Additionally, the generous support from the Deh Cho GNWT ITI team was instrumental in bringing this project to fruition.

In true Jonathan fashion, he made special mention to Dustin Dewar, whose artistic vision has transformed the team's ideas into a compelling narrative. He spent days working to

provide the final product that was Jonathan vision. He stressed that the wonderful community and residents of Liidlii Kue and Fort Simpson deserve recognition for their steadfast encouragement and belief in this mission and his dream of being a film director.

As the conversation came full circle, he talked about the immense support from his family and friends which cannot be overlooked. Their unwavering faith has helped him do this type of adventure in film and they are very much part of his achievements.

Moving forward with this journey, he has a strong commitment to continue to screen this documentary wherever opportunities arise. Together, he and his team will share these important stories and foster greater understanding within our communities. I look forward to seeing what he does next. Thank you.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Premier.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to do what I've actually seen one of the visitors in the gallery do before. As Premier, it's an honour to recognize former Premier Caroline Cochrane who is joining us today along with Shalene Woodward, both of whom I served with and worked with in the last Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real privilege to have a former Premier in the chamber today, and it's a real privilege to represent that former Premier as my constituent in Range Lake. So thank you, Caroline Cochrane, for being here today with your partner Rory. It's always great to have eyes in this the gallery, and you are definitely a VIP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some Tree of Peace adult ed students I'd like to recognize, three of them in particular. We have first Jasmine Powder. Secondly, I have Anastazie Goulet. And the third, and certainly not least, Margo Remnant. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize former Premier of the Northwest Territories, Caroline Cochrane. We had the opportunity to work together during the 18th Assembly. Mahsi.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to see from my seat but you recognized them earlier, and I'm not sure if they're still there. But Frame Lake constituents, Jeremy Bird and Angela Gzowski were in this the House earlier. And I'd also like to recognize the Premier who I had the pleasure of working with in her capacity as education Minister and a Premier when I was working as a city councillor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to recognize the former Premier of the NWT from the 19th Assembly, Caroline Cochrane. And, also, I'd like to welcome Shalene Woodward and Anastasia Goulet. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also recognize former Premier Cochrane. I had the pleasure to be in the 19th Assembly and have her at the helm of this Assembly with all of the things that we did, and as well as her partner. The last time I saw him, we were jumping on a plane, and we won't say when. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chamber. I hope you enjoy the proceedings. It's always nice to see people in the gallery, and I'd, again, like to thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity to represent the people of the Northwest Territories.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 718-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Premier in follow-up to my Member's statement, Mr. Speaker, and for the record, we all know that the full costs of the -- his envoy, his friend there, is \$440,000. So my question specifically is how many political appointments does the -- sorry, how many politically-appointed GNWT staff are paid more than the Prime Minister of Canada? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what the salary of the Prime Minister of Canada is. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the same question. The Prime Minister of Canada's paid about \$300,000. I believe the base pay of all MPs is about \$200,000, and he receives a hundred thousand additional on top. That's how you get to 300,000. So now that we've set the table, Mr. Speaker, the question still stands, how many politically-appointed GNWT staff are paid more than the Prime Minister of Canada? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd say probably one. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, we all know that -- we all know who this envoy is, but we don't know where the envoy is. He has no office, not on the GNWT website. Nobody knows anything about how to track him down but he's worth \$440,000, the top paid -- top paid --

MR. SPEAKER: -- ask the question. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: How many politically-appointed GNWT staff are able to work remotely from outside the NWT who are paid more than the Prime Minister of Canada?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the envoy to Ottawa works in the Northwest Territories and works in Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 719-20(1):
INSURED HEALTHCARE SERVICES /
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR WORKPLAN -
NIHB

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the public administrator for NTHSSA's work plan, it tasks him to, quote, "work with NTHSSA and DHSS to find ways to increase and reduce expenditures within the health and social services system, including supporting the establishment of income assessment and fee collection structures as applicable."

I've had two people reach out to me today, constituents, who are concerned what this actually means. So can the Minister clarify, are we looking to recoup the costs of the health system on the back of patients and people who need health care in the Northwest Territories?

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the services that we provide in the Northwest Territories, what that statement means is that we look across jurisdictions and we compare for non-insured services what they are charging residents for, how are they charging residents for, and is that something that, you know, to be able to pay for our extended health benefits and other programs that aren't covered by the federal government, how can we find funding. It doesn't mean that we are -- made those decisions. It's looking at ways to be able to continue to provide non-insured services to the residents of the Northwest Territories without any costs as a lot of them are now. So we'll continue to do those reviews, and those decisions would definitely be decisions that we bring back to this -- or to the Members and having those discussions if there were any changes. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, many of these non-insured services are critical services. I believe the urology department at Stanton is non-funded. So what services are we -- well, let's just get into that.

What services might we lose or might cost people to use after this review is done? Could the Minister give people a heads up, because if they're getting free care right now and they turn around and start charging them, we're going to hear about it in this chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if a patient is referred to neurology -- and I know that the Member is just using that as an example -- that would be an

insured service. I could go on and talk about all of the different insured services, but if Members wanted to understand what non-insured services are, those are the services that we provide through extended health benefits. So many of the services that are provided through that. But, however, there are other services that we do provide free of charge so outpatient rehab services, things like that. In many jurisdictions, insurances cover those. We provide those free. They're not even added to our extended health benefits list. So those are types of things. If you're inpatient and you're getting rehab services, then those are part of the insured services. If there is more information, you know, I'd be more than willing to provide standing committee on this kind of information. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you to the Minister for clarifying some of these points. The problem is when the work plan says as applicable, that's a very big window, and I think when people read that without that clarification. So will the Minister agree to update this work plan to make it clear that insured services will not be a fee-for-service in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, I will direct the PA to update what needs to be updated in that area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 720-20(1):
2023 WILDFIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE
AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier agree that rebuilding trust needs to be a key goal of the government response to the after-action review on the wildfire season in 2023? And, Mr. Speaker, what does he feel is needed to achieve that goal? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know we're not supposed to discuss opinions in this House, but I'll indulge the Member. Yes, obviously, we needed to improve trust of government in emergency situations. I think that is, you know, one of the primary lessons that we've learned from this last series of evacuations that we had. The work to do that

has already begun. It began at the beginning of this government.

When I drove out of Hay River, there was no one there to close the highway because people didn't understand what their roles were. And no fault of their own. But we weren't organized enough as a government to ensure that people knew where to people, when to be there, and what to do. And so as a result, we had vehicles driving out of the community into the middle of an active forest fire. So that is one of the very first things that I really focused on, ensuring that there were business continuity plans across government, that everyone's role was defined, so that they knew what they were going to do. So doing things like that and letting the public know that we've done those types of things, we've seen the issues that happened, and we are taking steps to correct them, I think that's important. And as we provide a response to the after-action review, the public will see the action that we've taken and understand that we've taken this seriously. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I note that the report contains some short-term recommendations but also some very long-term recommendations as far as four years into the future. Mr. Speaker, how will the government ensure these recommendations are followed up on and not forgotten? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, we are going to be providing a response, and this is wading into the Minister of MACA's territory, so I don't want to get too ahead of things. But the long-term work begins now. And so a lot of that long-term work - the planning, the relationships - that's already begun. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Premier started to touch on the answer to this question already, but he noted that the GNWT has already taken some action. Can the Premier detail for the House what has been done to date in response to this report or to the 2023 wildfires and lessons learned? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So noting that there will be a full review -- or sorry, a report back on the recommendations, I can note a few things.

So one of the -- obviously, one of the very first things was the realization that fire seasons start earlier than ever and so because of that, the GNWT has been bringing on fire crews, aircraft, seasonal wildfire personnel, earlier than they were before, and there's been significant

investments made in mitigation and prevention efforts.

We've been working with Indigenous governments. We heard in the last -- during the 2023 evacuations that Indigenous governments, not just the community governments that might be run by the band but even regional Indigenous governments, wanted more of a role in emergency management. And so we've struck a working group with the Council of Leaders to look at how we can amend the Emergency Management Act. And we've done the same thing with the NWTAC and with LGANT to ensure that communities are engaged in that work.

We are further supporting communities by delivering community emergency planning workshops and desktop exercises to better understand, so communities can better understand emergency management and how it would play out in the real world. We are working with them to update their community emergency plans, and we are increasing preparedness through practice, Mr. Speaker.

We're working on staffing, so building the GNWT's surge capacity by providing incident command system training, and the Minister of MACA spoke about that earlier this week.

We're also taking steps to ensure there's more coordination, so establishing emergency management training and development advisor position to help coordinate and track emergency management training requirements, as well as an emergency preparedness planner position, and staffing up -- and I believe they're all fully staffed now -- the regional emergency management coordinators. So those are some of the activities that I can speak to at this moment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 721-20(1):
COLVILLE LAKE SCHOOL

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my questions here related to the Colville Lake school to the Minister of ECE, my first question to the Minister is are the three modular units completed, certified, and ready for transportation? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to start off by saying I share the Member's frustration

and the community's frustration on this one very much. Mr. Speaker, we were anticipating shipping of these units this previous winter road season. We had worked diligently with the Department of Infrastructure and the company to get this done and were then advised in February of 2025 that the contractor's transportation company would no longer be able to deliver the units during that winter road season, the one that we have just, just passed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for that information here. My next question there to the same Minister is the procurement closed aside from the final shipping costs? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as part of the contract, it is the company's responsibility to ship the units to Colville Lake. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for that information. My next question and final one, will the Minister supply my office with the new 2026 winter road transportation schedule. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education -- I don't know if that's the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment question. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, she's prepared to answer the question. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know it's one that certainly straddles two departments but as infrastructure does -- or sorry, as education, culture and employment does not actually build our capital projects in the territory, I do work very closely with my colleagues on this House and would be more than happy to work with the Minister of Infrastructure on developing some information for the Member for the Sahtu. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 722-20(1):
TIMELINE UPDATE ON FORTHCOMING
JUSTICE LEGISLATION

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I mentioned three pieces of legislation that are in the queue. This legislation is paramount to our war on drugs and the criminal activity that comes with drugs. Mr. Speaker, my questions

are for the Minister of Justice. Can he give this House an update and what the status is of these three very important pieces of legislation - safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, civil forfeiture legislation, and the trespass legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as was so well stated in the Member's statement, I think that, you know, as we look at the challenges that we're facing in every community regarding drugs and crime, it's certainly top of mind, I know for all of the Members of this House, and certainly one of my priorities since I've become Minister of Justice. So the plan for these three specific pieces of legislation is to have legislative proposals developed during the summer of 2025 and pending approval by Cabinet to advance those legislative proposals.

A couple of -- I'll speak maybe to the SCAN legislation and the Civil Forfeiture Act, which are a lot more complex than the trespass legislation and will require extensive engagement with the public and stakeholders as we move those two forward. So the plan with those is to -- based on approval of obviously of the legislative proposals is to advance those and to have a bill brought to the floor in the winter sitting of 2026.

With regard to the Trespass Act, as I stated yesterday that's a little less complex piece of legislation, and we're currently working on the legislative proposal and, again, pending approval of the legislative proposal we'll bring that forward for a somewhat limited public engagement on that and with the target of bringing a bill to the floor in the fall sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister has also said to this House and committed to reviewing the Residential Tenancies Act to give that some strength as well to help us with this drug crisis. Can the Minister give an update on where they are with the Residential Tenancies Act review. Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. Certainly another very critical piece of legislation that will support the work of the different, you know, agencies that are trying to combat the drugs and the crime across the NWT and certainly as important to the territory to help us in that endeavour as the other three pieces.

So currently the department is doing a review of the Residential Tenancies Act, and that review will continue through the summer of 2025. And the information that's gathered from that review will be used to develop the legislative proposal for the Act and determine what future public engagement will also be required as we move that forward. So we have essentially four really important pieces of legislation and, you know, so moving those first three pieces forward has been the priority direction that we've given to the department right now, and we will continue to pursue the Residential Tenancies Act review and ensure that we're meeting with the stakeholders and the residents of the Northwest Territories, you know, taking into consideration the information from the rental officer, the information from this House and media, as well as our stakeholders that are involved in the conversation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know I can speak for AOC when I say we're ready for these LPs. You know, we're ready to get working on this. I appreciate that it's been brought up a little, that's going to be introduced in the winter sitting. My question, I guess, would be I know there's public engagement that has to be done on that. Can that public engagement on those three important pieces of legislation be done through the summer months to move this up even further, Mr. Speaker? We'd welcome these LPs as soon as they come forward, so the quicker we can get this work done, the better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for the question. I think, you know, all Members of this House on both sides, Cabinet and Regular Members, are anxious to move these forward, and I think that was expressed yesterday and, you know, the advancement of the Trespass Act and shortening that timeline from our original plan to have all three pieces of legislation together and brought forward in the summer of 2026, so now we're looking at the fall of 2025 for the Trespass Act. We're looking at the winter sitting for the other two pieces of legislation. And the Trespass Act, I think is certainly an easier consultation with the public and the stakeholders. The other two are much more complex and, really, you know, to get those advanced to a state where we could bring a bill forward in the fall would be -- I don't think that's possible with the complexities that were faced there and the amount of engagement that would be required because of the fact that they

are -- the SCAN legislation, particularly, is a little bit more contentious, and we'll need to ensure that we are engaging everyone on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 723-20(1):
STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
ELIGIBILITY

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to reviewing the current student financial assistance policy to allow students to receive funding for academic upgrading at institutions outside of Aurora College, either online or outside of the territory, so that our students with -- our students with financial assistance needs have a greater choice and access to quality education?

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of this work has recently just happened where Aurora College is transitioning a lot of their programs online in recognition that a lot of students do want to stay in their home community when they are pursuing some education so that they have those home supports as well and understanding that not every city or every place is where students want to go.

In addition to the college access program and the occupations and college access program at Aurora College and their online offerings, there's also the University of Alberta's transition year program that is also included and funded by student financial assistance. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister say what's step is the department taking to address the lack of financial support for part-time studies, especially for students on income support or those working full-time in small communities who want to pursue programs, like personal support worker training? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in it regards to part-time studies, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment does fund students up to \$880 per course with a maximum of \$8,800 per year with the idea that beyond that, they're probably actually potentially looking at more of full-time studies, depending on what they're taking.

In the end of the previous Assembly, there were steps taken to increase our student financial

assistance, and especially student financial assistance for Indigenous students in the territory, and also changed the number of semesters that they were eligible for to an unlimited number of semesters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given the closure of community learning centres and the limited upgrading options available, how does the department plan to ensure that Indigenous students from small communities can meet post-secondary admission requirements without being forced to leave home or return to institutions they are not comfortable attending? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so some of this has to do with the change that's recently occurred within Aurora College where students would be able to be supported to take learning in a digitally and online environment but supported with wraparound services through Aurora College.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, later on this week, I have the honour of having conversations with my colleagues on the other side of the House in regards to some upcoming suggested approaches to adult learning and basic education for the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 724-20(1):
DRINKING WATER QUALITY IN SCHOOLS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education. So within the past day, parents of students at Ecole William McDonald Middle School and Range Lake North School received news that drinking water in those schools is dangerously high in lead. At William McDonald School, the levels were almost twice the maximum acceptable concentration according to Health Canada's guidelines. And we know that exposure to high levels of lead over time can cause adverse health effects and given that the city's water supply is regularly tested and deemed safe, the problem must be with some part of the plumbing or distribution systems at the schools.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister, how many schools in the NWT have had their drinking

water tested this year? In other words, how many were determined to have safe drinking water versus how many of the water quality tests have come back as unsafe to drink? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all of our schools' water systems were tested, and two of the schools came back as needing confirmation testing and so, proactively, the departments of education, health and social services, and the school board, worked together to make sure that that water is not used right now for drinking or for cooking purposes. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, so that's good to know that the only two schools with problems are William Mac and Range Lake North. However, I'm wondering has the drinking water at Ecole William McDonald School and Range Lake North School been tested on a regular basis and determined to be safe up until now, or is this the first time that the drinking water at those schools has been tested? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, drinking water is routinely tested in communities throughout the territory. This project was done as a pilot to test drinking water from the school sources, and so this is the first time this work has been done.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. So it sounds like we don't know for how long the concern has been there.

The final question is if the plumbing and distribution systems in these two schools are the source of these high lead levels, does the Minister know how quickly they can be fixed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the next week, confirmation testing will be done in both of the schools and until we determine what those results are and then also from there do some exploration as to what the source of the issue is, I would have -- it would be impossible for me to say kind of what the next steps are for remediating that and fixing that until I know what the issue is and if there is,

in fact, a longstanding challenge there that needs to be fixed. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 725-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE
PROGRAM

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And my questions are also for the Minister of ECE. I don't want to preclude conversations she will have in Ottawa, but when can constituents expect more information of a redesigned -- equitably designed NTNP program intake for 2026 applications? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will be working with all stakeholders, redesigning that program over the summer and the fall of this year, and working with businesses, working with advocates, working with Canadian newcomers who want to be part of the program and are part of the program. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will this program, as it's being redesigned, make reasonable allowances so as not to create an extension gap where people are put in limbo needing to extend their work permit and not be able to seek their PR? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the re-release of the program this year, one thing that quickly became apparent was that there was concern over people whose work permits would be expiring in January and February of 2026. That quickly became apparent. And so while there is never an intention to design a program that has a gap, certainly I do know that going into next year that we have more people interested in the program than we currently have spaces for. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if I heard an answer there so I'll put it in a different way. Is there contemplation in the redesign that will give affordances to the fact that your application, if you do not -- if you're not

successful on the NTNP application, you have to then extend your work permit. This is creating a cycle of gap and anxiety for people. Will that begin to become addressed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this certainly is part of what I'm travelling to Ottawa to advocate for but while the Government of Canada holds exclusive responsibility for things like work permits, I would not be able to guarantee that without an agreement with the federal government. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 726-20(1):
INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AND
GUIDANCE IN HEALTHCARE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a big part of our health and social services has been falling short with Indigenous governments and in our small communities because Indigenous governments are not closely involved with healthcare administration. The leaders from my communities are calling for a creation of intergovernmental working group to ensure Indigenous governments have a seat at the table. Would the Minister agree to a proposal like this in her deliberation? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. We do involve Indigenous representatives throughout different parts of our health system to guide us in the work that we do. As I mentioned in my statement, under the cultural safety and awareness anti-racism unit, the work that they're doing is guided by representatives from all Indigenous governments that are pointed to the Indigenous advisory body where they meet and they go over policy and get their feedback to ensure that these policies and things are reviewed under a cultural safety lens, anti-racism lens, for Indigenous people.

We also have the regional wellness councils. In the last round of appointments, I made sure as the Minister who picks the appointments, that I reached out to -- even into MLAs and Indigenous governments if they did not have a representative on those boards to say -- put names forward because I wanted those boards to be representative in all of the regions to be representative of the differences in their

communities, so ensuring that there was different people from the communities. So -- yeah, and for the Member's riding, I know we have two seats in the Yellowknife region riding that come from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. But I encourage more people to put their name forward for those. Those are the ones that -- they work directly with the chairs and the chairs work directly with -- like, with myself and the PA. We recently created a chair Minister meeting that will be having the first one with the regional wellness council chairs, myself, PA, and the CEO, on June 12th. That will bring forward the regions' issues to a table where we can have those conversations. And there is one more that we recently did at the Council of Leaders. So all Indigenous governments and then government, we sit at the Council of Leaders as equals.

Health issues continue to come up. We need to find ways to resolve these issues. So everybody around the table has appointed executive members to sit at that table to take direction from each of their group, to speak on behalf of the issues in their community. I can -- you know, and I can share this information with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, there's an agreement with the provincial government to establish a First Nations health authority. At the same time, some First Nations operates their own private health centres there as well. Can the Minister indicate if any -- sorry, indicate if health and social services were to consider the creation of First Nation health authorities here in the NWT while allowing community-based initiatives to be jump started to fill in the gap in the meantime? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The little bits and pieces, what I do know of the First Nations BC health authority are from my old practices with NIHB. And I know from the -- within BC, all of the Indigenous groups have gotten together, the reserves got together, and so they do run clinics on their reserves. They draw down those funds. And I know that we've had these conversations that they're getting larger amounts of money per capita because they've drawn down some of these services on their reserves. And they also encompass administering NIHB in their province solely.

