



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 73

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Pages xx - XX

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

This is an unedited transcript.

Please send corrections to Hansard Editor: kate_covello@ntassembly.ca

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Shane Thompson
(Nahendeh)

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland

(Kam Lake)
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment

Mr. Richard Edjericon

(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Robert Hawkins

(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Lucy Kuptana

(Nunakput)
Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories
Minister responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Jay Macdonald

(Thebacha)
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Hon. Vince McKay

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

Mr. Danny McNeely

(Sahtu)

Ms. Shauna Morgan

(Yellowknife North)

Mr. Julian Morse

(Frame Lake)

Mr. George Nerysoo

(Mackenzie Delta)

Ms. Kate Reid

(Great Slave)

Mr. Denny Rodgers

(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Hon. Lesa Semmler

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)
Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. R.J. Simpson

(Hay River North)
Premier
Government House Leader
Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Minister of Justice

Mr. Kieron Testart

(Range Lake)

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

(Yellowknife South)
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
Minister of Infrastructure
Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation

Mrs. Jane Weyallon Armstrong

(Monfwi)

Mrs. Sheryl Yakeleya

(Dehcho)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Glen Rutland

Deputy Clerks

Ms. Miranda Bye
Mr. Harjot Sidhu

Clerk of Journals

Mr. Michael Ball

Committee Clerks

Mr. Paul Mercredi
Mr. Angus Wilson

Law Clerks

Mr. Toby Kruger
Ms. Sandra Mackenzie

Box 10

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

www.ntassembly.ca

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER OR REFLECTION	1
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	2
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 168-20(1): SESSIONAL STATEMENT	2
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 169-20(1): NOTICE OF BUDGET ADDRESS	5
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 806-20(1): CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW INUVIALUIT REGIONAL CORPORATION CHAIR ERWIN ELIAS ..	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 807-20(1): GLOBAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION.....	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 808-20(1): MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY	6
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 809-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ILLITERACY RATES	6
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 810-20(1): ATTENDANCE AT AME ROUNDUP	7
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 811-20(1): IMPORTANCE OF TESTING FOR RADON.....	8
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 812-20(1): IMPORTANCE OF DAY OF RECOGNITION FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION	8
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 813-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMY	9
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 814-20(1): SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE OF INDIGENOUS TRAINING INITIATIVE WITH CANADIAN COAST GUARD	9
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 815-20(1): TREATY RIGHTS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RELATED TO HEALTHCARE.....	9
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 816-20(1): TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR PRIVATE SECURITY	10
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 817-20(1): CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF TWYLA ISAIAH.....	11
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 818-20(1): NATIONAL GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS DAY.....	11
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	12
ORAL QUESTIONS.....	13
QUESTION 923-20(1): DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENTS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	13
QUESTION 924-20(1): LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS FOR PRIVATE SECURITY	14
QUESTION 925-20(1): DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENTS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND CONSTRUCTION OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY	14
QUESTION 926-20(1): CONSTRUCTION OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY	15
QUESTION 927-20(1): LITERACY RATES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	16
QUESTION 928-20(1): RADON TESTING, EXPOSURE AND MITIGATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	17
QUESTION 929-20(1): TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION.....	17
QUESTION 930-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICIES	18
QUESTION 931-20(1): LAND TRANSFERS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENTS	20
QUESTION 932-20(1): ASSAULT STYLE FIREARM BUYBACK PROGRAM.....	21
QUESTION 933-20(1): INVESTING IN YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS	21
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTIONS	22
ORAL QUESTIONS.....	22
QUESTION 934-20(1): ADDRESSING MEDICAL TRAVEL CHALLENGES	22
QUESTION 935-20(1): FINE OPTION COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE COMMITTEES	24
QUESTION 936-20(1): FORT LIARD COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAM.....	24
RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS.....	25
WRITTEN QUESTION 21-20(1): CHANGES TO CHILD AND YOUTH COUNSELLING SERVICES.....	25
WRITTEN QUESTION 22-20(1): ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	25
WRITTEN QUESTION 23-20(1): HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS RETURNING AS LOCUMS.....	25
WRITTEN QUESTION 24-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MEDICAL STUDENTS REJECTED FOR RESIDENCIES	25
WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY	25
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	25
TABLED DOCUMENT 440-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 822-20(1): NO-SHOW APPOINTMENT RATES IN HEALTHCARE CLINICS	25
TABLED DOCUMENT 441-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 899-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CANCER STATISTICS.....	25
TABLED DOCUMENT 442-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY (PREMIER)	26

TABLED DOCUMENT 443-20(1): JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF PUBLIC RADON TESTING AND MITIGATION SUPPORTS IN CANADA.....	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 444-20(1): JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF PUBLICLY FUNDED FERTILITY PROGRAMS IN CANADA	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 445-20(1): 2025 REVIEW OF MEMBERS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS REPORT (SPEAKER)	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 446-20(1): SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION TO REVIEW MEMBERS' COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS (SPEAKER).....	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 447-20(1): LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY GUARDS AND OTHER SECURITY OCCUPATIONS ACT (NWT, 1991).....	26
ORDERS OF THE DAY	26

Unedited Hansard

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 4, 2026****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer or Reflection

--Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON): Good afternoon, colleagues, welcome back. It is great to be here. I'd like to thank the Tlicho Drummers for opening our session today. I'd also like to thank elder Jonas Lafferty for his opening blessing. Please join me in thanking them for a wonderful start to this sitting. Before we continue, I would like to take a moment to honour Mr. Joe Arlooktoo, a former Member of the Legislative Assembly, who passed away just before Christmas. Mr. Arlooktoo was first elected in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 1979, and was re-elected in 1983 and 1987, representing the constituency of Baffin South. He served three consecutive terms from 1979 to 1991.

Mr. Arlooktoo was a devoted public servant and a strong voice for Inuit communities during a pivotal time in the history of our territory. On behalf of this Assembly, I offer my condolences to his family, friends and community. Please join me in a moment of silence for Mr. Arlooktoo.

Colleagues, I've said this before, I will say it now: I expect to hear respectful words and see respectful behaviour in this chamber. We cannot and will not always see eye-to-eye. That is okay. It is okay for us to disagree with each other, but we must do so without being disrespectful. We can and we must choose our words carefully, to show our respect for each other and this institution and our residents.

It is our responsibility, as Members of this Legislative Assembly, to uphold the highest standards that are expected by our residents and is both deserved and required by this institution. I expect thoughtful, meaningful, and honest debate. I have been clear in this message since you selected me as your Speaker. Not only is this what I expect from you; it is what is expected by the people we represent in this chamber.

Colleagues, we are more than halfway through this Assembly. Time sure flies by when we're having fun, doesn't it?

Regardless of our roles, this is a place where we often feel like we do not have enough time to do all that we want to do. I know that feeling well as I'm sure you do.

Colleagues, while our time is limited, I want you to take stock of all that you've accomplished in the first half of this Assembly: The Ministers' and Members' statements that have been delivered in this chamber. The questions asked and answered. The motions moved and carried. The work of your committees and departments. Your achievements have been many, and there's still time for more.

I want to encourage each of you to look ahead to the remainder of this Assembly and think of the things you need and want to accomplish. Think about how you can achieve those goals. Think about who you can work with and how you can make a difference in the lives of those who elected you, about how we can all work together effectively, and how you can contribute to a better, brighter future for all residents of this territory.

To put it simply, let's get to work, folks. Let's make the best of the time we have left and make a difference for our people.

Colleagues, please join me in welcoming our interpreters back to the House. February is Indigenous Languages Month. When we use our languages in this House and when we have our proceedings interpreted, we are helping to preserve and strengthen our languages. We do this to show our respect for the languages and cultures of our people, and we could not do it without our interpreters.

Colleagues, please remember to speak slowly and clearly for our interpreters. And please join me in thanking our interpreters and welcoming them back to the Assembly.

I'm also pleased to welcome our pages to the chamber. During this sitting we will pages from Yellowknife, Hay River, Kakisa and Tsuigehtchic.

I am proud of our Page Program, and I thank the pages who are joining us during this sitting. For the pages who will be joining us during this sitting, and all youth across the territory, I would like to take this moment to remind you about our upcoming Youth Parliament. This program is open to grade 9 and grade 10 students from across the territory. Applications are due on February 15th. If you would like to apply or just want some more information, please visit our website at www.ntassembly.ca.

Colleagues, I am proud of our Youth Parliament Program. It is an honour for us to be able to provide an opportunity like this for our youth. I am also very proud that we have been able to host youth from other jurisdictions. Most recently, we hosted youth parliamentarians from Tobago in December 2025.

Last fall I was fortunate to attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference where I met the Honourable Abby Taylor, who was the presiding officer for the Tobago House of Assembly. We quickly connected over our respective Youth Parliament programs. Although our programs are different, they are both designed and intended to provide opportunities for youth to help them become more engaged and knowledgeable about their systems of government. These programs, and the many other youth parliamentary programs that exist in other jurisdictions, are about investing in our youth and our future.

In December, the Presiding Officer Taylor led a delegation that brought their youth parliamentarians to Canada. Their trip included visits to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Toronto and the National Parliament in Ottawa, and to visit us here in the Northwest Territories. We were pleased to have the Tobago delegation attend a standing committee meeting, meet with Members of our Legislative Assembly, as well as staff and some of our former youth parliamentarians and to tour our beautiful building. They were even able to get out and experience our northern lights.

Finally, colleagues, I have received the following correspondence from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Gerald W. Kisoun. It states:

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, the passage of

- Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) 2026-2027;

- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 3, 2025-2026;
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026

during the February/March 2026 sitting of the First Session of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

Yours truly,

Gerald W. Kisoun.

Thank you, colleagues. Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 168-20(1): SESSIONAL STATEMENT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we gather today at a significant moment for our territory and for our country. It is a moment of change and uncertainty, but for the Northwest Territories it is also a moment of opportunity.

