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**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

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**Day 83**

**20<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**UNEDITED HANSARD**

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026**

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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

This is an unedited Hansard

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# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)

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Employment*  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and  
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(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

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UNEDITED HANSARD

**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, February 24, 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, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Hon. Lesa Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

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

Please be seated. Thank you, Lillian Elias, for the opening reflections or prayers. Member from Kam Lake.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move item 4 up in the orders of the day. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Kam Lake is seeking unanimous consent to move the orders of the day of number 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Seeing no nays. Member from Kam Lake.

**Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery**

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have some very special guests in the gallery joining us today, including members of the official languages board, participants of the mentor apprenticeship program, and staff from the Indigenous languages secretariat. And I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize them in the House today. These individuals continue to put their hearts and hard work into language revitalization, and it is an absolute privilege to have them in the House with us today. And in no particular order, and I will do my best, Mr. Speaker, we have names Lorna Storr, Elsie Mantla, Brenda Baton, Mary Louise Drygeese, MaroRose Sundberg, Ann Catholique, Karen Lepine, Stella Nadli, Bertha Landry, Caroline Bonnetrouge, Sheryl Cli, Mavis Klause, Debra English, Annie Jane Charlie, Anna Pingo, Alysette Lockhart, Candace Smith, Emily Kudlak, Victoria Rabesca, Susan Saunders, Jesse Green, Tanache Jonet, Lisa Zoe, Edward Mantla, Doreen Lafferty-Zoe, Mandy Beha, MaryAnn Vital, Jessica Sangris, Lena Drygeese, Margaret Mitchell, Hovak Johnston, Sheila Landry, Theresa Bonnetrouge, Lloyd Cardinal, Doris Bourke, Virdel Deneyou, Annabel T'litchi, J.C. Firth Hagen, Beverly

Amos, Ida Lennie-Manuel, Lucy Ann Antoine, Melvin Thom, Mary Adele Rabesca, Rochelle Haulderman, Jennifer Walterhouse, Jean Francois Pitre, Robin Mantla, Alice Liske, Tammy Steinwand Dechambault, Katherine Mkeinzo Taylor, Bertha Drygeese, Sally Drygeese, Shauna , Agnes Mitchell, Elaine Landry, Jacqueline Hope, Priscilla Canadian, Pacheo N'keko, Patricia Lafferty, Cecile Deneyou, Annie Smith, Marla Pissuk, Violet Sangris, Catherine Pope, Rena Chapel, Doris Thom, Alice Charlie, Brigitte Forget Watt \*, Jordan Reid who we loving refer to as Jordie in this House, Martha Popquarter\*, and Daniel Zoe.

So I'd like to give them a warm welcome to the House, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

**Ministers' Statements****MINISTER'S STATEMENT 182-20(1):  
HEALTH RECRUITMENT UNIT**

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to recognize the accomplishments of the health recruitment unit and to highlight the progress being made to strengthen staffing in nursing, social work, and allied health professionals across the Northwest Territories.

The health recruitment unit was established within the management and recruitment services division of the human resources branch of the Department of Finance, in partnership with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority and the Tlicho Community Services Agency. The purpose of this unit is to coordinate and streamline recruitment efforts across health and social services positions throughout the Northwest Territories by leading proactive and streamlined approaches to recruitment.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are persistent workforce challenges facing northern and remote jurisdictions. Across Canada, shortages of health and social service professionals

continue to place pressure on health systems, driven by demographic change, and increased service demand. In the North, these pressures sometimes result in greater reliance on locum and other short-term staffing arrangements. The work of recruiting skilled professionals is critical to maintaining reliable services for residents of the Northwest Territories.

The health recruitment unit's mandate is to increase the number of indeterminately staffed health positions by 5 percent annually over the course of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Indeterminate staffing plays a key role in improving continuity of care and strengthening service stability, particularly in small and remote communities.

Since the creation of the unit on August 1st, 2020, 728 indeterminate staff have been hired. These hires include 66 registered nurse graduates from the Aurora College Bachelor of Science in nursing degree program in the last five years. A further 215 term employees were hired during this same period, as of December 31, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to report that, as of December 31st, 2025, the health recruitment unit has recruited 60 registered nurses and three nurse practitioners, 11 licensed practical nurses, 14 social service workers, and 16 allied health professionals. Allied health professionals, for example, can include: audiologists, speech-language, occupational therapy, sonographers, medical lab technicians and so on.

The health recruitment unit also manages a growing database of over 700 registered nurses interested in casual employment and, during this fiscal year, has hired 239 casual registered nurses.

Based on current projections, the unit anticipates a 12.1 percent increase in indeterminate staff this fiscal year alone, excluding turnover. This projected increase exceeds the unit's annual target and reflects progress toward the Legislative Assembly's priority of access to health care.

Looking ahead, the health recruitment unit will continue to work to refine recruitment strategies, strengthen coordination, and support government-wide efforts to build and maintain a skilled, stable, and sustainable health workforce for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 183-20(1):  
2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Mr. Speaker, later today I will be tabling the first annual report on the Northwest Territories Emergency Management System covering the period of April 2024 to December 2025. This report gives residents, community governments, Indigenous governments, and Members of this House clear and transparent account of how the emergency management system is functioning, what improvements have been made, and where further work is needed. By reporting on our progress, we are taking an important step toward demonstrating improvements to the Northwest Territories emergency management system.

Mr. Speaker, Northerners have been clear about their expectations. They want a stronger emergency management system that is resilient, communicates clearly, and demonstrates accountability. The Government of the Northwest Territories takes this priority seriously. Trust is built through consistent action and a commitment to follow through. This annual report reflects our commitment to transparent and timely reporting on the actions to improve the NWT emergency management system.

The Northwest Territories continues to face significant risks. Floods and wildfires remain our highest risk hazards, and climate change is making these events more frequent and severe. The major floods of 2021 and 2022, followed by the wildfire seasons of 2023, 2024, and 2025, resulted in costs exceeding \$354 million. As a result, the Government of the Northwest Territories has strengthened its approach to emergency management by applying after-action review recommendations and lessons-learned from each disaster. Feedback from community governments, Indigenous governments, and emergency management staff also guide improvements to planning, training, and operational procedures. These emergency events have had real impacts on families, businesses, and communities, reinforcing the need for a resilient emergency management system that residents can rely on.

BMr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has invested in staffing, creating a new dedicated training officer position. This role ensures consistent training, increased support for communities to develop and practice their emergency plans, and improved local readiness.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has also expanded its communications team to strengthen risk communication, coordinate public information, and improve engagement with communities before and during emergencies. These resources help ensure information is timely, clear, culturally appropriate, and accessible.

The emergency management organization is building a long-term, region-based system so communities can be responsive to residents' needs during an emergency. Every region has regional emergency management coordinator who provides direct, on-the-ground support to communities. The regional emergency management coordinators are key local contacts who assist communities with planning, capacity building, training coordination, and preparedness activities tailored to each community's specific needs and risks.

Mr. Speaker, a key part of strengthening our system and public trust is ensuring that those who respond to emergencies have the training and tools they need.

The Government of the Northwest Territories made a commitment to expand the incident command system, or ICS training, across the territory. ICS training provides a common language and structure for emergency response and is essential for coordinating efforts during complex events. We continue to provide ICS courses for emergency staff and frontline responders.

Training for elected officials, including MLAs, is also planned for this April, to recognize the important leadership role they play during emergencies. Community governments can now access the ICS 100 training through local government administrators of the NWT. When responders across the territory are trained to the same standards, communities can count on a coordinated, professional response when it matters most.

Mr. Speaker, community governments are responsible for their emergency plans, but we are there to provide stronger supports through updated tools, templates, training, and advisory services. Tabletop exercises and improved planning resources help ensure that community governments understand their roles and responsibilities and are ready to act when an emergency occur. When communities are well prepared and well supported, residents have greater confidence in the system that serves them.

Improving public communication during emergencies is also a key focus. Residents can expect timely, transparent updates, using plain

language so residents better understand the risks they face and know what to do.

Mr. Speaker, these changes are making a difference. Since 2023, the GNWT, community governments, and frontline responders have a better understanding of their role, improved information flow, and a more structured response system. Standardized reporting and documentation have strengthened oversight during emergency responses, and after-action reviews are now more robust and better informed. These improvements demonstrate that the system is learning, adapting, and improving. Public feedback has played an important role in shaping these improvements. Residents asked for clearer communication, stronger reporting practices, and we have responded.

Mr. Speaker, emergencies cannot be completely prevented, but we can reduce their impacts by ensuring residents and communities have the tools and information they need to understand the risks and be prepared when an emergency strikes. This is how we build a system that we can trust, where communities lead, and the GNWT stands firmly behind them every step of the way.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue this work, we remain committed to providing regular, transparent updates on improvements to the emergency management system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 184-20(1): INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES MONTH

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, I will begin my statement today in Dene Suline.

Mr. Speaker, [Translation] **INSERT\***  
[Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous languages in the Northwest Territories are at a critical point. NThe 2025 Community Survey shows declining numbers of speakers in every region of this territory. This trend is real, and it is concerning. But it also strengthens our determination. Indigenous governments, elders, community organizations, schools, and language workers are leading the way, and the GNWT is committed to walking alongside them. This is also work we are legally and morally obliged to do through the Official Languages Act and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act. It is also work we believe in.

Mr. Speaker, several initiatives are helping us move forward. The Indigenous Languages Revitalization Scholarship continues to support Northerners pursuing post-secondary studies in their language. This year, we awarded to the full ten scholarships of up to \$5,000 each, bringing the total to 91 recipients since 2018.

Interpreters and translators remain essential to language revitalization, helping normalize the use of Indigenous languages in public life.

Last May, we co-hosted an interpreter-translator gathering with the Legislative Assembly to support training, development, and succession planning, especially for those who work during session. I want to thank every interpreter in this House for the time and expertise they contribute as we work together.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2025 we launched the Indigenous languages service request portal, a centralized translation management system now used across the government. The portal helps departments coordinate translation requests more efficiently and maintain a shared terminology database, which strengthens consistency, accuracy, and capacity for future work. In the eight months since launching, the portal has helped coordinate 80 translations.

Mr. Speaker, 2026 marks the seventh year of the mentor-apprentice program. Over 180 apprentices have now completed their 200-hour immersion experience, and some have continued over multiple years. Six former apprentices have progressed into mentor roles. This growth speaks to the increasing confidence, proficiency, and leadership within communities.

Schools also play a key role. In the 2025-2026 school year, 40 of 49 schools offered Indigenous language programming as a second language, four continued immersion programming, and three regions are taking part in the Indigenous language instructor employment plan pilot. This pilot creates trainee positions where emerging instructors learn alongside experienced language teachers.

Mr. Speaker, all NWT residents deserve access to GNWT programs and services in their Indigenous language. Beginning this spring, the government will begin introducing Indigenous language service standards. Staff who deliver frontline services will be trained and equipped to support the public in their language by email, voicemail or in-person at service offices.

Finally, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is developing a new long-term strategic approach for Indigenous languages, following the conclusion of the 2018-2025 Indigenous languages framework and action plan.

The new approach will align efforts across governments and organizations, reduce duplication, and strengthen collective impact in revitalization work. This government is taking steps towards this collaborative-developed approach with Indigenous governments and will also collaborate with language authorities, the official languages board, education partners, and community organizations.

Mr. Speaker, this work is practical, steady, and grounded in reconciliation. It also creates more opportunities to use, hear, and strengthen Indigenous languages in communities. Language is a source of strength, identity and continuity. By continuing this language revitalization work together, we help ensure that future generations grow up with the languages that belong to this land and its people. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 906-20(1): DISABILITIES SUPPORT PROGRAMS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, adults with disabilities and their families face persistent barriers to access and accommodation when more than one GNWT program must work together. There is currently no single coordinated access and accommodation pathway across GNWT programs, resulting in delays, service gaps, and ineffective accommodation.

This problem is systemic, not just case specific. I have heard from multiple constituents about these issues. It was raised in the 2023 Supported Living Review, and it was raised by another MLA already this sitting, so I think it's clear these issues are affecting numerous people in the territory. Programs commonly involved in fragmented access are home and community-based care and personal support services, respite, and short-term placement within long-term care facilities, GNWT-funded community and disability support programs requiring individualized accommodation, and GNWT-administered income and disability-related support programs.

These programs operate across departments and service delivery streams without a unified access point. In the absence of effective coordination and accommodation mechanisms, caregivers are routinely required to fill operational and staffing gaps in GNWT service delivery in order to prevent service breakdowns. This includes caregivers absorbing responsibility for personal care and supervision, transportation, coordination between multiple programs and departments, and continuity of supports during service transitions or delays.

In practice, Mr. Speaker, unpaid caregivers are being relied on to silently absorb service gaps created by fragmented disability and care programs, allowing systemic failures to remain hidden from public reporting and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT already has a proven model for managing clients facing complex situations and dealing with issues that span multiple programs and departments. The integrated service delivery team at executive and Indigenous affairs has been a welcomed solution, and I have had positive experiences with constituents who access this team for support and referring constituents to them. That team is specifically tasked to support clients with housing and social support needs, but I wonder if a modification or addition to that service could be made to the team to specialize in disability support related issues I have raised today. I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. Alternatively, perhaps system navigation support and coordination for persons with disabilities and caregivers is something the department of health could establish, modelled after the ISD team. Regardless of who does it or how it is done, what is important is that we close these service gaps. I am not asking for a new program here, Mr. Speaker, just that we better coordinate access to the programs we are already offering. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 907-20(1):  
CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening I had the pleasure of meeting Annette King, Yukon's child and youth advocate, alongside several of my MLA colleagues, to discuss the vital work she and her peers champion for the rights of children across

Canada. Ms. King's accomplishments, confronting and navigating challenges similar to those our communities here in the Northwest Territories face, are particularly impressive.

It was shocking, but sadly not surprising, to learn that 30 percent of the Yukon's child and youth advocates' work is dedicated to files from outside of their territory, many of which involve children here in the Northwest Territories. This means that parents, guardians, First Nations people, teachers, and even children themselves, are reaching out to outside of the Northwest Territories desperately searching for support because the service simply does not exist here.

The Minister can claim she can support these children with current policies, yet there is no solution for whose welfare could be compromised by the very service meant to protect them, especially when child and family services is their legal guardian. Many families are not notified of decisions CFS makes for their children. Foster families often fear heavy-handed reprisals and adoptions being ground to a halt, leaving children in legal limbo, transitioning from home to home until they turn 18.

Without accountability or transparency, there may be no publicly available data but as MLAs, we see how dire the situation has become. Parents and guardians only have two avenues to seek resolution for these heartbreaking cases - the courts or their elected representatives. But as MLAs, our hands are tied by a government whose policies leave children unrepresented and families, both biological and foster, feeling irrelevant in the process.

The Minister can't have it both ways. She can't oppose independent oversight at every turn and then dismiss MLAs when we try to help. It's time to build on the work that has spanned multiple Members and multiple Assemblies, efforts some of these very Ministers today supported when they sat on this side of the House. That's why today I will be giving notice of a motion calling on this government to finally establish an independent Office of the Child and Youth Advocate here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Colleagues, I must remind you to speak a little slower for our translators.

Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 908-20(1):  
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY

**MR. RODGERS:** I'd be early, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Inuvik and indeed the entire Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Delta regions rely on the Dempster Highway for vital supplies, from groceries to building supplies, fuel, and many other needed products.

Mr. Speaker, for the month of January the Dempster Highway was closed 18 days, 18 days where no transport trucks were able to deliver to its customers. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, as of February 20th, the Dempster Highway was closed for an additional nine days. Once again, trucking companies that serviced the needs of my community could not deliver. Product was being spoiled, product sat on the highway, sat at the border, and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, not only does this cause a major disruption in the supply chain where grocery store shelves are empty, building projects can be delayed, and the community runs the risk of vital fuel shortages in the coldest months of the year. Mr. Speaker, we've seen that this year, and it also, Mr. Speaker, can cause serious safety issues.

I spoke with trucking companies that service the region. Most drivers work on a contract basis, and if the road is closed there are no trips to make. The experienced drivers, then, Mr. Speaker, go elsewhere. We have seen this year significantly more incidents of transport truck accidents on the Dempster Highway than we've seen in many, many years.

The maintenance on the vehicles have increased significantly due to the condition of the highway. If this continues, we run the risk of companies having to increase trucking fees which, of course, inevitably will be passed on to the customer, or even worse, Mr. Speaker, choosing not to run the highway at all.

This is not a capacity issue, Mr. Speaker. On the Northwest Territories side, our model of maintaining the road by local contractors seems to be working. We have contractors that are local, have local knowledge that have been out removing snow quickly after snowstorms to get the Dempster Highway open.

Mr. Speaker, someone has to be the voice for trucking companies and the customers they serve. We must work with our sister territory to ensure these costly closures are dealt with in a timely manner. We have to ensure when winter storms happen, and we know they will, that action to reopen the road is dealt with in a much more timely manner. In a normal season, Mr. Speaker, there are 15 transport trucks per day traveling on that highway, and at times up to 20

trucks per day traveling on that highway. That's a lot of goods and services, Mr. Speaker, coming off that highway.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this certainly adds to the discussion of building the Mackenzie Valley Highway, our own highway maintained solely by our own contractors, carrying products to service more of our communities, and that's not to mention, Mr. Speaker, the commerce that will also stay in our territory. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure later today.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 909-20(1): INTERNAL TRADE BARRIERS

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue of significant economic importance to the Northwest Territories and to all of Canada: Efficiencies from internal trade barriers.

Mr. Speaker, a recent international monetary fund report reveals that Canada could increase its real GDP by approximately 7 percent, roughly \$210 billion, if we fully eliminated the internal trade barriers between provinces and territories, Mr. Speaker. This is not a small matter. These barriers currently equate to about 9 percent tariff nationally. With the costs concentrated primarily in services, which make up a majority of the inter-provincial trade, certainly, Mr. Speaker, a professional approach to Canada cost efficiencies in support of domestic economic growth.

Most concerning, Mr. Speaker, is that barriers in critical sectors like healthcare services, education, amount to 40 percent tariff equivalent. The IMF notes that smaller provinces and territories face costs that are multiples higher in sectors like health, retail trade, and professional services.

I want to acknowledge the progress made by the committee on internal trade in 2025 chaired by our very own Minister Cleveland. Parties removed 30 percent of the party-specific exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, signed the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the sales of goods and services, Yellowknife, and developed a labour mobility action plan with concrete measurables. However, Mr. Speaker, as a small jurisdiction, the Northwest Territories stands to gain significantly from full trade elimination on barriers. The report shows smaller provinces -- excuse me there, Mr. Speaker. Can I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement? Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, colleagues. The report shows smaller provinces could see changes of up to 40 percent points in the GDP per worker. Mr. Speaker, the opportunity is now; the prize is large. IMF says turning 13 economies into one is no longer an aspiration; it is an economic imperative. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 910-20(1):  
SOCIAL PASSING

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] **INSERT\*** [Translation Ends].

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just mentioned that this month is languages month.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to address an issue that has significant implications for student success in the Northwest Territories - the practice of peer group placement in our education system.

Peer group placement occurs when a student who has not met most grade-level expectations is advanced to the next grade with their peers, supported by an education program plan designed to meet their learning needs. However, advancing students before they have developed essential foundational skills can create long-term challenges. Students who move ahead without the necessary competencies often begin the next school year at a disadvantage. If these gaps are not addressed, they can widen over time, affecting academic progress, confidence, and overall engagement. Students who repeatedly feel unprepared may withdraw, experience frustration, or lose trust in their own abilities. This loss of confidence can follow them into post-secondary education, where expectations are higher and greater independence is required.

Without strong foundational skills, students may struggle to keep up, relying on upgrading, or leave their programs before completion. These challenges can also extend into the workplace, limiting the careers they feel prepared to pursue, making it harder to meet job requirements or advance within their chosen field.

It is important to note that peer group placement is not used in grades 10 to 12. By the end of grade 9, students must be prepared for high school, where progression depends on meeting course outcomes rather than age. This underscores the need for strong early

intervention and thoughtful support through the junior kindergarten to grade 9 years. Mr. Speaker, our children deserve an education system that prepares them for success at every stage.