But within the Northwest Territories, because we have so many different Indigenous groups, like we have the First Nations, but then we have self-governing nations, then we have Inuit, then we have Metis, it gets very complex in the Northwest Territories and I'm not saying it can't

be done. Maybe in the -- you know, in those conversations, and those are the conversations that would be something that I would, you know, suggest that, you know, we could continue to have those conversations with Indigenous governments and Indigenous leaders throughout the Northwest Territories. But how we get there, you know, that would take a lot of work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed by the last Assembly two years ago. Can the Minister provide any progress on the part of health and social services to uphold the rights outlined in UNDRIP which the GNWT must start implementing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the legislation was passed. I was part of that amazing work that was done. And, you know, and I think that work that continues to happen, I don't have the specifics on that, but what I do know is that within our department, we do continue to work with the Indigenous advisory body and with the culture safety and anti-racism unit to ensure that when we get those federal dollars, they're well -- like, each community has wellness funds that we give to each community based on their wellness plans, and those things are driven from their own communities to provide some services and programs in their community. But I can -- again, I will share that information with the Member of what's going on and in Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 727-20(1):
AVEN MANOR 2023 WILDFIRE
EVACUATION COSTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 2023 evacuation, Aven was forced -- not of their own volition, but they were forced by the government to evacuate 57 vulnerable residents with little to no assistance. Mr. Speaker, they were even in carriage of people from Hay River and Fort Smith who needed that specialized care, and they were all too happy to do so, to support them. Aven was forced to cover a cost of \$1.3 million that they had to take a mortgage out.

Now, after some long discussion, the government agreed to carry -- sorry, cover

\$900,000. They left 30 percent shortfall. That's \$400,000. Will the Minister direct her department to work through this process and pay Avens the outstanding debt they have -- they are owed by this government?

MR. SPEAKER: Could the Member tell me who the question is going to, please.

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Minister of health. Thank you. She can start.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I do know about the -- what happened within that situation, there has been discussions that's gone back and forth. It came back between the disaster funding that it wasn't eligible or applicable, and these were things that didn't meet for reimbursement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, let's start with not typical. Massive fire evacuation. Not typical? Find a way to remove everyone on your own. And furthermore and lastly, Mr. Speaker, the direction of oh, sorry, the plane you've arranged on your own without a plan, without support from us, we're commandeering it. You're right, none of it was typical. And in some ways, Mr. Speaker, not fault, but we have to figure out these things.

So, Mr. Speaker, knowing the situation, would the Minister go back and review the situation to see if they can assess on why this outstanding amount is still there and, furthermore, close that gap because Avens should not be subsidizing the GNWT. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have gone back. I know the Minister of MACA has gone back. My department went back and had further discussions, and the decision that was -- that there were benefits that were given to employees over and above that was what is -- and so that's why they didn't qualify under any of their collective agreement or under the disaster mitigation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, that's -- over and above is all fair and game when someone says this is what you're supposed to do and this is how you're supposed to do it. That wasn't the situation. They were left on their own, told to solve this problem, and they did in the best goodwill that they could. They took Yellowknife

residents, Hay River residents, and Fort Smith residents.

Mr. Speaker, to the point of the question is Avens was faced with a Judgment of Solomon. Do they take some, which some, or do they take them all? They took them all. So back to this. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister saying some seniors mattered more than others during this evacuation, because Avens had no other option, or is she willing to find a way to support Avens through this terrible financial crisis? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the relationship between the NTHSSA and Avens is between the NTHSSA and Avens, and they were supported. This -- as we've been talking about in this House today, that was something that nobody else has experienced. And I understand where the Member is coming from but, like I said, we looked at all of the, and we worked with the Minister of MACA, and the decision still stands. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 728-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE
PROGRAM

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister's going to -- or the Minister for Education, Culture and Employment is actively going to be working on this immigration file when she goes to Ottawa. So there's another issue that's come up that hasn't been raised on the floor of the House to my knowledge, and that's from workers who are now expecting children, if they wait for the NTNP to reopen next year, some of them will go on maternity leave which may make them ineligible to apply, forcing them to wait another year to -- for access.

What is the Minister doing to ensure that expecting parents aren't excluded from this program, or is the message that women must delay pregnancy in order to qualify?

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Member. Currently, within the policy, there is a leave provision in there and that is something that I am currently exploring with the department given the existing parameters of the program. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if I can tell the people experiencing this issue that an exploration is going on and that will be sufficient. So what does exploring mean in real terms to people with real lives who are experiencing this situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to fix this issue. I do think that it is an equity issue. And I don't have an answer for the Member right now other than the fact that I am live to this issue. Currently, the program says that people must be employed at the time that they apply, and so I have committed on the floor of this House that I'm currently reviewing that and seeing what parameters we can push this to within the program. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister develop some sort of exemption or exclusionary measure in this program for this very small class of people who are experiencing this issue. We want to keep people in the North, we want to keep people working, and we certainly want to keep people who have already contributed to the community in those jobs doing that work. So will she commit to an exemption to support expectant mothers who are in this program who are currently being shut out of that opportunity? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely agreeing with the Member that this was an equity issue, that we want to keep people in the North, and that we want to ensure that people can also add to their families and not be concerned about their applications. This is one of those frustrating parts of administering a program on behalf of another level of government, and so I need to see what my parameters are within our ability here in the territory to make adjustments to this extended lever part of the policy. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 729-20(1):
UNMARKED GRAVES AND IMPACTS OF
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ACT

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the other day I was talking about baby Alma, and my question is to the Minister of Justice.

I had a -- I was at a funeral yesterday in Dettah, and some of the elders had been talking to me and they were asking for an update on what's going on. So my question to the Minister is the baby -- baby Alma has been waiting years to bring her home, and the only way to do this is to investigate her cause of death is through the Coroner's Act. My question to the Minister is will the Minister of Justice initiate a proper investigation and bring her home through the Coroner's Act and if the Minister could update the House on where things are at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. We all know that this is a tragic situation and a very challenging one at the same time. I'm certainly committed, as I stated on Friday, to working with the coroner's office and with, you know, the Department of Justice to ensure that we do everything we can to find a path to get Alma home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you go through this process, will the Minister will look at also the cost under the Coroner's Act to bring baby Alma home? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar specifically with the Coroner's Act but happy to investigate what the possibilities may be there in that regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Final supplementary.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to working closely with myself and the Indigenous governments to develop new legislation to ensure that Indigenous communities dealing with this residential school graves never have to go through the experience like I did in my riding? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is a huge question, and I am certainly committed to working with the Member, with the Indigenous government and governments across the Northwest Territories. I've spoken with the Member. I've had the opportunity to have a conversation with the chief in Fort Resolution, and I am planning to attend the community next week for a face-to-face meeting. So certainly, I think, this is the beginning steps to our collaborative approach to how we all engage together to find

a mutual and respectful solution to this at the end of the day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 730-20(1):
UNHOUSED ENCAMPMENTS IN
YELLOWKNIFE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe my questions are for the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, although he has recently passed the responsibility for homelessness on to the Minister of housing, so I'll leave it up to them as to who responds exactly.

But on May 6th, recently the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs convened a meeting of the Yellowknife community partnership committee to discuss challenges associated with homelessness and integrated service delivery, and there were about 40 participants there from -- everywhere from local Indigenous governments and NGOs, GNWT departments, the city of Yellowknife, the RCMP, and lots of representatives from the business community. I noticed that some of the key takeaways included the need to compile realtime individual level data for understanding trends like shelter use and rough sleeping and the need for respectful and meaningful engagement with people who have lived experience with homelessness.

So my first question is given these key learnings and takeaways from the meeting, will this impact or change the approach that's taken by the GNWT this year to encampments that are already starting to appear within our city? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for raising this. We are working -- and trying to work more closely with the NGOs in Yellowknife who are providing critical services. As we move towards integrating more services across government, NGOs are very valuable partners, invaluable partners even. We want to ensure that they are properly supported, that we are hearing from them, that we're working together, and that we're sharing information. And so what we are planning to do is ensure that we have enough shelter space, first of all. We want to ensure that there is enough space for everyone who needs a place to stay, they will have a place to stay. That being said, not everyone wants to stay in a shelter and so we want to ensure that while

people have the ability to do what they need to do to get by, that we are not allowing other parts of -- that we're mitigating the negative impacts of encampments. And there could be impacts with, you know, businesses, with -- you know, even with non-profits who need to work, and there might be an encampment nearby and that's causing them issues. So we want to ensure that we mitigate those efforts, but we want to ensure that we're also working with the vulnerable population who's living in these encampments. We want to ensure they're in a place that is safe, that is not disrupting other, you know, nearby neighbours. We all have to get along, and we want to ensure that we're working to minimize any type of conflict that might occur. That being said, we want to -- we don't want to normalize encampments. We can't just have encampments popping up anywhere in the city year after year. And so while this is not new to Yellowknife anymore, we've experienced this before, we are still determining how we're going to get where we need to go so that everyone is satisfied with the outcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that answer. I noticed that there is -- there was a goal that came out of this meeting around the need to compile individual name by name data around those who may be sleeping rough or staying in shelters. I wonder if -- are the challenges around that task due mainly to barriers around coordination and technical and computer systems, or are there significant barriers related to Privacy Act legislation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, all of those things. So, you know, the population of individuals who are unhoused, you know, they come and go. They don't have fixed addresses obviously, and so just knowing where people are at any given time can be difficult. And so that's, you know, the most fundamental issue that we have. There is things like the Health Information Act which is one of our two pieces of privacy legislation here in the territory, and that puts a lot of boundaries around who information can be shared with, who can hold on to that information, and that can make it difficult when we are working with -- you know, working in the government system, you know, working with individuals who might be on the streets. And so that legislation is up for review, and I've had discussions with the Minister of health about that and the need to ensure that our own legislation doesn't get in our way. So that review will take place later this year.

There's also the issue of having computer systems and databases that can talk to each

other. And so we have offered NGOs certain software that we're using so that we can all speak in the same language essentially and all share information to better support vulnerable population. However, I understand that the federal government provides, you know, some funds to NGOs as well, and they require them to use a particular software that's different than our software. So, you know, that's an issue that we're going to have to figure out how to overcome as well. So a lot of challenges, but I think that we're actually in a pretty good place here. In my time as an MLA, I've never seen this type of focus on supporting the NGOs sector or homelessness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also noted the extraordinary involvement of the Yellowknife business community in these meetings, and I've certainly spoken with many business owners myself who are highly motivated to contribute to solutions, including equipping staff to better assist or deal with those experiencing homelessness. So can the Minister explain are there initiatives underway where the GNWT's assisting business owners to take tangible action in the short-term? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we certainly engaged with the business community. For that level of detail, I'm going to have to get back to the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 731--20(1):
UNHOUSED ENCAMPMENTS IN
YELLOWKNIFE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll follow up with the Premier with a similar line of questioning. He brought it up. So knowing that there's an encampment downtown, I brought it to the attention of several Ministers, not directly to the Premier, but I have no doubt he is well aware of it. You know, and I'm concerned that if the government starts providing food, water, toilet, security, etcetera, it becomes entrenched.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know what the Premier is doing or instructing through his government through various departments about removing the current encampment that's downtown to a more appropriate place. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so I think one thing that the House needs to be aware of is that there's no legal authority to actually -- for us to remove an encampment. We can't go down there with a bulldozer and knock it down. We have to work with the individuals who are staying there. And so that is the plan, is to work with those individuals, find a -- help them find somewhere to stay -- whether that's a shelter, whether that's a different location -- that's not as disruptive to business and the general public downtown. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to find out what "work with" means because the residents of that area, be it the neighbours with children, families, investments, businesses, same situation, investments, Mr. Speaker, they want to understand why are they being held hostage over people who have taken over a government parking lot that's usually used for vehicles to park in while these people are stealing power and being set up quite nicely? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I know the Member referred to these people who are stealing power and holding people hostage. I get if you are living next to an encampment and there's late night partying, that would be very disruptive and if that goes on continuously, that, you know -- that would aggravate anyone and rightly so, and I understand that. But the fact is that these are people who need a place to stay. I can't imagine that this was their, you know, destination in life, being in an encampment, in an alley, but that's the situation. So we are working with them, having conversations, working with their legal representation, and doing our best to find locations that might be more suitable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe there's a law or an area you can cite called mischief and hence why don't we send the authorities down and work with them and say we'll deal with this problem under the mischief. It's the catchall of statements and charges, Mr. Speaker. Because we have families -- and just to be clear, when I say held hostage, held hostage by the noise, the intensity, the irregularity, and the frustration that they can't sleep, they can't live healthily. That's what I mean about being held hostage, not physically bound, just to be clear.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is mentioning mischief. I'm not sure if that's reference to the Criminal Code but if it is, if there is something in the Criminal Code that would allow the RCMP to go and address this situation, I would not -- I don't have the ability to direct the RCMP to do that. The Justice Minister does not have the ability to direct the RCMP to do that. We have a contract with the RCMP that makes very clear that we do not direct to the RCMP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 732--20(1):
ACTION PLAN OF THE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL
SERVICES AUTHORITY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so we have a work plan for the public administrator for NTHSSA. We don't have an action plan. He says he's going to bring forward something in the fall. Can the Minister give us a sneak preview of what that's going to look like, because people need action today, and they can't wait any longer. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, the public administrator, you know, he arrived here, he's been on the ground, he's been going out to the regions. This is where the work is happening. It is going in -- like I said, he went into the Nahendeh first. He visited with the health centre. He visited with the staff. He went into small communities. Now they're doing a pilot on, like how patients are accessing care. This is -- access to care is our priority and within our smallest communities, this is where we're hearing and we're seeing that access to care is almost next to nothing. So we are -- the action plan is going into all of the regional, all the regions, speaking with, he's met with NTHSSA, he's met with the Stanton leadership. You know, he's met with the regional -- the Yellowknife region leadership. There is a lot of work going on and, you know, the action is the work that they're doing right now, and we did say that we will follow up with quarterly updates to the Members, standing committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, that's an engagement plan, not an action plan, and I'm very privileged to be able to get those updates

but members of the public are not. These are the people we serve, these are the people who are concerned, and the staff are concerned as well. They don't feel like things are moving fast enough. So will the Minister commit to bringing forward a clear, concise, set of actions that are going to affect the entire health system, not just one area, but the entire health system? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, there are many things going on throughout the entire healthcare system that is -- you know, is improving within the capital, within the regions. There is capital projects that are going on. There is a significant amount of work that is going on. I have discussed this with my department on how to better front-face all of the work that the department is working on and is doing, and I'm -- you know, we're working with our COMMS people to be able to provide a front-facing -- some type of public document that is showing a lot of the different things that are going on within the NTHSSA as well with the department of health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of health and social services. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot going on but there there's a lot of -- but what's going on is a system of health care that's failing people. We hear it every day. So, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister -- can the Minister tell us what steps the public administrator is taking to guarantee that the emergency room does not close? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, not only is the public administrator worked on that area but as recently as today, I've had conversations with NTHSSA and they are working with staff. They are working with staff on contingency plans throughout any department that we start to run short on staff in any of our regions because this happens in the small communities, we have to have contingency plans, in the regional centres we have contingency plans, and in the capital. And so that work is going on, and it's engaging those staff to come up with other plans, you know, in case that there are -- there comes a time where maybe there is a shift or two that there is an emergency doctor. Well, there's other physicians. There are other trained physicians that have emergency experience. Those things are being worked on. It's like what we've been asked for evacuations. It's what we are asked for any types of emergencies. We need to plan. And that's the planning that's going on, and

those things are being documented within health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Colleagues, our time is up. Mr. Clerk.

Follow-up to Oral Questions

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 7.2(7), I received follow-up information for oral question 598-20(1). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 598-20(1): SENIORS' HOME HEATING SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on March 5, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Income Thresholds are determined by the estimated cost of heating a home, the living cost differential and the NWT population fuel expenditure as a percentage of income for each zone. The Department is currently reviewing the Senior Home Heating Subsidy Income Thresholds to determine if they are meeting the needs of seniors and are aligned with the purpose of the program. This includes reviewing options for changing the Income Thresholds and determining the cost of the possible changes. An increase to Income Thresholds would likely require an investment from the government.

A review of the Senior Home Heating Subsidy Income Thresholds is expected to be completed by June 2025. I will share the findings of this review with the Standing Committee on Social Development. Changes to Income Thresholds may require an additional investment from the GNWT, and if so, would need approval from the Financial Management Board and the Legislative Assembly. Approved adjustments could potentially take effect during the upcoming 2025-2026 subsidy period.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Oral questions. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 348-20(1): 2023/2024 REPORT ON THE DEPARTMENTAL INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PLANS RESULTS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: 2023/2024 Report on the Departmental Indigenous Employment Plans Results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

TABLED DOCUMENT 349-20(1): LETTER DATED MAY 20, 2025, FROM YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION TO PREMIER SIMPSON REGARDING BURIALS OF CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED ST. JOSEPH'S RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tabling of documents, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a Letter dated May 20th, 2025, from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation to Premier Simpson regarding Burials of Children who Attended St. Joseph's School in Fort Resolution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 59-20(1): ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Kam Lake, that the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2025 is hereby established;

And furthermore, that the Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories that the Honourable Judge R.D. Gorin of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, be appointed as chairperson; and Mr. Daryl Dolynny of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; Mr. Sam Dyck of Inuvik, Northwest Territories; Mr. Kevin O'Reilly of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; and, Ms. Georgina Rolt of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, be appointed members of the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2025.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MOTION 60-20(1):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE
HOUSE TO OCTOBER 16, 2025

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that notwithstanding Rule 2.1, when the House adjourns on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, it shall be adjourned until Thursday, October 16th, 2025;

And further, that any time prior to October 16th, 2025, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier or later time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

I believe, actually, there was a typo in the beginning and that I meant to give notice that on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, I will move that motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Motions

MOTION 59-20(1):
ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTORAL
BOUNDARIES COMMISSION,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. The Member from Yellowknife Centre has asked unanimous consent to deal with his motion today. Seeing no nays, you may proceed.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS Section 2.(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act prescribes that an Electoral Boundaries Commission be established within two years after the day fixed

for the return of the writs of the 2023 General Election;

AND WHEREAS section 2.(2) of the Act requires that the Commission shall be composed of a chairperson and four other members appointed by the Commissioner on recommendation of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly is prepared to make such a recommendation;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Kam Lake, that the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2025, is hereby established;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories that the Honourable Judge R.D. Gorin of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories be appointed chairperson; and, Mr. Daryl Dolynny of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; Mr. Sam Dyck of Inuvik, Northwest Territories; Mr. Kevin O'Reilly of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; and, Ms. Georgina Rolt of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, be appointed Members of the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission 2025.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Colleagues, in recognition of the time, we will take a small break to give our interpreters a chance to rest.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Member from Range Lake.

MOTION 55-20(1):
STAFFING SOLUTIONS TO REBUILD AND
REFORM HEALTHCARE NOW,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Canada Health Act guarantees access to ensure health services that are accessible, universal and publicly funded;

AND WHEREAS the "medicine chest clause" is a treaty promise of ongoing health care

provided to Indigenous peoples as recognized by section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

AND WHEREAS the provision of healthcare services is the responsibility of the Government of the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS only 59 percent of Northwest Territories residents aged 18 and older have reported access to regular health providers in 2023 compared to an average of 84 percent in Canada;

AND WHEREAS nine family doctors have left their practice in the Northwest Territories since 2024, resulting in a 49 percent vacancy rate, with a further 42 percent vacancy for specialists;

AND WHEREAS the Northwest Territories Medical Association reports that 63 percent of current physicians are considering leaving their practice in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS some nurses in the Northwest Territories are calling for the establishment of a standalone collective bargaining unit to address chronic labour relations issues, low staff morale, and stagnant wages;

AND WHEREAS frontline practitioners at Stanton Territorial Hospital have reported that emergency department services may be interrupted or cease altogether if immediate action is not taken to address staffing matters;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Yellowknife Centre, that the Government of the Northwest Territories take immediate action to improve the recruitment and retention of all doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare workers through higher wages, contract flexibility and enhanced benefits;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Public Service Alliance of Canada and Union of Northern Workers to develop an inclusive bargaining structure for all healthcare workers to give the frontline a real voice in negotiations;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake the following actions:

- Establish a working group composed of Members of the Executive Council and Regular Members of the Legislative Assembly to oversee primary care reform and health system sustainability initiatives;

- Move to interest-based negotiations with the Northwest Territories Medical Association before the fall of 2025;
- Publicly release the details of a new locum contract for emergency department doctors;
- Improve flexibility in locum contracts to assist doctor and nurse retention and recruitment;
- Phase out agency nurses with a three-year plan that improves working conditions for frontline staff with improved professional development and compensation;
- Enhance financial incentives for shift work for doctors, nurses and allied healthcare workers;
- Implement minimum staff-to-patient ratios at all Northwest Territories hospitals;
- Implement practitioner-led innovation to ensure continuous improvement on the frontline;
- Negotiate physician license-sharing between Nunavut and Alberta to eliminate red tape preventing entry of new physicians into the Northwest Territories healthcare system;
- Prioritize pan-national physician licensing in the Government of the Northwest Territories federal engagement strategy;
- Fast-track development of new policies on emerging medical technologies such as AI, e-consults and virtual care;
- Expand the role of nurse practitioners in all regions of the Northwest Territories to improve access to health care and decrease costs; and,
- Modernize auxiliary care at hospitals and establish a licensing body for paramedics;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories release an action plan to implement the aforementioned actions that is time-bound and fully costed by the fall of 2025;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion in 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, almost every week since I hit the campaign trail in 2023, I have heard from frontline workers that our healthcare system is crumbling from the weight of inaction. I want to share one of those stories today that left me with a profound sense of urgency.