The world is rapidly changing before our eyes. We can no longer count on the traditional international rules, norms, and alliances that have helped Canada prosper over the past 80 years. We are witnessing unprecedented efforts at economic coercion and foreign interference in our political systems, a blurring of lines between allies and enemies, and internal threats to our national unity on multiple fronts. At the same time, advances in artificial intelligence are poised to reshape sectors of the economy in ways that are yet to be seen.

Understandably, the change and uncertainty in the world can leave people feeling anxious or scared. However, Mr. Speaker, when I look around the territory at our infrastructure deficit, the lack of economic opportunities in many communities, the high cost of living, availability of housing, access to health care, and public safety concerns, I am less concerned about change and more concerned about continuing the status quo.

There was a time, in the very recent past, when it felt like the North was an afterthought, if it was thought of at all. Today, the eyes of the world, and the attention of the federal government, have shifted northward. The strategic importance of the Northwest Territories to national security, to critical mineral supply chains, to energy security, and to Canada's very future as a strong and independent country has come into sharp focus over the past year.

Our mission now is to ensure that we take full advantage of this moment for the benefit of the people of the Northwest Territories. We must transform the attention from the federal government and industry into economic opportunities, more homes, better access to basic health care, supports for healing, and safe, healthy, and thriving communities. In the same way that Canadians must remain united to face down external threats, Northerners must be united if we are to capitalize on these opportunities. We need to work together, make strategic and informed decisions about things we can control, and remove any self-imposed barriers to success. The contributions of each and every resident are important to advancing these goals.

Mr. Speaker, there is an urgency to this work, and we feel that urgency every day. Economic changes across the territory, such as the decision by Imperial Oil to cease hydrocarbon production in Norman Wells and the instability in the diamond mining sector, mean that many residents not only feel the urgency but are being impacted in very real ways. We must ensure that those residents whose livelihoods are negatively affected are supported and that there are new economic opportunities available to them. We believe in empowering Northerners to work, to contribute, and to create strong and vibrant communities.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to ensuring that the Northwest Territories plays its full role as a cornerstone of a secure, prosperous, and united country, and we can only do that if we have an economically stable and healthy territory. To do that, we are making pragmatic choices grounded in principles and done in partnership.

The work ahead is serious, but so is our confidence in the people of this territory and in the future of this country. Together, we will continue moving forward while grounded in our values, clear in our purpose, and focused on delivering real results for Northerners. At the same time, we will continue strengthening Canada's presence and asserting sovereignty in the Arctic, now and for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economic foundation is essential to enhancing personal and community wellness and to promoting self-sufficiency. Together with our partners, we are advancing major projects that will shape our economy for decades to come. Work is advancing quickly on the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor. These nation-building projects will strengthen Canada's Arctic sovereignty, connect our communities to markets, and support the responsible development of critical

minerals and energy resources, all while improving connectivity and lowering the cost of living and doing business in the North. We are also moving forward with the Taltson Hydro Expansion to improve long-term energy security and help power tomorrow's economic opportunities.

We are also continuing to enhance our existing transportation infrastructure. With support from the Government of Canada, construction is underway on the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge replacement project near Behchoko. This project will improve safety, remove restrictions on heavy loads, and strengthen a critical transportation link. This project also supports economic growth, critical mineral development, and the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor and is creating opportunities for Indigenous employment and participation.

The NWT's strategic location in the Arctic means that we are poised to see significant investments related to national defence. An advance procurement notice shows this investment could exceed \$10 billion over the coming years. That spending comes alongside the federal government's stated commitments to reconciliation, creating opportunities for Indigenous businesses and communities through contracting, employment, and training. This is a transformational opportunity for local economic business development, and one that we intend to maximize in partnership with the federal and Indigenous governments.

Looking beyond direct investments in military and dual-use infrastructure, we must remember that the NWT boasts a wealth of resources that can support global economic transition and further enhance our sovereignty and security at home. We are among the most resource-rich places in the world, Mr. Speaker, with an abundance of precious metals, critical minerals, and oil and gas deposits to help fuel Canada's economy and secure a domestic supply of strategic resources. These natural resources place the NWT at the forefront of Canada's economic potential and, with strategic investment, will create great opportunities for our residents and businesses, and for all Canadians.

Together, these efforts are building a stronger, more self-reliant territory, one with new opportunities for Northerners who are ready to rise to this moment.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy must translate into stability at home. Jobs, infrastructure, and growth can only deliver real results if people have safe, suitable, and affordable places to live.

This government is taking action across the full housing continuum with a focus on community partnership and results.

In Inuvik, the homeless shelter has entered a new chapter of community leadership with the responsibility for shelter operations transitioning from Housing NWT to the Inuvik Homeless Shelter Advisory Board. This reflects a long-standing community goal to have homelessness services guided by local voices while ensuring uninterrupted services for those who rely on them.

In Yellowknife, a new transitional housing facility opened in December operated by the Yellowknife Women's Society. With space for 24 individuals, it provides a safe, stable place to live while accessing the programming and support that will help bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing.

We are also accelerating housing supply through strong partnerships with Indigenous governments. Housing NWT has entered into construction agreements with Indigenous partners in Fort Smith and Fort Good Hope, and recently signed a memorandum of agreement on housing with the Acho Dene Koe First Nation in Fort Liard. This agreement sets out how we will plan, buy, and deliver housing together, so the homes we build reflect what the communities actually need.

Since the start of the 20th Legislative Assembly, 81 housing units have been replaced, another 155 are currently under construction, with an additional 64 in planning or procurement bringing us to a total of 300 units across the housing continuum to be delivered during this Legislative Assembly. Together, these actions reflect a clear commitment: More homes for Northerners, better housing, and community-driven solutions that deliver dignity, stability, and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, economic strength and housing stability mean little if people do not feel safe, or if communities are not well prepared when emergencies strike. Keeping Northerners safe, supported, and informed is a core responsibility of this government.

Over the past five years, the Northwest Territories has faced some of the most challenging emergencies in our history - floods, wildfires, and repeated evacuations - that have tested our systems and our communities. We've listened, we learned, and we acted.

In response to after-action reviews from 2022 and 2023 and to lessons learned in real time, we have strengthened our emergency management system. We are working with the NWT Council of Leaders and community

partners to review the Emergency Management Act. We have updated the NWT Emergency Plan to clearly define roles and responsibilities. We have enhanced training for community governments, invested in emergency communications, and improved how resources are pre-positioned so help arrives faster when it is needed most, and so communities are more protected than ever before.

Safe communities are also built through strong planning. That is why we launched the NWT Community Planning Framework. This framework gives community governments the tools they need to guide growth, protect the environment, and plan for the future, while reflecting local priorities and Indigenous knowledge. It supports housing and infrastructure development while integrating climate change considerations to help communities build long-term resilience.

In addition, we are supporting community and Indigenous governments with flood mapping to inform emergency preparedness and land-use planning.

We are also supporting practical, community-driven safety initiatives. Safe growth pilot projects are underway in Hay River, Fort Providence, and Fort Smith, working with residents to apply crime prevention through environmental design principles. We are also providing law enforcement and communities with more tools to combat crime by advancing multiple pieces of public safety legislation this term. Whether through stronger emergency preparedness, thoughtful community planning, or more effective enforcement, this government is focused on ensuring safe communities for Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, health care is one of the few systems that touches every resident, no matter our age, income, or circumstances, and the quality of our health care experience comes down to three things: Access, respect, and reliability.

Access challenges are felt most strongly in our smaller communities. We are strengthening the community health nurse-led model used in small communities while making it more flexible to respond to ongoing staffing pressures. That includes expanding the role of licensed practical nurses and paramedics in community health centres, supported by nurse practitioners and expanded virtual care, so that residents in small communities can access more essential services closer to home. In larger centres, we are working to improve access to services for those who need them most. Service integration teams have been created in Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Simpson,

Behchoko, and Yellowknife to identify and remove barriers to access and to improve coordination among service providers. For now, these teams are focusing on supporting residents who are experiencing, or who are at risk of, homelessness. But the lessons we learn through this initiative will help us move closer to our ultimate goal of creating a culture of person-centered service delivery across government.

Mr. Speaker, the healthcare system must be grounded in trust, respect, and cultural safety. To ensure these values are reflected in the services we provide, we are working directly with Indigenous governments and communities through shared governance, co-design, and the integration of traditional healing and local wellness priorities, guided by frontline staff, elders, and families.

When care is not available close to home, residents rely on medical travel. Dealing with medical issues can be stressful enough on its own; medical travel should not add to that stress. That is why we are modernizing the system to make it more consistent, efficient, and easier to navigate. We are streamlining processes, improving communication, setting clear service standards, and developing practical tools, including a medical travel manual, to ensure residents experience a more reliable and less stressful journey for care. This work is a priority, and it is happening now. These are a few of the ways we are working towards improving access to basic health care to support healthy people and communities across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, Canada takes pride in being a northern country and an Arctic nation. However, Arctic sovereignty is not something that can be declared; it has to be asserted through presence and investment. It is built through the people who live, work, and stay in the North. It is built through resilient communities, reliable infrastructure, and public services that work in northern realities.

Northerners will soon turn their attention to another powerful expression of Arctic presence and identity. Next month, Team NT will represent the Northwest Territories at the 2026 Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse, the world's largest circumpolar multi-sport and cultural gathering.

More than 600 Northerners from over 20 communities came together in January to earn the chance to represent the territory. Up to 355 athletes and cultural participants will compete in 18 sports, including Arctic Sports and Dene Games: Traditions rooted in survival, skill, and connection to the land.

This is more than competition. It is continuity. It is culture. It is the next generation carrying forward who we are; visible, capable, and present in the Arctic.

Mr. Speaker, sovereignty is built by people who belong to the land and who are supported to stay on it. It is built by communities that are healthy, safe, and connected. It is built when governments choose to invest in the North. That investment is coming, and we must capitalize on it for the benefit of all Northerners; for those who are here today, and those who will lead us into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 169-20(1):
NOTICE OF BUDGET ADDRESS**

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that I will deliver the budget address on Thursday, February 5th, 2026. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Nunakput.