Ensuring students are ready academically, socially, developmentally, is essential for both their futures and future of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Dehcho.

Colleagues, before I go any further to Member statements, I'd like to recognize the Grand Chief from the Tlicho, Mr. Jackson Lafferty, former Member, former Minister, and former Speaker of the House. So welcome to the House.

Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 911-20(1):  
ACTION PLAN FOR UNITED NATIONS  
DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IMPLEMENTATION  
ACT

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, my colleague from Range Lake tabled the Standing Committee on Public Accounts Review of the Auditor General's Report, Audit of Protected and Preserved Areas in the Northwest Territories. One part of the report caught my attention:

UNDRIP came into force on October 6, 2023, and required, in collaboration and cooperation with Indigenous governments or organizations of the NWT and the executive council, a co-development action plan to achieve the objectives of the declaration within two years. The committee noted that this legislative timeline has passed, that no action plans was tabled, and that the required public engagement did not occur.

I was at the previous Assembly when Bill 85 was passed, and it was meant to be a proudly historic moment, a landmark initiative by our government to align itself with comprehensive far-reaching international rights. The UNDRIP Implementation Act was intended as a major step forward in the territory's history which, since division with Nunavut, has struggled to create a new model of governance its people have long called for. At the time, my constituents told me that they wanted action, not words.

They have heard a soaring rhetoric about rights, reconciliation, and cooperation from their

government for decades. Every day is in session when we ask for progress, the government simply tells us how dedicated they are to upholding treaty rights and implementing UNDRIP, the TRC Calls to Action, and the MMIWG Calls for Justice. Based on those words alone, you might think this is the most progressive government in the country.

But words don't get my constituents timely medical care. Words don't fund schools. Words don't solve housing crises. Words don't create jobs or bring economic opportunities to their communities or a seat for them at the table to determine economic development. When it comes to action on all fronts, this government has failed the Premier's 50-year vision for the North. It is more like a 50-year reversal back in time to when we were helplessly dependent on Ottawa.

My people are used to failure and disappointment from their territorial government but do not consent to it. Today my communities want more on how the Premier will intend to honour the treaties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 912-20(1):  
VETS WITHOUT BORDERS

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After raising the questions in the House with the Minister of MACA, as well as asking written questions, I had several folks reach out to speak with me about animal welfare programs offered to NWT communities. Most Yellowknifers are familiar with NWT SPCA and the services that they offer. NWT SPCA, the Tlicho Animal Rescue Society, the Hay River Animal Shelter, and Fort Smith Animal Shelter are all compassionate advocates and champions for animal welfare and work to re-home, spay, neuter, and treat hundreds of stray dogs and other pets each year.

A group that may have less familiarity in my constituency but is more well-known in some smaller communities, is Vets Without Borders. With their northern animal health initiative and community animal health worker program, vets travel to the NWT to support communities that have limited access to veterinary services. Vets Without Borders provides not only travel vet clinics for vaccination and deworming but can also assist interested municipalities and bylaw officers with capacity building. Vets Without Borders can provide them with telehealth supports, educational supports, teaching of pet

first aid, and training for lavex vaccinators to prevent disease outbreak. Rabies and dog bites can be costly to our human health system, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, across the North, passionate animal lovers are doing much-needed work to assist animals on pathways to new adoptive homes. Vets Without Borders is assisting animals and communities where they are at. Animal welfare has many facets, and some facets could be supported with in-kind government work. With some targeted support for communities, we can lessen downstream impacts on our animal shelters. I will have questions for the Minister of MACA at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 913-20(1):  
PRIVATE CONTRACT PARAMEDICS

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, many things about health care keep me up at night. One concern I haven't spoken about yet is the department's growing focus on integrating private contracted paramedics into both small community health centres and our hospital emergency departments.

To be clear, paramedics do difficult, important work. Their specialty is in responding to emergency events and stabilizing patients for transport to take them to other medical professionals with broader scope. In the NWT, paramedics have mainly been working for municipalities with ambulance services, like Yellowknife, working for mines or with firefighting crews to support remote operations, or else working for private companies that run medivacs.

Two things are new that concern me: The push to give paramedics new roles in order to plug nurse vacancies and the shift towards privatization of our core health care functions.

Now, one of this Minister's top three priorities is to create the small community model of care, and this budget proposes adding a new full-time manager position devoted to that work. The problem is that model seems to revolve around expanding the role of private paramedics in primary care. Now, let's remember that paramedics specialize in acute care and transport, so why would we turn to them for the everyday care people need in small community health centres, everything from health promotion and screenings, to pre- and post-natal care, to chronic disease management. The explanation given is that

right now we cannot recruit enough community health nurses or emergency room nurses to fill all the shifts, so we need to contract these paramedics for hire as helpers so the nurses don't burn out. Well, who could argue with that? Except why is the alternative to paramedics having nobody? Why aren't we focused on the need to hire more community health nurses when they're the ones with the skill sets we need most?

We have a health recruitment unit, we heard today. Reportedly, it's doing great, smashing its targets in hiring both indeterminate and casual RNs and community health nurses. Are they all leaving so soon? The shift towards filling gaps with private paramedics seems more like a short-sighted move of desperation than a long-term strategy we should pour more resources into. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will simply conclude by saying I will have more to say in the coming days about my concerns with the increasing privatization of primary care through paramedics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 914-20(1):  
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] **INSERT\*** [Translation Ends]. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] **INSERT\*** [Translation Ends] family services, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, family unity, responsibility, respect, and care for one another are core principles that have sustained our people for generations. When we speak about children and family services, those values might guide us. No dispute that child safety must always come first. When a child is in danger, the government has a duty to act, but we must also look honestly at why so many families are reaching crisis in the first place.

Too often, Mr. Speaker, housing shortages, overcrowding, poverty, trauma, and limited access to local supports are major contributing factors.

Mr. Speaker, these are systemic challenges, not simply individual failures. When parents do not have stable housing or access to mental health, addictions and family supports in their own communities, they are being asked to succeed without the tools they need.

Mr. Speaker, when a child must be removed from their parents, that is already a serious and disruptive change. When that removal also means that child must leave their home communities because there is no local placement available, the impact is even greater. The separation from family is compounded by separation from culture, language, school, and community supports.

If we are serious, Mr. Speaker, about reconciliation and about honouring Indigenous values, we must address both prevention and capacity. We must strengthen families before crisis occurs. And we must ensure that when children are in care, they can remain connected to their home communities. Mr. Speaker, our children deserve stability, protection, and the opportunity to grow up surrounded by their culture, their language, and their people. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 915-20(1):  
COST OF LIVING

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For most Northerners, the cost of living isn't just a challenge; it's actually a crisis. It's a financial impossibility some days from the grocery aisle to the heating bills. Mr. Speaker, Northerners clearly shoulder some of the heaviest burdens across Canada, and I think people are getting tired of the tried-and-true excuses of inaction when it comes to geography and climate change as the backstop of why inaction seems to happen.

Mr. Speaker, since 2023, this government has talked extensively about its affordability challenges, and yet residents are still asking show us some results, Mr. Speaker. Northerners deserve much more than rehearsed talking points and fingers pointing, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the government will list endless amounts of subsidies and things they do, but the people on the ground don't see results. They see band-aids for just such a few.

Mr. Speaker, the everyday person doesn't want incremental tweaks; they want to see something in their wallet. Insufficient or invisible rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, won't fill a belly, Mr. Speaker, and it definitely won't keep the lights on. Mr. Speaker, they deserve concrete action now to lower costs and, Mr. Speaker, this crisis can't wait any longer.

Mr. Speaker, the government has been in power, again since 2023, so as the mandarins behind the scenes pull the actual policy levers and make the decisions, Mr. Speaker, everyday families are waiting to see meaningful results. Mr. Speaker, we can list inefficient programs, but the fact is people want to see delivered relief.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to suggest why doesn't this government finally come to terms and let go of the NWT payroll tax. Mr. Speaker, that gluttony could end. Did you know if you made \$35,000 a year, you pay \$700 annually in payroll tax? Just imagine if you made as much as the NWT senior envoy. That'd be 10 times the amount of the everyday person, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 2 percent. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of local money, whether it's in Yellowknife or a regional centre or a small community, that's disposable income for families going to stores, helping kids, etcetera.

Mr. Speaker, you know, like the old saying, if you build it they will come. Mr. Speaker, the government's motto is if you give us money, they'll find ways to spend it. Mr. Speaker, the government could find a way to do this, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you right now I don't know if it's going to take Moses to part their payroll red tax sea but, Mr. Speaker, we need to see some action. Mr. Speaker, I am going to finish with set our people payroll tax free.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 916-20(1):  
CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR CHRISTINE  
HOLMAN

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Today, I am honoured to celebrate the remarkable life of Christine Holman, a woman whose presence touched every life she encountered with warmth, wisdom, and grace. Christine lived fully and loved deeply, leaving a legacy not only in the memories she created but also in the kindness she shared so freely with others.

Born with a generous spirit and boundless curiosity, Christine approached life with a quiet but steady strength. She found joy in simple moments - a morning cup of coffee, a walk through the community, or a conversation that lingered long after the day ended. Her laughter had a way of instantly brightening a room, and her compassion reminded those around her that love, in its truest form, is an everyday act.

Christine dedicated herself to her family and friends, always leading with empathy and faith. She believed in the power of listening, of showing up, and of finding beauty in

imperfection. Her home was a place of comfort and acceptance, where everyone felt welcome and valued.

Beyond her kindness, Christine also embodied resilience. Through life's challenges, she met hardship with courage and grace, showing us that strength and hope can coexist even in difficult times. She never stopped learning, growing, or inspiring others to do the same.

I knew this amazing soul as a neighbour, a sounding board, and someone who was always willing to share her ideas in meaningful ways. When she said she wanted to chat with me, I knew I could expect wisdom and insight. I will miss her deeply.

Her family would often joke that Christine made it a point to support every community fundraiser even if she didn't particularly enjoy playing bingo. She would buy her cards, dab away as the numbers were called, and laugh all the same.

On a more serious note, she was very proud of her Metis heritage and of serving as a Ranger, symbolized by the colour of her coffin, Ranger Red. Remembrance Day was especially important to her; she took great pride in participating in the parade and the laying of wreaths.

As we celebrate Christine's life, we remember her not with sorrow alone but with gratitude for the love she gave, the lessons she shared, and the joy she left behind. May her memory remind us to cherish one another, live gently, and carry forward her remarkable light in our own lives.

After a long battle with cancer, Christine passed away. Her sons and her partner would like to thank everybody for the well wishes and kind stories.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from the Sahtu.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a bunch of beautiful ladies there from my riding, starting with my Auntie Cathy Bolton\*, Marie Speakman, and -- there's so many up there to remember. Lucy Ann Menacho, Rena Chapel, and MaryAnn Vital. Mahsi cho. Welcome.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize some of my constituents from Dettah and also Lutsel'k'e. I want to recognize Sally Drygeese, Lena

Drygeese, Bertha Drygeese, Mary Louise Drygeese and MaroRose Sundberg is here. And also Alysette Lockhart, and all -- to all the beautiful women here today, welcome. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize all the translators here as well. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] INSERT\* [Translation Ends], Doreen Lafferty Zoe, Charlie Eyakfwo, Doris Thom, Marvin Thom, Tammy Dechambault, Elsie Mantla, Lisa Zoe, Daniel Zoe, Bertha Drygeese [Translation] INSERT\* [Translation Ends] Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize our translators here, Sarah Gargan and MaryJane Cazon, as well as the 7th year map participants and my constituents, Theresa Bonnetrouge, Stella Nadli, Bertha Landry, Elaine Landry, Sheila Landry, my mom Caroline Bonnetrouge, my sisters Jackie and Hope and Cecile Deneyou, and my niece that was supposed to be here but isn't for now, and all the other beautiful ladies (audio) from the map program. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have the best view of the gallery in my seat, but I did notice a few constituents coming in this morning, so recognition to Susan Saunders and Brigitte Forget Watt, and I do apologize if I've missed anyone from the Frame Lake riding. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel like the handsome men are getting overlooked so I am going to recognize a handsome friend of mine, the grand chief of the Tlicho Mr. Jackson Lafferty. Great to see you here today. And I also want to give a shout out to all of our interpreters. We could not do this job without you. I think a few of you are in Range Lake,, but thank you so much for the service you provide in keeping Indigenous languages alive and well here in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a couple of people in the gallery, Patricia Lafferty, Mavis Klause, Virdel Deneyou, and Cecile Deneyou. I would also like to acknowledge a couple pages that are working here this week from Hay River, Kennedy Bolt, Malikai Beaulieu, and Natalie Boucher. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Hay River South. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Nunakput.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Emily Kudluk from Ulukhaktok and Beverly Amos from Ikaahuk, Sachs Harbour. Thank you for joining us today and good to see you both. Also I would like to recognize Anna Pingo, Marla Pissuk and Debra English. Nice to see you all.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And although I don't have a list, so I run the risk of missing someone, I did hear some names that certainly I recognize from Inuvik, residents or previous residents. I'd like to recognize Anna Pingo, Adolf \*, Beverly Amos, Addie Smith, Debra English and Marla Pissuk. Welcome, everyone, to the Legislative Assembly. If I missed anyone, I apologize, but it's really good to see everyone here.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly, even with the benefit of spectacles age is creeping up on me, it's hard for me to make faces out in the gallery, but to that I want to say to my friends up there in the -- the new ones and the old friends, my kindest regards. But, Mr. Speaker, I do know recognizing Indigenous Language Month that my favourite interpreter, Ms. Sarah Cleary, is here today and I want to say a shout-out to her. I always try to say hi to her because she's one of my fondest friends. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The Member from the Sahtu forgot somebody so I will go back to him.

**MR. McNEELY:** I am privileged there, Mr. Speaker. I'd be in the bad books if I didn't

recognize Ida Manuel from Fort Good Hope, my home community. And the Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty. Welcome to the gallery. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Somebody else forgot. Member from the Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also too would like to recognize the Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty here and also former president of the Fort Resolution Metis Lloyd Cardinal, I believe he's up here. So welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Hay River North.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize our former colleague and Ticho Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty. As well, I want to recognize the individuals that my colleague from Hay River South recognized and all of the mentors, apprentices, and language champions that we're lucky enough to have with us in the gallery today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I have to recognize a constituent from Nahendeh, Sheryl Cui. Welcome to the Assembly. As well, Tammy -- sorry, I have to say her first name because I can't say her last name properly, so. Steinwand was but she's got this other part to it, so. And I turned her a nice colour of red, so.

Anyway, welcome to the Assembly. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your Assembly. You put us in these seats. We appreciate the fact that you honour us with this opportunity to represent you for the four years, and we have two years left, so I hope you enjoy the proceedings. And it's nice to see people in here. And if we missed anybody, welcome to your Assembly.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to Oral Questions. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### Returns to Oral Questions

RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 967-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY AND  
MINISTERIAL EXEMPTIONS

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And since you didn't see my hand, I am just going to recognize Anna Pingo because I know she is my constituent.

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to oral question asked by the Member for Range Lake on February 9, 2026, regarding medical travel policy and ministerial exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, the medical travel policy is in place for residents who need support with travel to and from scheduled appointments for services not available in their home community to ensure that residents have access to necessary health services.

Mr. Speaker, the medical travel policy does not apply in circumstances where an individual is transported by a ground or air ambulance and is receiving inpatient care from medical professionals.

Requests for non-medical escorts in scenarios where a patient is transported by air ambulance are denied because the patient does not require support during navigating travel to and from the appointment; however, through an exception request an individual's circumstance may be considered through the medical travel exception policy. In these situations, the applicant or advocate must clearly demonstrate the medical travel event has created undue financial hardship or the patient is experiencing extraordinary health needs that require a non-medical escort while admitted as an inpatient.

The medical travel exceptions are assessed at the Department of Health and Social Services, not the medical travel office, making it very important that the application detail and supporting documents are provided to ensure a timely assessment.

Mr. Speaker, medical travel continues to be a key priority for me. The first phase of the medical travel modernization work has focused on enhancing the medical travel process by ensuring the administration of available benefits is done consistently and transparently.

Phase 2 of the medical travel modernization will work to consider the needs for further updates to the policy and will consider options and costs of expanding the escort criteria.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the ongoing medical travel modernization work, I've also directed the NTHSSA public administrator to rapidly advance operational improvements in 2026 that will result in improved experience for NWT residents. We are also working closely with Indigenous Service Canada for NWT residents to review the process for handling medical

travel appeals and exceptions related to non-insured health benefits, with the goal of simplifying the process where possible and supporting more escort decision-making by the medical travel office rather than waiting for the approval from Indigenous Service Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral Questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 1071-20(1): COST OF LIVING

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions will be framed around the theme of cost of living that I brought up in my Member's statement.

Can the Premier clearly outline what new concrete actions this government has taken since assuming office in late 2023 that have resulted in measurable reductions to the cost of living for residents across the NWT, and where can we specifically see that in a transparent form? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member's question. It's a very important question and a very important topic. All of us are dealing with rising prices, whether it's food or rent or power, and this is happening across Canada. The Member asked a very detailed question with specifics in there, so I will take this question on notice and reply to the House with something in writing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 1072-20(1): CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, yesterday a number of MLAs met with the Yukon's child and youth advocate, and I think it was eye-opening for a lot of us, but to see the important good work they do. One of the statistics that was shown to us was that 30 percent of the files dealt with at the Yukon child and youth advocate are from outside of territory. Many of those deal with Indigenous children in the Northwest Territories.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, who is responsible in particular for children in care, which is the majority of the work of these offices, how are we tracking the concerns from parents, from foster families, from biological families, and from children themselves when concerns are brought forward? Can she demonstrate a similar volume of concern so we know that our system is, in fact, being responsive to the concerns of children in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when any family comes into contact or children come into contact with child and family services, the role is between the family -- the family protection worker or the family preservation worker to work with that family to bring forward their concerns. If there's protection issues, then the child protection worker works with the family to ensure that there's a safe place for the child. They'll work within the system, usually working with the families. If there's children that come forward which is, you know, more than likely, if the children are raising concerns, I do know that the social workers do meet individually with the children if they're able to do so. They would document and look towards a plan of care that supports the children and family to stay together. And then the other piece is with foster families. If there is no placement in the family or if there's no support -- immediate support that there could be for the safety of the child, they'll usually look towards family members or other members within the community and then foster families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a good summary of how our system works, how our child and family services system works, but what I am asking about is when people are raising concerns about the well-being of children in the system that aren't in custody or that are in custody, who's looking after the system? So if the very system is the problem, where do Northerners go to get assistance? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the director of child and family services, which is not within the operations -- the director is within the department -- investigates any complaints coming forward, works with the families, works with whomever the complaint is coming forward and investigates that complaint thoroughly and always puts the best interest of the child first and foremost. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, once again, the director is part of the system. There needs to be independent oversight and an independent advocate as well. That's why MLAs have been calling for, to establish a child and youth advocate in the Northwest Territories. Will the Minister establish that? If she does, I can get rid of this motion I am going to give notice to later. But if she just says yes today, then we can all move forward and get a much-needed advocacy and support for children in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am only the Minister of Health and Social Services so if I established it within the housing of health and social services, that would defeat the Member's concern. So this is a conversation, I think, that is beyond my role, I think, so. You know, we've been having these conversations, and the Member is correct that, you know, we've heard from Members in the past government, and I was part of the other side of the House, where these concerns come up. But what we need to do is we need to identify is it the -- you know, where these concerns are coming, what is the actual concern, how is that going to be improved, and so I look forward to working with the Regular Members and my Cabinet colleagues to resolve this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1073-20(1):  
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my Member's statement regarding the state of the Dempster Highway these past couple of months, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure.