Last weekend, I received an email from a physician who had spent seven hours in the emergency room, not as an attending doctor but as a patient. Their child was suffering from a laceration and there was only one doctor on shift, leading to treatment delays in an already overworked and overwhelmed emergency department. It took another hour, eight in total, to care for this child for what should have been a three-hour triage if the ER had been properly staffed.

I am grateful that this physician's child was able to receive treatment and is doing well. I'm also grateful for the doctors, nurses, and other staff at the emergency department who work tirelessly, sometimes without compensation, to ensure the doors stay open and Northerners receive treatment. But this incident is an all-too-common experience for Northerners, and this physician is one of those practicing medicine in the Northwest Territories; 60 percent of whom are thinking about leaving due to the lack of attention to the systemic failures in health care.

I am proud to represent the Range Lake riding that is home to a great many healthcare workers. Doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physiotherapist, lab technicians; you name it, we've got it in Range Lake, and what we've got is a whole lot of healthcare professionals who are fed up with their working conditions.

This motion calls for concrete and constructive action. It is not just complaining. It is consistent with many of the points my friends from Yellowknife Centre, Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, and I raised publicly, but also changed to reflect the feedback we received from many, many healthcare workers since its release. I have personally heard from RNs, NPs, doctors, from patients, and policymakers. We've updated and clarified their concerns with this motion, but what's clear, Mr. Speaker, is that no one is happy about the state of health care in the Northwest Territories.

Well, maybe one person. The Minister responsible has said, quote, "there's no place better to get sick in Canada than the NWT", and this is exactly why we have brought this motion forward. The message being sent by patients

and practitioners is simply not getting through loudly enough to those charged with managing our healthcare apparatus. We've tried for over a year to raise the alarm on health care through Members' statements, oral questions, written questions, motions, and even a Private Member's bill, but the response has been steady as she goes.

Yes, we have a public administrator with a personal work plan to do some work fixing health care. On paper, it looks good, like a great move, but without a clear action plan, with defined and costed measures, it's little more than a gesture of accountability for a system careening off the fiscal and operational cliff.

Mr. Speaker, we've had discussions with our Cabinet colleagues in the past over how to address matters of urgent crisis. Typically, when we think of that, we think of floods, fire, homelessness, things that require urgent attention from more than one side of this House. We are calling for that in this motion, to establish a working group composed of Members of the Executive Council and Regular Members of Cabinet, and the Regular Members working together in a working group to oversee the primary health care reforms of health and system sustainabilities that are going on, not to dictate those policies but to work together in collaboration to ensure that frontline is being heard. Because, again, I will repeat that time and time again, until their voices are heard and until we start to see changes that they are asking for, that their voices are not being heard. And I don't know if it's because they're being limited by their ability to speak up publicly because they work -- because their employer doesn't want them talking to MLAs or speaking publicly. That's all too common and something that happens in the Northwest Territories. But they are brave and brave in bringing these concerns forward, in bringing their working conditions forward, in asking for change, undaunted by the political pressures for them to stay silent, keep their heads down and work, again I might add, often for no compensation, because these healthcare workers, these doctors, these nurses, these allied healthcare workers, they have deep compassion for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

We heard the stories that they're willing to put aside their vacation time, to not take overtime, in order to keep these healthcare services going. And for that, I do thank them. But that shouldn't be the way it is. That's a recipe for disaster. It's a recipe for burnout, for low morale, and for only exacerbating the problems we have.

Wages are stagnant. We hear that time and time again. When negotiations are reached or

when new contracts are reached in other jurisdictions, we hear about it almost immediately, have you seen what they got in Alberta? That's the most recent one I can think of, which is a very generous deal. Why aren't we getting that here? Why aren't we even talking about that here? And the position that -- and what we do hear is that we need to find ways to spend less on health care because it's unsustainable. That is true, that we have an unsustainable healthcare arrangement, but not supporting our staff with improved compensation and benefits is not going to help that sustainability. Sustainability can't just be measured in fiscal terms; it has to be measured in the quality of health care that's provided. And as I said earlier today, if we can't provide the health care that Canadians -- Northerners and Canadians expect to have, we might lose all our funding all together because we're not compliant with the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Speaker, many of these considerations we brought forward as well aren't coming from us. I mean, all the concerns aren't coming from us obviously; they're coming from the frontline. But there's specific things in here that have been asked.

The NWT Medical Association give a very eye-opening presentation to the Standing Committee on Social Development about the conditions at the emergency room. If it was not for that, I would wager we wouldn't have seen the immediate response from the public administrator to issue new locum contracts and start working with the doctors to build something that can actually keep the lights on and keep patients going through the doors. There's still challenges there, and one, because there's no transparency around these measures. We haven't seen the terms of the -- of what these locums are being offered. We haven't seen the full details of the financial compensation. And as a result, there's still people -- I hear anecdotally the public administrator telling Members or telling the committee that, personally, he's talking about lots of doctors and they're very excited about this opportunity, but when you talk to healthcare professionals they say we don't know what's going on, and we can't tell our colleagues in other jurisdictions about the great opportunity because we just don't know what it is. Which is why we're calling for transparency on this. It's an expenditure of public funds, and it's important that we know what these new measures are.

It's also important for the full-time staff here because that's a media story and a release that came out almost immediately after that contract was announced was a doctor, a practicing doctor, a northern doctor, saying we need

benefits too. You know, and that doctor was taking mat leave at the time and took issue with comments that were made that doctors on mat leave were causing some of these gaps. And doctors shouldn't be told that they can't take mat leave or their mat leave is inconvenient to the system. They knew these doctors were having babies. Why wasn't there a plan? You know, and instead we're still making excuses - well, COVID screwed everything up and it's been so long since we've had solid health care because that was such a traumatic event. Well, that was in the rearview mirror. Yes, we acknowledge it; we all lived through it. And doctors and nurses did -- and healthcare workers, all healthcare workers, worked tirelessly to keep our communities safe at a time of global pandemic. But they too want to move on from that and see a different regime take hold that actually, you know, puts -- restores their faith in their own system, in their own workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, the other measures -- I mean, a lot of these measures are simply financial because that's what we're being told. You know, we keep trying to find ways -- creative ways to improve things without spending any money. And that's just not -- that's not practical. We need to spend more on healthcare workers, period. And I'm not a negotiator for the government, but I am a Member of this Assembly, and that is what I am hearing, so I'm transmitting that message loud and clear. Because if we don't, they're going to look elsewhere or they're going to look to private agencies which are rapidly resulting in more and more privatization of our health care in Canada. Other provinces are taking steps to change that. We have still -- we still want to maintain the use of agency nurses in case of emergency. But the problem is that's how it starts. That's how it started in Ontario. It was to keep ERs open, and then it was to keep other departments open. Now it's a routine part of their system, and they spend millions and millions of dollars on private agencies that are taking money away from publicly-funded health care and workers, unionized workers, who are working for their communities.

Mr. Speaker, this plan, we heard loud and clear from Members on this side of the House in particular, that they didn't want to take the option fully away because -- and we've heard from workers as well that the healthcare system is in such poor shape that if we ban agency nurses tomorrow, it would be a disaster. So we're not calling for that. We're calling for a three-year plan to phase out agency nurses and to, you know, take as much privatization out of nursing work as we can, to level the playing field for our own staff to show them that

they are trusted and they are valued. But to do that, we need to approve professional development opportunities and compensation. If we don't start to invest in the nurses we have in the Northwest Territories, they will leave.

Yesterday -- and we saw that in the gallery, we saw the message, you'll miss us when we're gone. And that is a very chilling statement if you really let it sit with you. Imagine a system with no nurses. It cannot function.

Mr. Speaker, staff-to-patient ratios is an emerging area of health care reform that we're seeing in other jurisdictions as well. There are plenty of healthcare systems we can look at to draw on, but it's a much-needed thing because that's how you ensure that you're not overloading and overburdening your staff by having the appropriate staffing on hand. Now, you need to hire those staff to have the ratios in the first place otherwise you are setting yourself up for failure but, again, this all comes back to the fundamentals which is pay, compensation, benefits, make it easier and more lucrative to be a nurse in the Northwest Territories so we can start stealing nurses from other jurisdictions. Let's be the best we can be in Canada.

So many people have come to the North to make -- to build a better life because of the opportunities here were second to none, and we've let that competitive edge slip away as our cost of living continues to rise and we play catch-up with the rest of Canada. Cost of living is lower down south, and our wages are not keeping pace with that. You could take a wage hit and still save money by living in a cheaper jurisdiction, or you can go to an agency nurse, still work in the Northwest Territories in an emergency, and make exponentially greater than your peers who you're working with as a staff nurse only months before. These are stories we're hearing, Mr. Speaker. These are not hypotheticals. And that's what we want to stop. That's sustainability. It's not just about cutting costs. It's about keeping staff in place and keeping services in place.

We also spoke to the medical association about physician license sharing. This is something that's been raised in this House before, and it's an important piece of the puzzle. In the Atlantic provinces they have a physician license sharing program that allows doctors to move between the different Maritime provinces. Why don't we have something similar with Nunavut and the Yukon? We have very similar challenges - geographic, resourcing, logistical. Having doctors who understand those challenges means it's a lot harder to start from zero when you come into work in the Northwest Territories. We also work very closely with

Alberta, notwithstanding some of their repugnant policies that are preventing gender affirming care and other things that vulnerable minorities in our society look to their governments to support and aren't being done there. But notwithstanding that, we still have their -- we still share much with their -- much connected tissue with their healthcare system. So let's find a way to do that.

It's done elsewhere. There's no reason we can't. The Minister says she's going to go talk to the health Minister. I hope that's part of the conversation. And when I look to the federal engagement strategy, you know, we were told loud and clear by our own doctors that the North should be the ones prioritizing pan-physician license sharing. It will benefit us the most, and it needs a champion at the FPT table. This is a beautiful opportunity for our Premier who has made engagements with other provinces, territories, and the world a centerpiece of his premiership. Bring this on too. Start talking about how to get more -- about how to share more credentials with other -- and not just doctors, but in this case doctors, but in other specialties -- hard to recruit specialists and specialized professions that we need in the Northwest Territories. Start making those deals. Sign them. Publicize them. Have a signing ceremony, a photo op. It would be it would be fantastic because Northerners would know we're working for them.

And, you know, fundamentally -- and sorry, and I will add the role of paramedics is important as well. They're currently unregulated in the Northwest Territories and many of them, once they get through the initial application process to work, they have credentials from other jurisdictions that don't need to be renewed here, and I have full confidence in the many hardworking paramedics, you know, particularly firefighters in our community of Yellowknife, but the many hardworking paramedics that do great work in the Northwest Territories. But to not have a regulatory oversight of people who are practicing medicine is a problem, and this is a gap that I know the Minister's aware of, but we need to fill it and use it to support especially care in smaller communities where the resources are much -- are stretched far thinner. Paramedics can make a huge difference. And I think in your riding too, Mr. Speaker, paramedics could make a huge difference.

So if we actually modernize auxiliary care in medical centres, and we also regulate paramedics, we can find more ways to move forward on solving some of these challenges. But we need bigger thinking, and right now we just don't know what's -- what the thinking is, which is why finally this calls for an action plan.

When I talk to people -- and I'm on the receiving end of this sometimes too, and it's fair. You know, I've met with nurses in my riding only last week who said you haven't done anything for us, what are you doing. You know, you're our MLA, why haven't you spoken about this? And I thought I had been doing that. But not well enough if the message isn't getting through.

So, you know, if we're having trouble communicating that to nurses, doctors, healthcare professionals, patients out there, when we have one of the biggest forums in the Northwest Territories, I can tell you the public administrator's work is not well understood. We need to do a better job, and that's why we need an action plan. Perfect is the enemy of good, and right now we just need a good action plan. We don't need to have everything figured out, but we need some concrete things.

You know, nurses have pointed me to what they're doing -- what Premier Houston is doing in Nova Scotia. He releases routine action plans. Some actions work, sometimes they don't. But he keeps at it. And because there are frequent -- these frequent action plans and actions that are coming out of the government, people really feel that things are starting to move. So take the work you're doing, take first, start with these points, because I also -- I do believe some of this work's already ongoing. I do. And we've heard that some of it's ongoing. So clarify that it's ongoing with an action plan. Throw in everything else you're working on, give the public some hope that things are going to get better and they're going to get better soon. And it's into the going to take ten years. Maybe it's going to take ten years to get to perfect. But give us one year to get to better. Give us two years to get to even better. And three or four years to get to good. And so on and so forth. But if we continue to do nothing but say we're trying, trust us, give us time, public's -- you're out of time. The public's fed up. Nurses and doctors are fed up. And if they feel that inaction is the order of the day, they're not going to stick around to find out what happens when everything does truly implode.

The threat of a closure of the ER because of these challenges should be a wake-up call for everyone who's serious about health care in this territory, and it should spur action, and it has spurred action, but it should spur even greater action to take immediate, clear, transparent, measured, costed, time-bound action that the public can see, that the public can hold government to account on, and that's actually going to make a difference. Because that's what we're here for. We're here to solve the problem of health care.

So if the Minister can present a plan, I will absolutely -- that's a good plan, that's a solid plan that meets those criteria of being time-bound, costed, clear, transparent, concise, that speaks to the needs we're hearing from frontline workers, I will be more than happy to fully endorse it, fully endorse it. And support her as she brings the plan forward and works on completing every single action. So I call on her to -- and the government to follow through with this motion, bring forward that plan, and help make a difference in health care, because people need it. Northerners, healthy, sick, it doesn't matter; people need this plan. They need action today. And once again, I will fully endorse and support it if it meets the needs of our frontline workers, of Northerners, across all of our diverse communities. But let's get something done today. Let's get the ball rolling with a clear commitment and start to take real action on health care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for bringing this motion and for drawing attention to the fundamental principles that guide our healthcare system.

As an Indigenous nurse who has worked in the regional centre and travelled to various small communities, I have witnessed firsthand the critical need and accessibility and quality health care that's needed. As I look to the remainder of my term, I continue to use the three priorities that are guiding me to make the decisions on access to care.

1. First of all, we are overhauling, again, the medical travel program so every resident, no matter their location, circumstance, experience, timely, seamless, and compassionate support from the moment they leave their home to the moment they return.

2. We will update the small community model of care, put more providers in local health centres, and use virtual team-based approaches so people can get help closer to home instead of travelling for basic services.

3. I will keep strengthening cultural safety across the system by expanding anti-racism training, embedding Indigenous knowledge, and holding ourselves accountable for respectful equitable care.

Together, these priorities will create a more accessible, compassionate, and culturally safe healthcare system for every resident in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we also acknowledge the very pressing issues highlighted in the motion. Many residents still face challenges to access to care, the shortage of doctors, nurses and specialists strain every corner of the system, and the frontline staff are telling us plainly that they need support. These challenges jeopardize both the quality and continuity of care, and they need a coordinated response. So with that, I do agree.

Our commitment is unwavering to collaborate with health care providers, unions, employees associations, Indigenous governments, and this Assembly, to stabilize the workforce, enhancing working conditions, and ensure every resident has access to timely, culturally-safe care where they live, whether they live in a small community, a regional centre, or the capital.

Mr. Speaker, I share the mover's commitment to making our healthcare system more responsive, sustainable, and centered around the needs of both patients and providers, and I appreciate the opportunity to share some of the proactive measures that have been implemented to address the actions outlined in the motion. For example, we are focusing on improving recruitment and retention through new initiatives for physicians, including increased daily rates, premium pay for night shifts, and long-term locum pilot programs set to begin on June 1st. That was initiated. That was work that was going on. And because of the conversations with the physicians, this was implemented sooner. So, again, those kinds of discussions do help to promote the change.

We have also reduced our reliance on agency nurses. Since January of this year, only five agency nurses have been used across the system and only as a last resort measure to avoid service disruption. There are many nurses that come into our system that are brought in as casual contracts to fill the vacancies. We do still continue to sit with a 20 percent vacancy. These nurses come in, they are paid the same as their colleagues that work beside them; however, there is -- you know, there has been concerns that the nurses that are working on the floor, that they do -- they need the support to be able to have those nurses supported on the floor while the senior nurses or the nurses that are employed full-time can continue to just do their job.

I have and will continue to raise the issue of agency nurses with my provincial/territorial colleagues at the federal level, and I believe that phasing out the use of agency nurses completely requires a national approach and commitment from all provinces and territories. The new federal Minister of Health, this is on

the agenda for myself to have this discussion with her as the Minister of Health now for the federal government comes from Quebec. This Member, you know, has stated that that is the first place in Canada that's making these changes, and so I'm hoping that we can get a national approach to this.

While this conversation is ongoing, we are investing in local nursing capacity. Two years ago, we added a clinical nurse educator to Stanton's obstetric unit which has significantly improved staffing stability and allowed us to phase out the agency nurses there. We are now recruiting a clinical nurse educator for medicine and the surgery unit to replicate this success to other areas where nurses have asked for more support. This approach to improving on-the-floor staff mentorship has many benefits, including increased competence, consistency, and patient safety while supporting retention efforts.

Regarding collective bargaining, Mr. Speaker, this work is led by the Department of Finance, and we remain committed to making space for frontline voices to be heard and respected. I would like to point out that recent agreement already includes improved financial incentives for shift workers based on feedback from staff.

Mr. Speaker, the mover has raised concerns about staff-to-patient ratios, and he will note that I have recently directed my department to these reviews. These ratios in the Northwest Territories compared to national benchmarks, we understand the importance of safe, sustainable staffing levels, and this work will help to inform the future actions. And I have already committed to sharing this data with Members once we have it.

The NTHSSA has been actively discussing a move to interest-based negotiations with the NWT Medical Association for more than a month, and in support of this change, the Department of Finance is also engaged and has indicated their support. An interest-based negotiating learning workshop is scheduled for June 12th and 13th, so representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, NTHSSA, and the Department of Finance, will all be attendance in this training.

Mr. Speaker, the ask for full public release of the new emergency department locum contract, the full locum contract fee schedule is confidential to protect contractual privacy, and publishing every detail would hand other jurisdictions a readymade benchmark making it easier for them to entice locums away from the Northwest Territories. To protect our competitive position while still being transparent, I can that with the newly -- new

daily rates ranging from 1,500 to \$3,200 a day for an 8-hour shift. These nationally competitive rates are designed to support both recruitment and retention, particularly during peak and staffing shortages. We've also made changes to improve the flexibility in locum contracts, including a standard travel stipend, premium night shift rates, which was requested by the emergency room physicians, and long-term incentive options. These are based on the feedback from the providers about what motivates them to return to the North.

Mr. Speaker, we are streamlining physician licensing. This includes maintaining our agreement with Nunavut which waives licensing requirements for NWT-based virtual clinics, treating Nunavut patients; however, they -- turning that around, you know, with all the territories, we all struggle to retain physician services. But we are negotiating a similar arrangement with Alberta, our southern partners, to enable broader license exemption so more out-of-territories can deliver virtual care to NWT residents. Feedback from recent hires is guiding us in removing the remaining barriers. We are also active in the national discussion on a pan-Canada physician licenser. And we are reviewing how best to modernize physician regulations in the Northwest Territories.

We are advancing practitioner-led innovation under my leadership. New staffing working groups, and town halls have provided staff with direct channels to identify barriers and purpose practical solutions. We are already exploring AI-enabled tools, e-consult, and expanded virtual care. These early steps demonstrate our commitment to solutions designed and driven by those who deliver care every day. And we are also, under my direction, with the public administrator, when there are areas that are seeing, you know, increased pressures, then under my direction, I give the -- I ask the PA to direct their staff to ensure that that area is being looked at.

We are redesigning the small community health centre model of care to strengthen continuity of care. This includes exploring innovative ways to integrate other health professionals into the teams, so core services remain consistently available. The NWT is not alone in these challenges, and I hear my colleagues, this has been an ongoing thing, but across the -- and just most recently, you know, hearing from BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, they're all trying to improve recruitment, reduce administrative costs, to support decisions that are informed by frontline realities.

Transforming a system as complex and diverse as ours cannot happen overnight. We are not

interested in quick band-aid solutions that fail to address the root problems. Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the motion's call for a Cabinet Regular Member working group to guide the primary care reform and health sustainability initiatives.

While I share the goal of strong oversight, the Legislative Assembly has a robust mechanism, particularly the Standing Committee on Social Development, existing statutory reporting requirements, and our regular ministerial briefings designed to perform this role. Rather than creating an additional body that could duplicate efforts and blur this accountability, I propose that we reenforce these established channels. I am committed to providing regular updates to standing committee, offer public technical briefings at key milestones, and collaborating with Members to ensure that they have information and access needed to scrutinize and help shape our reform.