Members' Statements

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 806-20(1):
CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW INUVIALUIT
REGIONAL CORPORATION CHAIR ERWIN
ELIAS**

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Quyananni, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the Member for Nunakput to congratulate the newly elected chair and CEO of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Mr. Erwin Elias.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working together in collaboration for the benefit of Inuvialuit and our constituents. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Duane Ningaqsiq Smith for his ten years of service as the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation chair. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 807-20(1):
GLOBAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
SITUATION**

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, the world today is very different from when we took office two years ago. Our once stalwart ally and partner,

the United States, continues to violently dismantle the prosperity and security we once built together. Last month, Prime Minister Carney captured this moment clearly in his address at Davos. We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition.

As Northerners, instability has long been our reality. We are all familiar with the instability of climate change as the North warms three to four times faster than the rest of the world. Our permafrost is thawing, sea ice melting, and natural disasters of unprecedented scale and frequency are being unleashed upon our communities.

Yet, climate change has always exposed us to the ambitions of great powers, Russia, China, and now the United States, have set their sights squarely on our abundant resources and strategic territory. President Trump's strategy of divide and conquer is a clear effort to bully us into handing this land over and, foolishly, some believe they can play along with his corruption. Separatists in Alberta, in their misguided admiration of his greed, are flirting with treasonous sedition convinced that tearing the country apart is some kind of game.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians stand united against any threat to our sovereignty, and we stand ready to welcome new allies who will join us in building an alternative to chaos and authoritarianism. To our friends in Greenland, a NATO ally and fellow Arctic nation committed to self-determination of their Indigenous people, I say this: We've got your back. But to this government, however, I say it's time to follow in the Prime Minister's lead and step up. A strategy of reckless optimism, blaming others for inaction, and waiting for a rescue from the federal government is no way to realize our destiny on our own terms. Now is the time to harness our potential and take our rightful place as the first and foremost leader in the circumpolar world. There is no middle way between our choices of survival or surrender. Will this Premier choose a true North strong and free? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 808-20(1):
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back, colleagues. Norman Wells' oilfield closure, another nail in our NWT coffin on the economic side:

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the matter of profound urgency for my home

community and the entire Sahtu region, a matter that strikes at the very core of our economic survival and our ability to exercise true sovereignty in Canada's North.

Last week, our Premier, Mr. Simpson, appeared before Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. His message was clear, Mr. Speaker: Sovereignty is not merely claimed through words. It is exercised through development, investment, and presence through the thriving communities and robust infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, for a century, Norman Wells has been an oil and gas town, a beacon of prosperity for the entire Sahtu region. People made a living, built futures, raised families with hope and dignity. Norman Wells was a showcase for the resource-rich region and the NWT. Imperial Oil's announcement on shutting down production this year is nothing less than an economic sword through the very heart of the Sahtu. There are families left wondering if they have a future, youth residents asking whether there's any future here in the region, elders watching a century of community history come to a devastating close, the business community left with costly mental stress and hard reality of decisions, Mr. Speaker, but even in crisis, there is opportunity.

We stand on the threshold of building the famous Mackenzie Valley Highway, a project that represents connections, access to markets, and the very sovereignty our Premier spoke about. The Sahtu deserves a fighting chance at economic prosperity. The federal government speaks often about Arctic sovereignty and northern development. Well, Mr. Speaker, here is the chance to put words into action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later, I'll have questions for the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 809-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ILLITERACY
RATES

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, as this term goes on, the list of challenges facing the territory keeps getting longer. It's so tempting to keep piling more and more demands on our public servants. Save our economy, decent housing for all, get crime under control, health care, addictions, graduation rates, build roads to every community and mine. Just a few simple asks. Oh, and solve everything faster because we only have a year and a half left. And cheaper because our debt's out of control.

Amidst this overwhelm, I am going to risk sounding like a lunatic or hopelessly naive because I want to first talk about literacy. Literacy. Come on, we're a modern society, everyone's literate. Except for maybe a few folks with disabilities, right?

Well, a study from 2003 found that almost half of our youth aged 16 to 25 could not read or write well enough to fully participate in society. Almost half. 70 percent of Indigenous adults and 30 percent of non-Indigenous adults were found to not be functionally literate. Struggles with math skills were even worse. Since then, we stopped even trying to measure literacy rates amongst either students or adults.

So picture a child who is struggling to read in the early grades. Maybe other students are picking it up naturally, but this child is not. So they get the idea early on there's something wrong with them. As they get older, school keeps getting harder. Maybe they skip school or act out and they get labelled as a troublemaker. After grade 9, they either just drop out entirely or get really good at faking it and manage to slip through without the basic skills to enter further training or schooling.

There's so much shame and embarrassment around illiteracy, people are good at hiding. So they're going to avoid trying for a driver's license or trying that trades entrance exam, avoid filling out applications, avoid applying for jobs. They're stuck, bored. They're likely to turn to crime, addictions. Their housing will be at risk. Even if they decide to go to a treatment program for addictions, they're likely to drop out because it involves reading and writing.

What if we tried to find out how many of our unemployed youth and adults are functionally illiterate? How many of those in our criminal justice system? How many of those needing addictions treatment? Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to my colleagues. Mr. Speaker, we have got overwhelming problems, and we've got to find threads we can pull on that can lead to transformational change. I believe literacy is a key thread that we've been ignoring and plan to speak more about it this session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 810-20(1):
ATTENDANCE AT AME ROUNDUP

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege of attending the AME Roundup Conference in Vancouver as the representative for the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. The conference gave me the opportunity to observe our Cabinet colleagues at work and attend numerous informative meetings and sessions. I wanted to share some of my high-level takeaways from my experience at the conference.

The first thing that stood out to me was the incredible amount of work and time our Ministers, Premier, and staff put into advancing the interests of the NWT. It was a very busy week, packed with meetings from morning to night. The Minister for ITI was my host for the conference, and one meeting that stood out to me in particular was the Western Mining Ministers Summit where Ministers signed an MOU on developing a Western Canadian mineral strategy. I noted that our Minister commanded a lot of respect at that table and was impressed at how prominently the North stood out in the discussion with Ministers from bigger jurisdictions. It was obvious our southern neighbours saw the importance of featuring the North in this strategy, so that was really encouraging.

Something else that stood out to me was the importance of the territory coming together and speaking with one voice at the national level. I had the opportunity to chat with someone who could be a funder for major projects here in the NWT, and they emphasized the need for a cohesive message and all the players pulling together towards a common goal. When competing for funding with many other worthwhile projects, if we aren't all pulling together we'll lose out to projects that are more cohesive. So I think it was really encouraging to see our government sign an MOU of cooperation with the Tlicho and Yellowknives Dene and see our Indigenous governments working together. BWatching Chief Ernest Betina deliver an opening address for YKDFN at Tlicho Night felt like a historic moment.

When we set our priorities for this Assembly, we emphasized that we are stronger together. I stand by that message, Mr. Speaker, and really believe it is the key to our success. The territory is facing difficult challenges but also has some big opportunities we can grasp if we work together for common good. So while I know this sitting is going to involve tough questions and tough conversations, I will continue to approach my work in a collaborative way as you have encouraged us to do, Mr. Speaker, as I really do think that is the key to our success. Thank you.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 811-20(1):
IMPORTANCE OF TESTING FOR RADON**

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker, Happy New Year and welcome back. Mr. Speaker, in 2022, a work colleague and neighbour reached out and asked me if I had ever heard of radon. I was able to say yes, I had. My father had told me to get our home tested not long before we had our conversation. My neighbour told me that her family's home basement was testing high and that she was going to investigate mitigation measures.

In 2023, I purchased my own battery-powered radon monitor as my home has a crawlspace. After a year's worth of testing, I found that although my house is not experiencing extreme readings, it is still high enough to consider mitigation.

Mr. Speaker, much of the NWT is in a high radon hazard zone. Radon is an invisible, odourless, radioactive gas produced by the breakdown of uranium in soil. Radon gas is the second highest contributor to lung cancer after smoking. Just before this session, CBC News reported on this silent threat that is present in much of our country.

Since 2024, I have been talking to several ministerial colleagues about radon and what the GNWT is doing in this space. In essence, Health has a website outlining health concerns, Housing NWT is working on monitoring and mitigating radon levels in public housing, and every homeowner who receives an EnerGuide home energy evaluation from Arctic Energy Alliance receives a report that includes a health and safety overview highlighting radon as a concern for households. And well, that's about it.

The good news is that testing is not hard. Small portable devices are easily purchased and shared amongst neighbours. It helps to have a longer timeframe of testing but especially getting winter readings when doors and windows are closed as radon readings are higher as a result of trapped air. While getting readings is relatively easy, there is not a lot of local capacity in the NWT to install passive radon mitigation systems. In essence, these systems are a way to vent the gas from basements or crawlspaces. These systems range in price but are not cheap one-offs.

In speaking with the Minister of MACA before the holiday break, he agreed that radon is a concern in the territory and noted that he has

seen high levels of radon in his region. Later today, I will table a jurisdictional scan of what provinces and territories are doing to test and mitigate radon for their residents. I will have questions for the Minister on what supports we can offer our NWT communities in taking on this health hazard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 812-20(1):
IMPORTANCE OF DAY OF RECOGNITION
FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION**

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] **INSERT*** [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, although these remarks were made in another jurisdiction, their impact reaches across this country including here in the Northwest Territories where the legacy of residential schools is deeply felt and where reconciliation is an ongoing and essential commitment.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was established in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. It is a day dedicated to honouring survivors, remembering the children who did not return home, and advancing public understanding of the history and intergenerational impacts of residential schools. Statements made in the BC legislature denying this history and calling for the repeal of the day are deeply troubling. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is not about assigning shame. It is about acknowledging truth; truth documented through thousands of survivors' testimonies, including many from the Northwest Territories. It is about recognizing that the harms of residential schools were real, profound, and lasting.

Mr. Speaker, acknowledging this history does not detract from the achievements Canadians are proud of. Rather, it strengthens our national narrative by ensuring it is honest and complete. Reconciliation is not an accusation. It is a responsibility. It reflects our collective commitment to healing, respect, and a better future for all who share this land.