I know he's aware, obviously, of these closures. He would get those reports through his department. Can the Minister tell me if he's met with his counterpart in the Yukon and/or whether or not that meeting is scheduled to discuss the ongoing issues with the Dempster Highway. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, yes, I have met with the Minister for Transportation Yukon. We were in contact

over the holidays. In fact, Christmas Day we were in contact over the closures, trying to assist Inuvik with their propane shortage. So we've been in contact numerous times to support the opening and keeping open the Dempster Highway. Unfortunately, climate change has been an issue. We all know that, and it's impacted our side of the highway, the Dempster Highway, and also the Inuvik ITH. So it's no different on the Dempster Highway with all the mountains and everything else, so. Yes, I've been in contact with her, and we continue to work with the Yukon government on maintaining the highway of -- and the open Dempster Highway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that. And, yes, I am aware; I know the Minister was very helpful during the closure crisis we had during the fuel delivery issue we had in Inuvik when the highway was closed. And I understand, yes, climate change is real; it's happening. It's happening on both sides of the border, but our contractors seem to be able to keep it open. I understand there's a little more mountainous areas on the other side. But 18 days is a long time. So does the Minister have any comments, or did he get any comments from his counterpart, the Minister of transportation in the Yukon, as to actually putting more capacity, more resources, to ensure that we don't get a month where there's 18 days or a 20-day period where there's nine days in February where it's closed? Has there been any commitment from the Yukon side? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, just to add to what the Member says, you know, we have a lot of good contractors on both sides of the Yukon and NWT. Our contractors have been working hard to maintain the roads and keep them open. I know Yukon -- our departments have been communicating, and they are doing a bunch of work to the Dempster Highway, and there's plans being developed on exactly what they're going to do. Unfortunately, I don't have details on what their action plans are for maintaining the road during winter events and when there is winter storms or anything like that on the Yukon side. So I will reach out to the Government of Yukon to see if there's an opportunity on how we can work together, and maybe some better communication on helping keep the Dempster Highway open for less impacts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. And I know there's funding to

do some upgrades on that highway, and certainly appreciate that too. In the summer, the Minister mentioned that he will meet again and talk about doing some commitments. Will the Minister include with that -- and I know in speaking with our contractors on the NWT side, they've often went down and said, yeah, we could get that open but yet a couple of days pass before it's actually done. Is there a potential that we could actually provide some of that service to the Government of Yukon?

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those discussions have never happened -- or those discussions haven't happened that I am aware of, and I don't know if that idea has ever been tabled. So it's something we could talk about and look at and maybe work with the Member on what exactly the idea looks like, but definitely, you know, always open for solutions of ways to keep the Dempster Highway open longer. I think it's important to get supplies and services to all the communities in the North, so thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 1074-20(1):  
DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM ACCESS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following up on my statement earlier today, does the department of health -- and these questions are for the health Minister. Does the department of health have a system navigation or cross-departmental service access function which could receive clients with disabilities or their families and help coordinate access to services across programs and departments for them? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no. Persons with disability access supports, like any other Northwest Territories resident, based on what their assessed needs are. So within health, if they have certain needs, then health will look within their system to support those needs. Many GNWT departments provide supports, so this is not just a health services area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 2023 supported living review recommended wraparound case management as a key systemic change needed. Has the department made any progress enacting this recommendation?

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is on the work plan; however, as I said last week, the health care sustainability unit is analyzing and looking at the supportive living program as it is, so we have paused any of this work until we get the outcomes of that because we don't want to be investing into areas where there's a higher need that may come through the analysis through the healthcare system sustainability unit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I consider this health sustainability unit more of a fiscal responsibility exercise. I mean, the department has had a number of years with that review and the recommendations from it. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister consider establishing a systemic support role similar to the integrated service delivery team at EIA for persons with disabilities and supported living clients or working with the Premier to see if such a role could be added to the ISD team that exists? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as per the -- you know, the comments about, yes, this is a -- it's going to analyze -- it's analyzing because of the overspend in the supportive living area. Every year, we're spending, you know, millions and millions of dollars on supportive living, and so when we got this report it's also recommending to spend many, many more millions. So we have processes that we need to go through for that in order to implement all those recommendations; however, we have -- within health, we have child and family services recommendations, we have health care, you know, hospital service recommendations, we have primary care recommendations. So I am trying to balance all of those recommendations as to implementing the highest needs. But at this time, you know, what I can do is I can have a conversation with the Premier and with EIA as to how we could establish or work together better. But not at this time we won't be establishing that within health because it is across the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1075-20(1):  
VETERINARIANS WITHOUT BORDERS

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in his response to my Written Question 22-20(1), the Minister of MACA wrote

that the Dog Act is designed to provide flexibility so communities can address dog control and welfare issues in a manner that reflects their specific needs. This includes the authority for communities to adopt tailored local bylaws.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister elaborate on what resources currently exist or need to be developed so that NWT communities can work collaboratively and share their good work with other communities that have partnered and seen success with Veterinarians Without Borders so they may also update their bylaws to improve animal welfare? 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. Communities across the Northwest Territories use a range of tools to promote animal welfare, including local bylaws, public education, and partnership with external organizations. The GNWT supports community governments by providing them guidance, developing, and updating animal control bylaws, and help strengthen local capacity. While the Government of Northwest Territories does not deliver veterinary services, communities interested in expanding their animal welfare programming can explore partnerships with organizations like Veterinarians Without Borders and their northern animal health initiatives. Some communities are finding success in these programs other than the ones mentioned by the Member, such as Arctic Paws in Inuvik. The GNWT can assist sharing information and highlight success approaches already underway by other communities. This helps ensure that communities interested in updating their bylaws and are enhancing their animal welfare practices have access to examples, resources, and partnerships needed to support informed decision-making at the local level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, and I believe -- and thank you to the Minister for that. I also believe that he's met with representatives from Vets without Borders. And could the Minister explain if any -- he's identified any actions that MACA could take coming out of that contact with that group? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that I have not met with the Veterinarians Without Borders. However, when communities express interest, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is prepared to facilitate any connections. Communities are

also welcome to reach out to the Veterinarians Without Borders directly at any time. 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. My mistake. They're great people to talk to.

Mr. Speaker, I hazard to guess that all bylaw officers in the territory would rather help stray animals than to destroy them. Can the Minister commit to sharing resources to put interest -- and I think he has, but can he commit to pathwaying communities that have changed their bylaws such that communities that want to change their bylaws could then have support to do so with learning from other communities who have? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it goes without saying that any of these bylaw officers would do anything to help these animals in distress, and most community members would. But MACA is prepared to assist by sharing information and connecting interested community governments with organizations such as Vets Without Borders. I will ensure that communities seeking these resources have access to the information and connections they need to explore solutions that best meet the needs for the local circumstances. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1076-20(1):  
CONTRACTED PRIVATE PARAMEDICS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So in follow up to my statement today, I want to ask questions of the Minister of Health and Social Services. And so I understand that currently there's already some use of contracted private paramedics in small community health centres, and the department is looking to expand that or put more of a framework around it but there's clearly sort of a reason in mind or what the purpose would be for this.

So my first question is are paramedics operating in community health centres meant to do simply all the same tasks that community health nurses currently can do, or are they meant to do additional tasks or different things than is currently within the scope of practice of a community health nurse? For example, treating patients outside community health centres in stabilizing or transporting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to be very, very clear so that -- the paramedics that we have used in the health centres are a contract that we are obligated to hold when it's fire season. So we contract paramedics so that way if a community is evacuated, that we send the health -- like, the community health nurse and all of the staff in the community leave the community; however, we need to send in paramedics into that health centre to support the emergency responders working in that community. So what we have done is we've been paying for them, and so over the summer months is also a time when it's challenging to ensure that our community health centres remain open because nurses do work -- do not -- like, we have casual nurses that are coming in and some are on their time off, so the primary objective right now is for them to maintain operations at a minimum, avoiding closures during those months. Paramedics have different scopes than CHNs, and they only work within their scope. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So can the Minister clarify whether paramedics that are operating in community health centres, are they required to be supervised by a health authority employee such as the nurse in charge at all times, or are they permitted to work shifts alone? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Paramedics that are operating in the health centres are overseen at all times and are part of the collaborative team. When they are the only resource in a health centre due to being an emergency service, paramedics will consult with physicians on physician orders, and community health nurses do have the ability to initiate some treatment under the protocols that they have without physician orders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Minister has mentioned in the past in this House that part of the idea of having a paramedic there to help is to be able to take the night shift so a community health nurse can have more rest. So if that was occurring and the paramedic was answering phones at night -- and yet we've just heard they're required to be overseen at all times by the nurse in charge. If a paramedic made a

decision about a patient, say, in the middle of the night that had serious negative consequences for that patient, who would then be responsible; is it the nurse in charge or the paramedic? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the paramedic scope of practice, you know, to be clear, is when those conversations happen, the nurse is within -- is in on the call. The part of it is that once the assessment is done, many of the health centres -- so people who live in small communities and health centres know that if there is a callback that there needs to be an eight-hour rest. And if there's only two other nurses and one nurse is assigned some other duties and the nurse that gets called back, usually what ends up happening is all of the clinics get cancelled for the next day. So what this is, is to enhance the support in the health centre to take the call then to -- you know, because a lot of times when the health centre gets phone calls and things like that, you know, they can refer them to 8-1-1, you know, and they can triage the call, call the nurse down, and be there to start the assessment, which might limit the time that the CHN actually has to be called back. So there's -- and as I am saying, this is something that's not set in stone. As the Member has stated, that there's a position that is in the proposed budget that we did a high-level analysis that we know that the health centre model of care hasn't changed -- my entire career, you know, anybody who's worked in this system has known that we need to make changes, we need to make sure that it's flexible. We know that the CHN model of care is the best model; however, what we want to do is we want to enhance that model. We want to look at investigating how LPNs could fit into that model. How can we fit in paramedics into that model to support those communities and to support those nurses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1077-20(1):  
INTERNAL TRADE BARRIERS

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement, my question today is to the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment on trade barriers.

First, given that the healthcare services face barriers equivalent to a 40 percent tariff, what concrete cost savings can the GNWT or Members of the Northwest Territories expect to realize from eliminating these trade barriers? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister of ITA.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for continuing to keep the conversation around internal trade barriers alive and well in this House. Much appreciated.

So, Mr. Speaker, last year we had really an unprecedented year as far as focus on internal trade barriers across this country. That included health care, of course. And often really what we saw was due to duplication in licensing and regulatory requirements of different supplies. That's where those real cost increases were coming. Last year we ended up with a 30 percent reduction in party-specific exceptions across the country. We signed the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on goods excluding food and also mutual recognition initiatives in sectors like trucking as well. And so all of these play an impact on the cost of goods here in the Northwest Territories. Whether that's through nursing staff and being able to access people from across the country as we sometimes do. Whether that is trucking supplies across the country or even things like first aid kits, if first aid kits have to be different in one jurisdiction to the next. So at this point we're not ready yet as a country to say what the specific dollar figure is at this stage, but this work continues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply. We're really trying to get down to the cost savings to residents and capitalize on this opportunity.

My second question, Mr. Speaker, is what measurable progress and specific outcomes, benefits, can we expect from the committee on internal trades 2025 negotiations as we move into 2026 particularly regarding services liberation? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, my previous response I alluded to some of those. So that was the reduction in the party-specific exceptions, the Canada Mutual Recognition Agreement that was signed across the country on goods. There was also the labour mobility laws that were imposed in other jurisdictions. And that has an impact here in the Northwest Territories because a lot of times we are relying on the capacities of other jurisdictions to do some of our regulating of professions here in the Northwest Territories.

We also saw the successful conclusion of the financial services negotiation under the Canada Free Trade Agreement, Mr. Speaker, and this has an impact of allowing financial institutions

across the country to work more seamlessly across Canada, reducing duplicative regulatory requirements, access to insurance, or increasing and improving access to insurance, as well as financing options for northern businesses, as well as increasing competition, which we know ultimately brings costs down across the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITA. Final supplementary. Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I approach my last question, I want to compliment our Minister on the chairing of this national committee.

What is the GNWT's timeline for implementing the labour mobility action plan's 30-day services standard and which sectors will be prioritized for barrier reduction to maximize economic benefits for the residents and businesses of the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for his kindness.

So, Mr. Speaker, we did have the chair position for 2025. We have happily passed it along to Nunavut for 2026. But we are ensuring that that momentum continues as a national team. We are going to see, as far as the 30-day service standard, work continue on that one here in the Northwest Territories as I alluded to previously as well. We rely on other jurisdictions in order to see some of those realized, but we also do have some regulatory bodies here in the Northwest Territories so we as a government are working closely with them. And that includes processes for -- standardizing processes for applications, including standardized documentation requirement and faster verification tools as well and making sure that we're aligning with the entire country on that through our regulatory bodies.

In addition, our federation of FMM -- first Ministers meeting. Thank you very much, Mr. Premier. We speak a little bit sometimes too much in acronyms, and I -- anyway, so we are still being directed by FMM, first Ministers, as far as maintaining the momentum at that table and ensuring that we're focused on things that do make a difference to Canadians. And with 2026, we're focusing and narrowing in on what services we can provide some consistency and standardization to across the country. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member from the Dehcho.

QUESTION 1078-20(1):  
PEER GROUP PLACEMENT IN SCHOOLS

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ECE.

Given that peer group placement is used only from junior kindergarten to grade 9, what steps is the department taking to ensure that students who are advanced with an education program plan are actually developing the foundational skills they need before entering grade 10 where peer group placement is no longer an option. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Dehcho. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the course of this term and the previous term, this was an issue and a concern that Members have consistently raised, and so I want to thank Members of the 19th and 20th Assembly for continuing to raise this concern.

We've introduced a standardized grade transition process. It's territory-wide so that there is a standard process that's followed with teachers across the territory in how grade transitions occur. And this is critical in ensuring that we're also not only treating those grade transitions the same way but also making sure that we're providing supports in the same way to the students that need them. So that's number one.

Number two is ensuring that the teachers and school-based support team are working with parents.

And then the third one, I would say, is that review on inclusive schooling that we're doing right now because that is ultimately where the rubber hits the road is those supports that our students need in the classroom to ensure that their individualized education plan can be followed. Thank you.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. When students do not meet the most grade-level expectations, a school-based support team must review evidence of learning and identify supports. What additional interventions or instructional strategies is the department putting in place to ensure these supports are delivered consistently across the territory so learning gaps do not follow students from grade to grade and -- yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we have a standard process across the territory so that we can support teachers in this

work as well as supporting students. So step one is that standardized process that I was talking about for teachers. And then step two is adjusting our inclusive schooling directive to really meet students with where they're at right now. We know that that directive is a decade old and our students have changed tremendously in the last decade, including the supports that they need across the Northwest Territories. And making sure that that directive is current and that the supports that go along with it are properly funded is going to be key for ensuring that students have the supports they need in our classrooms. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from the Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The peer group placement process requires families to be informed and involved in decisions about their child's learning needs. How is the department improving communication with parents and guardians to ensure they fully understand the implications of peer group placement and the programming their child will receive in the next grade? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the Member is right. In the previous Assembly, there was a change made in regulation that made it a requirement that parents were involved in this decision-making. And that's a relationship and a conversation that happens right from the child's school to the family. And so it's the teacher and the school-based support team that participate together with the family to ensure that they have all of the decisions and all of the options in front of them as well as the details of the child's individualized education plan so that together those decisions can be made. But it's critically important that families are involved in that decision-making and can continue to support their child at home as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1079-20(1):  
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE  
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I talked about the auditor general's report and audit also talked about the UNDRIP and also the council supposed to work in collaboration with Indigenous governments to create an action plan.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is who in this government is responsible for the failure to implement the UNDRIPA action plan and where is the accountability within this government for missing this obligation and what are the consequences? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a good question, and all of those answers are actually found in the legislation. So the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act was passed at the end of the last government. It may have been our last sitting actually. Because there was a no coming into force clause, the legislation actually came into force immediately, which I believe was last October 6th -- perhaps -- 2023. I am looking at the clerks to see if they're nodding their heads but they are stone-faced so no support there. Which meant the clock started ticking during the election period, really. And so it wasn't until April of the following year that the action plan committee got together, and then I was -- just like everyone else, I was expecting that report two years after the law came into force in last October. I wrote to the action plan committee noting to them that I expected to receive the report as required by the legislation. But as it goes, when you collaborate and, as I've said since day one, it takes longer to do things when you do things together but we have to do things together, and this is an area where we are actually mandated to do this together, and it's a requirement that the Government of the Northwest Territories and Indigenous governments collectively work on this action plan.

The action plan committee let me know that they are still continuing their work; they're not prepared to put something forward. And so that is the way things are going. I am not the boss of the action plan committee. I am not the boss of the Indigenous governments who are on the action plan committee. And so I don't have the ability to compel them to bring it forward.

In the Act, there are no provisions for violations of the Act. There's no fines. There's no imprisonment specified. And so like much of our legislation it's essentially the honour system, and it is Members standing up in the House and bringing this to our attention and holding us accountable is how accountability works. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 19th Assembly, I was part of Bill 85 when we created that document. But,

Mr. Speaker, my question is that a lot of the resources and time went into this -- and energy went into this bill -- my question again is to the Premier what did this government allow the legislated timeline under UNDRIP to pass without tabling the required action plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am required as the Minister under the legislation to table the action plan in the House, and I failed to do that. It's because I didn't have an action plan to table. And so once again the action plan committee is comprised of officials from the Government of the Northwest Territories as well as a number of Indigenous governments. I was not in a position to go to one of their meetings and take the papers off the desk and say this is what you have at this date, this is what I am tabling. And so I am still waiting for the action plan committee to submit an action plan, and once that's done I will happily table it in the House and there will be the public comment period as prescribed by the legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, we are going into our third year of our mandate. My question is to the Premier. How does the Premier intend to honour treaty/Metis rights when his government has failed to honour its own UNDRIP legislation? So what assurances can the Premier do to get this action plan started and done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am a little confused. I think I heard two questions. One was about Metis rights, which is maybe from a different statement; I am not sure. But the other is what we're going to do to get the action plan going. There's an action plan committee. They first met in April of 2024, I believe. They have been working on the action plan for a number of years since then. I have written to them. I said I expect it to be presented by the date as required under the legislation. I was informed they were not in a position to share that. We are continuing to press to have it completed. We're doing our part, and I know the Indigenous governments are doing their part as well. So we look forward to receiving that when we receive it and tabling it in this House sometime later this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1080-20(1):  
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what steps the department is taking to ensure children who enter care are able to remain in their home communities whenever possible? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as per the process for when children, you know, are accessing child and family services, when families come into contact with child and family services, it's when there is either a child protection issue or the family themselves are coming and requesting assistance to support them. When there is a child protection issue, the child protection issue is investigated and the child protection worker -- the child and family services does everything in their power to try to work with the family to provide supports for the child to stay within their family or, you know, to stay within their community if there is supports in the community to support that family or that child. And the next best thing is to -- you know, to remain with an Indigenous family within the community. And then the last would be in the foster family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked for what steps.