I appreciate the request for a formal, time-bound action plan. Most of the priorities outlined in this motion are already underway, and I am committed to improving how we report progress on this work to its Members and the public. In fact, I've recently committed to providing regular updates to both staff and standing committee on the progress of the public administrator work plan and, as I mentioned earlier, I am in the process of working on how to have health have a front-facing public face so that way the information and the work that we are doing and ongoing doing can be put into that for the public and the Members to see.

As we move these initiatives forward, I welcome continued collaboration with Members of this Assembly, with Indigenous governments, and with the public. Comprehensive system change takes time and sustained efforts, but the essential building blocks are in place, and our direction is clear. To ensure every reform serves patients and the professionals who care for them, we will continue to engage with staff and clients throughout this process, gathering their feedback, tracking how each change affects workloads, and care experience. I remain open to constructive dialogue on additional ways to further strengthen our healthcare system and look forward to seeing our efforts translate into measurable improvements for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with

my colleague, and I hear the concerns that have been raised. Mr. Speaker, as Members, we need to focus on cooperation and collaborations to make life better for residents across the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, this motion includes strong recommendations. True progress depends not just on passing motions but on continued dialogue, accountability, and collaborative approach to problem solving.

Mr. Speaker, we all want the same thing, a better healthcare system for our people, especially in small communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the Minister of Health and Social Services inherited a system with decades of challenges, some going back 60 years. With this motion, we are discussing how to bring about reform. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister has valuable insight, not only as a representative from the regions, but also as a former frontline nurse with years of experience. Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful, thankful, her leadership is bringing long overdue attention to small communities that have often taken a backseat to the needs of the city and/or larger regional hubs.

I also want to recognize that some of the items in this motion are already being acted on by the department. The Minister has responded to concerns raised recently by MLAs and is collaborating with Members to advance primary care reform. This is the kind of cooperative, inclusive approach we need. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate following up after the Member from Monfwi because I couldn't have said it better myself. I really appreciated her comments, and certainly quite a lot was said about this motion already, and so I don't want to add too much to it; I appreciated the Minister's response.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few aspects of this motion that I'm more comfortable with than others but would say that much of this has been called for already by MLAs, the NWT Medical Association, nurses, and other healthcare practitioners, and this motion is kind of -- I don't even know, I guess I'd call it like a healthcare super motion that kind of brings all the thoughts together that have been coming out in committee over the past couple of months. And so to the principle of the motion, Mr. Speaker, I

do agree with it. I will vote in favour of it. I'm going to leave my comments at that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do support the intention behind this motion, and I support many of the specific demands within it. I will support the motion, but it's also a very long list of demands and I just wanted to note my concerns with some of the specific points within it, for the record.

First, I don't actually think that another working group is going to be very helpful. There is currently a clear line of responsibility through the health authorities, to the public administrator, and ultimately to the Minister, and the Premier in some cases. The Minister is already responsible for overseeing primary care reform, and the Premier's responsible for overseeing the health system sustainability initiatives. So my concern is that a working group that includes Regular Members is not going to be able to directly oversee anything given that our role is to hold Cabinet to account. We already have many avenues to do that, including working with our committees to have regular communications both ways with the Minister, which has been happening.

Secondly, I'm unclear as to what it means to call on the GNWT to, quote, "work with" the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Union of Northern Workers to develop an inclusive bargaining structure for all healthcare workers. If we're talking about rearranging locals within the union or changing decision-making internally around who gets to be on the bargaining team, I don't see how it would be appropriate for the GNWT to get involved in that. What the GNWT is responsible for is our legislation, and, honestly, I think what would give frontline healthcare workers a real voice in negotiations is if they have the freedom to choose their bargaining agent and to be able to choose to represent themselves at the bargaining table instead of in this motion, once again, dictating that it's the PSAC and the UNW and the GNWT who know best, and they should be the ones to decide on behalf of healthcare workers how bargaining structures should be organized.

Next, I don't see how we could or why we should even publicly release the details of locum contracts, just as we don't publicize details of other private contracts in this government, and I'm not clear what the purpose of that would be. And, certainly, if we want to phase out agency nurses or temporary workers, I think there's general consensus that

we don't want to have a system that relies on agency nurses, but we would have to eliminate the need for them. And that means major changes and to achieve this goal in the next few years, major changes in the short term to be able to retain and recruit new nurses.

Significant and lasting changes in compensation and financial incentives are really only going to come from a new collective agreement and one that is targeted at meeting nurses' needs, which is what is contemplated by the Private Member's bill I brought forward that's now going to be examined by committee.

The other items on the list, I do support, and we've already been hearing from Cabinet that work is underway on most of them. So it's up to us to continue holding the government to account to ensure that meaningful and steady progress is made. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't be quite as long; I've got my speech right here. Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise to us that the Member from Range Lake has brought this motion forward. He's been passionate about this issue. It's been one of the main issues he brought to this House since he's been elected, since we've been in here, and the points he brings forward are valid and he does a lot of work in that area, and I certainly appreciate that. It also comes at no surprise to me that my colleague, the Minister from Inuvik Twin Lakes, is also passionate about this and has done a lot of work to already implement a lot of those things that are brought up in this motion, and I certainly appreciate that, and I know how much she cares about this issue as well.

It's not just a Yellowknife issue, obviously. I speak to health professionals in Inuvik as well. I know we're facing challenges. I speak to colleagues across other jurisdictions in Canada, and I speak to family back on the East Coast. We're not the only jurisdiction that's facing this, Mr. Speaker. We have -- there are issues throughout the country. There is -- you know, we're fighting, as they say, to get health professionals up here and some of the things outlined in this motion are things that are going to help us, as the Member from Range Lake had said, to attract those, to make us the place to want to come and to work and to live. And certainly, I appreciate all the work he's put into that. As I said, I appreciate the work that the Minister's done as well. I look forward to working collaboratively on this issue and continuing to move this forward, and I'm sure

that the Member from Range Lake will continue to bring those issues forward as well. Having said that, I appreciate the work. I'll certainly support the motion and look forward to continuing further. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many of my colleagues who have spoken before me, I do agree with the intent of this motion. I, too, am not certain why a working group is required when we have a very hardworking social development committee that the motion -- or the mover is a part of but perhaps he would like to speak to that later on.

I am also concerned that phasing out agency nurses without a wider national plan is something that we need to look at very carefully and therefore I'm very pleased to hear that the Minister is working on that file specifically.

And one thing that hasn't been mentioned so far, Mr. Speaker, is something that I just want to flag for the House, is when we talk about artificial intelligence, that cat is out of the bag, Mr. Speaker -- there's no putting it back in -- but I think that federal regulation is strongly needed on this front. I have also heard from the doctors speaking about the charting, the note taking, and I think these are all reasonable and rationale reasons for wanting AI to assist them in their work and make their workload smaller. I think that the intent of that particular clause is a good intent; I just want there to also be federal regulation about it. So with that, I will support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. To the motion. Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting this motion. What I've heard these past several months, several weeks, is healthcare reform, efficiencies, and with the passionate leadership we have I'm confident that this motion will only add to the list of efficiencies as a check box, and with four departments in deliberations, including Dexterra, I'm quite confident that the department will harness the leadership together to execute this motion, which I feel confident strengthens our move forward to rehab our system.

When I recently visit the hospital here and when I recently visit the clinic in Norman Wells when the dental team came in, there's a need for servicing that equipment in these smaller communities to make them readily available when the team comes to that small community. So there's a number of issues out there that

needs our attention, and I'm confident in the leadership will do that. In short, thank you. I'll support this motion. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Member from Hay River South.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member -- an active member of a volunteer ambulance service that was pretty busy back in the day, you know, I was able to form many relationships with doctors and nurses currently in the territories, around the territories, and throughout Canada. You know, I do appreciate the work that's been done to this; however, I do feel for me, it's very Yellowknife focused and very focused on what the issues are in Yellowknife where, for me, if we took care of our regions, if we took care of our communities, the strain on Yellowknife would not be as much as it is. And we not only have to deal with the issues of staffing issues, we also have to deal with the lack of professionals out there that are willing to work full-time, willing to be committed full-time. And I know this firsthand because I know two physicians who work in the city, that live in a city, that locum in the same city, that do not want to work full-time. So these are the things that our government has to deal with all the time, is attracting physicians, attracting people to work, that don't want to work full-time. They want to do locums. They want the freedom to do as they wish. So it's not only always a government issue. We're dealing with HR issues. We're dealing with personal issues, family issues, manager issues. We're dealing with everything. And I commend our health Minister on the work she's been doing. For somebody who bothers her probably on a weekly basis, I feel that, you know, we've come a long ways in the last little while with where we're going with the department of health.

One point I will bring up in here, however, is, you know, just for an example, establishing a licensing body for paramedics. My concern immediately triggers the fact that this would have huge detriments to volunteer ambulance services across the Northwest Territories. And my concern with that would be we would have a bigger strain on our volunteers and on our healthcare system by not being able to provide these services when we're putting more pressures on licensing and governing people that where a majority of the people in the territories are volunteering. So, you know, although I will -- sorry, I'll just leave it at that because I think it's important that, you know, we realize the impacts are not only here but throughout the whole Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River South. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure supporting a motion like this. I think it's in -- I think it's key to some of the mandate many of us has been running on, and I would certainly say, you know, I feel like saying hi, my name is Robert, I'm a healthcare supporter. It's been 560 days since my last election, and I've been fighting for better health care. It's 859 days until my next election, and I'll still be fighting for healthcare improvements, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's just this ongoing fight but, you know what, I promise to be relentless to the end. Actually, that's one of my mottos, being relentless, and I won't give up. And to move the dial or the needle a little further on this particular issue, I think my colleague from Range Lake had pointed out, you know, perfect is the enemy of good. We'll take any improvement we can get, and then we'll build on it. I'm a believer of success begets success, Mr. Speaker. So, yeah, we don't need the perfect solution.

As the clouds clearly are going over the NWT Assembly right now, the tone had changed, it kind of feels similarly or akin to how the gray clouds over health care is. And we continue to raise these things not because it's a bad system, but it needs improvement. And I want to thank the many voices that give us the strength to talk about the issues. And I want to stress that because the strength of their issues are our issues. I mean, when the Member for Range Lake brings forward an issue, it's not just because he's got nothing better to do. But then again, you can clarify that with him. But the thing is the community of the health professionals are saying to him, you know, we need help. When the community you're telling my good colleague from Tu Nedhe about how their community health services are struggling, I mean, he's not just doing it because, again, he's got nothing better to do. He's hearing crisis, and they want their voice echoed in this chamber.

So when we hear about people working together, trying to do this, this is exactly what we're talking about. This is a collaborative approach making positive suggestions on how we can improve this. I mean, if you're looking for failure in here, I don't -- like, in the sense of a bad message, there's not a piece in here. There's not a line saying give me someone's head. There's not a line in here saying, you know, bring them before us on their knees. There's nothing like this. This is all about working together. You know, when we -- that highlights about trying to get the two unions together on the same page, absolutely.

Now, I can appreciate my colleague down the road here as concerns maybe about the wording of the messaging of this but, you know, we must empower groups to work together. And if these two unions are willing to work with the government, we could almost do anything. How exciting that is.

Mr. Speaker, wanting to work together is exactly what the working group concept is and being part of the solution. I mean, how many times does the House hear me talk about or bemoan about the fact that Members are often thought of as an afterthought? We want to be part of the solution. We want to be part of the progressiveness of these communities. Again, we're here to help too. But it's been a little bit of a process here since I've been in this 560 days about, you know, we have all the power and we get to do it all ourselves and we'll tell you when the solution's ready but we'll tell you, and we'll tell you when to vote for it.

Members want to be part of the solution, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I recognize as well some of my community colleagues may be voting for this because they appreciate the file and I hear other community colleagues saying well, this is a Yellowknife issue. I wish you'd see beyond that. This is a healthcare system issue. Yellowknife issues are the same but different than regional issues, and regional issues are the same but different than community issues. And hence everyone has their own dynamics. But it doesn't mean you have to ignore Yellowknife to fix a Deline issue. We can work on them differently at the same time. You know, a solution in Norman Wells may be a solution in Fort Smith and Fort Simpson that is slightly different than Yellowknife. Yeah, work on them all at the same time. We have so many people working on different facets. You know, I hate this frustration of somehow embedding or characterizing this is a Yellowknife only solution or a Yellowknife only motion. This is a territory-wide problem.

Mr. Speaker, some of the -- I'm going to run through these very quickly. You know, for example, locum contracts and we want to talk about them in a public release. Actually, I think that would be a good thing. It's kind of like the sunshine list of our contracts. They're out there, we're honest about what we're paying people, and we're showing people. What better way to be more competitive and transparent. Mr. Speaker, there's no shame in that by saying these are the base pays of what we offer. They may come with benefits, but the reality is these are the base fee. By the way, we do that for most of our employees anyway now so why would we keep this area super secret just

because we call the work contract instead of employed?

Mr. Speaker, the reason we -- you know, we want to instill -- very important essence to the agency nurse problem. When we see people coming here, being paid more, leaving and whatnot, it causes frustration. And hence we also see people here, and we've been told stories by the nursing community where folks have just said well, wait a minute, if I quit and I move to California -- and I even heard a lady point out an individual from Australia comes all the way here. I mean, it's hard to imagine that those costs are being picked up. So you have all the glory of living wherever you want in the world and someone picks up all your costs. I mean, these are the type of dynamics that we want to see closing those gaps. Will there ever be a time that there's zero agency nurses? I don't know. But we can work towards it. And we certainly should work with that attitude trying to close that gap to zero. And it's things like that change the retention attitude on how nursing and other types of healthcare workers feel.

As far as pay incentives, Mr. Speaker, I mean I heard the other day about -- from the Minister, you know, like, they have a contract and sort of a way her response being as, you know, we can't do that. I never, ever, ever heard someone saying they wouldn't take more money than their contract currently prescribes. I mean, it would be really nice if people were like that, but the truth is is that if we're going to pay healthcare workers more, who is going to say no? Oh my goodness, you're paying my 10 more dollars an hour; that's a breach of your contract. Like, they're not going to dig it.

You know, and the fact about pay is you know what, it's about money too. I mean, what's wrong with leading the country? And I hate the repetitive story I hear everyone's competing for these people. Who cares? Let's show them we're leading and make them sweat bullets when they find out how much we pay them and show them how much we take care about -- care for them, and how much we're willing to go. I mean, if the Minister wants to bring forward through the Finance Minister clearly, but if the Minister of health wants to push forward a supp of another 20 percent on her budget, I mean I'll support it. Because health care matters. And as a matter of fact, every door you knock on, whether you're in Lutselk'e, whether you're in Deline, health care matters.

Mr. Speaker, it's funny when we talk about the negotiated physician licensing sharing. Actually, it's kind of like a -- the trade barrier is broken down, you know. A license is good here as a license is good there. And I think things like

that are extraordinary opportunities. You know, and when we look at, for example, technologies, I would actually extend that for my opinion of saying, like, online bookings. I was listening to something Wab Kinew was talking about the other day, how he was holding up his cell phone -- I won't use it because it's technically a prop -- but he was holding up his cell phone and showing people in Manitoba, you want an appointment, here, book one in the night. Oh, book one on the weekend. You know, like, the attitude of doing things is so much different. I really like that guy, by the way. Shout out to Wab Kinew because he's pretty cool. I really wish he was here at Western Premiers. He was the guy I wanted to meet because he's real. That's why. He's not robotic. He's sincere, but he's in touch with some of the challenges. And I really feel that he cares about the passion of these particular issues. And that's not saying the health Minister doesn't, but I'm just saying he has a way of communicating that passion. And I think Manitoba's quite lucky to have him.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear about emerging technologies, it's not emerging. Booking online, it's not emerging. Transferring your file, e-file to Alberta when you need a specialist to look at you, and it's not an emerging technology being able to dial in and find your own file like you can in other jurisdictions. These are literally catching up to the modern age. We're not even advancing progressiveness in health care; these are catching up.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak of a little frustration given the chance here is that doctors will be frustrated. We've seen the statistics. We've pulled them. We talked about 50 percent rates, challenges of staffing our specialists, hearing about some who have left, some who are planning to leave. And, you know, often we hear things like from the doctors directly themselves, would you just let us schedule our own stuff. Let us schedule our own files. Let us manage our own schedules. Let us arrange our own surgeries. We will work with each other and cover each other. And you see that loyalty from the medical community. So I say what type of -- you know, what larger bell do we need to ring to acknowledge there's a crisis here? Things are falling down. Things are challenging. It's true things are working but things I think are getting by on the thinnest of possibilities in hope that they're struggling, they're losing.

Mr. Speaker, when you hear about the challenges the medical association has brought forward just to keep the emergency room open, was that the bell of crisis that no one was listening to?

Mr. Speaker, again, I just want to circle back as I want to close here, and I would talk about the risk. Many of the professionals have put great -- I'll say personal risk in jeopardy by coming forward and talking to us, talking to others. They're concerned that the public administrator isn't the right fit or they're not seeing it through the right communities in the sense of community conversations that is. They're not hearing their concerns. They're bringing them to us. And, you know, they've reached the point of saying they don't care anymore; they're willing to risk it. And to me, that speaks passion, that speaks volumes about how important this matter is to these people, that they must feel that they put it all on the line to make sure it doesn't crumble.

Mr. Speaker, I want to finish by -- I'll finish-finish by saying I'm very grateful for the healthcare system we have. I have not been the product of it, but I have certainly been a user of the system very much my whole life. In other words, I wasn't born here but I was certainly -- I've had the pleasure of getting excellent service. Like so many of us here, I doubt any of us would deny that they offer nothing but gold standard. And we are just trying to show them the same type of respect that they give every one of those patients who walks through the door and says, hey, I need some help. And now they're coming to us and saying hey, we need help too. And I can't stress enough this isn't a teardown motion; this is a build-up motion. And I need that that -- ensure that that's loud and clear. This is a build-up the system, collaborative approach, welcoming approach, trying to be a friend of the system and trying to be part of the solution. So if you heard something else, give me a call, I'll walk you through it and show you that we mean well and we want this endeavour to succeed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll do it for my good colleague just in case, I know he'll be asking for a recorded vote, so I'll make sure that that gets noted on the record now so it doesn't get forgotten. So anyway, thank you, colleagues, for listening and to our healthcare workers, we need every one of you, please don't leave. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the motion, staffing solution to rebuild and reform health care. Mr. Speaker, for me, I bring this book along wherever I go, and I raise it with committee and I raise it with my Cabinet Ministers whenever I can, and it talks about in the treaties it just so happens that along with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

and Chief Drygeese, my great-great grandfather Oliver Edjericon also signed this treaty. And also, we got modern treaties as well. But most importantly is that the medicine chest is in our treaties, and it talks about health care. And right now, the biggest thing I'm hearing back from my constituents in my riding is that the fear of closing the emergency doors here at the Stanton Hospital. And right now, the medivac, the planes that go into the small communities for medivac, patients to bring them out, most of them come to Yellowknife and use the emergency, and that's where they get treated. But they're concerned because what happens if they close it and they -- and where do they go? Do they go to Edmonton? Vancouver? Winnipeg? Calgary? So it's a big concern to the constituents of my riding that, you know, how do we -- how do we deal with that and how do we -- how does medical travel deal with that?

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of health is in her job now two years, and she inherited one of the biggest files in government that takes up one-third of our budget, and it's a big file, but overall, you know, the nurses that come into our small communities are locum nurses. They don't engage the community. They come and go. But at the end of the day, we just want to have good health care in our small communities. And our elders really need them. The people that are asking for help are -- where do they go?

So I want to just say thank you to all the nurses out there that had provided good services to the GNWT and small communities as well. You know, we need nurses, and we need to backfill them with our young people that are coming up from our small communities or larger centres that go into colleges and universities. We need nurses.

The big issue too as well is NIHB is a big problem is that we don't have enough money. And how do we deal with that? Like, medical travel is a big issue. But right now it's been managed but -- by the health and social department but there's not enough money there to really help our people out who are really in need. And, most importantly, but going forward, though, I -- we still got to talk about the UNDRIP that was passed in the 19th Assembly and the Royal Commissioner Report on Call to Action, there's -- a lot of them are good recommendations that were in there too as well. And MMIWG is -- there was some really strong recommendations that are in that report as well. There's a lot of work that has to happen. And to me is that, you know, this motion, it's a start. It's a way to start working on reconciliation with -- on health throughout the Northwest Territories, especially in the small communities.

And Mr. Speaker, I didn't want to take too long, but I just wanted to say that also the review of the public administrator, you know, it would be nice to have him come to our communities and also listen to the elders as well because they have issues and concerns as well. So I look forward if the public administrator could come to my riding and listen to what the people have to say, especially to the leadership in our small communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know this is -- this motion here is reform. It's not to point fingers or anything like that. All we want to do is build on what we have. But how do we work together? And how do we improve it? We only got two more years in our mandate and between now and then, I think it's time that we really take a look at this issue and this motion is a start. So I'll be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Before we do question, Member from Range Lake, would you like to conclude the discussion.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. I think today was a very good show of the unity of this House to address health care on very strong terms. I think having these conversations in here is really important as well. It's the heart of our government, a heart of our democracy; the heart of our society in many ways. And knowing that we are listening, we're having these conversations in a very public forum is exactly what so many people want us to -- want to see when they feel like they're, quite frankly, banging their heads against the wall to be heard. So I think this is a good start, and it's a good way to move forward.