Mr. Speaker, instead of retreating from this commitment, we must continue to uphold it. Truth is not divisive, and reconciliation is not optional. It is a path forward for our territory and our country. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 813-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMY

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back, colleagues. I, too, would like to congratulate Mr. Erwin Elias on his election as IRC chair and the chief executive officer. As well, to thank Mr. Duane Smith for his 10 years of excellent leadership in the region as well.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier stated, the eyes of North America and, indeed, the world continue to be focused on the Arctic. With the recent federal procurement notice of up to \$10 billion in spending in the northern operational hubs of Inuvik and Yellowknife, we have the potential for a huge economic benefit.

Mr. Speaker, this is more than just infrastructure. This can be a gateway to further economic opportunities, much-needed resource development, LNG, critical minerals, roads connecting our territories and bridges, Mr. Speaker. We have to be ready. And as the Premier said, there's an urgent need to get work done. We have work to do. We have to resolve the issue around land transfers so communities like Inuvik can be prepared when land is required to build this infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that our ongoing infrastructure projects, such as runway expansions and bridges and gravel sourcing, are on track and completed without delays. We have to ensure that our federal government has the confidence in our government that we are ready to meet this challenge, Mr. Speaker, that we are engaging with our Indigenous government partners to ensure we are working shoulder to shoulder.

On the heels of this procurement announcement, now is the time to convince and lobby our federal government that the Mackenzie Valley Highway is a true nation-building project and that funding it and connecting the two northern operational support hubs will be significant for defence and sovereignty, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're all pulling on the same rope on this one but we, as a government, as my colleagues in this building have to ensure, that we are, indeed, pulling hard enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 814-20(1):
SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE OF
INDIGENOUS TRAINING INITIATIVE WITH
CANADIAN COAST GUARD

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back to the staff, interpreters, and all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly. Today, I would like to start the session off on a positive note. It is evident that we do have a lot of residents throughout the Northwest Territories who have the potential to succeed in their career paths, whether they are from Yellowknife, one of the regional centres, or one of the smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, one success story of an Indigenous woman from the small community of Tsiiigehtchic has made her dream come true. Her real intentions were to get a ticket to work on the Louis Cardinal Ferry for seasonal employment, but she excelled in her studies and is now part of the Canadian Coast Guard team.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read an excerpt that speaks to the accomplishment of this young Indigenous woman from Tsiiigehtchic, and I quote: First Indigenous woman deckhand hired through the Canadian Coast Guard Arctic Region's Indigenous participation and training initiatives. We're thrilled to announce the milestone of the Canadian Coast Guard's Arctic Region's Indigenous participation and training initiative. Amanda Andre-Niditchie has become the first Indigenous woman deckhand, a pro-graduate of the Western Arctic marine training program from Tsiiigehtchic, Northwest Territories. Amanda is now based in the Canadian Coast Guard Western Region and sails aboard the Canadian Coast Guard ship Tanu. Having completed two 28-day rotations, she is embracing life at sea with enthusiasm. Welcome aboard, Amanda. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, I would like for all my colleagues and the residents of the Northwest Territories to applaud the accomplishments of this young Indigenous woman from the small community of Tsiiigehtchic on her milestone career path with the Canadian Coast Guard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 815-20(1):
TREATY RIGHTS IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RELATED TO HEALTHCARE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we signed treaties to secure enduring promises of continual livelihood and

survival. Those treaties define our ongoing relationship with the Crown, and then the Crown's presence in the North has grown from RCMP patrol to Canadian coast deliveries, a sprawling network of department of public institutions. Amongst the most crucial to our people are the services they ensure: access to health care.

Responsibility for administration of health services eventually transferred from Ottawa to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, with the responsibility of care, sacred duty to ensure these services honour the treaties and fulfill the promises made to our people.

Health is a treaty right, Mr. Speaker; however, health and social services continues to fail in providing essential services and medical transportation. In an emergency situation, our people are often forced to pay out of pocket to travel for care that is urgently needed. A recent example is painfully clear. A Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh constituent was flown to Yellowknife by air ambulance and was expected to leave her newborn baby behind. If this had been a scheduled appointment, her young family may have been accommodated with a room but emergencies which makes up a significant portion of medical travel allow no such consideration. Emergency medical travel falls outside the program's scope.

This family was on their own. This is far from an isolated case. The problem is so severe that this Assembly was forced to pass a motion calling on the government to fix this policy gap, yet there's still no commitment to develop a compassionate medical evaluation policy. This is a clear failure to uphold treaty rights. Health and social services appears not to be honouring the Crown's obligation to the health of our people. If the Minister will not act on the consensus of this Assembly, she must act on the consensus of our people in the spirit of reconciliation.

The government must fully implement UNDRIP as a mandate by the last Assembly and implementing UNDRIP is not optional. It is a core feature of our own mandate letter, along with our own duty to work with Indigenous governments on medical travel policies. If the GNWT cannot administer health care in a way that honours the Crown's obligations to our people, constituents are left out asking the question: Should the GNWT be administering the health care policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 816-20(1): TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR PRIVATE SECURITY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A single moment in a Yellowknife apartment building not long ago has ignited an overdue conversation. While the courts will handle the specifics of that particular incident, the truth is undeniable. The NWT is standing at a crossroads of public safety.

Mr. Speaker, for years people have operated in a legislative shadow, in a dark place. Time has come to put the private security industry into the light. Mr. Speaker, the opportunity is here. Look across the map of Canada, from the Pacific to the Great Lakes. Canada has already got gold standard legislation. We're not reinventing the wheel of security legislation. We're just joining the movement, Mr. Speaker.

British Columbia has mandated rigorous licensing, criminal record checks, and a strict code of conduct. Alberta, our southern neighbour, built a powerhouse system of discipline, of oversight, and accountability. Sounds great to me. Ontario has set the bar, Mr. Speaker, with a province-wide training in de-escalation that the legal forces use to ensure people's safety.

So currently, Mr. Speaker, as we all know the Northwest Territories has zero territorial legislation system in place. There's no mandatory training. There's no formal oversight. There's nothing. Our security guards are on the frontline, sometimes high-stakes situations, dealing with mental health crisis issues, they're dealing with complex public safety issues, and yet left without the legal compass to help guide them.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't about red tape. This is about empowerment. We need bold vision, a made-in-the North process. But, Mr. Speaker, on that note, there'll be more.

Mr. Speaker, what we're looking for is we're looking to give workers protection, the public protection and confidence, and prevention through proactive solutions. Mr. Speaker, key legislation could help here. What am I talking about? Well, allow me to expand.

Mr. Speaker, under the Dennis Patterson government, in 1991 they enacted a law called the Locksmiths Security Guards and Security Occupations Act, but it was never proclaimed. What a shame. Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared today, tomorrow, or even during this session, whether it takes a Private Member's bill, a motion, it's time we get this existing Act on the books actually into action protecting

Northerners. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 817-20(1):
CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF TWYLA ISAIAH**

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, with great sadness I want to celebrate the life of a remarkable young lady Twyla Isaiah who was born on November 18, 1999, in Yellowknife to Robert Hardisty and Eileen Isaiah, and who left us suddenly on November 9, 2025. Though her time with us was far too short, the warmth, laughter, and love she gave will live on forever in our hearts.

Twyla was more than a daughter, sister, auntie, cousin, and friend. She was a beacon of light for everyone blessed to know her. With seven siblings - Trish, Natasha, Preston, Jordan, Carson, Wesley, and Jarrett - Twyla grew up surrounded by love and lively energy. Even in her big family, she found ways to stand out, shining through her kindness, humour, and the effortless way she made you feel valued. There are moments so small yet so powerful that they tell you everything about a person's heart. For Twyla, it was something as simple as stopping her dad on the street just to give him a hug and say, I love you, Dad. That small act would brighten even the darkest day. Her love for her parents was endless. The way she showed care for her mom was unmatched, and her selflessness was something that everyone witnessed time and time again.

I had the pleasure of knowing this young lady personally, sometimes asking her to house-sit, sometimes running into her at the store or on the street for a quick, cheerful catch-up. No matter how brief those moments were, one thing never changed: Twyla's presence made you feel special and loved. She had that rare gift.

Colleagues, I can tell you Twyla faced life's challenges with kindness and grace. She reminded us that even when obstacles appear, we have the power to meet them with love. She showed us how to love our parents unconditionally, to care for others selflessly, and to lead with compassion. Today, as we remember her, let us carry forward those lessons, to love as openly as she did, to be gentle yet strong, and to bring light into the lives of those around us.

Twyla's spirit will live on in every person she touched and in her family, her friends, and the community that had the privilege of calling her one of their own. Her legacy is one of

compassion, selflessness, and love, and qualities that will continue to guide us every day.

Being respectful of the time, I would like to have the remainder of my speech be deemed as read and printed in the Hansard.

Rest peacefully, Twyla. Your light will never fade.

During the service, her father provided some childhood and adulthood stories that I would like to share here today.

Childhood Memories

Twyla came into this world on a snowy, wind-blown day in Yellowknife, a sign perhaps of her strength and resilience. As the youngest sister, she always looked up to her older siblings and was eager to tag along wherever they went. From a young age, she developed a love for learning reading books and soaking up every bit of knowledge she could find. Many nights, she'd sneak out with her cousins and friends, gathering them together so she could read aloud to them, long after bedtime. Those early signs of curiosity and compassion were already shining through.

As She Grew

As Twyla entered adulthood, her deep care for others became her calling. Whether someone was struggling or celebrating, she was there offering comfort, laughter, and unwavering support. During tough times, Twyla helped bring her friends and family together creating a sense of belonging that many needed. She didn't just stand beside her loved ones; she lifted them up.

We will miss Twyla's joyful spirit deeply, but we are forever grateful for the time we had with her, for the laughter she brought into our lives, and for the memories that will continue to comfort and inspire us.

At the end of the beautiful service, her father, family, and friends shared their most cherished memories. There was a lot of laughter and a few tears during this time. I believe this is how Twyla would have wanted it.

The family would like to thank everyone who offered support during this difficult time. They are deeply appreciative.

Members' statements. Kam Lake.