Mr. Speaker, what is the department doing to strengthen prevention supports for families so that fewer children need to be removed from their parents in the first place? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within child and family services, there has been a bigger shift in foster care placement. I believe that there is around 1,000 kids that are actually utilizing -- families that are utilizing the service of child and family services; however, I believe there's only 154 at this time that are in placements out of that. Many of them -- 75 percent of them, I believe, are remaining in their home, and those that aren't remaining in their home are with extended family or family -- community members known to the child. So everything that child and family services does is they try to keep the child within the home using family preservation, with connecting them with services. You know, if the family needs to access family treatment, you know, child and family services goes and arranges that for them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, what is the department doing to better support children in care in maintaining their culture, language, and sense of community? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a really important part of the work that the child and family services has shifted to. I think within that area that's the importance of -- the 75 percent of the kids remaining with their family, that is where they're going to get their culture. That's where they remain with their family. The next part is extended family. If it's a child protection issue within their immediate family, it's extended family and they work to support children. And that's why they now have the family volunteer agreements with family members. And this was something that we heard loud and clear, that family members that were able to take care of these kids sometimes didn't have the means of the financial piece to take care of them so there was a shift in that so that, you know, we heard from many grandparents that, you know, took care of their grandchildren but couldn't be a foster family so weren't being financially supported. These things are now happening. And so, as I said before, everything that they try to do is keep the child with the family, with extended family, and within the community, before ever going outside of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1081-20(1):  
SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, continuing on the cost-of-living theme on Northerners, and certainly steps the government could do, my questions are now targeted to the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister familiar with the study and assessment that has been done at the Department of Justice with respect to territorial judges being elevated to the Supreme Court bench which would be a direct cost savings to the territorial taxpayer where the federal government would pick up that cost. In other words, eliminate territorial judges and make them all Supreme Court judges. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I am not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** As I am sure the Minister is aware, Supreme Court judges can hear all matters but territorial judges must stay in their lane, Mr. Speaker. This is an expense saved on the Nunavut taxpayer, which is a direct comparison, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister investigate this potential huge financial savings on the territorial taxpayer? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will take the Member's suggestion away. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** He's quickly becoming my favourite justice Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I recall, just to be clear, the last time this was reviewed or kicked around, it was about a \$5 million savings to the territorial taxpayer. So my question now is would the Minister agree to consider the opportunity to implement this approach if it boils down to administrative process and minor tweaks to territorial legislation to accommodate this necessity, an opportunity to save money on the territorial taxpayer? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, as the Minister, always looking for opportunities to, you know, reduce budget across our department, you know, I think that the Member has brought forward something that I was unfamiliar with, and I am happy to consider his suggestions as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1082-20(1):  
PARAMEDICS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So following up with further questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services and picking up on some of the things I mentioned in my Member's statement. So my first question is do paramedics have adequate training to engage in the common primary care activities that are needed in small community health centres, such as pre- and post-natal care, chronic disease management, or, for example, recognizing when the symptoms in a stable patient might lead soon to a serious decline; do paramedics have the right training to address those things? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, paramedics are pretty great. They are very versatile. They have different levels, and depending on the levels that they have educated and they're certified through their regulatory body in another jurisdiction, they can do many things. However, within the review that has happened and highlighting that paramedics could be implemented, that work is ongoing. And where the Member talks about all of the primary care services, that is the area that, you know, the nurses would be focused on. That is in their scope of practice. So whatever the scope of practice that they are able to do under the training that they have, that is what will be reviewed and analyzed, whether it's a good fit into implementing that type of a service and how well it could fit into the small communities. So that work is ongoing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so the Minister has referred a couple times to the scope of practice of paramedics versus community health nurses; however, my question is, is there any recognized scope of practice for particular levels of paramedics in the NWT given that we don't have a regulatory body and these paramedics may have been trained in any number of different provinces with different scopes of practice? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when hiring certified paramedics into the past work and the ongoing work, we have many, many services that we provide in the Northwest Territories that do not currently have a regulatory body, like respiratory therapists who manage patient airways in the Northwest Territories, lab technologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, imaging techs, x-ray techs. There's many, many -- mental health addiction, like, counsellors. They work within what their jurisdiction of their licensing is, and so within the -- as long as they're in good standing, then, you know, we can -- we write the job description or the -- what is it -- the employer has a scope of practice that they are eligible to work on under their current -- whatever level of certification that they do have through a licensing body in another jurisdiction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So in terms of the need for paramedics, we heard earlier today about some of the successes of the health recruitment unit. Does the Minister believe that the health recruitment efforts will allow us to close the gap in terms of recruitment of community health nurses to be able to fill the current vacancies? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I could only hope that, you know, we'd have tons of nurses that are going to go out that are going to go and take expanded scope and want to work in a health centre and live there. Yes, I wish that would happen; however, you know, I think the change in our workforce is different. We used to be able to even do job shares for 6 and 12 weeks, up to 12-week job shares in some of our communities. And now with the level that the nurses are willing to agree to, it might be 6 weeks, it might be 4 weeks. And so the change in the way that they want to work -- you know, we can continue to recruit, and we -- you know, wherever we can put them into places. There are some that are signing on and are staying. You know, we have local nurses that are going back home, which is really exciting, into small communities. However, we still have a lot of work to do. And we know what we've heard from them is that they need more supports. They need to be able to focus on some of the things to do their expanded scope whereas that's why we're looking at implementing other, like, LPNs into the smaller communities so that they can pick up a lot of the other -- and work at their scope of practice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1083-20(1):  
INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY  
PROGRAM PATHFINDERS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to follow up on my earlier questions. The Minister noted and keeps referring to the health care sustainability unit. Mr. Speaker, we have no way of knowing what recommendations will come from that unit. In the meantime, we have a system coordination issue with our existing services. The ISD team is a good model, and it's an existing model. Can the Premier or health Minister commit to consider whether to support to persons with disabilities could be provided by this unit? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. We need to have a Minister or a Premier; pick one.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was giving them the option of deciding who wanted to -- because it's kind of cross-departmental. I will say the health Minister for now but if the Premier wants to answer, I'd be happy as well. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will step in here, as the integrated service delivery Yellowknife falls under EIA right now. So that program is essentially a pathfinding program where individuals who are in contact with a number of different government departments to receive services, whether it's income support and housing and social services. We have pathfinders there who help these individuals make their way through the system, which is not the ideal end goal that we want. We want a system where we don't need the pathfinders. That being said, that's what we have right now. And through our service integration efforts, we would like to get to a place where we're not going to need the pathfinders where service is integrated and an individual can go get a government service that they need and they don't have to worry about going to ten different offices. But right now, the integrated service delivery team is -- they are -- their workload is full. There's no additional capacity there to take on a very large cohort of individuals. I am not saying the Member's proposal doesn't have merit; I wish that we could do it but at this time we don't have -- we're not resourced to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Minister's comprehensive and thoughtful answer to the question. I don't know how big the ask is. I don't know how many people are out there. I've had a few constituents reach out to me. It seems like the ISD team is a good fit for this. It's -- the service integration is exactly why I am asking for and why I've raised it with ISD. Can the Minister at least have a look into whether this is a possible interim measure while we're figuring out the health care sustainability unit for persons and their families with disabilities? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over my time overseeing the integrated service delivery Yellowknife unit, which was previously integrated case management in Yellowknife, or under the Department of Justice, I've had numerous opportunities to inquire about their ability to take on more and do more, and the answer always comes back the same in that they are fully committed with the work that they have now. That being said, I will go back, and I will have a conversation and see what comes back, but I expect that what I am saying here in

the House of what I've heard in the past will be the same answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate again the response from the Minister. And I am wondering if maybe something like the ISD team could be established in health considering how complex some of the files are that health system clients have. So if the Premier wants to consider a new team or an expansion of the team, it's certainly something I would support. So I would appreciate hearing from the Premier on that as well. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I would recommend that when there are proposals like this, they be brought forward at a point in the planning process that they could then make it into, you know, a future main estimate. So right now, we have the main estimates in front of us, in front of committee, and the money for the budget for next year is in that document, and there is not a line item for what the Member is speaking about. That being said, it's now on the radar and it could be something that is considered going forward but it would be, I am guessing, a significant investment of resources and personnel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1084-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE  
PROGRAM CRITERIA

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was with great delight that Northerners who rely on the Northwest Territories nominee program got the rules finally last week, but there's a new points' criteria that's been attached to the employer-driven stream. Unfortunately, my office asked for more information but were told to look for the articles and documents. People want to see what this is all about. Will the Minister publish very clear guidance about how the points system will work for the NTNP program? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, absolutely, we want people to have access to information along with guidelines that they can access so we can certainly publish some information. And

this information is currently available but, I mean, I am more than happy to -- understand what the Member feels is missing, but it's available on immigratenwt.ca. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The specific -- to answer the Minister's question, the specific criteria on how applications will be -- how the points will work, how they will be weighted. People will need to -- feel that they want to see more things. They understand how the process is, that there's a new step, but they need to understand what points they will get, how that will be evaluated against other applications, the whole kit and caboodle. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, on immigratenwt.ca, there is an employer-driven stream expression of interest points grid that's currently available. This points grid goes through all the different categories, what points are afforded and how. Because the major thing that we heard was an ask from the NWT -- whether it was employers or people participating in the program -- was transparency and fairness. And so we wanted to ensure that we were both publishing the different points that they would be graded against, the grid they would be used, and then within five days of them submitting their application they would get something that would confirm how many points that they were allotted so that they could compare and know exactly where they were at. And we also made the commitment as well of making sure that we were being transparent as a government and letting people know what range different applicants were falling into within the Northwest Territories so we had an idea as an entire territory of who was applying and kind of what -- where they fell within that prioritization grid. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I haven't heard any critiques about it. People just want to know how it works. So will the Minister proactively provide more clear information about this whole new scheme to everyone who is currently engaged in the program or who is interested in being engaged in the program, whether -- well, let's just say it's the employer stream. So employers who use the program, will she direct the department to proactively engage with them and make sure they have everything they need? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly the day that the program was launched and

announced on February 18th, we made sure that all these documents were found on Immigrate NWT so that both people interested in applying, whether it be employers or residents that wanted to partake in the program, could access it. I am certainly keen to hear either from employers, the Member, or residents what they feel is missing because one of the kind of key pillars of the relaunch of this program was transparency so we're wanting to make sure that this information is accessible and it is available on Immigrate NWT.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Clerk.

### Follow-up to Oral Questions

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr Harjot Sidhu):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 7.2(7)(2), I received follow-up information for the following oral questions from the first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly, 928 and 988. These follow-ups will be printed in full in today's Hansard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions. Oral questions. Written questions. Member from Range Lake.

### Written Questions

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 32-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL COSTS, BUDGET PRESSURES, AND TRAVEL VOLUMES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Medical travel continues to place growing financial pressures on the healthcare system. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. The Department of Health and Social Services recently released its report on medical travel services. The report indicates the overall cost of medical travel has continued to increase over the past three years. Can the Minister outline what specific factors are driving the cost increases year after year?
2. Can the Minister provide a general breakdown of the annual medical travel budget into major cost categories such as flights, accommodations, escorts, and administrative processing so the public can understand where the

program is coming under financial strain?

3. Does the department track cases where residents travel for medical purposes without prior approval; and, if so, how many such cases occurred in the last fiscal year?
4. How many medical travel requests, both scheduled and emergency, were submitted in the last fiscal year, and how does that compare to the average volume over the previous five years?
5. Can the Minister provide the number and percentage of medical travel requests denied last fiscal year, along with the top categories of reasons for denial?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Written Questions. Member from Range Lake.

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 33-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL DELAYS AND COORDINATION

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

Improving the overall reliability of the medical travel system requires addressing delays, strengthening coordination, ensuring clear communication standards and reducing avoidable repeat travel. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. Can the Minister provide the average and maximum wait times for medical travel approvals over the past fiscal year, and explain what actions are being taken to reduce delays for patients who need to travel urgently?
2. What specific steps is the department taking to streamline coordination with non-insured health benefits (NIHB), especially for cases waiting on NIHB escort or travel approvals, and how many medical trips were delayed last year due to pending NIHB decisions?
3. What portion of medical travel expenditures in the last fiscal year was driven by avoidable travel, such as repeat trips caused by appointment cancellations, inadequate pre-screening, or delays in diagnostic services, and what measures is the department implementing to reduce preventable travel?

4. Can the Minister outline what service standards, if any, exist for communication with patients regarding itinerary changes, cancellations, or approval updates, and how often were those standards met over the past fiscal year?
5. What proportion of medical travel cases last fiscal year involved repeat travel for the same medical issue due to cancelled appointments, incomplete treatments, or diagnostic follow-ups, and what strategies are being implemented to reduce unnecessary repeat travel?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WRITTEN QUESTION 34-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL ESCORT POLICIES,  
ELIGIBILITY AND APPEALS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a written question with respect to medical travel, escort policies, eligibility, and appeals.

Ensuring fairness and consistency in medical travel requires clear escort policies, accurate eligibility assessment, and a transparent appeal process. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. Can the Minister provide the total cost from last fiscal year related to non-medical escorts?
2. How many cases in the past fiscal year involved patients who met the criteria for a medical escort but did not receive one either due to administrative errors, capacity limitations, or policy interpretations?
3. How many of the medical travel requests that were denied last fiscal year were later overturned through appeals, Members of the Legislative Assembly inquiries, or ministerial interventions?
4. What steps is the department taking to ensure that escort eligibility is identified early, particularly for vulnerable patients to prevent last-minute denials or unnecessary hardship during travel?
5. What quality assurance processes are in place to review cases where medical travel arrangements were

made incorrectly, such as missed bookings, incomplete itineraries, or communication failure, and how many such administrative errors were identified in the past fiscal year?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Written questions. Colleagues, being respectful of the time, we'll take a short break for the translators.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you colleagues. Returns to Written Questions. Replies to the Commissioner's Address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 473-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE  
REPORT 27-20(1): REPORT ON BILL 23: AN  
ACT TO AMEND THE CHILDREN'S LAW  
ACT & BILL 24: AN ACT TO AMEND THE  
FAMILY LAW ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 474-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE  
REPORT 28-20(1): REPORT ON BILL 27: AN  
ACT TO AMEND THE PROTECTION  
AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 475-20(1):  
WASTE REDUCTION AND RECOVERY  
PROGRAM 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 27-20(1), Report on Bill 23: An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act; and, Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Family Law Act; Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 28-20(1), Report on Bill 27: An Act to Amend The Protection Against Family Violence Act; and, Waste Reduction and Recovery Program 2024-2025 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

TABLED DOCUMENT 476-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT  
2025

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Northwest Territories Emergency Management System Annual Report 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Tabling of documents. Mr. Premier.

TABLED DOCUMENT 477-20(1):  
TLEGO'HLI GOT'INE FINAL SELF  
GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 478-20(1):  
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL  
42, TLEGO'HLI GOT'INE FINAL SELF  
GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Plain Language Summary for Bill 42, Tlego'hli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act; and, Statement of Consistency for Bill 42, Tlego'hli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 479-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE  
REPORT 31-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT  
ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2024-2025  
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES OFFICE OF THE OMBUD  
AND THE 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF  
THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER

I wish to table the response to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Committee Report 31-20(21), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Office of the Ombud; and, the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Range Lake.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 67-20(1):  
ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE OF THE  
CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 26th, 2026, I will move the following motion.

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Monfwi, that this Legislative

Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to take immediate steps to establish an independent Office of the Child and Youth Advocate as an Officer of the Legislative Assembly;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories introduce enabling legislation defining the Advocate's mandate, powers, and responsibilities, including but not limited to the authority to investigate complaints, initiate systemic reviews, make recommendations, and report directly to the Legislative Assembly;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories make comprehensive amendments to the Child and Family Services Act to strengthen transparency and accountability and to require cooperation with, and responsiveness to, the oversight exercised by the child and youth advocate in relation to the administration of the Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second Reading of Bills. Mr. Premier.

### Second Reading of Bills

BILL 42:  
TLEGO'HLI GOT'INE FINAL SELF  
GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT ACT,  
CARRIED

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 42, Tlego'hli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act, be read for the second time.

The proposed Tlego'hli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act will approve and give legal effect to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlego'hli Got'ine. The Act is comprised of provisions addressing the approval of, giving effect to, and declaring valid of, the final self-government agreement, including the governance, legal structure, and authority of the Tlego'hli Got'ine government, authorizing the creation of regulations that may be needed to support the agreement; and, ultimately, serves as the legislative mechanism by which the Government of the Northwest Territories fulfills its ratification obligations under the final self-government agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. To the principle of the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 42 has been read for a second time and is referred to the Standing Committee on the Assembly for -- sorry, Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 42 deemed ready for third reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7). Seeing no nays, Bill 42 will be read for the second time and will -- third reading will be on Wednesday, February 24th, 2026.

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

Second Reading of Bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? I will go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, committee wishes to consider Bill 33, Technical Safety Statutes Amendment Act; Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act 2026; and, Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 33, Technical Safety Statute Amendment Act. I will ask the Minister of Infrastructure to introduce the bill.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am here to present Bill 33, Technical Safety Statutes Amendment Act. Bill 33 updates and replaces the current Elevators and Lifts Act with the new framework called the Technical Safety Act, or TSA. The bill will cover elevators and

lifts, boilers, and pressure vessels, electrical systems, and gas safety under one Act. These areas will be phased in through regulations over the next three years to four years. The bill will address the need for common rules across technical safety fields, allowing for future modernization of outdated legislation while strengthening public safety requirements. The bill will combine licensing, permitting, registration, inspection, and appeal systems into one unified framework. This will eliminate gaps and duplications while modernizing and aligning the NWT's electrical mechanical legislation along with other jurisdictions.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment conducted a clause-by-clause review of Bill 33 on February 10th. We heard no concerns with the bill, and I would like to thank the committee for their time in review.

That concludes my opening remarks, and I am prepared to answer any questions that committee may have. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Would the Minister like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Does committee agree? Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witness into the chamber. Thank you. Would the Minister introduce the witnesses.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So to my right, I have got Jacques Roberge, senior legislative advisor. And to my left, Mitchell Roland, director, compliance and licensing.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 33.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 33, Technical Safety Statutes Amendment Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 30, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment for its thorough review.

Mr. Chairman, on February 10th, 2026, the standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Infrastructure and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill. The committee received no submissions on the bill from the public or thereabouts.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I want to thank the committee members for their robust and detailed efforts in reviewing this legislation. And individual Members may have their individual comments at this time but that summarizes committee's perspective. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 33. Any Members? Is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments? Sorry, you're agreeing?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Can we proceed to clause-by-clause review of the bill? Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until consideration of the clause. I will call the clause in the groups of 10.

Please turn to page 1 of the bill. Clauses 1 to 10, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Clause 11 to 20, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Clause 21 to 30, does committee agree? Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 31 to 40, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Clauses 41 to 50, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Clauses 51 to 60, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clauses 61 to 70, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Clause 71 to 80, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clauses 81 to 89, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Bill 33, Technical Safety Statute Amendment Act, does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** To the bill as a whole, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Does the committee agree that Bill 33, Technical Safety Statute Amendment Act is now ready for third reading? Committee?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 33, Technical Safety Statute Amendment Act? Committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Minister -- I am going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Yeah, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think for those that do pay attention to this, they should -- just wanted to provide a quick comment. Although it was -- in my view, it wasn't quite mentioned by the Minister -- it was in some ways, but it's just a molding of multiple Acts, problems together, and it's not a technical change in the context of anything really -- changes in the system. And hence, this is just a bringing it together in a consistent form. So in other words, not -- even though technically Bill 33 is a new law but there's no new law or new grounds being broken, and I think that's probably a narrative that's missing from the conversation we're having here today. So there's no questions but the point is I just want to make sure that the public knows that it's just bringing together two pieces, separate pieces, into one. That's all. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. If there are no further questions, I want to say thank you to the Minister and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

Okay. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026. I will ask the Minister of Justice to introduce the bill.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to be here today to discuss Bill 35, the Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026. The purpose of Bill 35 is to amend various statutes of the

Northwest Territories for which minor changes are proposed or errors or inconsistencies have been identified and to repeal the temporary variation of of statutory time periods, COVID-19 Pandemic Measures Act, which was put in place as a temporary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic and is no longer necessary. Each amendment included in the bill had to meet the following criteria:

- It must not be controversial;
- It must not involve the spending of public funds;
- It must not prejudicially affect rights;
- It must not create a new offence or subject a new class of person to an existing offence.

The Department of Justice routinely brings forward Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Acts which make changes to various statutes that require minor amendments or where errors or inconsistencies have been identified. The department responsible for the statutes for which provisions are included in the bill have reviewed and approved the applicable provisions.

This concludes my opening remarks, and I would be pleased to answer any questions that Members have regarding Bill 35. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the chambers?

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

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

Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, today I have with me Laura Jeffery, legislative counsel, Department of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will now turn to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 35. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you Mr. Chair. My opening comments are short and sweet.

Mr. Chair, Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026, received second

reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 31st, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. The committee completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Minister of Justice on February 16th, 2026.

I thank the committee members for their efforts in reviewing this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 35. Are there any questions? Okay, seeing none, is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments? Committee?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we will defer the bill number and the title until after the consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

Clause 1, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Clause 2, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 3, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 4, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 5, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Please turn to page 2 of the bill. Clause 6, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 7, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 8, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 9, does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 10, does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Clause 11, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Returning to the bill's number and title. Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** To the bill as a whole, does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Does committee agree that Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026, is now ready for third reading? Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026? Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Does the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Yes, please.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Okay, would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have Pamela Strand who's the deputy minister of industry, tourism and investment. And on my right, I have Nina Salvador, who is the director of corporate services and administration for industry, tourism and investment.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will defer to the department summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with corporate management starting on page 232 with information items on page 234. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some very basic questions for the Minister today. In the business plan, it says that the SEED program review and evaluation is due in February 2026. Could the Minister provide an update on when committee will see this work? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there's a slight delay on getting this work back. We had a couple of amendments that we wanted the evaluator to make in terms of essentially the fullness of the review that we wanted. So we've gone back to the reviewer and asked them to make some amendments, and then once we get that back, we'd be happy to share the findings with committee. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister have an estimate of how many weeks or months that might be? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we are looking at

within, like, this -- I would say this spring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Similarly, the Indigenous capacity building program, there is some discussion around outcomes of looking into and evaluating that program. And the business plan says it should be due in March of this year. Can I get an update on that, please, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, that will be available mid-summer. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Okay. Sorry, I am just scribbling this down, Mr. Chair.