I want to take a minute to acknowledge that our Minister of Health and Social Services is an Indigenous nurse with -- and someone who has real experience both in the profession and in the small communities. I hear that. I have no compunctions about her character, her experience, or her passion for the work. She is the Minister, though, and as the Minister she is accountable. So when we bring a strong voice of accountability to these issues, it's not to diminish her strong credentials and bona fides as a passionate health leader in the Northwest Territories. It is to hold her to account for the job that she has been assigned. And it is a tough job. I acknowledge that. But our job on this side of the House is to be tough critics as well. And I think when we have these discussions, it can

get -- there can be tensions. But that tension is exactly what -- what's required sometimes when we are at these crisis points.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the Minister's -- the three kind of overarching principles that she had laid out, but I would like her to add a fourth, one of those being -- that being the staff-led innovation pieces, staff-led feedback, innovation, system -- continuous improvement of the system. That needs to be enshrined in our healthcare system.

Before the amalgamation of the authorities, there were robust mechanisms in place for physicians, for nurses, for other healthcare professionals, to participate and make continuous improvements to their workplaces. Somehow, that hasn't transitioned into the new -- the amalgamated authority, and it is something that's sorely missed. Now, I should stress, no one who's currently working there wants it to change back to the way it was. They recognize the improvements of centralizing the authority into one cohesive unit. But they do feel unheard. And I know there's been town halls. The Minister's participated in those town halls. We've had town halls as well. And, unfortunately, I think the -- you know, the conversation's happening but people aren't still feeling like those conversations go very far. So we need to find a way -- and I'll charge the Minister with this. We've given her some places to start, but staff-led innovation and continuous improvement and system change that needs to be enshrined in operational groups that can make -- so it's not a top down process where all the changes are coming from a public administrator or from a board or from senior management, but they're actually coming from the floor, meeting somewhere in the middle. Because that's been missing from this conversation and from the system that we currently use.

You know, I'm pleased to hear there's only five agency nurses. I know they've been reducing the amount of agency nurses, so I just say take the extra step, commit to phasing them out. If we wait for every other jurisdiction to do it, I guarantee you there's other jurisdictions saying the exact same thing, especially the smaller provinces, PEI, New Brunswick, that are struggling with these challenges as well, that are have-nots. I'm sure that they are saying same thing. If we get rid of this resource, then we'll lose it and what are we going to do. But if we all did that, not much would change. I think of daylight savings time. You know, we're waiting for Alberta. Alberta's waiting for BC. BC's waiting for California and so on and so forth. So we're never going to lose it. And that's frustrating for people who are tired of it. And it's the same thing here for workers who are tired

of seeing travel nurses and competing with travel nurses while they want to see them gone, and they don't want to hear the excuses of, we'll wait for everyone else to do it first. I applaud Quebec for their changes, and I hope other provinces do follow suit, starting with this one next. We could be the next domino to fall as we move forward, and we've given the Minister plenty of time to consider a robust plan.

Now, I just want to speak to -- I know some of our colleagues are very passionate about collective -- expanding collective bargaining for nurses. But there are other healthcare workers as well. And, you know, the discussion we had yesterday in the House didn't include them, so it's -- I don't think it's too perplexing to consider that those healthcare workers also need a voice.

One of the things I have heard from those folks, who work very hard for Northerners, is that they don't feel like they're heard as loudly as the doctors or the nurses and so forth. And we don't want to leave anyone out. So what this is calling for is essentially for the parties who are involved with labour in the Northwest Territories to sit down and figure out an inclusive way to make sure no health workers are being left out. You know, so there's certainly a lot of effort that's gone into supporting nurses, but we need to support everyone because we need those professions as well.

Mr. Speaker, the working group concept that also is flummoxing some Members, this was pitched by our Honourable Premier. So I don't know what it looks like. He's established a small community -- a committee of Cabinet, which is a different approach. I'm not on that committee. I've seen the terms of reference, but this is a concept that was brought forward as a way to find closer ways to working together. So, yeah, we have a standing committee, for sure. We have these committees. But this, again, was a novel concept to solve crises or challenges that are affecting regions, not long term but short term. And we have a crisis right now that needs short-term fixes before we can move to those long-term stabilization. So to put a finer point to it, the motion contemplates an action plan at the fall; let's establish a working group from both sides of the House to build that working plan collaboratively. So if any Members are wondering what it could look like, that's an option. But I'll leave it in the hands of the people with the resources to pull together that rather than speculate on our side because ultimately it wouldn't be in our hands; it would be in the hands of the Executive Council.

And my last comment is just because I'm a Yellowknife Member doesn't make this a Yellowknife motion. I hear often that criticism,

and you know, I hear on the one hand some Members saying, you know, there's a divide and conquer approach that is often seen in this Assembly and we shouldn't have that. And then I hear other Members saying well, Yellowknife gets everything. But that's divide and conquer. And, again, just because I'm a Yellowknife Member doesn't mean this is a Yellowknife motion. If we're trying to staff positions in the communities and outside of the capital in regional centres, well, we need a strong incentive regime. We need a strong collective agreement. We don't have the staff to deploy to the small communities or recruit to the small communities, so I don't see what these points are explicitly about Yellowknife. Yes, there's a hospital in Yellowknife that serves the entire territory. It's Stanton Territorial Hospital, not Stanton Yellowknife Hospital. We benefit from that resource, absolutely. My community benefits from that resource. But it is not to the exclusion of the rest of the territory. And this motion is contemplating solutions that affect multiple communities, and the changes that we want to put -- we want to put in place will impact multiple communities.

So, again, don't let the fact that Range Lake is in Yellowknife fool you. This is a territorial motion for a territorial problem to help territorial doctors and nurses. So I -- with that being said, I think this is a good start to this problem. I am very -- to start solving these problems. I am very encouraged by the words spoken by the Minister of Health and Social Services in this debate. I was encouraged by the words she spoke earlier about a willingness to make changes to the public administrator's work plan to better explain his mandate.

I think communication is a key point here, and I want to communicate something very clearly, that coming into this session, I had made references to confidence. I'm no longer making those references to confidence. I am now confident that the Minister is on the right track. And now it is our job to hold her accountable for the commitments she's made. But I am confident that she is moving forward, and I hope that we will be active partners as we build a stronger healthcare system together. But rest assured, if it falls off the rails, I will be the first one to jump up again and say this is not okay; we need to take care of our doctors and nurses, allied healthcare professionals and everyone else. But the Minister has clearly understood the problem. I have confidence that she will bring forward plans that are going -- a plan. I hope it is costed, time-bound, and is very clear and clearly communicates the government's intentions and actions to the public so there's no ambiguity, and people, not just me, but the people of the Northwest Territories regain

confidence in their healthcare system. And, most importantly, the people who work in that healthcare system regain confidence as well. So the Minister has a lot of work ahead of her, and I hope we can all be part of the journey together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member from 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 Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, all in favour, 9. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, 7. Motion has carried.

---Carried

Motions. Member from Great Slave.

MOTION 56-20(1): CODE OF CONDUCT REFERRAL TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES, CARRIED

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS a Member's privilege of freedom of speech is crucial to a Member fulfilling their role in the Assembly;

AND WHEREAS a Member's freedom of speech applies to all proceedings of the Assembly, including committee meetings;

AND WHEREAS a Member's freedom of speech during proceedings is only limited by the rules of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS these rules only apply to proceedings of the House and its committees;

AND WHEREAS the Members' Code of Conduct was established to ensure that Members conduct themselves in a way that instills trust and confidence on the part of the public in their elected officials;

AND WHEREAS the conduct of individual Members of this Legislative Assembly can and does reflect on all other Members, as well as the institution itself;

AND WHEREAS residents of the Northwest Territories expect and will hold Members of this Legislative Assembly to a higher standard when it comes to how we conduct our business in and outside of this Assembly;

AND WHEREAS public statements made online by Members of this Legislative Assembly outside of proceedings, that are not governed by our rules, and may not meet the threshold for legal action, may be interpreted by members of the public in a manner that erodes the trust and confidence in the Legislative Assembly and its Members;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Yellowknife South, that this Legislative Assembly direct the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges to consider if the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Members' Code of Conduct requires any amendments or updates regarding statements made online by Members of the Legislative Assembly outside of our proceedings;

AND FURTHER, that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges deliver a report to this House on the Matter by February 2026.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the conduct of each Member of the Legislative Assembly reflects not only on how the public perceives that Member but also how the public sees all Members and the institution. This is why we have a Code of Conduct. Residents of the Northwest Territories expect and will hold Members of the Legislative Assembly to a high standard when it comes to how we conduct our business inside and outside of this Assembly.

Comments made by Members outside this House can and sometimes do cross the line of what would be allowed to say in the proceedings of the Assembly or its committees per our rules. Those rules are what we have

collectively agreed to not allow for decorum and order and to be respectful of each other.

The limits on our speech during our proceedings are, in some instances, greater than those required by law. Members' conduct outside of the proceedings of the Assembly is governed by laws as well as the Members' Code of Conduct. As such, Members of the Legislative Assembly are expected to conduct themselves to a high standard to protect the reputation of the institution. This builds and maintains public confidence in our institution and contributes to a healthy work environment for all Members and staff.

If this institution is seen as a healthy, collaborative workplace, it can and will inspire residents to seek public office. This point is very important to me as the Commonwealth woman parliamentarian for the Northwest Territories. I'm committed to sharing my knowledge with residents of all genders and backgrounds who wish to run for elected office.

Our residents deserve to choose the best representatives to serve in this institution, and if we are working towards a healthy collaborative workplace it can encourage more people to get involved in our democracy.

After discussing the idea for this motion with caucus, I heard that Members are particularly concerned with the conduct of conversations of politicians, or at large, that is, in many jurisdictions worldwide, on social media. This motion is a deliberately public conversation that I will hope help us discuss whether Members should consider updating the code of conduct so that online statements made outside of the House are bound by some or all of the rules related to order and decorum in our proceedings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reserve the rest of my comments to close the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to keep my comments brief today. Certainly, as a Member of this committee, I see merit in investigating this issue further. Times change. Social media has been around for quite a long time now. I'm happy to refer this to committee for further investigation. I'm supportive of the motion as such. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to be the seconder on this motion. I'm going to try to be relatively brief, but I do think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that the public hears some of the perspectives on this, including around the idea of freedom of expression/freedom of speech, in this context.

Mr. Speaker, freedom of expression obviously is extremely important, particularly political expression. This is an essential feature of democracy in my view and it's enshrined in the Charter of Rights, which is something that inspires much of my professional life. Being a part of our constitution, being part of our supreme law, Mr. Speaker, I do think it's important that we, again, lay that foundation as to why this is so important before we discuss any potential of in any way limiting that right.

Obviously, we can't exist in a democratic society without freedom of expression. It's a means by which we become aware of different ideas, different options, of different opinions, of different policies. It's a way that can help us govern ourselves better. And, Mr. Speaker, freedom of expression protects distasteful ideas as much as it might protect the more popular ones, and this is a key tool because it allows us in a democracy to ensure that it's not just the majority that get the voice, it's not just those with power or authority or money or funding who can bring their message out. It means that everybody should have an opportunity to raise their voice or share their message; in other words, express themselves.

With all of these important benefits, freedom of expression, however, is not absolute. We are, of course, and again, in a situation where even the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does permit reasonable limits on individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, and governments do place limits on these freedoms including on freedom of expression such as, for example, when there's someone expressing something that meets the definition of hate speech or, for example, when there is someone who wants to make a claim in a legal court of action for libel or defamation. This is where there's been expression made that can be demonstrated as being false or damaging or otherwise libelous and that it actually can then harm a person's reputation.

We don't have rights of citizens to simply say anything and everything in every context at any time. There are limits. There's limits, again, that the government can place upon us. There may be limits that are in a workplace where there's harassment-free policies to ensure that people are not subjected to any and all expression that can be harmful to them. And, of course, we

have placed already limits on ourselves here through our code of conduct that creates some limits on what we can or how we say things here in this House. And so in short, Mr. Speaker, freedom of expression is fundamental to democracy. Its protection from government encroachment is enshrined in the Constitution, but it is not absolute.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what this motion speaks to is an arena where expression can be arguably its most creative, arguably its most free, but also equally perhaps its most vile. And it is a space that is often rife with inaccuracy, poorly regulated, and that, of course, that I'm speaking of is the internet. The internet is increasingly a source of misinformation and disinformation and can, in fact, go so far as to have active attempts to spread false information and deceit.

And now misinformation, quite unlike other forms of expression, in my view, can be a very threat to democracy. It's not just a matter of being uninformed or incorrectly informed. When done with some intention, sharing information that is inaccurate, that is knowingly incomplete, that is suggestive of something that is untrue, it can lead those who are receiving or reading the information to draw false conclusions, to draw unknown, unwarranted conclusions, to have terrible impressions, and this can be done in a way that can be used against a political opponent, against a particular policy, or against an idea and in that way, Mr. Speaker, we would, in fact, be limiting the kinds of expressions that would provide greater opportunity for minority voices and for alternative voices. We, in fact, would start to stifle debate and stifle people who may want to speak out and may want to participate in discussion. Because when you're under attack, if something is untrue, it's one thing to counter a fact, it's one thing to simply counter a lie, but it's difficult to start to counter suggestions and innuendo. And so in that sense, you start -- you stop arguing over policy and you start to have to question whether or not you want to engage or how to go about engaging in a meaningful way.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly forms of what might be defended as political expression that then can be reduced to something much more simplistic, and this is what I read this motion to be alerting us to. And, really, the motion at its core is quite simple. We're just asking ourselves as elected leaders if we will consider, consider, whether there are limits that we want to place upon ourselves to try to ensure that our public discourse, our public discussions, don't veer towards misinformation or false misinformation or towards anything that would bring this House into disrepute.

Mr. Speaker, writing on the eve of the recent federal election, a political commentator in the Edmonton journal wrote this, and I quote: "At some point, a class of political operatives in this country decided that business as usual wasn't working for them and that the main problem wasn't their strategy but the system itself. After all, what do democratic norms, traditions, and integrity matter if you lose? It's okay to lie and deceive, obfuscate, because the end justifies it. Fear and outrage are allies. Institutions that provide checks on this behaviour must be vilified and neutered. Rather than building bridges, more votes can be gained by blowing them up."

So, Mr. Speaker, should society expect us as political leaders to hold ourselves to some higher standard or rather than simply saying what may be in our individual interests, I would think yes, and so, again, that's why I've seconded this motion so that we can at least give some thought to that process or thought to what that might look like, and should society or does society expect that its political leaders with an ability to establish reasonable limits and rules, that we would then use that power to place some limits and rules upon ourselves so that we act with the highest standards of integrity when we put information out into the public dialogue. Again, I think as leaders we should expect that, and I think that society, as members of society, that we would expect this as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's also a matter of trust and how we go about increasing and encouraging trust not only in our leadership but more importantly in government institutions broadly. Government institutions are how we decided to organize our society. It's how we establish and share and distribute our common resources. It's how we want to work together towards common goals, to seek better goals, to find better ways of serving one another as members of the society. But if people and residents and members of the society don't have faith in what leaders are saying, that what we are saying is accurate, truthful, fulsome, again, Mr. Speaker, I fear that we quickly render any meaningful debate meaningless and becomes a conduit towards something that is far -- quite the opposite from building trust. I think we want to try to encourage more trust in our institutions here and certainly not less and in no way put them in any further jeopardy.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly not alone in trying to face down the challenge of how to deal with the rather speedy rise of internet media as a medium of unregulated expression. It's a challenge that's being faced by democracies around the world and by colleagues across Canada. Fortunately, I believe here in the

Northwest Territories, we are well placed to lead this discussion.

MLAs who are legislators but not Members of executive council have access to government information in a very different way than what politicians in a partisan system might. We, of course, have a variety of information sharing protocols and practices to provide MLAs with a variety of different advanced copies, for example of the budget or of other documents and in-camera briefings where we can speak frankly, and certainly entrust this House with the various documents through our internal processes here with legislative proposals, for example, and ask committees to do the hard work and heavy lifting of legislative committee work. There are standing committees that have powers to bring Ministers and department officials in. And, Mr. Speaker, we, of course, are not divided in terms of allegiances to party lines or party teams or platforms. We arrive here as representatives, each of us together.

And so, really, I would suggest that as far as any legislative system in Canada, we are arguably are among the best placed to consider whether or how we can look to ourselves and ask ourselves how we can find a way to engage in policy discussions that are tense and often terse but that remain well informed, founded on facts, and avoid anything that veers towards presumption or innuendo that is not founded on fact and not advancing a policy discussion in the interests of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I, of course, don't know what outcome of the discussion there might be at this committee on this question. Perhaps we will not find any path forward that will allow us to better manage ourselves in a digital age, although I certainly hope that we do. Even so, Mr. Speaker, I am still pleased to second this motion for the very fact of wanting to put it to the public to let them know that we are trying to be better leaders, and we are trying to look for ways to improve how we as leaders communicate to the public about topics and issues that impact this territory. And so it was with that in mind that I seconded this motion and that I support this motion and that I want to encourage the committee to do some heavy lifting. I hope we are asking ourselves what more we can do to improve public discussion of political matters, what more we can do to find ways to better express ourselves as an Assembly of 19 elected leaders and as on behalf of our constituents. I think, Mr. Speaker, that we can do better and, at the very least, I'd like us to try. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Voltaire famously said, quote, "I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it." These immortal words are the crux of the matter of this debate, that being the speech of Members of this Assembly that is not subject to our rules of debate, nor the privileges we enjoy as parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, Members enjoy certain individual rights and privileges by virtue of being elected to this House. The privilege of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings is generally regarded as the most important of the privileges enjoyed by Members of any legislature. This right is protected in the Constitution Act 1867 and section 18 of the Northwest Territories Act that provides the Legislative Assembly with the privileges, immunities, and powers enjoyed by provincial legislatures and the Parliament of Canada.

The House of Commons defines this right as such, quote, "freedom of speech permits Members to speak freely in the conduct of a proceeding of parliament, such as in a chamber during a sitting or in committees during meetings while enjoying complete immunity from prosecution or civil liability for any comment they make in order to encourage truthful and complete disclosure without fear of reprisal or other adverse actions as a result of their testimony. This right also extends to individuals who appear before the House or its committees. The House of Commons could not work effectively unless its Members and witnesses appearing before House committees were able to speak and criticize without being held to account by the outside body."

Mr. Speaker, the reason we have rules of debate, points of order, which Members are very familiar with, is because of this immunity, this fundamental right which gives us complete protection for what we say in this chamber. There needs to be some limit on it which is why we have rights for ourselves. To extend those rights outside the chamber is unnecessary.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the Indigenous traditions of open dialogue, inclusive decision-making, accommodation respecting trust, form the other side of a consensus circle. These principles err on the side of allowing Members to speak more frequently, affords more time to do so, and encourages honest debate that sets aside procedural rules in favour of clear and respectful communication. What this motion contemplates is nothing less than an affront to both sides of our consensus traditions,

Indigenous and Westminster, that enshrine the right of freedom of speech that's paramount for our role as elected representatives in the NWT. I believe this motion is reckless, undemocratic, and will lead to a chilling effect on speech in a territory where far too many of our people fear reprisals when speaking truth to power.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is calling on a committee to investigate new restrictions on speech outside of this chamber online and in social media. While the code of conduct requires us to live up to a higher standard than most others, it should not be used to lower the standard for what is acceptable speech. Our citizens enjoy the right to free speech, but even that right has limitations that are determined by the courts through libel and slander laws and criminal offences such as uttering threats. This motion contemplates imposing new restrictions, if the committee chooses to endorse them, of the speech of its Members through the back door by making statements made by Members outside of proceedings online that, quote, "erode trust and confidence in the Legislative Assembly and its Members. These offences could be censure, fines, suspension, maybe even expulsion. Despite the fact that these statements so made would not meet the threshold for legal action in civil society."

Mr. Speaker, my question is who then decides what comments, quote, "erode the trust and confidence in the Legislative Assembly and its Members in the eyes of the public?" This definition is so broad and so subjective that anything written by an MLA that personally offends another Member or a citizen could reasonably interpret it as offensive. Perhaps the Integrity Commissioner would disagree, but regardless an investigation would be required and thus lead to complaint after complaint after complaint any time someone feels so aggrieved.