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 818-20(1):
NATIONAL GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS
DAY**

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is National Girls and Women in Sports Day. When girls play sports, they're not just chasing a ball, crossing a finish line, or scoring a goal. They're chasing dreams, climbing over barriers, and scoring victories that last a lifetime. Sports teach courage, discipline, and the unshakable belief that no challenge is too big. These lessons are life changing. Every sprint, every jump, every game builds confidence, grit, and leadership, qualities that carry them far beyond the field and take a lifelong outlook from "I can't" to "I can" and "I will."

Studies show that girls in sports are healthier, more confident, and often perform better academically. But beyond numbers, sports give girls the strength to stand tall and the courage to keep going when life gets tough. They often come with built-in community, mentors, and support networks. Yet too many girls still face barriers, and those barriers look different across the Northwest Territories. Fewer opportunities, less support, and outdated stereotypes that ultimately serve none of us.

We must break down these walls, create opportunity, and stay involved. And when we give girls the chance to play, we give them the chance to lead, inspire, and yes, change the world. It doesn't need to be elite Olympic style training either. Getting out snowshoeing, lifting weights, join the ping pong team, but watch out for Fort Providence; they're deadly.

Mr. Speaker, sport requires champions. Volunteers are the fuel that move our kids, and I am so thankful for the support, the sport champions across the territory, like Shakita Jensen, award-winning hockey coach with no kids of her own but out there consistently leading youth. Like Caitlin Fabian Farrell, creating safe spaces for girls to learn strength training. Like Toby Taylor, who coaches every sport the school offers. Alex Malakoe, who with young kids of her own and a busy job, continues to show up as a coach and travel for Special Olympics. Like Veronica McDonald who routinely dominates in Arctic sports, inspiring the next generation of northern athletes to dig in. And moms like Aurora **Kodakat** who live by example. I'm not sure where Aurora gets her energy, but she's an inspiration with an endless battery life.

So let's cheer loud, let's invest more, and make sure every girl knows that the court, the track, the field, the gym, and the trails are hers too because when girls rise in sports, they rise in life, and when girls rise, we all rise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I get the pleasure of recognizing my constituent assistant Deborah Richards who has graced here with her presence this week, and I'd like to thank her for being here today. She's just keeping track of me, that's all.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to have two pages from Yellowknife South with us this week, **Celesta O'Brien** and **Joshua Kostache**.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Julie Thrasher. Julie is a constituent of Yellowknife but a member of the Mackenzie Delta, and we're both from Aklavik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Nunakput. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize Julie Thrasher who is a friend and a supporter from the people of the Mackenzie Delta region. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge and recognize Ms. Julie Thrasher. Sorry, I'm tongue-tied today. I'll say it again, Ms. Julie Thrasher. She lives downtown in Yellowknife, and I know she's certainly the eyes and ears of a lot of things that go on, and I appreciate her support and friendship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone -- oh, man oh man, I'm having a hard time with Kam Lake. Member from Kam Lake.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: I had my arm way up high, but I need to hold it higher, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much.

In addition, we have a great number of wonderful pages in the room today, including some from Kam Lake. We've got **Mika Kotchilia**,

Avena Nadaway as well Mia Dyson joining us from Kam Lake. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. We thank you very much for the honour of representing everybody from the Northwest Territories and getting us the privilege, short privilege, of representing you here. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

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

Oral Questions

QUESTION 923-20(1):
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENTS IN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recent news reporting has led to some good news for the Northwest Territories. As much as \$10 billion is hanging over our territory as part of the NORAD northern basing infrastructure program with development and design construction to continue to 2039 with some of those contracts out of tender now. I know our Premier has been doing the circuit on television, at FTP meetings, at standing committee. So can he tell us if we are on track to receive this money, to get this money invested in our communities? Are we ready and able to spend it and start to see that economic growth today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the money the Member's referencing was made public through a -- I guess a pre-procurement announcement that was intended to allow potential contractors to prepare to bid on the contracts. So it's still a lot of details left to be hashed out on this but the whole purpose of this pre-procurement announcement is to ensure that people can get prepared to do the work that needs to be done. And so people are already talking about ensuring that employees in the territory have the appropriate security clearances, that we have, you know, appropriate trades people ready to go. But it's unclear yet what those procurement notices mean, so we have to wait until likely a budget is passed, and then the Department of National Defence will provide more information. So it is a federal

procurement, and I don't have many more details than what has been made public already. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, there's a lot of attention on this obviously because our economy is in poor shape. Mr. Speaker, it's good that this procurement process is going to let other private sector make themselves prepared for this money, but is the government prepared? So a lot of this is about developing new infrastructure, airport hangars, all that kind of stuff. We need land, we need permitting, we need all these things done. Is this government prepared with those steps to support the private sector, support DND, and make sure this money arrives on time and revitalizes this economy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we are well aware of the opportunities that exist, and we are treating this as essentially another major project that could be advanced. And so there's great efforts being made to ensure there's coordination, coordination across government. We're working hard to coordinate with the federal government although they have their own processes, and the Department of National Defence, I believe, kind of does things their own way regardless. But I know that there's efforts to change that culture because from my discussions with the Prime Minister, with the Minister of National Defence, there was a big focus on ensuring that the infrastructure is infrastructure that is useful to the community as well. They talk a lot about dual use infrastructure. They want to ensure if there is military facilities in the territory, that the people of the territory see those benefits. So I have been working to get that message out, that when this procurement happens, we need to ensure local employment, local benefits. And on our end, we are working with, like I said, the government departments, development corporations, and now with this procurement announcement out, it's time for the local businesses to ready themselves as well. And we want to approach this in a coordinated fashion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I will ask one direct area of public policy. This requires an all of government approach. We need land. We need land available for the development in Yellowknife and Inuvik. My colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake mentioned this as well. Will the Premier eliminate all barriers within the GNWT policy realm to transfer the lands that the City of Yellowknife and the Town

of Inuvik have been asking for, yes or no? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So eliminating all policies is a pretty broad request. There are probably some policies that are required to be there, and there's probably other policies that we could do without or that require modification. And I know that the Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change is focused on this. And as a government, we want to address this longstanding issue, and we will address it before the end of this government. And with this procurement now looming, it's more urgent than ever. So yes, we're going to move forward with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 924-20(1):
LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS FOR
PRIVATE SECURITY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With 600 -- approximately 607 days left in this Assembly, we often ask for things and the government says well, we're too busy and can't get legislative drafters.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke about a Securities Act today that was developed, went through committee in the Assembly in the 90s, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't received ascent. So my question for the Minister of Justice is is the Minister aware that the NWT has a Locksmith, Security Guards, and Other Security Occupations Act sitting out there not enacted? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the Act to which the Member references, but I will certainly have my staff pull that document out and give it a good look over. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the benefits of Ministers having dual roles, I get to ask the same Minister sort of the same problem. Will the Minister of Justice work with the House Leader to bring forward this particular Act so we can either review it or just simply enact it? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to sit down with the Government House Leader and review the Act together, and once we've had that opportunity we will see what direction it goes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the urgency that the Minister will take communicating to the other ministerial duties. Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness would the Minister commit to have an update before the mid-session break on what they can or will be willing to do on this particular legislation that's been sitting out there for 35 years doing nothing, since 1991? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take a look at the Act and see what's involved in bringing it to the floor or to review of committee, etcetera. But having no direct knowledge of it at this specific time, I will have to have an opportunity to review it first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 925-20(1):
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENTS IN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND
CONSTRUCTION OF MACKENZIE VALLEY
HIGHWAY

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following up on my Member's statement, and my friend and colleague from Range Lake as well kind of mentioned the infrastructure investment. \$10 billion is a lot of money. My question is for the Premier. And I know -- I mean, information or details right now around the investment are pretty sparse. I get that. But through his dialogue with Ottawa, with his federal counterparts, has there been any indication that some of this enormous amount of funding would be used for major projects, namely, the Mackenzie Valley Highway? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I can speak to what I saw in that sort of pre-procurement notice, and that is that it is for things within those forward operating locations, so runways, hangars, etcetera. It does not speak to major projects. That does not -- that's not to say that the federal government's totality of their expenditures related to defense in the territory will be limited to those two communities. So I'm still very, very hopeful and optimistic that there's other sources of funding from the federal government. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that little bit of a tease in there. I

like that, that potentially we could have some funding for our highway.

You know, we have three major infrastructure projects that we know we have listed, we've discussed in this House many times. And, again, not to put anyone on the spot but would the Premier say that the Mackenzie Valley Highway, given that it is shovel ready and it is further along than the other -- than all three projects, would be the number one project that we would be certainly expressing to Ottawa that could be done and done now when it comes to Arctic sovereignty? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Mackenzie Valley Highway's getting a lot of attention from Ottawa right now, and I'm continuing to promote that highway. And when I meet with the Prime Minister, he talks about the highway before I get a chance to. So this is definitely something that the federal government is well aware of and they see the value, not just to the people of the Northwest Territories but to national security. The Mackenzie Valley Highway, it is -- it's coming out of environmental assessment and there's already portions of it that are permitted for construction. So there's some bridges that we can begin working on. There's community engagement that can be done. So this is a project that's ready to go very, very soon. In some instances, it's ready to go today. And so it's not a great comparison to say we have a project that's ready to go today, and we have one that's going to be ready to go in a number of years, maybe by the time this one's done. It's hard to rank those as one and two because sequentially there's a sequence. The first one will come first and the second one will come second, but it doesn't mean that we have to attribute a priority to them. If they were both being advanced, if they were both at the same place right now and they could both start construction tomorrow, then that would be a different story. But the fact is that we have a sequence, and I think that sequence is going to work well for us. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 926-20(1):
CONSTRUCTION OF MACKENZIE VALLEY
HIGHWAY

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my previous colleague on highlighting the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Further to my Member's statement, it's got to be recognized that I sent out a briefing here earlier to this question. My first question to the Minister of strategic infrastructure: Will the Minister

support and endorse the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Sahtu Secretariat Land Claims chapter 20 and 21 with the federal government which addresses access for Armed Forces division providing the capacity is there. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge very briefly that the MLA is forever here working and finding ways to advance this project in every possible angle, including looking at land claims chapters. Mr. Speaker, that said it's not the position of me as a Minister to endorse specifically any particular chapter. I certainly can say that we do continue to be mindful of the land claim chapters to ensure that the Indigenous governments themselves are, you know, at the forefront of the considerations of planning and to the extent that they can make use of those chapters as partners as we go forward to [indiscernible]*, that is certainly -- we look forward to that. And, meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the GNWT will continue to ensure that we rely upon and use the established processes that -- to which Members may be signatories and Indigenous governments may be signatories. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply. And I encourage others to familiarize themselves with more specifically the Sahtu chapter 21.3.2, which really addresses a procurement process to secure that capital project. Mahsi.