In addition to those two pieces, I did note as well that the grants and contribution policy had many mentions throughout the business plan and that things were going to be posted -- the work is going to be posted on ITI's website imminently. Can I have an update on that work too, please, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, that will be done in March. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And some further questions on this, and the Minister has heard me ask them before. Is there any contemplation on how the updated grants and contributions policy in ITI could be shared and applied throughout the GNWT such that other policy shops could learn from it? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, both from a political and operations level, we'll make sure that it is shared. So I will make sure that I share it with my colleagues at the Cabinet table. And in addition to that, the deputy minister will be sharing it with her colleagues as well. Thank you.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any other Members that have questions? Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just wanted to clarify on their -- I think it's in the business plan; I don't have a specific page here but there's a report that's expected soon, final report on the socio-economic agreement program redesign. Can the Minister clarify whether this report is actually complete and if it will be made public and if so, when could it be made public? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, for all the finer details on this one, I'd like to pass to the deputy minister.

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

**MS. PAMELA STRAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, this was -- this SEA program review has happened over the last couple of years and the SEA program is a partnership between HSS, ECE, and ITI. A number of these considerations would require additional resourcing. So those are all pieces that we're considering. And this will be rolled into some of the decision -- that decision-making in the Mineral Resources Act in regards to the SEA program under that umbrella. So we still have a bit of work to do on what actions we will be taking, which ones not. And I think that, yes, it is our intention to make that final report public. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is there an estimated timeline on that? And I assume that as part of making it public the department will also publish its sort of responses to recommendations or the plan about what is going to be done about the program. Is there a timeline for when we might see that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as with much of what we do, we try to be as transparent as

possible. So absolutely there will be a public publication of the report itself, the review itself, as well as a management response. And we want to ensure that at the same time we are aligning the MRA regs and so my understanding is that we're looking at next winter for that, but I would want to confer with the department and come back to the Member with a more definite timeline on that. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I appreciate the Minister getting back to us on that. And further on the theme of socio-economic agreements, in the business plan, on page 16, it lists targets related to the socio-economic agreements around increasing NWT Indigenous and resident procurement and employment stats in the natural resource sector overall. So right now in the business plan, it just lists the figures from 2024 under progress to date, but there's no sense of whether things are getting better, things are getting worse, how the trends have changed over time, and so it's hard to measure progress when your baseline is just, like, the current year or just the last year. Is the intention to update the business plan or -- I mean, we do have many years of data on this. It's not like it's the first year we're collecting data on this. Those socio-economic agreements, for example with the diamond mines, have been there for 10, 20 or more years, and data has been collected over time on those indicators. So is ITI going to update the business plan with targets of how we're going to increase procurement or employment over what time period and then look at that data over that specified time period, or is the goal just to start with right now as the baseline; what's the intention there? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I will start on this one, and then I'd like to see if the deputy minister would like to add. I think what the Member is looking for are the annual socio-economic agreement reports that are produced every year. And so those would show more of that trending information that the Member is looking for. Within the business plans themselves, we have a very small box to be able to put information in, and so a lot more of that more detailed information is found within those annual reports.

One of the pieces in this entire conversation is those socio-economic agreements are certainly not just a government conversation, not just a

resident conversation, not just an industry conversation, but definitely a partnership with all of the partners at the table. And as a government, especially through more on the education, culture and employment side, we make sure that we're working with industry to let them know what programs we have available. When I meet with industry, I am constantly asking, for example, for their workforce forecast so that I can communicate that to our career education advisors and to our career development officers as well to our business development officers to ensure that we are aligned with industry and that we're all basically working in the same direction at the end of the day. But, Mr. Chair, through yourself I'd love to pass to the deputy minister to be able to add more detailed context on that as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MS. PAMELA STRAND:** Yes, thank you. So yes, a bit more on the SEA program, we've learned a lot about the SEA since the diamond mines started and these SEAs are 20 years old, and they're not very consistent between the three of them. Some of them contemplate the different phases of a mine, so construction, operations, closure. Other ones don't. Some have Indigenous targets for employment, others don't. Our hope is that with the Mineral Resources Act, there will be some standardization where we can actually consider what is appropriate for targets to the different mine phases. Because we always know, for example in construction, we'll have a surge, and we can't, you know, bring all that capacity in. So the intention is to learn from that. So what we'll bring into the next generation of mines will be really important from what we learned through the diamond mines. We will publish this year's reports in June about, and that actually sets out targets and how the projects are performing. We do know they exceed in the procurement piece. So we know where the work is needed in that partnership approach is on the employment side. As the Minister said, you know, getting communities ready, knowing what their workforce needs are through the different phases of mining is all part of making that a successful outcome for both of us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand that, and I am aware that the data is listed in reports over the years. My concern was that we haven't put a meaningful goal in our business plan because there's a target

there to increase these things, and then -- but we haven't said, like, starting when. Are we going to increase from now and into the future? Are we going to increase, say, employment stats from five years ago to -- anyway, so in order for us to make a meaningful goal for ourselves, we have to sort of set out in more detail what the goal is. And so I would hope that we can -- I know it's challenging when we don't have complete control over this. We're one partner. But that is part of the overall challenge of these socio-economic agreements, is that it's a number of partners coming together to commit to something that no one is truly accountable for at the end of the day. Everyone is -- commits to it, but then there's no mechanism to enforce it or say whose fault it was or who didn't try hard enough at the end of the day. Everyone can just say well, we tried, and if, you know, we didn't achieve it, we didn't achieve it; it was a partnership. And, anyway, so I would love for us going forward to find ways to hold ourselves more accountable for our part in the bargain and set clear targets and hold ourselves to them as opposed to saying well, we set a target but we had no control and we didn't meet it, and outside our control. So I will leave it there on that one. I do have a couple more questions, and maybe there'll be another chance. But to finish it off here, on page 17 in the business plan, it talks about an action around growing the workforce that says promote and support mentorship and capacity building programs in all non-extractive sectors, and then it lists for each region, I guess, the number of participants. There's no detail provided there.

Can the Minister or staff provide examples or details of what kinds of mentorship and capacity building programs we're talking about here? What do those numbers represent? You know, 42, 85, 29, what is going on there? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, and I will come back to this but I wanted to first speak on what the Member was referencing in regards to clear kind of targets within the diamond mine sector, within the socio-economic agreements. And I agree with the Member, if we want to get somewhere we have to have an idea of where we're trying to get to. So I absolutely agree with the Member, but I think it's also important that we consider the context of what's happening around us and what has changed since the very beginning of the 20th Assembly. The world has definitely changed in the last two years and so we've changed a lot -- or we've seen a lot of change within the diamond industry globally,

and that's having an impact here at home in the Northwest Territories. And so while there are other markers within the business plan that speak to increasing northern employment, increasing education levels of Northerners, increasing the number of businesses we have in the Northwest Territories, we are going to continue to see changes within the diamond sector in the Northwest Territories, and I think it's important that we take the -- when we're making goals, we have to consider what is happening around the world that has an impact on those goals as well. So there are other indicators, though, within the business plans that do speak to us wanting to grow our private industry, grow our private sector, and also grow our education and training levels of Northerners.

The page that the Member is on and the numbers that are being referenced are in regards to the northernmost host training that relates to tourism, and industry, tourism and investment also does mentorship opportunities within the film industry, arts industry, within the agriculture industry through the Territorial Agricultural Association as well. And then there are also lunch and learns that are happening in regional offices as well as part of mentorship and training opportunities outside of Yellowknife and through regional offices. So, for example in the Beaufort Delta, there were 42 participants and the Sahtu had 48, the Dehcho region had 85, the North Slave region had 29, and the South Slave region had 26. And I'd be happy to answer any additional questions that Member has on this as well.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to continue on. Next on my list is the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. According to your business plan here on page 15 -- 14 and 15, you know, the mines are going to be closing. We know that, you know. And then there's three mines that's going to be closing. And I know it's going to have a major impact, especially on my region, because there's a lot of people employed in my -- a lot of people from my region are employed at the mine. So I just wanted to ask the Minister, it says here 100 percent of Diavik mine closure workers that want to stay in the NWT are employed. And on the next one it says NWT workforce is maintained. So I just wanted to ask the Minister, okay, 100 percent of the diamond closure, you know, like, is it all of the NWT, northern NWT workers that we're talking about, or does that number represent the NWT workers or is it the -- does that include the southern workers too as well? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're talking about the NWT resident workers in there. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Now with the mine closure, like I said, my region is going to be impacted more. So now with the mine closure, do we still -- are we still going to employ people from the south knowing that we need -- you know, the family needs to survive or that rely on the mine, are we still going to keep those southern workers? You know, have them working here rather than using 100 percent of northern resident workers? It doesn't say here about the progress. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, this is in regards to the staff of Diavik Diamond Mine that are employed by the mine. And so we've worked closely with Diavik to participate, for example in their career fairs, made sure that through our different available programs within especially ITI and ECE that mine workers are made aware of them and have our support of our staff to apply on them if they want to take advantage of them. Every time I do sit down with all of the diamond mines and speak with them, we talk about the importance of maintaining NWT residents as much as possible, and this is a commitment that they continuously make, is doing their best to maintain their northern workforce. But at the end of the day, I don't have control over who they keep on their mine site and what staff they require at the end of the day. It might be an issue of, for example if they have five heavy equipment operators they're supposed to and have committed to maintaining the NWT-resident heavy equipment operators and letting go of the southern ones, but if some of the workers are of, you know -- I don't know -- whatever position and there's only a southern worker in it and then not a northern one, then they would have to maintain that person in that position for the safe operation of the mine. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. You know, I've heard, and I am sure there must be some other Members too that heard from their constituents saying that, you know, the older workers, they've said it many times that

they train -- they don't mind training their own Indigenous but not others because then they take over the jobs, you know, like, and then our young people lose out. So that's why some of them had an issue with it. So that's why I am asking, like, if it's 100 percent northern residents that were employed. And I know a lot of them had issue with that and I thought I'd just -- I'd mention that in here.

Another one too -- because here you have a number here, northern employment at the three diamond mines was 32.1 in 2024 and at the same time 16 percent was Indigenous worker. So does this 32 percent includes the Indigenous, or is that a number by itself? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the northern employment at the three diamond mines of 32.1 percent, that's NWT residents, and then Indigenous employment of NWT Indigenous persons at the mine was 16 percent.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for that answer. And another one here is that same thing on the same page, northern companies in 2024, you know, was nearly at \$800 million. Northern companies that -- this is regarding their procurement. And procurement with northern Indigenous company was at \$456 million. This is northern Indigenous companies. How big are some of these Indigenous companies? And it would have been nice -- because I know for the impact benefit agreement with the Tlicho, they're -- you know, for the procurement, they're considered first in my region so -- and if they're -- you know, for whatever reason that, okay, due to capacity or whatever it is, but then they can, you know, go with it or not. So it only mentioned Indigenous companies but I just wanted to know about small business, you know, small northern Indigenous business that consists of one or two people. Do we have a number for this as well? You know, I mean, northern Indigenous companies it doesn't say. It just, you know -- it would have been nice if there was a large to small, if it was identified in this business plan. So that way we have an idea of, you know, who and where. And it should have been by region as well too, because I know that every region needs money. Every region needs -- they have families and a lot of them rely on -- if they're an entrepreneur, you know, they need the business. We know that. You know that too, so. I am just asking that if

there's a breakdown or is there any other information about the northern Indigenous companies and northern Indigenous companies as mentioned here for 2024. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't have that level of detail from the diamond mines. But this would be everything, for example, from a one-person business operation to something as big as Tlicho Investment Corporation and beyond, who has hundreds of employees. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** What I meant to say here is that from 2024 to date, I would like to get that information but, you know, if you can provide us with that information, that would be good so that we can share with our members.

Yeah, I know increased NWT Indigenous and NWT resident employment at the natural resource sector, is that only related to the diamond mine at this time, or is there any other exploration? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is other exploration happening in the territory. There's other drill projects happening in the territory, other advanced projects happening in the NWT as well, but the only mines who report to us for these types of statistics at this point, because they have their IBAs, are the diamond mines.

And as far as the Member's first question, in regards to providing information on procurement, I'd be happy to provide the Member with the information that we do receive from the diamond mines and definitely happy to share that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will go back to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. I think we're out of time. But, yes, that's it for now.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I want to ask some business planning questions

that aren't 100 percent clear exactly where they land in the budget. So the first one I wanted to ask -- or first series, I guess -- are just the risks and mitigations activities page.

Over the last two business planning cycles, ITI has noted that no changes were required to its risk profile or mitigations. Maybe I am misunderstanding what that page is for. But does ITI have internal triggers or external indicators that they use to decide when a risk or mitigation must be updated? Are those triggers documented and time bound? It just seems -- yeah, I will just leave that as my first question.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, for this one here, I would like to be able to pass to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**MS. PAMELA STRAND:** Yes, so the risk matrix for ITI is all very low -- low risk. You know, there's pieces in there, for example royalties, which we know were very low but we can't really mitigate that. Another risk area would be what we've already been addressing with parks and evacuations. And so, yes, this is just done through regular business and we haven't had to make any changes, but we do keep an eye on the risk matrix on an annual basis. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. I mean, I guess this is where we get into the difficult area of, you know, is ITI the department that's responsible for the economy or not. I recognize that we want to have a cross-departmental, government-wide approach to these economic risks that we're facing but, I mean, it's just strange to me that, like, ITI -- I mean, I will just get right to the nose of it. I mean, what evidence did ITI review in 2024-2026 to conclude that existing risk and mitigations remain fit for service -- fit for purpose, sorry, despite significant shifts in the NWT economy and operating context, for example the shifts that we've been seeing in the diamond industry, which forms the backbone of our economy. That seems to me like a massive economic risk. So that's not considered a risk that we would need to mitigate with our department that is responsible for economic development and diversification? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would say that's not a new risk for the NWT at all. It's definitely a risk that this government and this territory has been addressing since -- you can go back and find documents from 2003 that say, hey, our entire GDP is now coming from pretty much diamond mines, and we need to plan for the next piece so we don't end up in a constant boom and bust cycle, which is what we went from gold. We had a massive bust, and then we went to diamonds, and we have still not diversified our GDP. So this is absolutely a risk that continues within the Northwest Territories, but our controls do lie within how we ensure that we are supporting industry, supporting diversification of our GDP, how we, you know, are doing things like reviewing our royalties, how we collect royalties, how we are reviewing our Mineral Resources Act. And so that is all information that is captured within the business plan already.

And to the Member's question about, you know, is ITI responsible for economy, I would say that this Cabinet has invested a tremendous amount in our economy but that our investments have found their way into places like health care investment and housing investment. And I know the Member and I have had conversations to quite a large extent about how we capture that as a government, and that is something that I'd still like to pursue because saying that, you know, our economy is isolated to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is absolutely not true, nor should it be, and making sure that we have a diversified GDP means that we have to look at this from an all-of-NWT perspective and therefore an all-of-government perspective. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I think, yeah, I mean, if I could communicate back what I am feeling when I review our business plan and particularly ITI's consideration of risk, I mean, I think that risks to the NWT economy have increased significantly in the past few years, or at least become more acute, and some significant changes occurred that were unexpected. I agree with the Minister's point that, you know, we knew that the diamond mine closures were coming. I've made lots of statements about that, and I think lots of Members have noted it. However, there have been some changes to diamond markets over the past few years that have significantly accelerated the problem. And so I think when I look to risk mitigation, particularly with the

Department of ITI, I think that that acceleration is something that should be acknowledged, and I think people in the NWT would take probably a fair bit of comfort knowing that the government is pulling out all the stops, is recognizing the increased risk that changes in the diamond market have created for our economy and are looking to this department, and the GNWT as a whole, to respond to those risks and challenges.

So it's just a piece of feedback in terms of seeing that in the business plan, and that piece missing there feels to me like an oversight. I know that the -- I mean, I do want to pause here and just note that the general public probably doesn't read the business plans generally. I certainly didn't when I was a member of the public. But I want to be clear that what goes into the business plans and what comes out of the business plans does matter to the public. And so, yeah, I guess I am just making a point here, but I am curious to hear the Minister's feedback on that. Thanks.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I definitely appreciate the Member's point. All that to say that while that page specifically has not been used to capture the extent of risks as far as economy is concerned, I am happy to take away the Member's feedback and to kind of have a conversation around the department about -- or sorry, have a conversation with the department around how we're interpreting what needs to land on that page. So I can definitely take that away and revisit as well kind of how other departments are using it to make sure that there is alignment between each of them and bring that back. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And just to kind of close out my comments on the risk that don't relate to economic development and diversification, which I will ask in a later page, I would just note that I think taking a risk-based approach to our economic planning and response may be a change that we could look into. I think, you know, as risk increases or as the greatest risk that we're facing, I just think it would be helpful to look at it in that sense and think about mitigations that we could be putting in place and think about changes that could be -- because it's very easy to get locked into, we've got these programs, these are what we're delivering, yeah, the economy is facing some major challenges, but we're working our way at it. I think it's helpful to revisit things that we're

doing, to consider whether we're doing enough or whether we're doing the right things, and so thinking of it in the sense of risk mitigation may be helpful. Just putting a plug in for that.

The next one I wanted to get to in this section just -- because it's not very clear to me in the department summaries where this actually lands, is the work that's being done to grow and enhance the northern workforce, the various skill development and employment transition efforts that are going on. Maybe the Minister, first could, just clarify where that takes place because it's not clear that it's in ECDEV and diversification or where it lands. Thanks.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is because a lot of that work happens over in ECE. So same Minister, different hat. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I only ask because there's a number of targets in the business plan -- under ITI's business plan that I wanted to ask about. So maybe I will just start asking, and maybe this is the right section.

So I noticed that a number of the measures and targets that we have are related to northern employment, percentage of northern employment. I will just pick one project. The Giant project is below the target that the department has set. I am just wondering what is being done, generally, to increase northern employment percentages in the existing projects that we have like Giant considering the significant workforce changes that may be coming with the result of early diamond mine closures. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, very happy to chat about these type of metrics which definitely expand over both departments.

So within the Giant Mine remediation project, I want to first acknowledge what the Member is talking about here which is that the employment numbers are lower than expected but the procurement numbers are looking good. So what we are seeing is that a lot of our northern employers are having to source additional staff and additional resources from outside of the NWT. This is something that I've had the opportunity to have conversations with different employers from Giant Mine about, and one of

the things they have assured me is that last year's numbers will look better than the previous years, and those just still need to be reported on. Many of those employers have, they themselves, taken on different on-the-job training programs and have also made sure that they're essentially working hard to get those numbers up.

One of the things that is going to, good or bad, work in a little bit of our favour is being able to repurpose some of the staffing from the diamond mines. But one of the things that really does impact this is a lot of the work that happens out at Giant Mine is seasonal, and seasonal is very hard for people to make do with in the North and so it means that it either doesn't work for everybody, because they've got full-time employment, or you're having to kind of stack different jobs and positions. And so one of the things there is how can we support employers to bring together some of those different opportunities and knowing what those opportunities are. So, for example, within there, making sure that we are, again, working with different proponents of different projects that are happening in the territory, making sure that they are connected in with different companies that are doing some of this work, but then also making sure that we are working, for example, with the federal government that is doing some of this procurement and explaining to them that northern businesses need longer lead time to make sure that they are ready and that they are properly resourced in order to take on some of these opportunities. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** No, Mr. Chair, I don't have anything further at this moment.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any questions from Members? I will go back to the Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will try to be brief. I just want to kind of finish up the conversation that I was having with the Minister here. And can the Minister just -- considering that the growing and enhancing the northern workforce by investing in skill development, that there's a number of pages in the business plan -- in ITI's business plan that speak to this, recognizing that skill development and workforce tends to be an ECE thing.