Mr. Speaker, in his July 16th, 2020, ruling for a complaint made by then MLA Jackie Jacobson, the Integrity Commissioner warned against the weaponization of the code of conduct writing, quote, "I recognize and emphasize that the purpose of the Members' Code of Conduct is to set high standards which MLAs as leaders are expected to abide by in every aspect of their daily lives in order to earn and keep the respect of the citizens they serve. However, it is not the purpose of the code to be used as a political weapon of choice."

Support for this motion encourages exploring ways to further weaponize this code by making every word spoken outside of this chamber subject to a complaint if interpreted the wrong way or interpreted opportunistically by a bad faith actor.

Mr. Speaker, MLAs are accountable to each other, especially so in our consensus system. Confidence in the Premier and Cabinet is held individually, not collectively. That means each Member of the Executive Council is personally responsible to the other Members of this House. They're not appointed by Premier or party leader, and their actions by their peers deserve to have the same level of scrutiny as any other citizen. It is in our very job descriptions and etched into the DNA of our proceedings.

To this end, Members should not have fewer rights of free speech than the public we serve. This is an absurd notion. We must be able to freely communicate with our constituents in the spaces they use most frequently to share their stories and raise their concerns. In 2025, Mr. Speaker, that place is social media for good and for ill. Social media connects the North in a profound way that traditional media never could given our geographic and linguistic differences. It is a hugely important tool for elected officials to communicate with their constituencies. It is a prime venue for free speech of our Members to communicate policies, concerns, and, yes, even criticize government decisions and fellow decision-makers.

Mr. Speaker, the politics of getting along to get ahead is a longstanding concern of many Northerners regarding our system of government. In-camera meetings and discussions are typically the rule and not the exception. Too often is accountability confined into what is tolerable to maintain chummy relationships within a given caucus, relationships that purportedly advance the political priorities of Members. For those who prefer to govern that way, this motion only furthers that style of internal economy by giving new tools to deal with dissent outside of private conversations in-camera that are far away from the public eye.

As per guiding principle number 4 of our process conventions, quote, "effective communication is a double-edged sword. For consensus government to work, all Members must agree to respect the confidentiality of information before it is properly made public. Similarly, Members should acknowledge the fact that information was shared in confidence once it has been released."

Mr. Speaker, this so-called double-edged sword is hard enough to cope with when constituents are looking for answers. With this motion, our ability to speak freely or freely speak to our accountability will only be further restrained, and our ability to speak to the -- as per our ability that's already constrained to

speak to confidential matters that are shared with us.

Mr. Speaker, I will say again Members of this House know exactly how reluctant many of our constituents are to speak out publicly, and support for this motion only furthers that fear in public of reprisals from their own institutions. Mr. Speaker, putting all that aside for a moment, the very real -- those very real arguments of a slippery slope towards censorship, I cannot help but raise the question what problem is this motion trying to solve? Because, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, you've already solved it in your March 3rd, 2025, ruling on a point of privilege brought forward by the Member for Yellowknife South.

Mr. Speaker, you ruled as followed, quote: "In our proceedings, we can speak freely. Our only 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 are 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 our proceedings. Although I did not find it in this case, statements outside of this Assembly easily could have been found a question of privilege."

Now, I'm not reflecting on your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I do not wish to relitigate any part of it, but it does come to mind in the context of this motion. Clearly, this House has found the boundaries of the rights of Members to speech both inside and outside the chamber. This precedent is now set by your ruling and therefore there is no need for further investigation by standing committee referral. The work is already done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is beautiful, even when it gets messy. We shouldn't be trying to sanitize political speech and instead embrace it for what it is even when it forces us to face hard truths about ourselves and what we stand for as politicians. As an elected official, I expect to be scrutinized in print and online; I expect to be satirized in editorial cartoons and memes. This is what we all signed up for whether we like it or not. We have better things to do in the limited time of this assembly than police the speech of our Members outside of this chamber and the committee room. Let's fix our broken health care, end homelessness, rebuild our faltering economy, take back our streets from criminals, balance the budget, or any other multitude of issues Northerners sent us here to solve. Censoring Members' words and protecting Members' hurt feelings are not the reason why we were elected. Let's not waste time on

matters that have already been addressed by the precedence of this House, by the rulings of our Speaker, that are guaranteed by our privileges and, most importantly, fundamental to our rights as Canadian citizens. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to reject this incautious motion and get back to the work of what matters most to our constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another long speech. It's a tough one. Certainly, I mean, I see both sides of the debate on this one. The Member who brought it forward -- and I'm not convinced, Mr. Speaker, that we can change the code of conduct to reflect online comments without restraining our freedom of speech, but I think it's -- but I'm not an expert in that. The Member has asked to have this go to committee and, quite frankly, committee on policy and planning procedures could have studied this at any time they want. I don't have an issue with taking a look at it at committee. I'll support the Member's motion to send it there to have a look at it, to at least review it. Again, we're not making any decisions at this point; we're just saying, hey, let's take a look at it in light of some of the things that have happened. Certainly, a wise person told me that I think Facebook has been stolen by the Baby Boomers from Gen X, and 50 percent of the comments are likely made from the washroom anyway, Mr. Speaker. So we'll take a look at it at committee. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I just wanted to clarify that as far as I understand, we're not talking about taking away or challenging any of the rights and privileges -- rights and privileges established for work that we're doing here within the chamber or within our committees. The point that I think we're trying to discuss here is that as elected officials, our freedom of speech needs to be balanced and constrained by the need to instill public trust and confidence in their elected officials. So I think that's the basic premise that we already accept because that is already constrained by code of conduct and rules within this House.

Mr. Speaker, four years is a long time between elections. I mean, it can be short for those of us who are really anxious to focus on the issues and make as much change as possible for residents. But it can be long for residents who

may watch their elected officials publicly behave in unethical ways, whether that's through comments on social media or comments that make it into more traditional media.

Mr. Speaker, no one is going to stop anyone from speaking truth to power. The point is to put boundaries and consequences around elected officials potentially speaking lies, and that would be within forums such as social media. I think it's alarmist to claim that this would lead to a flood of complaints. I mean, I don't know what my colleagues are planning to do on social media. I hope it wouldn't lead to a flood of complaints. And I don't accept the idea that it would be impossible to judge what is an inappropriate, untrue, or misleading statement on social media. We already have mechanisms to judge within this chamber whether statements, you know, violate the code of conduct or are untrue or misleading. So we could use similar criteria that we use to judge things spoken within this chamber to judge statements made outside the chamber. I don't think this is a slippery slope that would lead to wide-spread censorship amongst members of the public at large. We're talking about conduct of elected officials here. And I just wanted to note in my -- the Speaker's previous ruling was based on our existing rules, and it reflected the constraints in our existing rules. And that's fine. But what we're talking about is looking at changing the rules. So for those reasons, I'm supportive of sending this referral to the standing committee so they can examine what could be appropriate amendments to our code of conduct. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do feel the same way here. I don't think -- I don't really see the validity in the motion, but I'm willing to give it the benefit of the doubt by supporting the motion and moving to committee so they could do their work to the motion, thank you, and come back with a report as suggested by the deadline. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I may not have been around as long as you have per se, but I've been around a while in this process and to me, this motion is rolling out the welcome mat for censorship. I'm not going to overstate -- and I insist this is not an overstatement when I say, you know, what's next? You know, do we have the 1984 George

Orwell thought police on, you know, we didn't like the Members' or the Ministers' decisions so I'm thinking bad thoughts? Like, out of frustration, obviously, and I certainly wouldn't do them, but I'm just saying where do we stop next? Is this a situation -- is this a novel being written by Philip K. Dick? Who knows? Controlling our thoughts, asking us. It's honestly a slippery slope and, as my colleague had said, like, where does it end? You know, and that's what really worries me is it's rolling out, again, the welcome mat for censorship. Limiting free speech honestly undermines individual autonomy I have, you have, my colleagues have. And, you know, rightly so. That last decision, you know, your authority as Speaker of this House to help us ends at the door or at the end of the precinct, Mr. Speaker. And to me, we can't let Members who want to downplay the seriousness or the consequences of what's happening. They're kind of missing the point. We're opening up the doors to this type of censorship and it's, you know -- it's abhorrent to the overall principles of our Assembly.

It will stifle free exchange of ideas, opposing ideas, ideas that people speak both frankly and passionately, and sometimes it takes a special ear to hear the difference. And what I mean by that is I remember being at a wonderful speech Perry Bellegarde was giving, and I was really excited listening to him, and he got louder -- and I'm going to emphasize just by way of -- louder -- and I'm just emphasizing -- louder, and he stopped, and he goes, I'm not yelling, I'm just excited. But somebody only heard the volume and thought he was yelling, but then the moment you stop and think about maybe the words, it's their passion sending the message. And I really enjoyed that little comment he had provided. Because it's true, the writer, or in his case the speaker, was sending a message. Which message are you hearing? Which message do you want to hear? Which message do you refuse to hear or acknowledge? I really like that man's context because to me, it made a big difference on how I listen to people sometimes or sometimes how I hear people sometimes.

So I mean, we could go on or get dramatic about the democratic process and as important and fundamental that is, it can't be overlooked. I mean, the moment that we allow this type of censorship, suppression of dissent to me, just, it starts to get -- like, I get a chill down my spine thinking about who is going to police Members; are we policing Members? So why do we police Members when certain people in the public say way, way, way worse things than us; do we police them next? Is that the next thing? Because if a Member is making a comment on

social media that offends another Member well, why wouldn't we be policing the public, then, if it offended a Member of this House? Like, where does it stop? That's the point. The code of conduct, I actually really strongly and adamantly believe this is a lowering the bar of offences, finding ways to find offence, putting Members at risk, risk that's unfortunate, risk that you have to accept in this business that people will be disagreeable and sometimes very strongly disagreeable.

Mr. Speaker, when we have that risk, then it'll be Members deciding about the continuity and we'll be voting on oh, well, that hurt their feelings or that hurt their opinion, and I completely disagree, or we feel that that might have misled the circumstances. And that will then roll the ball onto the next process. Well, we need an inquiry and a process, and we welcome more complaints. I mean, how many times has there been complaints about stuff that ends up growing legs? I mean, we had complaints that were dismissed through the last Assembly through the Integrity Commissioner about someone swearing at someone in the public. I mean, yes, good behaviour matters and, I mean, I make no exception to it. I've had less good behaviour at times. I know it's hard to believe for most of you. But the truth is I'm full of energy and passion, and sometimes that's exactly what that is and what's driving sort of how I believe. To stifle this, you're suppressing people from being people and their passion, and that's what bothers me, is their passion.

I'm also going to sidestep but also draw to a very important example. We've all heard of conflict of interest in one form or another. In the principles I was once told by someone very wise before me and said it's actually used as a shield to protect those at risk. It's a reminder that the conflict of interest is to ensure that you're safe from something that it's okay you're in conflict with, but it's there to protect you just as much as it's to protect everyone else. But unfortunately, in many cases, it's used as the sword to come after someone, and they wield it with great indiscriminate behaviour and it ties more time up. So, again, I can only imagine -- I don't know what the final bill of that last inquiry was but, I mean, my goodness, where -- you know, we have to remind freedom of speech comes at a cost, so does defending it come at a cost, and so does proving one side right or the wrong comes at a cost.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard Members say this is about stopping falsehoods, spreading -- by spread by Members online. And I don't see anything in this motion that really focuses in on that. Decorum and disorder is a challenging thing. So who exclusively will oversee that falsehood? I mean, that's a funky sort of

process. It's okay to disagree, and it's okay to be passionately disagreeable. I remember there was a former Member from the -- well, it would have been the Monfwi riding in the old days, I think it was called North Slave. And he was very clever in his disagreement. I mean, how many times would he have been charged before this when he often said the Minister and the truth go in two different directions, you know, and he'd come up with these clever anecdotes to talk about how he'd feel things. So if he said that today on Facebook of his frustration that he didn't believe the Minister or didn't believe they were being honest, they would be brought before this House in some form, his personal passionate disagreement. In the House, I appreciate the fact that you can't use that language or those types of tricky words and process. In other words, you can have two truths in the House that point in two different directions. But I worry freedom of speech must be protected at any cost because once you crack that door open, this is what we're going to see.

First, it's going to be like who shamed me on Facebook? Let's haul them in before the committee and fine them. Let's haul them before us on bended knee and shame them for making -- so then Members will no longer use their media. That's the idea. Maybe that's what the nature of this motion is, to control Members. Maybe that's what it is. It's a fundamental right that aligns with who we are as Canadians, and many worlds and democracies share this. And I won't quote the Voltaire quote, but we all know that about defending and supporting opposition points of view. Yeah, I don't like what you're saying, but I will respect that you want to say it.

I think it's right that certain aspects of speech should be limited, although I don't profess to be an expert but I'm going to say when it comes to hate speech as an example, there's many examples, that's when the process should be kicking in. But when a Member is passionate online, where does it end?

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm worried about where we're going next. It's not overstating that are we looking at a George Orwell times or Philip K. Dick times once we start this, imagining what people said. Well, I think you kind of said this and I think you kind of implied this. And where does it go? I'm just going to say that I think it's a -- it's scary as I've ever been -- it's more scary than some of the decisions I've heard of this government, Mr. Speaker. I'm that worried about where it will go next. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'll be supporting this motion, and I'll say right now that when it comes to these types of motions about the rules of the House, there's no Cabinet position so all Cabinet Ministers are going to vote how they feel. You know, I won't presuppose the outcome of -- you know, if this motion passes, I won't presuppose the outcome of the committee report. I won't presuppose that it will recommend that all -- that we allow complaints to the Integrity Commissioner for everything said on Facebook that offends someone. I mean, if that's what the report says, then obviously I would vote against that. So I'm not scared that we're going to wind up in a situation where any time anyone opens their mouth outside of this House we'll have an Integrity Commissioner complaint. I think that's a bit much.

But we are in a post truth era, Mr. Speaker, where truth is beginning to take a backseat to a motion and to people's personal beliefs. People live in echo chambers on social media. They don't bother searching out the truth. They see an official, an elected official, and they make an assumption that what that person is saying is true. We know that's not the case. We see what happens when elected officials go on social media, spread misinformation, spread disinformation. It threatens democracy. The entire world right now is in a crisis, a democratic crisis, and social media and the comments made by politicians on social media have a role to play in that. So I don't think this is farfetched, the idea that we want to look at that sphere.

I am, you know -- I think it's worthwhile to examine it. It's going to have to be some very well-crafted recommendations that really don't infringe on free speech to the greatest extent possible for me to support it. You know, even standing up here, you know, no matter what comes out of this, I'm probably leaning -- right now I'm leaning towards well, maybe I won't support whatever comes out of this report, but I want to see what comes out of the report. I think it's worthwhile to have that conversation. I hear about the comments that people make on social media, elected officials, and then I hear what the results of that. That empowers other people to make similar comments. It empowers them themselves to go after elected officials. There's real life consequences of the comments that officials in this territory make for other people, for those other people's families. So this isn't, you know -- this isn't a situation where we haven't seen any sort of impact from these comments. This is a response to things that are actually happening today. And I know the Integrity Commissioner was quoted earlier, and I also have a quote from the Integrity Commissioner from an October 8th, 2024,

ruling: There are limits on what a Member may do and how they may go about what they do. Being a Member is not *carte blanche* to make or repeat unverified or unfounded allegations. Members have an obligation to inform themselves about the facts.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's a very high bar, and that's my concern. I want Members to inform themselves about the facts and I want Members, when conveying information, for that information to be factual as far as the Member is aware and that they've done their due diligence. There's, frankly, too much nonsense out there. There's too many comments that are made outside of this House that everyone knows definitely can't be made inside this House. But they have the same effect. Because of social media, actions outside of this House have a far greater reach than the actions inside this House. And so I think that it's worthwhile for us to at least begin to look into this because we could be heading down a path of the United States. We see instances in Canada where we are going down that slippery slope where social media comments are eroding democracy, are empowering, emboldening people who would do damage to our democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that this is something where we want to get ahead of this. We don't want to be talking in a number of years about why we never looked into this at all. So I'm supportive of this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River North. To the motion. Member from Kam Lake.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me be clear from the outset I do not believe in censorship or anything that stifles anyone's ability to speak truth to power, but I do believe in the need for responsible leadership.

Before the last election, I sat down with a dozen people considering running for MLA. I was excited with their ideas, leadership, and professional experience, reputation, and what they would bring to the job. But the majority chose not to run. The most common reason, they said they had too much to lose. The social cost of politics had become too great, driven largely by the behaviour they witnessed from politicians in chambers and on social media platforms where facts did not always prevail, and the global shift is notable.

This should concern us all. When good people refuse to serve because the personal cost has become unbearable, we don't strengthen democracy. We weaken it by narrowing the pool of those willing to lead.

Social media has fundamentally transformed political communication. These platforms have democratized political engagement in remarkable ways. Politicians can speak directly to dozens, hundreds, and millions. Citizens access diverse perspectives instantly, and grassroots organizing has become more accessible than ever. And this is good news. Yet this digital revolution has also created serious concern. Information overload, echo chambers that deepen divisions, rapid spread of misinformation, and the informal nature of these platforms leading to more impulsive, sometimes harmful, statements from politicians that imply untruths or conveniently leave out key information to drive a narrative.

Freedom of speech stands as one of our most cherished democratic principles, yet it remains one of our most misunderstood rights. Too often, we hear this phrase invoked as blanket justification for any statement no matter how harmful or irresponsible, but true freedom of speech has never meant the absolute right to say anything anywhere at any time without consequence. The architects of our constitutional freedoms created a framework for robust democratic conversation, not a license for unlimited expression. Even the most speech protective legal systems recognize necessary boundaries. These limitations exist not to weaken free speech but to preserve its essential purpose, enabling the open exchange of ideas, holding power accountable, and allowing truth to emerge through debate.

Consider how unlimited speech can restrict freedom when marginalized voices are drowned out by harassment campaigns, when communities are terrorized by hate speech. When deliberate lies poison public discourse, the result is less meaningful dialogue, not more. Free speech protections aim to create space for all voices in democratic conversation, not to allow the loudest or most aggressive speakers to dominate.

With every right comes responsibility. The power and privilege to speak brings the obligation to consider the impact of our words. This doesn't mean self-censorship of controversial ideas. They are precisely what free speech protections are designed to safeguard. It means recognizing that our words have consequences, they can heal or harm, unite or divide, inform or mislead.

Mr. Speaker, all that said, there needs to be clear lines, and I would like to start with one: When people run for elected leadership, they consciously submit themselves to public scrutiny. Their policies, records, statements, and actions will be dissected, debated, and criticized. This is not only appropriate; it's

essential to democracy. But their children, their families who never sought the spotlight, these individuals made no such choice. When we attack politicians through their families, we're not holding them accountable; we're engaging in collective bullying that diminishes us all. This behaviour doesn't strengthen democratic discourse; it drives good people away from public service and reduces our politics to its worst elements.

I see this motion as two-fold: How the rules we have committed to in this House follow us out of this space; and second, is balancing legitimate concerns about misinformation and responsible governance with fundamental principles of free expression on social media platforms.

Decorum and responsibility aren't reserved for when the cameras are on. They are the foundation of public service, whether speaking in chambers, posting online, or engaging in private conversations that inevitably become public. The strength of our democracy isn't measured by how ruthlessly we attack one another. It's measured by how thoughtfully and effectively we can engage with ideas as change makers.

I have taken questions in this House about creating safe spaces in schools. We need to lead by example by modelling those safe spaces here. I support this motion because I think there is value in discussing how the rules that we have chosen to adhere to in this House apply outside of this room where we spend most of our time and because the role social media plays in how we serve residents and the consequences to democracy play a significant role in politics today, and that is what this motion does: It creates space for the conversation. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when people leak confidential information, there should be consequences, but our ability to express is another issue. From Indigenous perspective, as an Indigenous person, a woman, we finally got our voice. As a result of the colonization, it destroyed our language, culture, and way of life. For so long, the racist Indian Act had power and control over our life. Not only that, it discriminated more against the Indigenous women. With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I do not support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to support the motion to send the Members' Code of Conduct to the standing committee on procedure and privilege for review and possible changes. This motion, again, is not about restricting free speech. As my colleague has said, as an Indigenous woman, we have a voice, we'll use it, but it's about our duty as elected leaders to maintain the respect and the trust of the people that we represent.

In our territory, governance goes beyond just laws and parliamentary rule. It's also deeply connected to Indigenous laws, values, and northern traditions as we practice those as part of our processes. The Dene, Metis, Inuvialuit, and other northern communities have long governed themselves based on respect, honesty, and accountability. These values are not just written down; they are shown in our relationships, teachings, and the shared responsibility to keep harmony in our communities. And when I speak about this, one of the areas that I like to talk about is when my first experience of walking into this chamber of fear, of fear of doing it wrong and getting it wrong for the people that I represent, of being a role model for those that come behind me, and to be the person that my elders expect of me. And many of our elders are sitting around us, behind us, as we do these proceedings. And I do hear feedback from my constituents and other residents in the Northwest Territories and ask me what's going on, what's going on, why is this happening, you know. And I take it a step back and, you know -- and I say that we -- we are all passionate. That is not -- I'm not going to say that that's not -- that's not -- that's happening in this room. Every single one of us are here because we are passionate about the work that we are doing. We may disagree. And, again, we can disagree. We can, you know, get to the point where we may not even like each other very much. But we have to respect each other. And that was something that was taught to me a long time ago, and I'm not saying that rule that's in here. That was given to me when I was working, when I was in school. I had teachers that I didn't get along with. It was, like, you may not like them but they are there, and you have to respect them and you have to do the work with them. So, you know, and I take that away.