My next question to the Minister is when will the Minister of strategic infrastructure submit the completed Ernst & Young business case for phase one of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are right now completing the work plan that was signed with the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation, and one of the deliverables there is that we will be submitting the (DAR) addendum report in July, and alongside that will go in the business case. So that is -- July would be the deadline on that but in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, that is not stopping anyone, any Minister here from advancing and advocating for this project using already the very well-known principles of what will make this project such an important asset for the Government of the Northwest Territories, for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy,

and Supply Chains. Final supplementary. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're making progress. We have targets and deadlines so we can achieve our accomplishment.

My third question there, Mr. Speaker, is when will the Minister arrange for a joint Indigenous governments group to engage in campaign engagement meetings with our federal counterparts on that specific project? Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly already, in October, had the opportunity to be in Ottawa alongside Indigenous governments, the Sahtu Secretariat as well as the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation, and the Member for the Sahtu all conducted a -- co-hosted and presented the Mackenzie Valley Highway engagement attended by federal Ministers, a number of businesses, foreign dignitaries. It was very well received. I would certainly look forward to doing something similar again. I can say, Mr. Speaker, there's an intention amongst the Indigenous governments who line the entire route, both phase one and phase two, all the way up to the Gwich'in Tribal Council lands, to return to Ottawa. I would hope that that would be this spring. I don't have a date set, but I'll certainly want to get word out as soon as we do. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 927-20(1):
LITERACY RATES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. As I said in my Member's statement, a study from 2003 found that almost half of our youth aged 16 to 25 could not read or write well enough to fully participate in society. 70 percent of Indigenous adults, 30 percent of non-Indigenous adults were not functionally literate.

The first question is, does the Minister have any data or even anecdotal evidence to tell us whether our functional literacy rates amongst youth or adults have been getting better or been getting worse since 2003? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the survey that was done in 2003 that the Member is referring to was done by Statistics Canada, and the most recent version of a Statistics Canada study that was done was done in 2022-2023 and, unfortunately, the most recent study did not include the Northwest Territories. So we do not have updated trend analysis information that would allow us to compare to that study that was done in a similar fashion. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So does ECE or do the school boards even keep data on literacy levels amongst students at any grade in the school system, whether that's early learners or high school students? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the answer is yes, but it's certainly the type of information that's gathered varies by both age and purpose and we don't have a single territory-wide number. It's worth noting that the territory's currently in the process of transitioning to the BC curriculum, and there will be consistent literacy and numeracy testing and assessment -- graduation assessments that are done as part of that. So those will be done in grade 4, grade 7, grade 10, and grade 12. And because of the change in regulations that affords for more information sharing to the department, we'll be in a much better position to track that data. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final question for now in my information gathering mission here. I'm curious whether income assistance navigators have any tools to help identify or flag struggles that clients might be having with literacy, and then do they have any ability to link them with available supports for literacy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this is done in kind of two different fashions. So the first is ensuring that client navigators are serving residents with the supports that they need in order to understand the paperwork that they're completing. We know that sometimes people need supports in other languages. Sometimes they need added support. Sometimes those supports come as well from Members in this House. And then the secondary kind of role with literacy supports is kind of those pathways to training or to supports for education that people might be looking for, supports for the knowledge of different programming that's

happening in a community, for example, with the literacy council employability programming that's happening in some small communities in the territory right now as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 928-20(1):
RADON TESTING, EXPOSURE AND
MITIGATION IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

The process to mitigate radon is not complicated, but professionals who can install these systems are not extensively available throughout the territory. Mr. Speaker, I'm not asking the GNWT to find cash to set up private homes and businesses with mitigation solutions. Rather, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking if the Minister of MACA has any interest in creating a coordination function at his department so that residents could mass book specialists from other jurisdictions to realize cost savings of booking en masse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So radon testing in private homes is not within the mandate or authority of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. And do I appreciate the Member's desire to coordinate; however, MACA does not oversee environmental health issues and this is not in the area that MACA has any funding for or staff supports for. However, I will say, though, just because of, you know, the concern that we have, you know, I'm interested in collaborating with the Member to try to get resources available for residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister; I'm happy to collaborate.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT is working to address radon concerns with contractors when high levels are found in public housing. Would the Minister consider discussing any kind of coordination approach -- maybe he and I can chat about it further -- with LGANT or the NWT Association of Communities in addition to discussing successful options for securing contractors with Housing NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's something we can discuss with the Housing NWT; however, I'm not going to commit to anything on behalf of Housing NWT. And radon testing and mitigation in private residential dwellings is not an area that MACA holds responsibility for. As such, MACA is not lead with coordinating work on radon testing initiatives. The federal government has a lot of information for action plans for municipalities, and also the Department of Health and Social Services has a great website on radon information in the Northwest Territories, and I've also asked the department to share resources and information with LGANT and NWTAC and get that information out to the Members, and I believe this has already been done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Minister does not hold this function. I'm hoping to create a conversation amongst all communities as we look to address this issue. So that's what I'm speaking to today. I'm hoping he can review the jurisdictional scan I will table later today. And, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister talk to municipal leaders at the upcoming NWT Association of Communities beer pit about possible actions that we can support with the GNWT's resources? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, again, I appreciate the interest on radon mitigation, you know, and I will review the jurisdictional scan that is going to be tabled. However, radon mitigation in private homes, again, is not the responsibility of Municipal and Community Affairs. And as a former municipal councillor and government official myself, I -- you know, I'm always happy to hear from municipal leaders on the issues that are important to their communities. Any discussion on radon would focus on sharing information, helping direct communities to possible external resources rather than undertaking new MACA-led initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 929-20(1):
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

MRS. WEYALON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier.

What specific actions will our government take to ensure that misinformation or denialism about residential schools, such as the statement made in the BC legislature, does not take root here in the Northwest Territories, particularly in our schools and public institutions? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I understand that the bill that the Member is referencing in the BC legislature was handily defeated. I believe it was 86 votes against and 3 votes for. So even there I think there's a clear understanding that residential school denialism is not appropriate, and it's not factual obviously. And so here in the Northwest Territories, I say we are the leaders in Canada in reconciliation, working with Indigenous peoples. Specifically, when we speak to how we are going to educate the population, one of the things we do, of course, is we have northern studies courses in schools that all students are required to take, and those speak to residential school. As a government, we've developed the Living Well Together program where new GNWT employees -- or all GNWT employees, actually, have to take this and this speaks about the history of the territory, including residential schools. And so we have a number of ways to try to educate the, you know, large swaths of the public in this area. And, of course, we have to remember that half of our population is Indigenous and very much familiar with the history of residential school as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the defeat of the motion that was introduced, but there are people out there with that kind of mindset so we need to let the public know that is wrong. So how will the GNWT reinforce its public commitment to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and support communities, survivors, and Indigenous governments, so that the day continues to serve its intended purpose of truth telling, honouring survivors, and educating the public? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, we've enshrined that day into our legislation, and so it's only this House that could actually remove that as a day that we recognize here in the Northwest Territories. We're doing -- again, as I said, everything we do, we try to do it in partnership with Indigenous governments, but we do it with the spirit of reconciliation. We're doing things like moving forward with the residential school monument here in the capital that will, you know, always highlight that part of Canada's history. We

know -- this is actually -- I like these questions from the Member, and we're doing a lot in this space, so what I would like to do is come back to this House with a written response for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given the harm that denialist's statements can cause to survivors and their families, what additional supports or engagement will the Government of the Northwest Territories provide to ensure that survivors in the Northwest Territories feel heard, respected, and protected when other jurisdictions undermine or challenge the realities of the residential school system? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's incumbent on all of us to do, to support each other. Personally, I will continue to speak about the history of the territory. One of my primary roles when I travel around Canada is to educate people on the history of the territory. I was actually just in front of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, the parliamentary standing committee in Ottawa, and they asked me what's the biggest issue we face in the territory and I said it's trauma that came from residential school and colonialism. So I'll continue to be out there speaking to Canadians about this. And in the territory, it's important that people know that the government understands, I understand this. I'm aware of the impacts that this has had, and it's always in our minds when we move forward, when we look at our healthcare system, housing, some of the social programs through employment insurance. The impacts of residential school are at the forefront of our considerations. And so I'd want the residents of the territory to know that we are always, always putting our mind towards this in support of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, in Premier. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 930-20(1):
MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICIES

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of health.