Can the Minister just help us better understand what the Department of ITI is responsible for regarding all these metrics and measures that they have in the business plan related to workforce growth and transition? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, certainly workforce development and training doesn't happen in a vacuum and a lot of the training opportunities that we see in the Northwest Territories really do rely on partnerships with industry in order to do them. We're seeing a lot of, you know, need for trades. That requires a partnership with an employer. We're seeing a lot of need for on-the-job opportunities where people can still put food on the table, make a living, not have to leave an employer they may have been with for a long period of time and still be able to fill a new role and evolve with their business. And this is incredibly relevant when we're talking about evolutions of businesses that have traditionally served diamond mines.

We work quite closely with education, culture and employment, with health and social services, and with industry as well. And a lot of what we're seeing for asks, especially in regional centres, is for mentorships and for relationships with somebody who has established and kind of gone through the hours and the labour of love to figure out what works and what doesn't work for them or what works in a region, and being able to pair up with somebody who wants to start afresh. So there's definitely a synergy there between departments but ITI definitely has to be at the table given the relationship with the workforce and also making sure that ITI and ECE and Prosper NWT are working together to also understand what industry is saying they need. So it's important that that training also doesn't happen in a vacuum.

And through yourself, Mr. Chair, I'd like to see if the deputy minister has anything that she would like to add.

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

**MS. PAMELA STRAND:** So I think -- thank you, Mr. Chair -- where ITI plays a role is really specifically targeted in the diversified sectors, so our tourism mentorship program. SEED is available for any businesses or residents to come -- or sorry, businesses to come and access funding that they can use for whatever mentorship programs that they think would best suit their business. Also in our northern food program. So we try and ensure that those mentorship programs are well known. And introducing youth to programs as well, such as in tourism week or agriculture week. We also have the arts to market program where artists get to go and learn the business of doing arts by being mentored through a process to

become self-sufficient. So those are direct programs that ITI administers, and I can say that a lot of the numbers on those are making good progress. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And the Minister in response on Giant, you know, I don't want to just focus on that project but, I mean, it's a project that is going to be ongoing for a while. There's also talk of airport development and military investment. What I am wondering is what is the department actually doing to ensure -- to address the issues with these new kinds of development that are going to be -- that are where our employment numbers aren't being met and yet we have the risk that we're facing of losing employment through the diamond mines, what is the department doing to try and mitigate that risk and work with projects like Giant, work with DND, whoever is building projects in the NWT, to try and structure the contracts in ways, structure the work in ways that respond to people's needs for employment so that we are not as reliant on southern employment to get these projects done? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we all have things that keep us up at night, and this is one of mine.

Mr. Chair, we are at an exciting crossroads as far as the Northwest Territories is concerned. We are definitely at a -- as the Member reflected on earlier, a different -- seeing diamond mines close at a different pace than what we had anticipated. We are also acknowledging that we need to maintain that workforce of northern workers in order to be able to capture the opportunity that we see coming toward us. And so that is making sure that people have employment to go straight into so that we don't lose anybody but also at the same time making sure that we are doing the training and workforce development that we need at the same time.

To the Member's question of what am I doing, I am constantly talking to industry about what their needs are and constantly -- because part of this is not just, you know, the DND opportunities the Member is talking about or the infrastructure development, but there's also still major advancements in critical mineral mines that are happening in this territory, and we still want to see the fruition of those opportunities come to the North and come to Northerners and so still working hard alongside those

proponents. And so I am constantly asking them for their workforce development plans and timelines because I want to be able to provide that to regional high schools, career education advisors, and to the career development officers and the business development officers that are in those regions so that they can speak to people very specifically about what opportunities are coming and when. So if we know, for example, that we're going to need five electricians, who wants to be an electrician? If we know, for example, that we need environmental technicians, who wants to do these roles? Because when I talk to kids these days, they want to have meaningful employment but might not necessarily know exactly what they want to do. They might know they want to be involved in an arts. They might know they want to run their own business. They might know they want to work at the mines. But they want to know what those opportunities look like, and this is how we tell them that.

The other side of this, Mr. Chair, is having conversations with the federal government around the procurement needs of this territory.

So the federal government put out a web page advising people to kind of get their criminal record checks done or their security clearances done in anticipation for some of this work. And just an example of that, of something that I've communicated to some of our federal partners, is that we need to ensure that all Northerners have space for employment in these opportunities. Some Northerners are ready and some Northerners are, you know, ready but need training opportunities that are very specific to certain roles. And some Northerners have training, but might also be carrying with them, you know, a minor infraction from 30 years ago that landed them a criminal record and that might mean that, for example, they won't get a security clearance to clear brush on a site that is being prepared for a DND project. And we need to make sure that there are tiered levels of security that make these projects accessible to all Northerners because we want to make sure that from one NWT border to the other that if somebody wants access to an opportunity, we're working together to create it for them. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No. The Minister shared a lot of information there. I think the -- I think I guess if I could just get some comments in on this, what I would say is that I recognize that the problems we're trying to solve here are complex, and it's not easy to just answer on the fly and on the floor, and I don't expect necessarily answers on the fly and on

the floor to these kinds of questions. But my point is that I want the department -- because I can't see where else this could land. It could be ECE. It could be ITI. But we need to be thinking about how to deal with this workforce transition that I think is about to hit us like a wave, and I want to be really clear about that on the floor and be eyes wide open about it. I keep using that phrase, but it was a good one. And I can't think about who would be the coordinating force here if not the GNWT. No single employer is going to step up and be able to do this. So I think we need to be thinking it through. I support the department in resourcing and making changes as needed to do it. But I think we've got to come up with solid plans and changes to how we're doing things to improve these employment numbers considering what we're facing. Leave my comments at that, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just to reassure the Member and all Members in this House that we have not stopped talking about this at all over at the Cabinet table and with departments. We are very much having the same conversations and working through the same motions that the Member speaks of and that it is not just ITI; it is absolutely every single department. If you are all of a sudden having to stand up significant projects in this territory, that has an impact on housing. It has an impact on health care. It has an impact on our roads to be able to bring material up to the territory. And so this is certainly an all-of-government approach and is not something ITI is doing on their own but ITI certainly has a significant role to play, as does ECE. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The last topic I just wanted to address, in the business plan on page 21, it identifies work specifically around the Mackenzie Valley operational dialogue. And I know that a lot of people have put a lot of work into this, stakeholders from lots of different organizations, different levels of government, industry, and I think there's also been a lot of disappointment as to the concrete or tangible outcomes or results that have come out of all these meetings and all this effort, and it's not really clear from the business plan either what concrete has come out of it. You know, we're measuring number of meetings or number of initiatives, but what does that mean at the end of the day to people what improvements are being made, because we've heard over and over again that people feel that

the regulatory processes could be made more efficient, that could make more sense, it could, you know, be made more effective. And so a lot of resources and people's time and energy has been put into, you know, this dialogue and it's really unclear after a number of years what's come out of it.

So can the Minister explain what tangible results this dialogue has produced to date in a way that would sort of make sense or make a difference to people on the ground, whether you're sort of working in the industry or, yeah, involved in the regulatory processes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So some examples of some tangible results have been things like the regulatory streamlining partnership between the feds and the GNWT that's currently underway, the exploration data bundle that we just released at Roundup, boards working to build online tool pathways to make it easier for regulatory -- or sorry, for proponents to pursue their land use water licensing permits, and another example of that would be the targeted amendments that are currently being made to the Waters Act. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. I mean, a number of things that were listed there. I mean, there's a few things that have been completed but there's a number of things that refer to processes, things that are still, you know, a work in progress. Is there -- has there been any, like, analysis within the dialogue itself or discussion as to, hey, is there something we can do to improve our own process to, you know, achieve things more quickly or, you know, communicate better what difference this is all making. Has there been anything identified by the dialogue itself in terms of improving its own process, or is the impression of the Minister that anyone who's working within the dialogue is sort of a-okay with the processes in place? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think everything we do in the world has room for improvement and that we always need to be asking ourselves how we can do and work better together. And so one example of a change that has occurred was the group felt that working on everything as

a conglomerate was too much and, you know, how do you kind of make, as the Member referred to, timely change or timely decision-making. And so one of the things that happened was smaller carve-off groups with more focused mandates. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the GNWT produce any reports identifying, like, what commitments the GNWT is making as part of this dialogue? I know, again, this is a partnership where you can't control what all the partners do and you can't control the -- all of the outcomes of the work, but you can identify what you as one partner can do and hold yourself accountable to that. So is there any records or reports of what the GNWT itself has committed to do in these dialogue meetings and then sort of tracking of whether we've done it or not, how long did it take us to do it? Is that available publicly somewhere? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member is right to allude to the fact that the federal government is ultimately responsible for the reporting on that tracking and that that is currently behind. This is one of the items that would be captured under our MOU with the federal government because we -- I absolutely agree with the Member that we need to make sure that we're seeing traction at these tables and that that traction is publicly reported. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. And so can we assume, then, from that answer that currently there is not public reporting as to the outcomes of those meetings and initiatives, or is there public reports available somewhere online? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So there is publicly available reports that are available online but the reporting is currently behind. So the reports that are currently online are dated. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. Yeah, I did notice that there didn't seem to be anything from 2025. So does the Minister know when that reporting will catch up? And, secondly, can there be any commitment that the GNWT's role or actions can be kind of extracted so that we can look at those separately and then keep track of whether the GNWT is fulfilling its own commitments as part of this partnership? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I can commit to following up with our federal partners on this and making sure that we're updating the online library. I am apprehensive to kind of carve off a GNWT piece and potentially run into a scenario where we're duplicating work because as the Member for Frame Lake alluded to, we have a lot of work ahead of us so I want to make sure that we're not being redundant. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Well, it's, again, another ongoing conversation that we'll continue to try to push for more results, but I will leave it there for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. We went through one round. Second round, I am going to continue on now. Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** In your business plan, tourism operator licenses, you know, now that with the mine closure, there's going to be a lot of people that's going to be looking for jobs or to start their own business. So 90 percent of tourism operators license maintained. That's what -- you know, the target. And it's maintained, so -- and then here you identify progress to date. You know, there's 159 approved, 8 pending. Can you give me an update or a report or something that shows how many of this are in Tlicho region? I mean, Tlicho region, not North Slave region, because at this time, the way that it looks, we're part of North Slave and in North Slave region, there's a lot of development, not in Tlicho region. So I just wanted to ask the Minister on that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd be more than happy to provide information to the Member on total tourism operator licenses and the breakdown of Tlicho operators as well. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. According to her knowledge, is there any license issued to Tlicho? I don't think there's any, but I am just asking. I just wanted to know if there she -- if there is, if they issue any license -- tourism license to Tlicho. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the answer is yes, Tlicho do have tourism licenses. A big example of that is Tlicho Adventures and Tlicho Investment Corporation has a number as well. I just don't have the overall number at my fingertips right now. But there are definitely examples.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. The Tlicho Adventure, I don't know who they are. But then are there Tlicho citizens living in the Tlicho region? Because I am more interested in the Tlicho region. I don't see any tourism happening even in Tlicho constructions or, you know, Tlicho Investment Corporation. Is there an agreement in place, or how do they keep track of the tourism operators? Like, I don't know how the policy works but if it's not being used by a certain amount of time, then do they automatically cancel or is it just something that's -- or it's renewed every year yearly? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, tourism operator licenses do renew their licenses every year, and we have a number of staff that support people who are interested in opening tourism businesses and we also have funding mechanisms as well. And then we are also in the process of resetting our tourism strategy which will come with additional supports for interested tourism operators in the North as well.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for the information. I live in Tlicho region. I haven't heard of any tourism happening in the region. Maybe the fishing lodge. But, anyways, I want to go on to the next item.

For future explorations, you know, there's an increase of NWT Indigenous, NWT residents employment in the natural resource sector. We know that, okay, the diamond mines are closing. We have no control over that because it's our market -- you know, it's a market that we have no control over. But we know that there's the -- the gold price is up. So I just wanted to ask the Minister -- because I do worry just the same as her, as anybody else, because we have -- like, Tlicho region is going to be -- really be impacted by the -- by the closure of the mine and people have to live, provide for their families, and some have -- like, they've been working there since the day that mine opened. So a lot of them rely on that job, and that's the only job that -- you know, that they've been working at because some of them are doing it because they love it, you know, they want to be there and they put in a lot of -- you know, they worked there for many years, two weeks in/two weeks out, and they make a living from there and we -- so with that in mind, I just wanted to ask the Minister if -- if there -- because I haven't heard from the government if they are doing any -- or they're working with other mining or other industries regarding future explorations for gold mine and maybe other minerals within -- in the Northwest Territories. Because after the diamond mine close and after the oil and gas sector, you know, close, or, you know, slow down, we have nothing in the Northwest Territories. So I just want to know if there's any other new development that the government is working on that we are not aware of because -- yeah, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will start and then I'd like to turn over to the deputy minister as well. So in short, the answer is yes, there's more drilling happening in the Northwest Territories right now than there has been in the last 10 years. So right now, there are -- and multiple projects are in Tlicho region as well, and this is in addition to the work that Tlicho government is doing with Fortescue.

So right now, there are multiple gold projects that have drills turning in and around the Slave Geological Province area and including in Tlicho area. So in Tlicho area, there's, for example, Stellar and NICO. And then there's also significant dollars coming into the territory to projects as well, and they're very busy forming partnerships with interested investors. So we have the opportunity when we go down to Roundup to sit both with these proponents and their investors. And the other thing that we're currently doing is making sure that we are supporting the critical mineral infrastructure

fund applications, if they are critical mineral mines versus gold mines, and those are applications that go to the federal government. And we're hoping to hear sooner than later on the success of these projects so that we can share that information with Members as well. With that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the deputy minister.

**MS. PAMELA STRAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So yes, further to the Minister and the Member's comments, the price of gold is extremely high, and it is driving money into the market and to NWT projects. We haven't seen this much gold activity happening for a very long time, so multiple drills on several projects. Courageous Lake, which is the 15th largest unmined gold deposit in Canada, which sits north of the diamond mines, is being spun out to a new company that will dedicate its efforts just on that. But we're also seeing commodity booms in zinc which we haven't seen for a very long time; in tungsten, which is the Mactung project; in cobalt. So, unfortunately, the opposite is true where the diamond prices have gone down, and so it is -- it's rejuvenating all those projects with an even more urgency to be able to hit the commodity upswing, and it has made major financing. Some of them up to \$50 million are coming into the companies exploring in the NWT. And so I will say that all projects, like under Arcan, our MOU for example, we will meet with all of those projects to ensure that we identify any barriers that we can help to remove with our federal partners that sit in their way, regulatory or other. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you for the information. Thank you for sharing with us. Because I just wanted to ask -- you mentioned NICO. Does the Minister have an idea of why or -- why NICO is not progressing forward? NICO is -- it's also a mine that, you know, could happen tomorrow. But I just wanted to know why, if the Minister has -- why this is not moving forward. And it would be nice if we can have an update, a report on all the drilling, the mining exploration that's happening in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the Member is right, would love to see NICO move forward and progress. They are a fully permitted mine that has gold, cobalt, and bismuth, and they just

recently purchased a refinery in Alberta and so they're in the process of also making sure that they're putting their downstream pieces together at the same time. They also still do need an access road as well into the mine, and that's one of the pieces that they are currently trying to pull funding together for in addition to their full feasibility. And we can certainly provide a list as well of the active exploration projects that are happening in the Northwest Territories to committee. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I am going to stop there. I am going to move on. I am going to move on to page 233.

Industry, tourism and investment, corporate management, \$10,471,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to economic diversification and business support, beginning on page 235 with the information items on page 237. Are there any questions?

Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, also in the business plan I noted that there's mention of -- and I will read it so you don't have to reference the page number -- improving accessibility of NWT arts program streams, and the business plan noted that the measure was for fewer points of entry within the GNWT. Happily, yes, we've moved everything over from ECE into ITI and now one department rules them all.

So I am curious about the ways that arts overlap with the other functions of the department, as the Minister knows. So I guess my first question would be are there ways that the Minister can identify that connects funding of the arts with tourism? Are there ways that we can encourage local artists to work with local tour operators, for example? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so our economic diversification and business support branch of ITI, it works very closely together and are always looking for ways to kind of cross-pollinate. We see this even with both kind of the mineral side and the art side. And so, for example, when we travel to our mining shows, we're constantly making sure that we are also including our artists in those opportunities as well. We also have a new tiered funding model

that enables more data-driven decision-making through a centralized intake within ITI, and there are performance measures that are included in that. We also have maintained, for example, the arts operating funding as well within the organization so that we're making sure that we're kind of evolving the sector while still holding on to the parts of the program that were evolved under ECE because they had just worked very closely with artists and with the sector. And maybe I will stop there and see what other questions the Member has. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to the Minister for that. I guess I will be a little more explicit. I know that there's a new tourism strategy coming, and I am curious if the cross-pollination -- I think was the words used -- between arts and tourism is being considered as maybe part of that forward-looking piece. Obviously, not getting into detail, but just in terms of a wider breadth of those, the Venn diagram of arts and tourism. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, those are two things that go hand-in-hand very closely together. Right across Canada, we're seeing a huge increase in cultural tourism, which also relates in that Venn diagram that the Member was referring to. And so, you know, whether it's through NWT Tourism, through the Territorial Agricultural Association, through, you know, film and arts, they all work hand-in-hand and all complement one another. In addition to that, Mr. Chair, you know, we've got programming that really can be applied right across funding mechanisms, for example SEED, so that people aren't pigeonholing themselves into one area. They're really just having to develop an idea but that idea doesn't have to just stick to one part of the Venn diagram. So certainly, the more creativity, the better. And we're certainly happy to work with residents, whether that's through our business development officers or regional offices as well. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And changing topics slightly, still in the economic portion. I know that in the business plan it's previously stated that there is preliminary work on the economic vision to 2035. Has that work been continued, put forward as something that the

department wants to press forward on, or if there's any additional information around the economic vision that the Minister could share at this point? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, our economic vision at this point is in draft form. We are currently putting dedicated resources to helping us finalize this work in short order. And the draft that we do have is an overarching GNWT 50-year vision. It aligns with our governance vision of the NWT -- or the GNWT, which also aligns with our 20th Legislative Assembly mandate, so making sure at the end of the day that we're tying all these pieces together. And from there, we really need to make sure that -- you know, to the previous conversation I was having with the Member from Frame Lake, we need to make sure that this work can be grounded in immediate action to capture the current opportunity that sits in front of Northerners. So there's some other pieces that need to be put together, given where we are and given the transition that we're in in the territory right now, certainly different than what we expected when we sat down and created a mandate together two years ago. But, you know, we're Northerners, we adapt, and we capture the opportunity that we have. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I can appreciate that that's in draft, and the Minister and her department want to get it right. What is the timeline associated with the vision? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recognizing that we're certainly in a shifting geopolitical world that's really -- you know, it's reshaping everything from our diamond mines to our critical mineral opportunities and also the opportunities with Arctic security and sovereignty investments that sit in front of us, we need to make sure that we're working with the federal government in this as well. And so when the Member asks for, you know, specifics on timing, I want to ensure that, first and foremost, we're putting together something that is a quality document rather than working towards a specific timeline but recognizing that we're -- the clock is ticking because these opportunities are sitting in front of us. So I would

say very soon, Mr. Speaker, but I don't want to put an exact month on it because I, you know, would like to over -- under promise and over deliver. I almost got that wrong but that's not where we're going with this. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Sorry, I am also at the loopy hour of the day, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

I am just noticing here as I look through the grants, contributions, and transfers under economic diversification and business support that, really, you know, year over year there is not a significant amount of growth. And so could the Minister speak broadly to some of the grants and contributions and whether any of them are wildly oversubscribed? And I guess that's subjective but she can make an assessment, I suppose. I am just wondering if these monies are staying static year over year, if that means that they are successful, if they are -- if there's more money needed, if they're not meeting these targets year over year. I am just curious if the Minister can speak to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, absolutely our program funding is fairly consistent year over year, and for the most part all of our programs are oversubscribed which means that we've got evaluation committees that have tough decisions to make. But whether it is tourism programming, SEED funding, community transfer initiatives, and film funding, there's a lot of competition for programs in the territory. We have seen an increase in, for example, film funding because we recognize the multipliers that exist within that industry so really trying to see a growth in that sector given the significant returns we're seeing throughout the North. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Yeah, same problem. We always have too many good things going on, not enough money for it. More of a comment than a question, Mr. Chair. I think I am done for now.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions to Members on this section?

Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I first wanted to -- I think it's part of this section. I always get confused. The -- okay.

The film commission, my understanding is that we're establishing a new film officer position. I can't actually see where it's reflected here. But can the Minister confirm whether we are intending to add a new film officer position under the NWT Film Commission? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the answer is yes, we have increased the funding through our film program substantially, and so we require an additional staff member in order to process those applications and ensure that we are making solid investments with public dollars. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to confirm, the role of that new position is mainly to process, like, funding applications, or can the Minister clarify what is the primary role of that new officer position. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So certainly there's the increased demand on the funding mechanism but these positions do a lot more. They are managing multiple programs, including the producer incentive program, the film rebate program. There's also the SEED for film sector funding schedule. Currently, there is very minimal staff that work within this. But they're also supporting the film producers themselves. People often call to the territory and are looking for, okay, we want an old bridge, where is there an old bridge in the Northwest Territories? Or, hey, we want to film another season of *Alive* in the Northwest Territories, what do we have to go through in order to do that, or who should we call on in the community for this. And so these roles are providing pretty extensive customer service and making sure that when people choose to build a film in the Northwest Territories that they are able to essentially hire as much local as absolutely possible and that those connections are made. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that seems positive.

I also wanted to ask, in terms of film, the producer's incentive program, my impression was that last year -- or maybe it was started a couple years ago, but that it was considered a pilot and that it was being paused to be able to evaluate the success of the pilot. However, I do see that we have \$200,000 in this main estimates. Does this mean that a decision has been made to go forward with the program not as a pilot but as an ongoing program, or -- and is that evaluation complete yet? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the Member is absolutely right. Through conversations with film producers in the territory, I believe one of those conversations even was -- I was -- both the Member and I were present at, was just about the success of the program and how it really helped transition projects from an idea and from an idea potentially on paper to an idea that was all of a sudden on a screen in front of all of us. And so it was -- the picture was painted by multiple producers in the territory and people within the film industry, what kind of significant role that this funding played. And so we have brought it back and made it a permanent hold within the film funding. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. That is great news from the Minister.

I wanted to ask about a federal grant. It's related to the arts. It's -- I mean, it's located on page 229. So there's been an MOU between the Canada Council for the Arts and the GNWT around capacity building and sector development in the arts, and that is supposed to sunset or end this coming March. Can the Minister explain what was accomplished over that three-year pilot project to strengthen the arts sector? Like, what tangible do we have to show for it now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, this funding also came with a staff member, first of all, so that staff member was able to support the sector and drive a lot of the review that happened within the arts programming. And the funding also pays for a lot of the funding that is

flowing through to artists in the territory. So we're in the process of renegotiating this funding right now with the federal government as well -- with the Canada Council for the Arts, sorry.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, so that is good to know that there's an intention to try to continue that.

And I finally just wanted to ask about the Hay River fish plant operations. I certainly believe that we have so much potential in our fisheries, especially our Great Slave Lake fishery; however, this seems to have been a long prolonged process around trying to establish the fish plant and decide what to do with it.

Can the Minister first just clarify what funding for fish plant operations is being requested in this main and how much of an increase that is over previous years of operations funding? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the ask for funding for the Hay River fish plant operations is \$2.9 million in this budget. So it is for the FFMC contract that we have. And so we work with FFMC to manage the plant for us. We are currently in the process of, one, making sure that the plant has all of its required certifications, and we can do the exporting that we have been long working toward. So we have an RFP out to work on a plan to divest the plant as well. And part of that work that needs to be done is also showing the success of the plant, so making sure that we are working to build a successful business case because, ultimately, we want to show that not only is the plant cost neutral but it makes money at the end of the day. And I am happy that the Member reflected on the great potential that exists within the NWT's fisheries sector, and I think that there is a lot of opportunity in front of us to be able to market our good quality fish globally. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so I also note that, you know, we've seen in some of the graphs and statistics from finance around our economic outlook that we do see positive signs that the number of commercial fishers has rebounded significantly, that we now have more than 70. I am not actually sure if that's for the

territory as a whole or for the Great Slave Lake fishery. But, anyway, up from about 30 commercial fishers from 2012.

So I am wondering if the success and profitability of the Hay River fish plant, does it depend largely on the number of fishers, like the volume of fish that you can get in, or have the barriers been other kinds of challenges? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, traditionally we've had to ship all of our fish to Winnipeg through our agreement with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act. By being able to have our own CFIA-approved fish plant, it means that we can do our exports on our own globally and that we're not locked into the FFMC fish prices by having to ship through their plant. So with these certifications, it means that literally the world opens up to the Hay River fish plant and the fishers that fish there. There are 93 commercial fishing licenses, I believe, and that's for the entire NWT. And as far as what the barriers are is a lot of the export contracts that you sign onto you have to be able to commit to a certain poundage of fish and a certain type of fish in order to secure your contracts. And so certainly making sure that we have a solid number of fishers and who are fishing consistently throughout the year is going to be key to us landing and maintaining those contracts. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is how many -- oh, that was the second question. How many businesses have started up in the Dehcho in the last two years; can the Minister tell me that? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in the interest of time I'd be happy to provide that to the Member in writing. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** I was going to ask about what are some barriers to business startup in Dehcho. That was the second question. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, our information has both the Dehcho and the Nahendeh included, and so in order to break out just the Member's communities I would need to follow up in writing, but would be happy to do so. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from the Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that one is, like, for either Nahendeh and Dehcho, what is a barrier? The information will be good for both -- well, I guess for everybody. So what is some barriers that prevent people from starting up businesses? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the cost of doing business in the Northwest Territories certainly can be quite high, depending on what business somebody is starting up or opening. The cost of securing goods, we, you know, certainly are working on certain projects. For example, the Mackenzie Valley Highway in the Northwest Territories, acknowledging that air travel or traveling, you know, down through BC, up through the Yukon and up the Dempster to get back into the Northwest Territories, it certainly adds to the cost of doing business and the cost of living in the Northwest Territories. We certainly make sure that we are providing access to different funding programs that help kind of mitigate some of that startup of business shock in the territory, whether that's through our tourism operator funding that people can use for some infrastructure or whether that's SEED funding for example, that people can use for business plans to make sure that they're also charging rates that really allow them to stay in business and make sure that it respects their cash flow needs as well.

And then we also have Prosper NWT, and I know there have been multiple businesses over in the Dehcho that have worked with Prosper NWT to secure loans for increased business opportunities and to great success. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from the Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. I would think one of the barriers would be -- it could be housing. Housing could be one of the barriers, lack of knowledge of starting a business. So given those, what are some supports that are

available to business starter-uppers? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair. So in regards to housing and the challenges we see across the territory, this government is investing more in housing infrastructure than any government before it with \$150 million and still working to make sure that we're supporting increased investments in housing from other third parties into the territory.

In addition to that, Mr. Chair, there's also mentorship opportunities that I alluded to earlier with other Members. So making sure that we are creating opportunities for somebody who wants to start a business to work with somebody who successfully has done just that.

And in addition, we have our business development officers, our career transfer initiatives as well, which fund economic development officers in regions and in communities so that different funding opportunities are accessible, where people can sit down with somebody, understand what programs are out there for the idea that they have, and really working with not just economic development officers, but also staff -- any staff member, really, from a regional office, whether it's ITI or ECE, should be able to kind of cross-link somebody to different funding programs that are available to them.

And then Prosper NWT also has not just funding programs but they also have grants -- or sorry, not just loans, but they also have grants. So they have grants that can help people set up different websites, especially people who want to kind of transition into e-commerce and so able to expand their reach beyond just their community to different potential buyers and potential customers for their business. And then in addition to that, there's a new grant through Prosper NWT that links businesses with different artificial intelligence opportunities as well. And those are both grants. And then Prosper NWT also works very hard to provide different kind of business advice type solutions for people. So, you know, if the Member knows of somebody that's looking to set up a business and looking for supports, please don't be shy to either reach out through the MLA to myself, or I would be more than happy to provide contacts for ITI, ECE, or Prosper, depending on what the person is looking for. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from the Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. I guess I think about just, you know, when you're in small communities, it's a lot harder especially if you're living isolated. I can't imagine if that, you know, they have business development officers come to the community. Do they do that once a month? Once every -- twice a month? I am not sure how that works. But that's why, I guess, I talked about it before. I'd like to have a business development officer in my community so people can feel like they're supported right there rather than having to drive to Hay River. And, yeah, so just having that support readily available in communities. And I understand people can phone, they can email, but it seems like it's better to talk one-on-one with somebody in person rather than on the phone. Because you have to -- I guess it's all about building relationships, right?

So the other question I had was on the fishers. It's funny how they call them that, fishers now, commercial fishermen. What supports do they get by becoming fishers? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, we certainly provide supports through the purchase of supporting the purchase of equipment, through training for people who are interested in becoming involved in commercial fishing. In the past, we've also done support for wages as well. And then we have our commercial fish program and also the northern food program that people can access for different buckets of funding depending on what type of infrastructure, whether that's hard infrastructure or soft infrastructure that they're looking to fill. And so the budget for that is roughly, I believe, about half a million dollars. And then in addition to that, there's also the SEED program that people can apply through. So we -- acknowledging that there's a lot of demand on different funding programs, we try to make sure that we're working directly with the person who's interested in accessing these funding programs and suggesting different avenues and different ways that they can apply so that we're trying to really expand that opportunity as much as possible.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from the Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have anything further. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to take a 30-minute break, and then we'll come back. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, I am going to continue on with the questions where we left off on page 237 to 239. Are there any questions from the Member from Frame Lake?

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first question, how is ITI measuring whether its business programs are actually diversifying the economy rather than reinforcing the existing composition of it?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, that is part of the program redesign work that we are doing right now. So, we started today with the Member from Great Slave asking about the SEED review, and so we are doing this work through existing reviews that are ongoing right now.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you. I appreciate the Minister being brief most of the time, but in this case if she could elaborate a bit on what the review is looking to achieve and change, that would be great.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. To the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I just promised my colleagues I would be far more brief.

Mr. Chair, we are doing reviews. These are the hard questions we ultimately need to ask. You know, there's a lot of people across the territory who apply on these programs more than once. Sometimes it reflects kind of the economic landscape and goals of the territory. Sometimes it doesn't. And so, essentially, where we're at right now is at a point where we have to ask ourselves the hard questions of, are these programs designed to ensure that everybody gets a small piece of the pie, or do we want programs that ultimately act as game changers and accelerators of businesses within the Northwest Territories. And this is part of that work that's currently underway. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I think I will just say I appreciate that they're doing this work, and I think this kind of measurement is needed. We've talked a lot about the need for economic planning and connecting it better with our economic analysis. So I am not going to belabour those points here,

but just to say that while the department is doing this work, I'd appreciate it if they look into that. And the comments that have been made about the economic and fiscal outlook and how we can plan our economic planning around that using the fiscal outlook to inform our actions in the sense of if we have workforce shortages, if that's a risk or if that's a problem that we have to address, then that's certainly something that should be part of our economic planning on the other end of it, which is what can we do about that problem. So I won't belabour that point too much here aside from to say that I'd like to see us including that in the review of the business programs as well.

But speaking to the workforce shortage issue and the statement I made on Friday about the importance of the polytechnic transition but not just that, but generally workforce development and education in the territory and how that can be transformative of the economy.

I know that the department was doing some knowledge economy development work in the recent past, and I've noticed that it has worked its way out of the planning when it comes to economic diversification and business support. At least in the sense that we have a film industry, we have film industry programming, we have art sector supports. I don't see anything in here related to knowledge economy development, and I do see it as an underdeveloped sector that has the opportunity of, through further development, helping to diversify the economy. So I am wondering if the Minister could comment on that, why that is lacking in the business planning and work of the department on economic diversification. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, that was funding that we had received, and that funding has since sunset. So it's current, like, that line item is currently not funded and we were seeking funding with CanNor to work with Wilfred Laurier on being able to extend that so currently that is not funded. But what we are working toward as commitments made through the business plan that are connected to the economic vision are the innovation action plan. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you. And we talked a fair bit about workforce on the previous pages and in the business plan with relation to boosting northern employment numbers. But,

yeah, I am wondering about knowledge economy development from a couple of different perspectives. One is the risk identified in our economic and fiscal outlook that we have workforce availability issues, and we have issues with the level of education and preparedness in our workforce. And so that's a risk and a gap that I think we should be trying to close in terms of economic planning.

The point that I wanted to highlight from that statement on Friday the most is just the idea that creating an environment of ongoing improvement and learning and skill development in the territory is known to be transformative in terms of creating a skilled workforce that can attract investment here. And so people will be more inclined to invest in this territory if certain skills exist, and that growth of the knowledge economy can be a real driver. And I would just note that in terms of looking at this as a risk factor, the other two northern jurisdictions are well ahead of us now, and they're attracting quite a bit of investment. The Yukon, I would say, is at the point of being developed, and Nunavut is moving very quickly to become developed, and the NWT has fallen behind along the way. And so why I am raising it here is because that is a challenge and an opportunity that we're missing out on, I see as. Us missing out on it because we're not focusing on it as not just a social development thing, as not just an Aurora College thing, but as a general economic development, as part of a fulsome strategy for economic development. So that's why I am highlighting it here and why I think we need to pay more attention to it.

The other point I would make is that development of that knowledge economy, it's very, very similar to the justifications used by the department for their investments in film, is that every dollar that you put in brings in research dollars, it brings in private investment, and it can grow something that wasn't there before. So I think that we need to be pulling out all the stops in the territory. We certainly don't want to be leaving opportunities on the table, particularly one as big as this one that we see the other two territories having so much success developing and us falling quite a bit behind. So I am concerned about it. I want to note that I think we need to put more thought into it than just worrying about whether CanNor can give us some money. I think we need to be thinking about what we're doing. So a bit of a speech there, but I would appreciate the Minister's thoughts.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, a couple of

things, and I will try to be brief. The first piece being that this falls also within the mandate of Aurora College, so an expectation that they're doing some of this work, that they're looking to stack funding, that they're also looking to bring in research dollars and have been noted in, I believe, was within the top 15 of research institutions across Canada for multiple years now. And that is work that we can continue to expect them to continue and to grow on and stack.

This also has to do with partnerships with industry. I was here first thing this morning before the rest of our meetings got started today because I was meeting with an industry leader who is looking at securing investment and stacking that investment on some different research opportunities that extend across other departments. And I've had the opportunity to speak with the other Minister about this and how we can work collectively together. So it's not just about the GNWT. There has to be industry partners in this as well if we're going to be successful. And so making sure that we are securing multiple avenues of investment, that we are supporting further research and some of the work that Cabinet has done, as well as meeting with ambassadors and consul generals from other countries, because there's an incredible amount of interest in the Northwest Territories from other countries around the circumpolar north who want to be able to do this work together. So we're looking at these opportunities and it's worth noting as well that the investment that has gone to Nunavut does also have a part to play in the NWT. I understand from conversations with the IRC that the intention is for there to be also satellite facilities associated with that funding in the Northwest Territories in ISR territory as well. So we will continue to make sure that we're working with all education partners and supporting the growth of these sectors. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And with my last few seconds, I will just ask, how is the department identifying new opportunities for the NWT, new opportunities for bringing investment into the NWT? We are not seeing new sectors, growth, just generally diversification. Because that's kind of coming back to the beginning of my first question which was not only what are we measuring but what are we doing to actually increase diversity in the economy as opposed to just supporting existing activities? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the NWT has a diverse economy. We don't have a diverse GDP. So we have businesses that are involved in arts. We have businesses that are involved in tourism, construction, retail, too much public administration if I may say so. But we certainly are doing a lot of things to do with making sure that we're working to diversify our GDP, which is where I think the difference really needs to be noted there. So, you know, making sure that we're building on our strengths, that we are noting where we're seeing major multiplier impacts in the territory. So, for example, within our mining sector, continuing to invest in that and invest in multiple metals and minerals across the board, making sure that we're speaking with investors from other countries and interested investors, making sure that we're doing support applications for organizations that need them to be able to attract that investment to the territory.

In addition to that, we are, for the example of film, making sure that we are creating robust investment that, at the end of the day, multiplies the public dollars and sees a tremendous amount more investment in the Northwest Territories. And this has an impact not just on film, for example, but also on tourism. They kind of feed into one another. That leads us into our tourism strategy or 2030 tourism strategy, which will be released this spring in which we will have offered a briefing to committee on, but making sure that we are listening to these sectors that already do exist and listening to what they need in order to see acceleration within their own sectors.

In addition to those pieces, we are also making sure that we're telling the story of the Northwest Territories. So that includes making sure that we're traveling with Indigenous governments to different conference opportunities, whether it's within the Northwest Territories nationally or internationally, because we know that the world is small and the world is very connected. And a lot of people are looking to the Arctic right now, particularly the Canadian Arctic, and we want to make sure that we're telling our own story ourselves. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. On this section, are there any further questions? Okay, seeing none, please turn to page 236.

Industry, tourism and investment, economic diversification and business support, \$23,111,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to minerals and petroleum resources, beginning on page 240, with information items on 242 to 243. Are there any questions?

I am going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. I wanted to ask first about, so the money allocated for Mineral Resources Act implementation, there's an increase there of \$300,000 -- no, \$400,000 -- math is hard -- Since last year's main estimates although the revised estimates -- the numbers are going up and down a little bit, and my understanding is that we had some sort of money that is sunsetting for implementation of the Mineral Resources Act but then there's also a new chunk of money coming in. Can the Minister clarify, did we get federal funding before for this, or was it like a GNWT allocated amount that has sunsetted, and what sort of new funding package do we see coming online there for these 2026-2027 Main Estimates? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, we previously had federal funding for community engagement position roles, so supporting with helping communities do engagement across the territory. And in addition to that, the funding that you see in this year's budget, and we're trying to make sure that we are only requesting funding that is needed for the implementation of the MRAR, as well as getting all of that done. And that is a key focus of the department in the life of this Assembly, and so what this also includes is a director position that will be required. It is the director of mineral and energy regulation, and that will be a new position that will be required as per the new org chart of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to make sure that we're accommodating what's required from the implementation of this legislation. And in addition to that, as a communications officer, because there will be a tremendous amount of communication required to people who are currently lease and claims holders in the territory and need to understand how the Mineral Resources Act regulation will impact their operations, so making sure that we are being proactive in those conversations. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, first question around that. So, I assume that the new director position is going to be indeterminate. The new communications position, is that a term position or indeterminate? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The communications position is a two-year term position. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And with the director position, what justifies the need for a new director? I mean, that's a significant and indefinite investment. ITI is a relatively small department. Can you comment on, say, the number of directors that ITI already has compared to other departments given the size of ITI, like the total staff numbers? And, like, what's the rationale for needing a new director position? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, ITI went through a very extensive review of their entire org chart and rewrote, actually, 83 job descriptions as part of this work to make sure that people's roles would be shifting, that we were trying to work within the staff means that we had within the department. And the need for an added director is because there is a requirement to ensure that we are separating the regulatory versus the mineral promotion roles within the department, because the roles have changed and the expectation on the department has changed as per the co-drafted Mineral Resources Act legislation. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And so the federal money that is sunsetting for Mineral Resources Act implementation, obviously we haven't seen implementation yet. It seems to have dragged out for a number of years. But what was actually accomplished with that federal funding that's sunsetting given that we haven't yet seen the MRI come into force with regulations? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the engagements that still have to happen around the territory still exist. It really enabled participation and meaningful participation from Indigenous governments, which is key to projects in the territory, as well as the fact that we co-draft our legislation and our regulations in the Northwest Territories. So a tremendous amount of work has been done. It certainly is taking time. But this is a leading piece of legislation in Canada, not just the Northwest Territories. We are co-drafting how we are going to develop land in the territory from a mineral resources perspective. And we're doing that hand-in-hand with a shared plan with Indigenous governments. And this is something that other jurisdictions have actually looked to the NWT, placed phone calls, wanted to know how we're working together, how we're doing it, and how it's going. So there are a lot of eyes on the territory right now as this work unfolds. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also wanted to ask about the new \$150,000 being allocated under the line item Indigenous capacity building. Can you explain what are the expected outcomes or targets from that new -- I don't know if it's a new category of thing or that new activity? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in the Indigenous capacity building program is the program, the funding program that ITI uses to help Indigenous governments participate at different conferences, shows, and through different events that are happening where you find a lot of conversation around projects that are unfolding in the territory or want to unfold in the territory. And so it enables and empowers Indigenous governments to participate and be at the table where they ultimately need to be at the table to make sure that they're working on, you know, what their expectations are, how they want to be engaged within their communities, how they want to participate in these projects. And so it is absolutely imperative that Indigenous governments are empowered to participate and be at the table. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I would never dispute that, absolutely,

Indigenous governments need to be at the table and negotiating on their own behalf. I guess I would love to see if someone could do some analysis at some point as to whether our level of attendance at conferences and conventions and things and, you know, ITI staff in particular, I think, tend to -- and the Minister, I know, spends a lot of time traveling to various places going to these conventions and conferences. But whether our level of attendance, if we ramped it up by 200 percent, would we then, you know, get 200 percent more investment or more companies interested in investing in the territory? Like, what is the sort of value for money in attending those conferences? And if we had more people attending, do we get more value or, you know, what is an efficient level of sort of resource allocation and how many people and who actually needs to be at these kinds of conferences? Because it seems like a potential sort of money sink that lots of people want to go to lots of conferences but how do we measure what we actually get out of it.