So, Mr. Speaker, our northern laws and values teach us to communicate carefully and with integrity, especially in the public. That's another part that I've always said, is as a leader everything that I say carries weight, even though I'm not very big and -- but I'm very loud and so I try to be heard because I'm very small, but the things I say, I have to be careful

because it may, you know -- and the way that it's interpreted, I -- you know, I have to be very careful in the way that I speak because it may be interpreted in the wrong way that I don't want somebody to take that the wrong way. So, you know, this reminds us to be role models, protect, honour, through respect, behaviour, and care for one another. When a Member of this House speaks publicly, whether here or in it the community, again, like I said, those words represent not just the individual but all of us, the integrity of this building, this Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, and we need to be aware of difference between lawful speech and speech that is respectful and responsible. So this motion acknowledges that our current code of conduct may not fully meet the public's expectation in this digital age where words can spread quickly and cause significant harm; it also shows our common goal across cultures that communities and communities that -- to ensure that our leaders are held to a standard that respects the privilege of serving in this house.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan matter. This is about people honouring our legislative traditions and respecting the laws of the land as experienced by Northerners. It's about fostering respectful dialogue, accountability, and leadership that reflects the best of who we are, both as Members of this House and neighbours.

And at the end, in closing, Mr. Speaker, you know, I do reflect when I have conversations with Members or with people in the public that might get heated and take away, and I'm always okay to say I'm sorry and I forgive you and move on for the greater good, and I think that's something that a lot of people that are close to me kind of go I don't know how you can forgive and forget a lot of things. And that's not to say that that's -- in this House. It's something that I try to carry throughout everything that I do. So for those reasons, I wholeheartedly support this motion and the work that will come with it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiliideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to respond to this motion today which seeks to update the code of conduct to include public statements made outside the Legislative Assembly to voice both my disappointment in this motion and explain the risk I know it will have on our unique democracy. I think the intent of this motion is to signal some constituents in the North that our institutions are strong, especially when it mentions words like "trust" and "in confidence." Those words may

inspire reassurance to some who look around the world are frightened. However, my constituents will interpret this motion very differently, that our institutions are, in fact, weak because they look to their history, the history of the rule of law of selectively applying to silence them. The truth is this motion will have the unintended consequences of restricting the speech of elected representatives. Even though this motion makes it clear that such speech does not meet the threshold of legal action, that my constituents would ask, if this speech is not defamation then what is the problem.

However, that would be a rhetorical question because as an Indigenous man, I know what the problem with this speech is, and my constituents do as well. The problem with this is free speech is that it's only one guilty of eroding a confidence of the Legislative Assembly. In other words, speech that the territorial government may find objectionable. We treat each other with very high standards in this Assembly to ensure we do our best work, to follow the traditional parliamentary democracy. Outside of this chamber, I consult with my communities, my constituents, chief and Metis councils who I represent, and I work hard to bring their perspectives back into this chamber. These are different institution that this Legislative Assembly of the Government of the Northwest Territories because they come from a different tradition. The tradition of my communities have existed here since time immemorial, so there are going to be in conflict with the territorial government which arrived very recently. This is the history of the Northwest Territories, and the North has changed for better as we let natural disagreements shape our common future. Yet, when you take the standards we have in this building and you apply them onto how I work out in my communities with vague policies decided by strangers behind a desk, then you are disconnecting me from my communities and limiting my ability to serve them.

I've been through this before because I am first generation survivor of residential schools. The schools thought to disconnect us from communities and limit how we can express ourselves. This was done to assimilate us through an unequal application of rights by a political system that made no room for other perspectives out of fear and ignorance. How can we work, how we look around at the progress that has been made in this territory to advance the rights of Indigenous people in their self-determination which culminated in many of my colleagues -- sorry, my Indigenous colleagues, and I becoming elected representative to the Legislative Assembly only

to be told that to participate, we must assimilate and disconnect ourselves from community -- from our communities.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we been through this before. So I oppose this motion and caution because our democracy is stepping between us and our communities will prevent us from shaping that common future based on a respect and self-determination we have so far worked -- so hard to achieve. If our institutions are indeed strong, it would not need to rely on motions which seek to prevent criticism therefore prevent changes.

And this motion, to me, I feel that it's going to prevent us from speaking out on what we're told by our people in our community. And in some ways, this motion, to me, it seems like it's a -- would muzzle us, and my voice for small communities is not going to be heard. So no matter how the vote turns out, I want you to listen to what I have to say here today because it's coming from the people in the small communities, and we need to be heard. And I've been saying that since day one, that we're here to do a job for our people and work together. That's what our elders always say. So, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I am outside of this chamber, I make every effort to consider the 18 other Members of the 20th Legislative Assembly in how I conduct myself and how I make comments in the public. You know, a lot of passion in this room regarding this issue on both whether you're supportive of moving forward with this discussion or you're not, and I think the one thing that -- and I'm going to keep my comments pretty short here -- that should be considered throughout this conversation is how did we get here and why are we having this actual conversation. So maybe a little bit of inner reflection from the Members in this room to look at the situation that created the need to bring this to the floor or not bring it to the floor as the case may be might just require a little inner reflection. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the motion. Member for Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I respect everyone's viewpoint, and I don't want to be stifling or suppressing any type of freedom of expression as we live in a democratic society. But in our role as elected officials, we have to

be careful in our expression to ensure we are not bullying or intimidating or hurting intentionally. We have to lead the way in public discourse, especially in this age of social media, with our children and our grandchildren accessing it constantly. I would agree that having the committee examine the code of conduct. If it needs to be updated, I would agree with that. I will support this motion.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Before we conclude, Member from Great Slave, you may conclude the debate.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. This was a good discussion. I want to respond to a bit of what I heard today.

The motion I've provided is discrete in the sense that we are looking at our current practice in this House and whether it is something that we would like to consider for the online forum, how we do business as Members. Yeah, it is not about infringing on the freedom of speech in any other fashion.

The broadness of this motion allows the committee to study and recommend actions which are for the public's knowledge which are then voted on by all Members. There is no final decision being made here today. There are several checks and balances before or if any, indeed, changes are made to the code of conduct.

Having respect for each other in this House doesn't mean we need to agree. It means we debate policy, not personalities. I feel that if you can't appropriately argue the content of debate without attacking someone's intent or character, in the rules of our House that's something that the Speaker would rule on. Being honourable means respecting your colleagues. Both our elders and our youth are watching us here and outside of these walls. I also think of the principles of consensus. We're not here to defeat or discredit or lie about each other. If impugning motive to Members is unacceptable in this House, my question, I suppose, with this motion is why should it be acceptable online?

Consistent behaviour strongly contributes to perceptions of integrity and encouraging Members to behave consistently in all and public contexts helps build trust and confidence in individual Members and the Assembly as a whole. I would like for standing committee to investigate what other jurisdictions have done to encourage civil and truthful discourse

amongst their Members online. And regardless of the outcome of the vote, I really do honestly thank Members for an open and frank conversation here today. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Question has been called. All those in favour, it's a recorded vote, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Monfwi.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River South.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, all in favour, 9. Opposed, 4. Abstentions, 1. Motion has carried.

---Carried

Notices of motion for the first reading of bills.
First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 27:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE PROTECTION
AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE ACT,
DEEMED READ

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Protection Against Family Violence Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Pursuant to Rule 82(3), Bill 27 is deemed to have been read for the first time and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Tabled Document

340-20(1), Tabled Document 341-20(1), with the Member from the Sahtu in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): I now call committee to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member from Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 340-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026, and Tabled Document 341-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you. We will take a short recess and resume with the first item. Mahsi.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Recognizing that we had the introductions there from yesterday and we're carrying on, we would carry on. Please turn to page 10 for the Department of Justice.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, community justice, not previously authorized, \$588,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, community justice, not previously authorized, \$588,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, court services, not previously authorized, \$246,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Department of Justice, operations expenditures, court services, not previously authorized, \$246,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, legal aid services, not previously authorized, \$1,793,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, legal aid services, not previously authorized, \$1,793,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, services to government, not previously authorized, \$31,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, services to government, not previously authorized, \$31,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$2,658,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Justice, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$2,658,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Please turn to page 11 for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$137,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$137,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, sport, recreation and youth, not previously authorized, \$2,194,000. Are there any questions? I will now turn to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have a few questions about the contribution to physical activities, sport and recreation fund. Just to be clear, what is this funding proposed to cover, the \$1.8 million?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, to the Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This specific amount of funding, Mr. Chair, is suggested in order to help fund the cost associated with 2026 Arctic Winter Games which will be held in Whitehorse March 18th to 15th of 2026. The funds do need to be confirmed well enough in advance for teams to be selected and the associated coaching and support staff to be selected, and so that's why it is coming through now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: So what is the current position of the lotteries revolving fund? Because I understand that that's typically where money for Arctic Winter Games and other such sport-related activities comes from. So can the Minister discuss how we got to the point we're providing supplementary estimates to afford to send kids to the games.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so I'll see if we can get the specifics on the lottery revolving fund just shortly. I can say that in terms of more broadly how we get to where we are, where there's a deficit in this particular fund. Mr. Chair, there's a couple of factors at play. One is that the revenues being received from lotteries are not simply -- or simply not keeping up with the costs and the expenditures. Lottery revenues are trending downwards and, meanwhile, the cost

of sending students and youth and their associated coaches and sport teams on trips are becoming ever more expensive, and there are more draws on the sport and recreation fund every year so, again, that is leading to -- and also just wanted to try to ensure that there's -- you know, a large contingent that goes from the Northwest Territories. So, again, between the reductions in revenues and increasing costs, the current team for March -- next March of 2026 is proposed to be at 600 participants. I don't -- I can't say necessarily -- or sorry, 600 participants just for the trials and then sort of 360 or so for the final games. So even just running the trials around the Northwest Territories, all of that comes with costs. And, again, costs of travel are on the up and revenues on the down. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so I understand the need for a one-time contribution, but I guess I'd be interested to hear the Minister discuss whether there's been discussion about what can be done in the long term to stabilize this fund because I'm guessing we don't see it as a tenable situation to just simply be providing supplementary funding every single time we need to fund games. I mean, the idea was the lotteries revolving fund was supposed to sustain itself. It seems like we're not in that situation anymore, so I'm curious to hear what we're doing to resolve that problem. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there is work underway. This is a problem that was anticipated; it's not new. And so there is, of course, the Northwest Territories active living framework. It is a framework that is, you know, covering the next several years right through until 2033, and in that framework, I can certainly report -- I'm happy to report that there are some new funding agreements that are being signed with different sports partners, different territorial sports organizations, not for the coming fiscal year but for the year after which, you know, hopefully, will start to improve the way that the funding at least is being utilized and distributed which may then, again, impact the overall deficit if it can be used in a way that's, you know, again, spread in a -- spread more equitably, more widely. There also, Mr. Chair, are efforts underway to look at how we select our -- the team selections, the process that we do to -- as I said, over 600 participants are anticipated for trials in advance of this group, and so looking at how that can be still done in a way that

maximizes participation by the youth but without perhaps having as much cost, looking at whether or not there needs to be a change in the frequency of games or the games in which we are participating. And certainly, last but not least, but looking to as well what kind of advocacy we could be taking to Sport Canada to see, you know, whether or not the amount that is coming in from them is equitable against the costs for participation for young people in the North. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Member of Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, and certainly I just want to, you know, be clear in that my hope is that we are, you know, going to find ways to stabilize this fund because I think it's important that youth have opportunities not just to attend games but perhaps even more importantly just engage in activity and sports in their communities as much as possible. And I know that the funding from these -- the lottery revolving fund enables that and enables a lot of fantastic crucial programming in our communities, and so I want to see that continue.

Can the Minister enlighten the committee as to whether, you know, have there been any, you know, cuts to contributions from GNWT into this fund that previously kept the fund afloat? Has there been any changes with the way we're funding this that has led us to have to do supplementary appropriations as opposed to just simply using budgeted money?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There certainly have been changes over time, Mr. Chair, so there are MACA contributions in 2019, 2020, and 2021 were higher than what they continued to be thereafter. I'm not in a position here to say why in the last sort of -- why that change was made some now five years ago. Certainly would be happy to look into that further if I -- if it's helpful. But, really, Mr. Chair, the bigger -- the biggest single loss is coming as a result of the changes in the kind of funds from the lottery revolving fund that's just simply, as I said earlier, not seeing the kinds of revenues it is. And, I mean, you know, certainly during COVID that was more obvious. There was a very quick and sharp reduction in the amount that came in because lottery terminals simply were not open and/or not operating, and it's my understanding that they may not frankly have bounced back entirely since that time and that that -- that period of interruption may well have led to those who use those -- who participate in gambling

are finding other ways to participate in that activity so as a result of which we've just not seen a return. Obviously, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is examining whether or not there's opportunity to move into the e-gambling space. I don't yet know, of course, what the results of that consideration will be. We want to, of course, not create any worse problems for ourselves but if there's money that is leaking out in a way that is not benefitting us, then I'm sure that that's what -- you know, that's exactly what we want to try to determine is there an opportunity here for us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Member of Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's it for questions for me, and I'll just kind of reiterate that I'd like to see, you know, the department of MACA working to -- and Cabinet certainly working to stabilize this fund over time so that we're not stuck coming for supplementary estimates. And I think, you know, we need to figure out how to fund sport to ensure that, yeah, activity is going on in communities. I think a lot of the community programming is really important, and I just want to emphasize that. So I'll leave my comments at that for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member of Frame Lake. Moving on to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, many of my questions are similar to what the Member from Frame Lake had said. I do have a couple of additional and just a comment, Mr. Chair, for the millions of subscribers that are tuning in to watch us do this important work.

It is important to note that of the approximately \$47 million that we're approving today, about approximately \$39 of that is funded by the federal government, so it's not just a rubber stamp. We are actually being transparent and doing due diligence here.

But this one is not, Mr. Speaker, and full support of the \$1.8 million. I think it's very important that the Arctic Winter Games does get funded. It's unfortunate that the lotto fund is not what it once was for the reasons that the Minister explained. But if we're going to do this, and certainly I would encourage that we do continue to support Arctic Winter Games and whether that's, you know, hopefully not have to come back through a supplemental appropriation but to be able to budget it accordingly as we move forward in next year's budget, but has there been discussions at the department as well around additional funding, or will there be

additional funding required for other games such as the Canada Summer Games or the North American Indigenous Games or Northern Games for that matter, which are also very important to our territory and to the residents of this territory? So has that been considered by the department, Mr. Chair? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I certainly can confirm that the department is aware there are a number of upcoming games, really, over the next -- every one of the next fiscal years, whether, you know -- and as such -- so yes, they're aware of them, they're planning for them. Again, the challenge has become knowing what the kind of costs for travel might look like as well as what the kinds of revenue losses may or may not continue to be over time. But they are being planned for, so to that extent, again, I'm not necessarily in a position to predict the cost but other than just to assure that that's -- it's the intention. And I can say, Mr. Chair, I -- you know, the idea of reducing access to students and we're reducing the frequency of games is not something that is generally receiving support from the other participants any more from wanting to ensure that young people are having the opportunity to attend. So as far as and determining what needs to happen again, as I said earlier, with the living -- active living framework now underway and with some of the elements of that being implemented over the next couple of fiscal years that may well -- or that's certainly hoped that it can have an impact. There are other ways to try to mitigate some of the costs. I -- you know, I can note, Mr. Chair, that, you know, there is -- it is noted here to me that there have not been any increases in participant fees since 2020. Again, obviously, the -- you know, that's not -- we want to obviously be careful we don't want to limit access but just making that observation that there have not been any changes to fees in now, some, five -- over five years. And, again, you know, looking to Sport Canada and whether or not this is an area where we similarly want to be able to make a case for an increase and support to the Northwest Territories and possibly to the three territories from this national organization. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. And thank you for that answer. And I understand that, there is a potential possibly to do -- you know, I would -- my only concern would be looking at income testing there, and I certainly wouldn't want the cost to students from -- you know, from

any of our communities to be an impediment to participating. We've all seen the benefits that students get from participating in these games, any games, given, you know, some of the other social ills that are out there and we've discussed in this House. This is one thing that certainly, you know, is a benefit to our kids. And, listen, I'm a father. I was a coach. I had kids in sports. And I've had friends. And we all do in this House. So it is very important that we keep and maintain the funding for that. So that is it for questions on that. I think the other questions were answered through my colleague through Frame Lake. And I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Moving on to Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: That's okay, Mr. Chair. My questions were already posed and answered by other Members. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member of Yellowknife North. Further questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, sport, recreation and youth, not previously authorized, \$2,194,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$2,331,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$2,331,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Members, there will be a schedule on page number 12 that details borrowing authorization, and on page 14 that details supplementary reserve impact. Are there any questions on these schedules?

Seeing none, please turn to page 13. Department of Government of the Northwest

Territories, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Finance, revised borrowing authorization, total government borrowing, authorization, proposed adjustments, \$130 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Do you agree that we have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 341-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you. Okay, Members, I will go to the Member from Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 77-20(1):
CONCURRENCE MOTION - TABLED
DOCUMENT 341-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES AND BORROWING
AUTHORIZATION), NO. 1, 2025-2026,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that consideration of Tabled Document 341-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 341-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Question has been called. All those in favour? All opposed? The motion is carried. Tabled Document 341-20(1), Supplementary Reserves (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization) No. 1, 2025-2026, will be reported as ready for consideration in the formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

---Carried

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

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 340-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am here to present the Tabled Document 340-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. This document proposes a total increase of \$178.555 million in capital expenditures, comprised of the following items:

- \$92.94 million for infrastructure expenditures funding for projects that were not completed in 2024-2025. This amount is fully offset by unspent appropriations in 2024-2025;
- \$41.6 million for contributions to Housing NWT for infrastructure investment in public housing;
- \$20.9 million for increased costs associated with the Mangilaluk School project in Tuktoyaktuk;
- \$14.5 million to fund three new projects under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program Notional Plan. This funding is fully offset by revenues from the Government of Canada;
- \$3.7 million for contributions to community governments under the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund Agreement. This funding is fully offset by revenues from the Government of Canada;
- \$2.9 million to fund costs associated with the Yellowknife Courthouse capital project;
- \$1.7 million for cost increases related to the Fuel Storage Capacity Project. This funding is partially offset by revenues from the Government of Canada; and an increase of \$832,000 to reflect the changes in project timelines for the NWT Courts Modernization project.

That concludes opening remarks, Mr. Chair. I am prepared to answer questions that the Members may have.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Does the Minister wish to bring any witnesses forward?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Mahsi. Sergeant-at-arms, would you please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Thank you, Minister. Can you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have the deputy minister of finance Bill MacKay. And on my right, Mandi Bolstad is the deputy secretary to the financial management board.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Okay, thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor for general comments.

Seeing none. Before we proceed, committee, we will waive on the paragraph going into each supplement estimate is the opening infrastructure and go to the department and not previously authorized and the funded amount that was -- that will eliminate that duplication of -- I'm starting to dream of these words here. Seeing no further general comments, does the committee agree to proceed to the details contained in tabled documents?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will begin on page number 5 with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Education, not previously authorized, \$33,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, education, not previously authorized, \$33,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Languages and culture, not previously authorized, \$1,923,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, languages and culture, not previously authorized, \$1,923,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department, not previously authorized, \$1,956,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$1,956,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Finance on page number 6.

Management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$41,600,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Finance, operations expenditures, management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$41,600,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you. Total department not previously authorized, \$41,600,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Finance, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$41,600,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Infrastructure on page number 7.

Asset management, not previously authorized, \$250,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Infrastructure, operations, asset management, not previously authorized, \$250,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):

Thank you, committee. Energy and strategic initiatives, not previously authorized, \$2 million. Are there any questions? Seeing none. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure

Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, energy and strategic initiatives, not previously authorized, \$2 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department not previously authorized, \$2,550,000. Are there any questions? Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$2,250,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs on page number 8. Community operations, not previously authorized, \$12,835,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, community operations, not previously authorized, \$12,835,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department, not previously authorized, \$12,835,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$12,835,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, page number 9.