The Premier made opening comments on this health today, and he talked about access, respect, and reliability. And in the 19th Assembly, we signed UNDRIP, so we talked about that a little bit as well. But, Mr. Speaker, part of the priority of this government, access to

health care, is one of the three top priorities of this government -- or sorry, four top priorities of this government. And the letter from the Premier, June 12th, 2024, in that mandate letter from the Premier to the Minister of health, it talks about -- I'll just read the section here. It says that can the Minister start working with Indigenous governments to advance modernization of the GNWT medical travel policy.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister: Can the Minister update the House on what advancements were made in the last 27 months to modernize the NWT medical travel policy? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are many things that are ongoing right now, but one of the things that we had to do that was really priority was the medical response. So that's our air ambulance. We had to negotiate a new contract, which is only negotiated every ten years. This is to make sure that anybody who needs emergency air ambulance out of a small community into the capital or from a regional centre to the capital or to the south for whatever care that they need, that was a priority that was done. The other piece is that we are working on right now is we are working with NIHB. As the Member has stated in his Member's statement, the medical travel pieces are to surround the patient and getting them access to care; however, for First Nation and Inuit, we administer those on behalf of the rules that the federal government give us to do their program. They are the funder of the program, and if we do not administer their program under their rules then they do not give us the money to run the program. So one of the things that we have been doing is to -- working with our counterparts in Ottawa is to ensure that they understand the logistics of the North and our small communities and how our small communities and our seniors, our elders in our communities, don't comprehend a lot of English. And this is some of the work that we were able to take them with us on the Nahendeh tour, and they went into the small communities, heard from those communities. And so the work that we did through that, the work that we are doing on modernizing the medical travel that will also aid in some of the things that -- you know, I can't speak to the upcoming budget, but it's the work that we're doing that's going to help to make those changes. However, there is still many areas that we are working on and throughout the rest of the term of this government that hopefully

that we'll be able to finalize that and implement those changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I talked about my constituents that have been medivaced here, a young mother was in an awkward position and leaving them more or less homeless because of the policies of government prohibited them getting help. We've been at this business since 1967, and I guess my question to the Minister is that is there a way that we could create a contingency account until proper due process is done in Ottawa to approve medical travel for patients here in the Northwest Territories? We should have an emergency fund. And we've been at it for 59 years, so is there something that we could do to help in that area? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the piece around air ambulance and medivacs is to get the patient to care. And sometimes, unfortunately, there is no -- patients can't take -- or the plane can't take other family members due to the amount of space and getting -- it's about getting the patient to the care that they need. What I would recommend is that anybody who -- you know, if their family members are leaving, it's reaching out to medical travel prior to, you know, jumping in your vehicle and driving because there are processes in place and sometimes, you know, it's unfortunate we're looking at the air ambulance because right now there isn't an exception or there isn't a policy around escorts when there's air ambulance. However, with NIHB -- which they will not delegate that to us -- they can, with the doctor and everybody can put in an exception request. With that exception request, sometimes there's an approval and sometimes there's not. But they don't delegate that to our administration. They hold that to them because that's up in their -- you know, for their decision-making. We are working with them right now to look at all of the things that they have approved to see if there's a way that they can delegate that to us, which we could do an approval a lot faster. And we're hoping within the next -- you know, within these next couple of months that we will have that work done. 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. Mr. Speaker, I am a little concerned that our Treaties number 8 and 11, signed in 1900 and 2000 -- or sorry, 1921, and we have rights on health. And, Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the policy on government now is overriding our treaties. And so when they turn down help for

our constituents, who are treaty members, and we deny them because we're hiding behind policies, in terms of moving forward in collaboration and implementation of UNDRIP, what can we do different now as we develop new policies to work with treaty communities and without impacting their treaty rights on health? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with health care, access to health care, anything that's an insured service, any -- it doesn't matter whether you're treaty or not, you will have access to those services and we will get you to those appointments if you are the patient. Where it comes into always an issue is when the patient has the approval to travel but when there's no escort and the escort is denied. Those are the pieces that we're trying to work on. Because right now, you know, we have increased the amount of escorts over the past -- every two -- last two years, since I've been in here, the amount of escorts have increased. We are approving more escorts. We are streamlining the process a little bit better; those who need them. But there is still some work to do with NIHB on those circumstances related around air ambulances because there isn't, and that is not something that's delegated to us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 931-20(1):
LAND TRANSFERS TO SUPPORT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
INVESTMENTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up on some of the comments made by my colleague from Range Lake.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has been criticized by being a cumbersome process in the transfer of land by the city of Yellowknife. But not just them. Indigenous governments, businesses, and industry, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are directed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

What barriers is the Minister prepared to remove or is currently removing to ensure that the GNWT does not stand in the way of the \$10 billion northern investment by the national defence? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have -- the Department of Environment and Climate Change has been working very closely with the city of Yellowknife. We recently signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on bulk land transfers and moving land within the city. We currently have been meeting with the department on a very regular basis. We just had a meeting a week ago to talk about these potential requests that are going to come from the Department of National Defence. And we certainly recognize that this is a very important opportunity for the Northwest Territories, for the City of Yellowknife and the Town of Inuvik, and we are prepared to work with both of those communities as well as with our Indigenous partners in both of the regions to advance this as quickly as we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what MOU the Minister's referring to. I believe the last one, the City of Yellowknife either, you know, theoretically or metaphorically or whatever you want to call it, tore it up. In other words, they believed it wasn't working. Mr. Speaker, to the point, \$10 billion doesn't come around every day, and it's certainly worth dedicating a dedicated team for this to help Yellowknife and the Town of Inuvik, Mr. Speaker. So my question specifically is does the Minister recognize the opportunity of aligning his department in a way so it can help facilitate and accelerate this extraordinary opportunity to ensure it isn't lost? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly recognize the opportunity here. I think it's a tremendous opportunity for the Northwest Territories as a whole. One of my priorities as Minister has been to focus on land and the ability to transfer land to communities. That's through collaborative work with housing, with MACA, to ensure that we are putting forward our resources in a way that maximizes those opportunities. We've added additional resources, and we've really gone on an effort to focus. Our primary focus was on housing, but it's very clear to me that working with the communities to advance the land requirements for these mega projects, to ensure that we get the maximum benefit from the \$10 billion, is certainly a priority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, just a few short weeks ago, the city was telling us that the land process and transfer process continues to be bogged down. Mr. Speaker, I know a lot of

numbers get confusing, but I am going to say one land's employee, using round numbers, is \$150,000. I would hate to think 0.000015 would stand in the way of \$10 billion. That's the percentage, Mr. Speaker. So would the Minister take action to ensure the ball isn't dropped, and can the Minister explain what type of action he's going to do and accelerate to ensure this investment opportunity isn't lost in Inuvik and in Yellowknife and Northerners at large? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my earlier response, we currently have a memorandum of understanding with the City of Yellowknife that we signed in the fall. It's a new version of the agreement. We have been working very closely with the city. There's a number of parcels that have been identified as parcels of interest from the Department of National Defence, some of which are already in the possession of the city and have the ability to work with the Department of National Defence to move those requests forward. And certainly, as a department, we have dedicated staff to this process. We realize the importance and significance of doing this, and we are totally committed to working with all of the partners involved, including our Indigenous partners in and around the City of Yellowknife, to ensure that we move this forward in a way that meets everybody's interest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 932-20(1):
ASSAULT STYLE FIREARM BUYBACK
PROGRAM

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take an opportunity to ask the Minister of Justice. A few weeks ago, the GNWT announced its position with regard to the federal government's assault-style firearms buyback program, and it was reported in the media, as the GNWT stated it would not be involved in the federal buyback program and that our territory's RCMP would be directed to not get involved. So that's left many residents, particularly those concerned about rising gun crime in our communities, confused as to whether the program applies in the territory at all.

So my first question is, can the Minister clarify whether the federal assault-style firearms buyback program will be going forward in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. J. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the program is a federal initiative, and it will go forward in the Northwest Territories. It started -- I believe the initial process started in the middle of January. It will be administered by the Department of Public Safety at the federal level. My understanding is that they are going to bring in some reserve RCMP officers from outside the territory to help administer that across the Northwest Territories. Our focus from the GNWT perspective is that we have staff challenges with the RCMP across the territory, and we need to have our folks focused on our current challenges within our borders, with the levels of gun crime and drug crime that are in our communities, and that's where we will be focusing on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, you, Mr. Speaker. So I know there was talk of sort of like a mail-in program. But can the Minister clarify, will there be federal staff or contractors physically travelling throughout the territory to collect firearms directly from NWT residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. J. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time I don't have that level of detail. Like I said, it's a program that is run by the federal government and will be entirely administered by the federal government. And what their work plan looks like across the Northwest Territories, I could not say at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, finally, can the Minister clarify is this an optional program, or are all owners of assault-style firearms on the list required to participate in this buyback program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. J. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I understand it the letters were sent to all registered owners of assault-style weapons that fall under this program, and it is a mandatory requirement to be completed by the 31st of March, 2026. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 933-20(1):
INVESTING IN YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT
IMPROVEMENTS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another component of this new defence investment is the Inuvik airport but, of

course, the Yellowknife airport as well. The Yellowknife airport has its own revolving fund and, you know, last year saw over 618,000 passengers. It's time that it got some real investment. The revolving fund isn't moving quick enough to invest in the needs, and it's certainly not moving quick enough to invest in the needs of \$10 billion that is going to revitalise the economy, create jobs and growth. Will the Minister of Infrastructure commit to investing more funding into the Yellowknife airport, make it a major project, and develop it so that it's ready for that new military investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. The Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member is probably aware that the Yellowknife airport is going through strategic planning sessions on the type of work that needs to be done at the Yellowknife airport. Those are ongoing. They've completed public engagement and are continuing with the engagement. So the Department of National Defence and the Department of Infrastructure and the Government of the Northwest Territories have all been communicating on the types of assets and resources that are required for their projects at the airports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear a commitment there, but I will ask more details. So has the NORAD northern basing infrastructure program's needs, have they been inserted into that strategic plan? Are we going to see a strategic plan that specifically is focused on those goals, focused on meeting those needs, and focused on bringing those dollars to the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The strategic planning and the work that's been going on has actually been slowed down in order to wait for DND, essentially a What We Heard was coming, and now that we know a little bit more, the work is ongoing and there is plans with the strategic planning and everything else that's been going on with the Department of National Defence to build that all into the Yellowknife airport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the pace is what worries me. Plans within plans within plans; it does not sound like we're getting anywhere very quickly. So will the Minister -- can the Minister reassure me and

Northerners that that plan and the necessary investments in that airport will be done by the time this money starts rolling out? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, this is ongoing work with the Department of National Defence, and the Department of Infrastructure is constantly working with them. I would hate to say that we're going ahead to do something at the Yellowknife airport that goes against their plans and definitely puts us back. So, again, this is an ongoing working thing with the Department of National Defence, and we continue to work with them in order to achieve their goals and what they're trying to do in the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife and Inuvik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Mr. Clerk.

