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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

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# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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UNEDITED HANSARD



**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Friday, February 27, 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 10:01 a.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

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

Please be seated. I'd like to thank Ms. Cleary for the opening prayer and reflections. Ministers' statements. Minister from ITI.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 189-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FILM  
INDUSTRY**

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2016 actor Denzel Washington was asked why playwright August Wilson insisted that only a Black filmmaker should direct the screen adaptation of his Tony Award-winning play *Fences*. Denzel answered, It's not color, it's culture. Steven Spielberg did *Schindler's List*. Martin Scorsese did *Goodfellas*, right? Steven Spielberg directed *Goodfellas*. Martin Scorsese probably could have done a good job with *Schindler's List*. But there are cultural differences.

He continued, I know, you know, we all know what it is when a hot comb hits your head on a Sunday morning, what it smells like. That's a cultural difference, not just color difference.

Who tells a story and where they tell it, matters. Here in the Northwest Territories, we have storytellers and filmmakers who understand this place in a only a way Northerners can: Its beauty, its humour, its everyday truths. They understand the sound of a frozen lake, the feel of a kokum's hand, the smell of a freshly smoked hide. They know the excitement of Hay River's Polar Pond Hockey, the bonds built over picking aqpiks in the tundra, and the realities of life in remote northern communities. As Northerners tell stories, whether passed down by ancestors or unfolding today, they are blending tradition, creativity, and new technologies to bring them to the screen.

In the budget address, the Minister of Finance said, For too long, the North has been a

fairytale for Canadian identity about snow and cold, dogsleds and aurora. Fairytales are not real. But Mr. Speaker, fairytales and folklore make great movies, especially here in the Northwest Territories.

The finance Minister also said, The true story of the North lies with its people. And this is true and these stories, our stories, need to be told.

Today, I want to talk about the people who are ensuring that northern stories not only endure but reach further than ever before.

It is an industry that is coming into its own as an economic force: Breaking down stereotypes, telling real northern stories to the world, and growing through collaborations and mentorships between Northerners and southerners.

Mr. Speaker, across the Northwest Territories, filmmakers and production organizations are building a more established and confident film sector. Their efforts are strengthening local capacity, opening doors for northern talent, and supporting good jobs in communities. At the same time, their work is showcasing the people and places of the Northwest Territories to wider audiences.

The Northwest Territories Film Commission supports projects from development to delivery and promotes the NWT as a filming destination. Their programs are working. Every dollar of support given to this program adds \$8.90 to the NWT's film and media sector. Since the rebate program's launch, it has supported over 20 projects, filmed in communities across the territory. We have seen a change in the type of productions, indicating growth in the industry.

Most of the activity was once generated by documentary and reality-style series, but we are now seeing feature length films like *Red Snow* and *Elijah* and the *Rock Creature*, and scripted television series like *Alaska Daily* and *Arctic Air*. Recent filming in the territory includes high-profile projects, which remain confidential, but signal strong confidence in the NWT as a place to produce high-quality screen content.

In the past, we have seen shows like *North of North* become wildly successful. While filmed in

Nunavut, this production is an indicator of the significant appetite for northern stories and the ample space for the Northwest Territories to meet that interest.

Mr. Speaker, there is no shortage of talent in the Northwest Territories. Our writers, directors, producers, performers, and technicians continue to demonstrate exceptional creativity and professionalism. They strengthen the territory's reputation as a place where compelling stories are told authentically and with care.

This flourishing in film has been powered by local producers and organizations like Dead North, the NWT Professional Media Association, and Western Arctic Moving Pictures. In fact, a few big milestones lie ahead for the industry this year. In 2026, Western Arctic Moving Pictures will mark its 25th anniversary, and the Yellowknife International Film Festival will celebrate 20 years of supporting filmmakers, audiences, and screen culture in the North.

The film and media sector is a growing economic driver with real value to the territory, with knock-on benefits to other sectors like tourism. Data shows that people have travelled to the NWT inspired by something they watched, like Ice Road Truckers, Arctic Air, and Alone. The industry also creates new opportunities in smaller communities by hiring locals, like the Alone franchise did in two different seasons, to fill positions as guides, knowledge-holders and wildlife monitors.