Education, not previously authorized, \$32,983,000. Are there any questions? To the Member of Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my questions are about the overage on the Mangilaluk School project in Tuktoyaktuk. I just -- it's quite a large overage, and just noting a lot of the concerns that were raised, you know, about the Stanton project and the auditor general report on that one, you know, spoke to our need to control the costs of contracts better,

I guess and, you know, this is quite a large overage, so I'd just like to hear a description from the Minister as to how we got here and how we're continuing to improve our contracting and our budgeting and project planning to ensure that these kind of overruns aren't occurring or are minimized. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member of Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This certainly is an unfortunate situation of having a further significant overage but on an asset that is of crucial importance to the community and to young people in the region who attend this school obviously, so it is a project that's several years old now and it was, unfortunately, one that was subject to some delays starting, if I'm not mistaken, prior to COVID and that immediately starts to lead us into a situation where project budgets did face some significant challenges, that things changed quite a bit quite substantially in terms of supplies, supply chains, and the costs of supplies. Adding to it, then, Mr. Chair, there were some issues early on when, if I recall correctly, it was a line, but I believe it was specifically telecommunications line discovered and that put some delay in the project and then, again, other delays resulting from that needing to mitigate and manage COVID-19 situation and ensure that the community remained safe when there would be an expectation of fairly large amount of labour coming in and out of the community in order to perform the contract so -- and then when there's delays, there are inevitably overages. There's losses of time and labour that has to sit idle but then there's a cost to it. So that's some of the explanation but beyond that, Mr. Chair, there were some challenges. We are working with a regional contractor, but they were challenged with some of the subcontractors that they were relying upon.

I can only speak, Mr. Chair, from the point of involvement in the last couple of years where Ministers worked more closely directly with the contractor to ensure that their subcontractors were meeting our needs as well in terms of timing. I can say that that relationship was one that proved important because we were able to work together and to bring in a reputable contractor who could advance this project very quickly and in a way that the community was satisfied and we were satisfied with what we were seeing in terms of changes that started to happen quite quickly and then the construction progress and monitoring that is now moving along as I -- last that I understand quite well and steadily.

So the second part of the question, if I understand correctly, Mr. Chair, was with respect to our longer term, you know, vision and longer term responses to these sorts of things that, you know -- the nature of some of the projects that we do take on does -- they are often large and in remote and small communities, and there can certainly run into some challenges that are distinctly and distinct and, you know, everything from wildfires to just simply the ability to bring supplies in, for example, to communities that were barged communities to becoming to fly-in communities, so those do present some challenges. That said, there is now, and has been over the last couple of years some significant changes done to our procurement, particularly of capital projects so, for example, we've reintroduced a peer review committee to ensure that when a project moves forward, it's been reviewed not only within a department but across the planning groups from across departments. There's an ADM capital working group, so, again, they too provide a second level of overage -- or of coverage to ensure that the planning is done adequately and that the budgeting is done to a level and with a level of rigor that really just takes eyes away, you know, human nature, if you're looking at your own projects sometimes you need to have some objective eyes on it so we've introduced both those processes.

And last but not least, Mr. Chair, we've recently put out a new set of guidelines for capital project planning. It's the first time since 2013 that we have updated those guidelines for staff. They are much simpler to use and are brought up to a modern state.

And last but not least, Mr. Chair, I always like talking about vendor performance management. I have asked the department to look at whether we can expand not only looking at our vendor performance management for delivery of BIP commitments but if that can start to be -- if we can get to a place where we are actually able to put that in place more broadly for quality circumstances and quality monitoring, that is certainly more complicated, it would take a fair bit of change, but at the same time there's certainly -- there may be an opportunity here that is if it's already rolled out and it seems to be working well in it the BIP circumstance, maybe this is an opportunity to expand that more broadly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, some of these reforms to the way that we're managing contracts, have we considered -- or

maybe we already do -- consider looking at previous performance on contracts when awarding subsequent contracts. So if a vendor has gone over budget frequently or if the vendor has gone over budget previously, does that affect their point rating in terms of their being awarded contracts in the future? So what I'm looking for is can we demand accountability not just from ourselves but also from contractors as they bid on contracts.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there certainly is some ability to do that. You can have a contractor or a subcontractor declared to be -- I'm not -- the word's escaping me, Mr. Chair. But to have them noted so that future procurement does look at them as being -- yeah, and would have that noted on file as being a known contractor with whom there have been problems. That's a fairly significant consideration, fairly significant marking to have (audio) so it would have to be fairly certain. I'd certainly be happy to take it away and see whether there is something more that can be done. I hear the Member's concern. We don't want to have repeat challenges. There was questions on the floor of the House today about a project in your riding that I know we've all been struggling with a bit. So, you know, it's not the first time it's come forward, and I would like to see that we have a solution that, really, it's more that making sure that we're rewarding the good contractors that we know are here in the Northwest Territories and delivering services. So as I say, it does happen, but the specifics of when and how, I think, could perhaps be clearer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I just want to be very clear that, you know, I -- I'm not necessarily suggesting that that needs to be the case with this contract. It's more just ensuring that we've got robust controls around our contracting. Just knowing that, you know, we see costs overruns a lot. And it's important to note that, you know, a lot of the projects that the government does, virtually all of them, are for essential infrastructure, like this, like a school. Like, this is not something that MLAs are going to turn around and say, you know, we're just going to have to cancel this. Because they absolutely need a school in Tuktoyaktuk which means that the government, to a certain extent, is beholden to building it virtually whatever the cost, and that puts us in a really difficult situation, and I think that's part of what has led us to be in this situation where we are constantly frequently going over budget on

projects. And so I think we do need to be really careful about ensuring that we have robust controls in place. And also that we're honest with ourselves about budgeting. I mean, if -- you know, I know that we're -- we try our best to learn from previous experiences, but it just seems to me -- I made statements about this in the past, and I'll digress it after this, but, you know, that it does seem to be something that happens quite frequently. We see a lot of supplementary estimates come in, and this one is just, in particular, quite high, and we see a lot of that. And so I think it is our responsibility as public government to do what we can to ensure that we're taking steps to prevent it as much as possible. So I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Moving on to the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again, my colleague has asked all the questions that I needed to for that one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you. Moving on. Seeing no further questions, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, capital investment expenditures, education, not previously authorized, \$32,983,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Languages and culture, not previously authorized, \$232,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, capital investments expenditures, languages and culture, not previously authorized, \$232,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department not previously authorized, \$32,215,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, capital investments expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$32,215,000. I'll make a correction to that number. It's \$33,215,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now consider Department of Environment and Climate Change on page number 10. Wildfire and forest management, not previously authorized, \$437,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investments, expenditures, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$437,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department, not previously authorized, \$437,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investments expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$437,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Committee, we will now consider Department of Finance on page number 11.

Management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$478,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Finance, capital investments expenditures, management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$478,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, \$2,903,000. Are there any questions? To the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the \$832,000 to increase the appropriation to reflect changes in project timelines for the NWT courts modernization project, so usually if there's delays in a project, then it says that an offsetting amount was lapsed and we're just sort of bringing forward a previous amount that was lapsed, but it doesn't say that in this case. So can the Minister confirm whether or not there were any lapsed amounts as a result of delays or what is the reference to changes in project timelines mean? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on this one, we -- the project timeline certainly has changed over a bit of time. So previously, when this was approved for a three-year project starting in 2023-2024, it was approved as \$1.715 million, and that has become clear, as the project's got underway working with the chief information officer, that this would be insufficient so there's been now an additional amount added to the budget, and it's been approved over four years which has extended the project further, and that is leading to some of the funding that was previously allocated to 2024-2025 moving over to 2025-2026, specifically that's the \$832,000. So it's that amount that's aligning with the longer timeline and the somewhat more complicated or somewhat bigger -- not more complicated but the larger budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So to clarify, this \$832,000 is being sort of carried over from 2024-2025 but it wasn't authorized under the 2024-2025 budget? Can the Minister clarify? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, Mr. Chair, I realize my answer wasn't very clear. So originally, this was a three -- projected to be a three-year project. It is now projected to be a four-year project first, on the firsthand. And secondly, there was an additional amount that was added to the project, not in this supp. But with the addition of the extra year on the project, the original timing of some of when things were being spent has changed. And so originally, the total projected -- the total projected spending now for 2024-2025 is just shy of \$200,000 which leaves a balance available of -- for spending on other projects. Some of that went to other IT capital projects because they weren't -- they did have needs in the 2024-2025 year, but there was a balance of \$832,000 on this project that can now move forward on to year 2 of 4 for 2024 -- or sorry, for 2025-2026. That's what is being requested here. So take this amount that was not spent in 2024-2025 on this courts modernization project, move that to 2025-2026 which aligns with the needs of the project in this current fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So is this the final year in the project, then, or is it year 2 out of 4? Can you -- is this the final amount that it's -- is expected will be needed to finish off this project, or might we expect further supplementary requests in the future? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So it is formally in -- we are currently in year 3 of 4. There are some stages that certainly will continue on. So where we are expecting this year is to be in a -- to have the formal contract to a contractor completed and a solution in full design over the coming year. That will be implemented in the -- in sort of late or mid-2026, and then there's -- thereafter in the project, there's training of our own staff to ensure that they can utilize this new system but that is different from the construction, if you will, of the IT system. So for the construction of the IT system, it's our expectation that that will be fully implemented in, say, mid 2026, so just into the next fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions on that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Any further questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Finance, capital investments expenditures, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, \$2,903,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department, not previously authorized, \$3,381,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Finance, capital investments expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$3,381,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services on page number 12. Administrative and support

services, not previously authorized, \$4,761,000. Are there any questions? Okay, to the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I certainly wouldn't dispute the need for health information system improvements and charting tools and -- can the Minister explain why these were not completed in 2024-2025 when they were budgeted for and why they've had to be bumped forward another year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me start, if I might, with the health information systems charting tool. There's a couple of items all listed here so just so I'm talking about the right item. But this is the electronic health record project. This is a multi-year project. It is underway; I can say that much. But there was -- let me just see if I can -- sorry, Mr. Chair. There's been some changes to the project timeline, and specifically, here we do have -- sorry, Mr. Chair. I just want to make sure I'm on the right project.

Let me see if the deputy minister has it, the right one in front of him, Mr. Chair. If I could send it to him, please, to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. Deputy.

MR. BILL McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this project, as the Minister noted, involves a number of steps and initiatives that are interlinked, and all of them start with the -- in 2023-2024, when the diagnostic imaging replacement was completed. So once that was done, they were able to move on to the next portion of the project so that was -- so that kind of delayed everything else, so that's why this amount has been carried over for all of these projects, so it's delayed the projects that are integrated. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, deputy minister McKay. To the Member, Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister know whether these projects can actually be completed in the coming year, or do we have estimate times for when each of these three projects will actually be completed? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I can, at least, share what

the revised timelines are anticipated to be at this time. So right now, there's -- the charting tool is expected to be underway for procurement in this current fiscal year with implementation expected then the year after. As we've said, there are a number of components here that are making it a bit difficult to say exactly the specific dates of one or the other, as they are interrelated. But laboratory information system upgrade, that work is underway. It was begun, and it is proceeding we're expecting this fiscal year, 2025-2026. Similarly, sharing of information to and from Alberta, that too has already had its basic planning as being -- is already underway as of last fiscal year and continuing this -- the current year, although I don't have an update as to what the latest status or expectation would be on an implementation date. Health information -- sorry, health information data repository, that too entered its planning phase in 2024-2025 but they are expecting to begin at least initial implementation of a project this current fiscal. Last but not least, Mr. Chair, integration engine platform replacement, that too got underway in terms of its planning last fiscal, and we are expecting to be in procurement for that replacement this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I didn't hear anything in that list about professional licensing modernization. I may be looking at a different list than you, but do you have an estimate for when that professional licensing modernization will be complete? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just bear with me for one moment, Mr. Chair. This project has now been underway since 2022-2023 and the solution, as it does sometimes prove to be the case with a number of different IT projects, what was initially expected to be the final solution has proven to, in fact, be more difficult in terms of it not aligning to the needs of this -- of the office. So at this time, Mr. Chair, yeah, so that did delay the project that we didn't have -- it wasn't -- the suitability of the originally anticipated solution. So instead, what we are looking to do is it's called the one-touch solution so it's -- that is now being moved in. Yeah, Mr. Chair, as sort of the dates here, I don't have a date in front of me, unfortunately. But I could certainly get back to the Member with an anticipated date. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have further questions at this time, but it does sort of concern me that these big multi-year health information system type projects, which are so critical and foundational to our system, if we're -- if we're sort of fumbling or choosing the wrong system and then it takes us years to sort of pivot and find a different one, I guess I'm concerned about the process internally for ensuring that we have the right choice or the right direction to begin with so we don't waste a number of years pursuing the wrong types of solutions, but I will follow up on that through other channels. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Moving on to the Member for Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In a strange turn of events, Yellowknife North has poached my questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Any further questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investments expenditures, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$4,761,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Health and Social Services, health and social programs, not previously authorized, \$18,589,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investments expenditures, health and social programs, not previously authorized, \$18,589,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Long term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$8,441,000. Are there any questions? To the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On this one, I'm wondering if, in particular, for those four, long term -- or no, there's three, long-term care facilities there. How many times have the funding for these projects lapsed or, you know, been pushed forward to the next year? Is this

the first year that this particular funding for those three facilities is being pushed forward, or how many years have we seen this happen? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member of Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have these projects right now broken down one by one, so, for instance, by Inuvik, by Hay River, etcetera, so I can't give a simple number. I can say these projects have -- if I'm not mistaken, all four of them been subject to delay over more than just the one fiscal year. I can recall back in just around the times of COVID, there was a change because the estimates that were done pre-COVID in terms of bed requirements were updated through and then immediately towards the end of when the COVID-19 pandemic was subsiding. That led to some changes in planning because of the changes of bed counts, if I'm not mistaken, have been updated yet again. And so here we are still trying to get a handle on what size of facility is needed as there continues to be changes in term of the kind of what the best option is to ensure that people are being given the best tools to age in place and not necessarily be in a facility. So I'd be happy to collate the information about how many times they've been moved over. I just don't -- I don't have broken down by project in front of me right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't necessarily need an exact number but I guess my concern is that if these projects are continually being sort of passed along to the next year, next year, and we're tying up around \$7 million in projects that are continually being bumped forward, bumped forward, is there sort of a limit on how many times we can just keep this money and bumping it forward without deciding that, okay, you know, this money's been tied up long enough, it needs to just fall off the budget and then start again when we do decide that this project is actually underway or making progress? Is there any policy or limits on how long we continue to, yeah, keep money tied up in projects that don't seem to be moving forward? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, there absolutely is a limit. It is -- it's whether or not a project's request for carryover complies with the financial

administration manual, and so that is specifically whether or not there's already a contractual obligation in place or if a department can demonstrate that there's been substantial progress on a project. And so, you know, if a project is slowly moving along, it will, in theory, meet that test -- I say in theory because it is still subject to approval by the financial management board. So all projects where departments are seeking carryovers do come individually to the financial management board and do need to be approved. So, again, obviously if they're compliant with the financial administration manual, that is sort of step one. But it doesn't necessarily change too the fact that there are known needs for long-term care facilities but wanting to ensure that when we get to the place of breaking ground and building facilities that are going to be into the tens of millions of dollars, wanting to make sure that they are obviously at the appropriate size, but I certainly take the point that we don't -- and I don't disagree that we don't want to tie up funds where they are otherwise needed clearly in the health care sector. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister. To the Member.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions on that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, to the Member of Yellowknife North. Any further questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investments expenditures, long term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$8,441,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Total department, not previously authorized, \$31,791,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investments expenditures, total department, not previously authorized, \$31,791,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee.

We will now consider the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment on page number 14.

Infrastructure expenditures, economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized, \$689,000. Are there any questions? To the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll try to keep these brief. But is this the final amount, then, for the Hay River fish plant? Does this signal that it will be complete, or should we expect further amounts coming forward in the future for the completion of the Hay River fish plant? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the project is in the implementation phase which is hopefully a positive word. The plant has been substantially completed already. It is expected to be fully commissioned in this current summer. There was some modification required for some of the ice harvesting related systems and that is where the carryover, I believe, originates, and that system had to be modified and then reconstructed, so that is where the carryover came with this. The plant is otherwise, as I said, operational, and I -- it would be hopeful would be fully implemented and therefore not see any further delays or need for any further carryover on the project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister of Finance. To the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. Any further questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investments expenditures, economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized, \$689,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Infrastructure expenditures, minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$714,000. Are there any questions? To the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that the MARS, or the mineral administration registry system, is also important to lots of people, so I would be remiss in not asking are we expecting this project to be complete, then, in the coming year, or how far along are we on this project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, Mr. Chair, this will not be fully complete in the coming fiscal year. Where we're at at this point is that there -- the MIT system is expected to be fully replaced over the course of this fiscal year, and then MARS as a whole, best guess here that I can give, Mr. Chair, with fair limited -- with the sort of limited notes that I would have for the purposes of this supplementary appropriation is that will happen in the following fiscal year, so in roughly a year and a half from now, and then over the course of that fiscal year, so 2026-2027, some of the timing issues there is that we are trying to design and develop an IT system that can fully accommodate the final details of the Mineral Resource Act regulations, and, of course, the Mineral Resource Act regulations are not themselves fully complete, as that is a process that is going through the intergovernmental protocol with the IGCS. So trying to have that project move as quickly as possible, again, while trying to align it with the timing of a project that is also not done is proving to be a bit challenging, but, again, based on what I'm -- I understand to be the stage of the regs, and the -- and then is that MARS itself can then be good to move in by the following fiscal year, and I think that would mean that we would have final implementation of the tools so that people could basically go on and actually do all of the things, including map staking, which people are very excited about, would be by the next fiscal -- the following fiscal year thereafter. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thanks to the Minister of Finance. To the Member.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member of Yellowknife North. Any further questions?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investments expenditures, minerals and petroleum resources, not

previously authorized, \$714,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. Infrastructure expenditures, tourism and parks, not previously authorized, \$2,465,000. Are there any questions? Seeing -- to the Member of Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just very quickly, why did so many of these projects have to carryover? It just struck me as a large number of projects as opposed to -- I mean, it's a fair amount of money, but just so many of them and so many across the territory, why so many? Does the department simply not have the capacity to complete the number of projects it's budgeting for, or what's going on? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, again, just so that we're clear as a get-go, a project can request a carryover only under specified circumstances, and that is specifically if either there is already substantial work underway or if a contractual obligation exists. So on -- you know, there's different reasons why different projects can see particular carryovers and, you know, they can range from anything from a contract being signed, you know, right at the line and such that they then end up, you know, requiring a carryover because they didn't quite meet the cutoff for having, you know, the timing begun or the funding expended or there can be -- certainly over the last few years, starting, as I said -- and I don't like to go back to COVID, but there are still projects we're seeing here that are facing carryovers because their original budgets were begun at the time of COVID. And then following from there, floods and wildfires that have affected different projects in different communities. So there certainly are some then, too, that have suffered from an opportunity of from perhaps a lack of -- a lack of as robust planning as we would like to see which is where, you know, I can certainly say that I've been quite pleased at the department and all departments have been quite, you know, ready, willing, and eager to see the changes in capital planning over the last sort of roughly two to three years. That does hopefully provide a greater degree of oversight to the plans before they come forward so that they are, in fact, ready.

With respect to the IT plans, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give a plug for listening to the Minister statements again because I've also gone to our

OCIO office that has been an area we are quite challenged to deliver tech projects, and they have done a fair bit of work to try to improve that system for how we planned. They're involved earlier with departments. Yeah, Mr. Chair, I think this -- it's a good question. It's just difficult to answer as a collective question as opposed to having to maybe sit down and look at some of the bigger areas one by one by one because trying to improve the planning is going to mean sometimes looking at the individual problems. There will be one-offs on big projects. Like the Member specifically mentioned that there are times where we are stuck as a government, we have to provide a school or a health centre, but there's other times where, you know, there's things that we could try to increase in our own systems about even respond -- having responsibility contractors, having vendor performance management, having contract monitoring, all of those things. So, again, all -- I'll be mindful of the Member's time, Mr. Chair. It's a topic I'm actually quite happy to talk about because a lot of our projects do come in on time and on budget, but the ones that don't certainly make the headlines. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister of Finance. To the Member.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026. Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investments expenditures, tourism and parks, not previously authorized, \$2,465,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. I will call the Member, Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member of Inuvik Boot Lake. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Sergeant-at-arms, could you escort the witnesses from the chamber there, please.

Report of Committee of the Whole

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Edjericon): Members, thank you. I'll go to the Member from

the Sahtu. May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Documents 340-20(1) and 341-20(1) and would like to report progress with one motion carried, that consideration of Tabled Document 341-20(1) is concluded and that the House concur with those estimates and that an appropriation bill will be based thereon to be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there a seconder? I'll go to the Member from Monfwi. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, May 28th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 666-20(1), Legal Aid Commission of the Northwest Territories
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees

14. Tabling of Documents

15. Notices of Motion

16. Motions

- Motion 57-20(1), Supplemental Recommendation of the Integrity Commissioner on Costs in the Complaint Against the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh

17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, No. 2
- Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Protection Against Family Violence Act

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 340-20(1): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2025-2026

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 28th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