Follow-up to Oral Questions

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 7.2(7)2, I've received follow-up information for the following oral questions from the first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly: 771, 784, 785, 789, 792, 796, 801, 804, 811, 813, 814, 815, 822, 823, 835, 840, 844, 848, 849, 851, 860, 861, 866, 879, 880, 881, 883, 887, 893, 899, 901, 902, and 903.

These follow-ups will be printed in full in today's Hansard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Good job, Mr. Clerk. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 934-20(1): ADDRESSING MEDICAL TRAVEL CHALLENGES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to use this short opportunity to ask a question of the Minister of health. We had a brief conversation over lunch hour with respect to medical travel, and it got me to thinking during that time, an hour or so ago, what is the Minister doing to open up for public dialogue and suggestions on repairing problems and challenges with medical travel? Could she open up a form or discussion board or something that they can receive direct input on stories, individuals. So that question is for the Minister of health.

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

HON. LEZA SEMMLER: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Some of the things that we're working on with -- yes, okay, because I was, like, lost. I thought we were moving on, and I didn't know you guys went back.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Back to the question. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always happy to repeat the best question ever.

Mr. Speaker, I said I had a brief conversation with the Minister over lunch hour regarding medical travel, and it got me to thinking during that time a couple hours ago which is, is there a way the department can set up some type of form or way to receive information on challenges individuals have been receiving through -- or going through medical travel in a way that we can help repair or fill some gaps on the system sort of like a -- I don't know how you do it, a flow system in but it's not meant to be a dialogue. Anyway, the point being is then we need to hear direct stories from people about ways of their -- challenges they're facing and ways maybe we can help deal with some of those challenges. Thank you.

HON. LEZA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have the Office of Client Experience as the NTHSSA is the administrator that does the medical travel, and so I've had these conversations with the CEO and the public administrator and they really encourage people, when they're having issues, to make sure that they're raising them with the Office of Client Experience as well. Anything that comes through my office is tracked, and we do have a long list of the things that -- and those are the things that we are working on. However, that would be my first area that I would suggest, because all of the Office of Client Experience complaints and process. And I can see if there's a way that we can kind of streamline a medical travel route through that if that works, and I can get back to the Member on that. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ever so briefly, I was on the City of Yellowknife website about snow removal, and they had a bunch of Q and A simple questions as why you don't do -- or why this isn't being done and you click it, and it explained why this wasn't being done. Mr. Speaker, there could be a great chance for medical travel to help communicate some of the things. As I'm highlighting, I'm only going to briefly highlight one example, plane alignments with schedules. So in other words,

that question could be is why aren't they aligned or better, you could have we're working on this, this is the progress, those type of things. That way people feel their government's listening. So, Mr. Speaker, is something like that feasible, or could you recognize the opportunity there within? Thank you.

HON. LEZA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now online we do have the where we are with the medical travel. There's a portal online -- I can share it with the Members again -- on the progress that we're working on. But what I can do is also highlight that there is going to be a new manual, whether it's -- and if we can break some things down to our most common FAQs, that, you know, that could or -- and a general email box that people could probably send in some things. I can bring those back to my department to see how that can be done. I do believe that some of the work that will be coming out -- and I shared this with the Member -- is, you know, is we've all heard is the service standards. And so that has been a directive that I have given to the department to have a response and an implementation plan on how they're going to do service standards within, making sure patients have their travel at a certain time before so that they can actually -- if they don't have an escort or something like that, they have a period of time that they can -- they actually have time when they're not getting on the plane to figure out why they don't have an escort. So there are different things but I'll take those back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can keep this one quite short: We need a platform so people with see the questions are being heard. Because not everything needs to be an Assembly question and problems solved here. Everything could -- you know, so people need to know these questions are being worked on, and that's the platform I'm suggesting. Does the Minister, again, see the opportunity here to in a more transparent way communicate the struggles the department sees, hears, and is working towards solutions? Thank you.

HON. LEZA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take that back to my department, and I can -- I see it as a good idea. I see it as I know that we do have a lot of -- you know, communication is one of the things that I'm always trying to see how we could do better. And so I will take that back and see what we can, and I can even let the Member know where we'll go with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 935-20(1):
FINE OPTION COMMUNITY JUSTICE
PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE
COMMITTEES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, fine option programs are crucial components of the justice system that allow different ways of people who run afoul of the law to repay their debts to society in a way that doesn't involve jail time or setting them up for failure. In recent travels on the Trespass Act, I became aware that there are some concerns in communities around the accessibility of these programs. So can the Minister of Justice tell me are fine option programs and community justice committees, or their equivalent, available in all NWT communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fine option/community justice programs are available. And I can't stand up here and say that it's everybody community. I believe it's a large number of the communities and certainly something that we've been working very closely with local Indigenous governments to help to administer those programs within those communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need community justice committees for these programs. So can the Minister just clarify if there are community justice committees in all NWT communities. Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that option is available to all communities in the Northwest Territories. Right now, I'm happy to come back and provide the information to the Member if every community has taken up the opportunity to participate in that program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. I welcome that information, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is about access to justice and ensuring there's a level playing field for everybody, especially people we are trying to rehabilitate and return as productive members of society.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are other ways to do this. There are ways to make this process an online portal where everyone in the Northwest Territories could access it. Is the Minister willing to look at expanding this, having a one-stop shop, modernizing the approach, because apparently there's ways to do it and do it for free. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, happy to take that away and have some conversations with the staff at the Department of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 936-20(1):
FORT LIARD COMMUNITY POLICING
PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems to be justice today, or at least Minister Macdonald day in some form or fashion.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice, and it's with respect to the community -- one of your communities, the community of Fort Liard. Mr. Speaker, they've run a community policing program for many years and often we've referred to it as the gold standard, could we do more of these types of things, you know, how important it is, and how key it is to have community people working with community people. Mr. Speaker, the question is, has there ever been any evaluation on that program? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate this question coming to the floor very much. It just so happens we recently went through a priorities exercise, and one of my three priorities was to look at this program that was run very successfully in Fort Liard, have a complete evaluation done and be able to table that document here in the House to see how we can use that to support our ask with the federal government for more funding in other communities to support the rest of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That sounds promising. So just to clarify the record, who is doing that evaluation, what expertise do they have, and when can we expect it to be done? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of

developing the terms of reference for that evaluation, and that work will be completed in the next few months, and that document will go out to the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect the opportunity that we should always have a balance on these particular evaluations so, in other words, balanced perspectives. So would the Minister ensure that not only social -- the social agency side would be part of the communication of setting up the criteria of the evaluation, he would also invite the RCMP to provide their expertise on the essence of the evaluation so we get a nice 360 point of view of how it's working for various elements of the community for the community. Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that that's a very good suggestion. I believe that we want to have a very thorough evaluation. This is certainly going to be a guiding document that will help us to inform our conversations with the federal government. We don't fit right now currently within the program to access additional funding. We want to ensure that we can show the success of this program from all aspects within the community and use that as our guiding document to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 21-20(1): CHANGES TO CHILD AND YOUTH COUNSELLING SERVICES

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by the Member for Yellowknife North on October 23rd, 2025, regarding changes to child and youth counselling services.

WRITTEN QUESTION 22-20(1): ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by the Member for Great Slave on October 29th, 2025, regarding actions to improve animal welfare in the Northwest Territories.

WRITTEN QUESTION 23-20(1): HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS RETURNING AS LOCUMS

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 31st, 2025, regarding healthcare professionals returning as locums.

WRITTEN QUESTION 24-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MEDICAL STUDENTS REJECTED FOR RESIDENCIES

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 31st, 2025, regarding Northwest Territories medical students rejected from residencies.

WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 31st, 2025, regarding the Senior Envoy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 440-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW- UP TO ORAL QUESTION 822-20(1): NO- SHOW APPOINTMENT RATES IN HEALTHCARE CLINICS

TABLED DOCUMENT 441-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW- UP TO ORAL QUESTION 899-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CANCER STATISTICS

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Additional Information for Follow-up Oral Question 822-20(1): No-Show Appointment Rates in Healthcare Clinics; and, Additional Information for Follow-up Oral Question 899-20(1): Northwest Territories Cancer Statistics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Mr. Premier.

TABLED DOCUMENT 442-20(1):
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RETURN
TO WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR
ENVOY (PREMIER)

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Additional Information for Return to Written Question 25-20(1): Senior Envoy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Tabling of documents. Member from Great Slave.

TABLED DOCUMENT 443-20(1):
JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF PUBLIC RADON
TESTING AND MITIGATION SUPPORTS IN
CANADA

TABLED DOCUMENT 444-20(1):
JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF PUBLICLY
FUNDED FERTILITY PROGRAMS IN
CANADA

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table two documents: One is a Jurisdictional Scan of Public Radon Testing and Mitigation Supports in Canada; and additionally, a Jurisdictional Scan of Publicly-funded Fertility Programs in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 445-20(1):
2025 REVIEW OF MEMBERS OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY COMPENSATION AND
BENEFITS REPORT (SPEAKER)

TABLED DOCUMENT 446-20(1):
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION TO
REVIEW MEMBERS' COMPENSATION AND
BENEFITS (SPEAKER)

Colleagues, pursuant to section 35(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I hereby table the 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report presented by the Independent Commission to Review Members' Compensation and Benefits dated November 2025.

I hereby table the Summary of the Recommendations of the Independent Commission to Review Members' Compensation Benefits tabled November 2025.

Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

TABLED DOCUMENT 447-20(1):
LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY GUARDS AND
OTHER SECURITY OCCUPATIONS ACT
(NWT, 1991)

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I talked about an Act that was never fulfilled. So today I am going to give the pleasure of the House by tabling the Locksmiths, Security Guards, and Other Security Occupations Act that was passed and ascended in April 18th, 1991. That's 35 years ago, Mr. Speaker. And here's a copy on the record.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Reports of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills.

Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, February 5th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 1 of 7)
6. Notice of Motions
7. Motions
8. Returns to Oral Questions
9. Acknowledgements
10. Oral Questions
11. Written Questions
12. Returns to Written Questions
13. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
14. Petitions
15. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

16. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
17. Tabling of Documents
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 5th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Unedited Hansard