I will just turn to -- okay, so the projection of revenues, and so this is back a little bit in the revenue summary, but revenues from minerals, oil, and gas royalties. Last year's actual revenues was, looks like around \$65,000, and we're projecting for these main estimates \$196,000 in revenue. I mean, I know it's still peanuts compared to years past, but what gives us confidence that we can go up from last year's actual revenues or royalties amounts to \$196,000; what gives us confidence in this new revenue forecast? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, these numbers are put together in the fall and, as we know, life continues to change, so it can be very difficult right now to predict where diamond markets are going to go. Likely, it will most likely be lower. And also included in that is Norman Wells for Imperial Oil. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Next on my list I've got is the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleague before me. I got an answer on one of my questions already, so okay.

Just for clarity's sake, and because it is noted in the business plan and just to have this in the conversation this evening, can the Minister speak to, I think in the business plan it flags that the MRA regs are expected to be in force in fiscal year 2027-2028. Can she clarify if this means it will be happening before the end of

this Assembly or the beginning of the 21st? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, it will be this Assembly, and we are working very hard to make sure that we are mitigating all of the risks to that. So, for example, one that was brought to my attention was the amount of time it takes to translate and as for official languages, we need to make sure that we have time built in to translate all of the regulations as well. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** I feel like that might have been me in past Committee of the Whole but thank you to the Minister for that.

On a completely different note, Mr. Chair, the NWT geological survey is under this activity, and the staff, and perhaps this is not the same as NTGS, or is it? It is. Okay, thank you. Sometimes the acronym soup gets lost on me too.

So SCEDE had the pleasure of attending the NTGS not too long ago and meeting with staff and getting to understand some of their projects. And one of those projects that was explained to MLAs by staff was the carbon capture study and how that works, as best they could, to a layperson. So, thank you again to staff for that. That study, according to the business plan, is anticipated to be complete by the end of the fiscal year. Can the Minister provide an update on that work and how this work will align and assist petroleum and LNG development in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

So, Mr. Chair, this work is still ongoing. There's another year left where results need to be brought in from this study that is being done and is being co-funded. For the Member's second question as to what this means for LNG and the territory, and so essentially carbon sequestration means that as you're extracting the LNG from the ground, you can take the carbon capture and essentially feed it into some of the rocks in the territory. So the work being done is to determine how much and how effective it is, and so what it could ultimately do is potentially lower the greenhouse gases for

Mackenzie Delta LNG or even potentially the M18 well up in the Beaufort Delta. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Very exciting work that they're doing there indeed on that front. And so I am curious if the Minister knows at this particular time -- obviously she's just noted that it will be another year or so before final report, study report will be available. But at this time does she see any dovetailing applications with industry that are currently interested in the results of this study? What is the sort of -- what is the sort of anticipation, I guess, building, if any, with industry and/or regulatory partners? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. To the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would say more so that people are kind of waiting on the edge of their seats for is what the federal government plans to do with the offshore moratorium. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** No, fair enough. And I am sure my colleague down the way has questions about that. So I will cede my time. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as I've brought up in this House many, many times, I do think that the next economic engine that could fuel this territory is liquefied natural gas, or LNG. Obviously, I've said many times we have a significant amount of that in the Beaufort Delta, both onshore and offshore. I've also talked about in 2021 when I know the department did a pre-feasibility study that stated exactly that, that it was technically feasible and -- technically feasible and financially feasible to look at doing this. And I know I've brought it up in the House but I just want to reaffirm with the Minister that they are, indeed, reaching out to the Inuvialuit who are doing their own LNG project there right now to ensure that we take the next step to move forward to fund a feasibility study, an actual feasibility study now, to move that forward with the department and looking at how we can -- obviously with industry as well, how we can look at developing that LNG. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, absolutely have a meeting set up with the chair of the IRC and this is definitely, I can assure the Member, on our agenda for conversations. And then in addition to that, Mr. Chair, at the end of March, we also have the Arctic Energy Resource Symposium that we participate in as well, and at that meeting we are also meeting with interested people who want to talk about our energy opportunities in the Northwest Territories.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you. And yes, that's good to hear and, I mean, I trust that as we move forward talks on getting a feasibility study completed that we're certainly letting the industry know that that is the plan, so they are aware, and obviously they will be involved with some of the information, but that they're aware early on that this is the intent of our government to do that, and I trust that the Minister will be engaging with that and that we do have the proper capacity set up staffing wise to have dedicated staff members to do that. And I am looking at the staffing. I note that there's, you know, right now -- and I get this is minerals and petroleum resources. But we know right now what's happening with the mines in the region, in the territory, unfortunately. We have 53 staff at headquarters up from 51 last year. We have 7 staff members in the Beaufort Delta down from 8 last year. And, Mr. Chair, last time I checked, there wasn't a lot of oil and gas exploration going on in the Great Slave Lake unless there's some secret fracking going on that I don't know about, so I am wondering if the Minister will look at -- well, first of all, why did we decrease the staff in Inuvik by one? And if there's any contemplation moving forward about actually staffing up in the Beaufort Delta, given that, you know, there's some significant action happening there and looking at either staffing up through new positions, new senior positions, to -- you know, to engage with Indigenous governments, to engage with industry, you know, in the region where the action is happening, so to speak, and as well why we -- I don't know whether or not you could do that through transferring positions from the -- you know, from headquarters into the region or whether or not we look at expanding the staffing up there to make sure we have the capacity to do this, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So it was an admin position that was a duplicative position that was reduced. And in regards to the staffing up, certainly we would want to do so based on need. And so I really hope that together with the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake we get to that need. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah and, you know, and I know the Minister is aware and I am happy to work with the Minister and the department on that. You know, some of the folks that we've had presented to us and the folks that work both at headquarters in the region are keen. And I am not saying we don't -- I am not certainly not disparaging the folks we have in place doing the work because I know they're very knowledgeable, and I've had some very good conversations with them. I just want to make sure we have the capacity. Maybe the dream would be a regional envoy for energy policy in Inuvik, Mr. Chair, would be an ideal situation. But yeah, more of a comment than anything, that I think it's going to be, you know, even more important as we move forward and hopefully as we look at developing that natural resource up there to provide some much needed revenue to our territory, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to add to some of the discussions from the Member from Frame Lake and Boot Lake here also on these different programs of assistance that is within this activity and the previous. And I like the Minister saying they're looking at marketing and discussions with energy opportunities, and certainly this activity is one of the supports to achieve and continued dialogue and marketing what you have and serving the interest of potential investors. So summarizing all that, I am kind of hoping that there would be additional capital added throughout the year.

If you look at the compensation and benefits line item at \$10 million and the delivery of staff costs on the balance of what's left over, so if you take \$17 million and add it on to the additional -- the next page on 242, of 1.9 and your staff costs is around and about 50 percent of what you're going to be delivering, so we seem to be spending a lot more on staff to deliver these different types of programs, which are all ideal, but when you look at the demand

for energy opportunities, maybe that could be tweaked and expanded on.

If you take an example to that and say okay, Indigenous capacity building is there to support and offset transportation costs for staff from the Indigenous governments to go and publish their position to different conferences, could that capacity building maybe expand on to, say, secondments, for example? So, really, what I am trying to say is how can we broaden this activity and previous activities that recognize the potential.

When I travel back to my dying community, and the Norman Wells Esso is very similar to what we're seeing here in the capital because of the decline in the diamond fields. And just to measure the downside to that, the resupply of the diamond customers in peak years was 9,000 truckloads, and I -- I do believe it's down to, like, 3,000 truckloads now. So that just gives you a real indicator on the decline. However, that shouldn't stop there. You should recognize what you have in terms of assets and growth and wealth and potential, and capitalize on that. When I say we have huge amounts of reserves in gas and coal, believe me, it is true. It is into the billions of cubic feet of gas. And adding on to that inventory, you've got critical minerals. And adding on to that, you've got a huge play referred to as the Canol shale play. Now, if we really want to look at readiness and diversification of the existing inventory we have, we should expand on the resources needed to market that. And I look forward to working with the Minister on readiness, and I really think we need a readiness on the assessment of our current situation in the Sahtu.

And just expanding on the negativity of our economy in that particular region, not only the decline by the ESSO closure, you can look at the losses of the children or the students that are going to be withdrawn from the school. Then on top of that you add on negative more losses because of the Jordan's Principle losses. I am told this region is going to see in the neighbourhood of 35 staff members. Now, what are they all going to do? And you can add on to that and say okay, it's not 35; it's more over 40 considering the closure of the community learning centres. So it just keeps building and building but yet I know I am not discouraged by the negative losses. I want to promote what we have. And what we do have is truly recognized by the assets that we have in that region. We've got incoming players such as Rio Tinto's staking claims there so let's seriously look at that. So I just want to know the continued support from the Minister in resilient approach to build on the existing economic development regional strategy we have, in particular updating that to the decline that we've

seen over the last several months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Member for his comments and questions in there, and the Member is always a huge proponent for economic development across the territory and also for the strategic infrastructure.

Mr. Chair, when we are talking to industry and their desire to really invest and to build capital for the projects that they're working to develop in the territory, they talk a lot about, you know, the need for energy and the need for roads. And I know that the Member is a huge supporter of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and it's projects like that that are really going to make further investments in these projects possible for companies. We can't expect industry to come out and build a major highway that extends from one end of this territory to the other but industry is prepared to build spur roads and to build the pieces that are needed. And that's where ITI comes in as the regulator and the pathfinder of being able to support projects that are in these regions and working closely with strategic infrastructure that's working very diligently on these road builds and these energy solutions in the territory. So I thank the Member for his comments and, certainly, we will continue to work together because there's so much opportunity in this region. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I've got to compliment the Minister on her energy towards the critical mineral infrastructure fund. Together we supported a client, and at the end of the day the client was lucky in accessing federal capital. Okay, recognizing this crumbling economy here, I am not going to crumble with it, but I really want to look forward to working with the Minister in analyzing these programs and services and how can we utilize this to share and boost our economy, in particular now that we've got some federal money for the one client there for their approval on the critical mineral infrastructure fund. In my recent discussions here over the last six months with the divestment of Cenovus's assets midway between Tulita and Norman Wells, they got a huge play there, and they literally want to give it away to eliminate it from their books. So there's an opportunity there. There's an agreement there between the oil company and the Tulita District Land

Corporation. So maybe with different programs we can help the Indigenous potential recognize that opportunity. And maybe they need help in the engineering of that potential. I can only imagine the tie in from one side of the river to the other side of the river tying into the Enbridge Line 21. That technology was proven for 2.5 kilometers upstream from Fort Simpson back in 2018. The technology that's seen two rigs drilling towards each other, and they were offset by one centimetre. And I am quite certain that technology could access the resources on the west side of the Mackenzie on the Cenovus play to Line 21. So these are types of discussions I think we should have, and if we had that readiness assessment discussion in the community, I think we -- it'll be shocking, Mr. Chair, to see the potential we do have. As my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake said many times, we're resource rich and cash poor. So let's recognize that resource and see how we can market it and develop it and bring it into production. As a result of production, royalties will be realized to government. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. For details on the Cenovus play that exists in the Sahtu, I'd like to pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MS. PAMELA STRAND:** Yes, thank you. So yes, we are aware that there are resources over there that Cenovus owns. Access is going to be key to this one. It will require barge access. They have a very large significant discovery license. And so yes, there is potential, as the Member mentioned, and we are there to support the community, you know, and path find as this project advances. So Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions on this page item? Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. You know, there's -- I don't want to take from other regions, but there's a lot of jobs allocated or there's a lot of jobs in the headquarters and some in North Slave. Tlicho is not part of North Slave for -- and there's one job for economic development diversification, and there's about 53 jobs, you know -- and when -- from last fiscal to upcoming fiscal year, 53 jobs created. I mean, there's one job that's added, or two jobs, and nothing in all the other regions. So I just want to ask the Minister do they have a plan in place, or are there -- are they going to transfer

or thought about doing -- decentralizing some of the jobs to the regions because in Yellowknife or in the headquarters, you know and I know there's no resources, but all the resources are in this -- in outside of Yellowknife, in the Sahtu, in Tlicho, in the Delta. You know, we have all these resources. I would like to see some of these headquarters position moved to the regions, so I just wanted to ask the Minister if -- have they -- are they working with the Indigenous government or other regions to, you know -- to build relationship to transfer some of these jobs to the -- outside of Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker -- or sorry. I keep doing that today. Mr. Chair. So ITI funds Tlicho government, for example, and other governments across the territory for -- through the community transfer initiatives, and that way Indigenous governments can hire their own economic development officers. In addition to that, there's also regional superintendents and economic development officers that work for ITI as well. And in addition to that, Mr. Chair, one of the policies that ITI uses and has even used for interns is the remote work policy. So there have been people who have applied on positions that may be headquarters positions but are able to use the remote work policy in order to do the positions from their home community. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. I am aware of the economic development officer positions in agreement with the Tlicho government. That is good. You know, it would be nice if, you know, the government can do that with other Indigenous group as well. What I am talking about is the high-level positions. You know, it's all situated in the headquarters, and I -- you mentioned remote work policy, and it's in -- the focus is on intern. So are these intern positions -- how many intern positions are we talking about? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So the intern position was an example that I used. And so the remote work policy is a Department of Finance policy that as long as people can do their jobs from their home community, so, for example, if it's a frontline position in a clinic or something, then it doesn't work for remote work, but the intern

position was simply the example that I used in addition to -- yeah, and I will stop there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Since you brought up the intern positions, you know, they are training positions. I know at one time, and I've said it a few times before, there was a lot of training position within the government, and I know some of those intern or trainee, they move up, they were promoted. I just want -- will they be bringing back some of these training positions so that we focus on our people in our regions? Is there any other plan in place to train more people from the regions? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, industry, tourism and investment also uses the Indigenous career gateway program which is essentially training positions where the department can gain access to training funds for an employee through that program, and ITI always looks to do that first and foremost with any hiring opportunities. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Can the Minister explain to us why with the minerals and petroleum resources, the regional allocation, headquarters have more jobs in all the other regions except for Delta? There's no positions there identified. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So we have our regional superintendents, and so the regional offices that support each region are -- those positions are found there. Within this division specifically, it's a regulatory division, and so the staff of this division end up serving the entire Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, they serve all of the Northwest Territories headquarters. I think we can be more efficient, more effective, if we saw some of these headquarters positions in other regions rather than just in the headquarters. Because right now, now is the time where we are advocating for more jobs to be transferred and/or created

especially with the mine closure and, you know, with the minerals and petroleum resources, they are all in the regions outside of Yellowknife. So will the Minister commit to possibly transferring some of these headquarters positions to the region so that they are building, you know -- because they are always talking about collaborations. And this is a good time to do that. So I just wanted to ask the Minister. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Waiting for -- oh, there we go. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, new jobs, we always ask if they can be regionally located, and then in addition to that, we ensure that we are also using policies, for example, the remote work policy so that if somebody wants to apply for a job from another community and live in their home community and not relocate for it, that we are always using the policies that we have available to us. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, the remote work policy, that's -- whoever gets that job, it's still considered headquarter. It's not the regional. What I want to see is more jobs being transferred to the region, decentralizing. I know then that our regions will be advocated. We know that there's going to be more activities happening. But if everything is out of Yellowknife, who's going to be communicating with who? And there's no communication if it's all in Yellowknife. So I want to ask the Minister, in the near future, hopefully within the next fiscal year, or current -- or in the upcoming fiscal year, that they're going to be focusing on decentralizing jobs to the smaller communities, where we need more jobs. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, certainly when looking at, you know, the trajectory of how a lot of these roles are moving, a lot of -- we've got a number of secondments right now from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to Indigenous governments and to hamlets, and so we've taken staff members out of headquarters and put them in with Indigenous governments and specifically staff that Indigenous governments have specifically requested because they have a built and trusted relationship with those staff members. Some of them are also part of their Members that they wanted to be able to employ within

their Indigenous governments. And so part of the conversations that are happening is how do we ensure that we are supporting Indigenous governments and transitioning some of these roles in this shared kind of co-managed world over to Indigenous governments or over to, you know, for example, land and water boards and where these positions need to be, and not necessarily feeling like they all need to be within the GNWT. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. In terms of time, was there any other questions? We've got one more pressing question. Okay. One more question.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** (audio) I know there's a lot of transfer assignments, and especially with Tlicho, I think they have, like, over 10. I think because of that I strongly believe that many of these transfer assignments, I -- it's probably from Yellowknife positions, headquarter positions, and/or North Slave, the one that they -- now's the time to transfer some of these jobs to the small communities where -- it's not just -- because eventually those people that are in that job, they're going to get old. They're going to retire. And, you know, we need to -- we need to start focusing on the younger generations where -- for career development. But if we keep all of the jobs in Yellowknife, we won't know -- the young people won't know what kind of jobs that exist within the GNWT. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I hear the Member and absolutely appreciate her comments as these decisions continue to unfold. And in all of the decisions that -- the staffing decisions that have been made here, we've indicated a desire to see it respected, where even if it's a headquarters position, that if somebody applies on the job and wants to use the remote work policy, that they can stay in their home community. And so really making sure that we're encouraging people to apply on these jobs is critically important, and then knowing that they can use the remote work policy if the job falls within that criteria is really important. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to move on before we shut down in five minutes here. Please turn to page 241.

Industry, tourism and investment, minerals and petroleum resources, \$17,166,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Because of time, I am going to stop here and I am going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

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

---Carried

I am going to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses from the chambers. Thank you. And I will rise to report progress. Thank you.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering considering Bill 33, Bill 35, and Tabled Document 448-20(1), and I would like to report that Bills 33 and 35 are ready for third reading. And then, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder? Yellowknife North. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Unanimous.

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third Reading of Bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr Harjot Sidhu):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight will meet at the rise of House.

Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 25th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 1071-20(1), Cost of Living

5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
- Written Question 26-20(1), Application of Waters Act Provisions to the Sale or Transfer of Mining Assets
  - Written Question 27-20(1), Physician Recruitment and Retention
  - Written Question 28-20(1), Medical Travel
  - Written Question 29-20(1), Paramedic Contracts
  - Written Question 30-20(1), Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority Action Plans
  - Written Question 31-20(1), Prenatal, Pregnancy, and Postpartum Costs
  - Written Question 32-20(1), Medical Travel Costs, Budget Pressures, and Travel Volumes
  - Written Question 33-20(1), Medical Travel Delays, Coordination, Communication and Repeat Travel
  - Written Question 34-20(1), Medical Travel Escort Policies Eligibility and Appeals
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committee
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
- Committee Report 35-20(1), Standing Committee on Public Accounts Report on the Review of the Auditor General's 2025 Audit of Protected and Conserved Areas in the Northwest Territories
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
- Bill 33, Technical Safety Statutes Amendment Act
  - Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026
  - Bill 42, Tleg'hli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act
23. Orders of the Day
- MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 25th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.
- ADJOURNMENT
- The House adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

UNEDITED HANSARD