Our landscape, our stories, and our people have the ability to tell the rest of the world who we are, showcasing that while there is ample magic here, the finance Minister was right in the budget address: We are not a fairytale. We are real people with the creativity, humour, and sheer will to tell the tales of the North in a way that draws attention, attraction, and investment from across Canada and around the world. I am confident that the future of filmmaking in the Northwest Territories is ripe with possibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 939-20(1):  
UNSUSTAINABLE NURSE-TO-PATIENT  
RATIO IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, nurse-to-patient ratios measure the average number of patients assigned to each

nurse in our hospitals. When those ratios become too high, workloads become less manageable, compromising the quality of care and even threatening patient safety. High nurse-to-patient ratios not only compromise care, they also take a serious toll on our nurses, creating a cycle that worsens staffing shortages as burnout drives them away. Overwhelmed nurses must decide what patients receive timely care, leading to chronic stress, exhaustion, and a feeling that they cannot provide the quality of care they passionately want to deliver. Excessive overtime only accelerates this burnout, forcing nurses to work longer and take less time to care for themselves.

Research shows that whenever nurse-to-patient ratios are high, they identify understaffing as the reason they consider leaving their jobs. Many transfer to less demanding settings, while other nurses leave the profession altogether. Recruitment also suffers as new nurses are far more likely to leave frontline practice within their first one to two years.

Here in the NWT, recruitment and retention are the Minister's top priorities, yet our vacancy rate stubbornly remains among one of the highest in the country. The facts are clear why. This government's half-measures aren't breaking this cycle of burnout. The Minister often points to staffing problems across Canada as if they are beyond our control, but it's time to look to the solutions provinces are already implementing. Emerging evidence shows that mandating minimum nurse-to-patient ratios strengthens staffing, increases recruitment, and improves quality of care.

British Columbia is leading the way. In 2023, their government signed a memorandum of understanding with the BC nurses bargaining association to implement minimum ratios, and evidence shows that hospitals with improved staffing are already seeing real benefits. Now that we have a proven solution to turn to, it is time for this Government to spare no effort, mandate reasonable nurse-to-patient ratios, support our nurses, and empower them to deliver the standard of care that Northerners deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 940-20(1):  
NORMAN WELLS SCHOOL

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about the impacts on the Mackenzie Mountain School in Norman Wells.

Mr. Speaker, Norman Wells and the Sahtu region face two converging crises threatening our families and children. Imperial Oil's closure, being one, has already forced 11 students across five families planning to leave Norman Wells, with eight more potentially affected. That's nearly 20 percent of our student enrolment population, children uprooted from their schools, parents forced to choose between community and economic security. Simultaneously, the federal government cuts the Jordan's Principle funding or stripped away critical supports.

Mr. Speaker, for years, this funding provided specialized educational assistance, supports to occupational therapists, and health supports that showed us what's possible when schools are properly resourced.

Mr. Speaker, now it is being stripped away. Hundreds of student support assistants are being lost across Northwest Territories. In the Sahtu, students are losing specialized equipment, health services, and therapy. Without specialized staff, all students suffer and, critically, we lose the ability to ensure safety, education of our staff and students.

Mr. Speaker, these positions provided meaningful employment to northern residents, many Indigenous. That employment is disappearing precisely when Imperial Oil closure eliminates other jobs. We cannot stand by while the gap between Indigenous students in the North and their southern counterparts widens. We cannot accept our children losing education security. The Sahtu is resilient, Mr. Speaker, but resilience requires support, partnerships, and action planning.

Mr. Speaker, our children and families deserve better, and I encourage this government to act with urgency on this crisis demands. Later, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions to the Minister of ECE. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 941-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ASSOCIATION  
OF COMMUNITIES ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Association of Communities are holding their 60th annual AGM here in Yellowknife this week. I attended the event last evening, caught up with some old colleagues, and had an opportunity to again touch base on some of the issues that the communities are facing.

Mr. Speaker, I spent 11 years in municipal politics, so I know the great work that this organization does on behalf of their communities and all our communities across the Northwest Territories. I know they've got, Mr. Speaker, meetings scheduled with Cabinet this weekend as well so I'd like to wish them all the success. If you have an opportunity to drop by -- they're at the Chateau Nova over the weekend -- and say hi to some our community leaders, mayors, councillors. I certainly encourage you to do that. And, again, wish them all the success. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 942-20(1):  
DENTAL CARE

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the well-established connection between oral health and overall well-being, far too many Northerners continue to face significant barriers when trying to access even the most basic dental care. Mr. Speaker, this lack of access does not only impact residents; it also carries a substantial financial burden for the government. When dental services are not available in communities, preventable oral health issues escalate to emergencies requiring medical travel, an expense that continues to grow year after year.

Oral health is not a luxury. It is a core component of general health, affecting nutrition, speech, confidence, mental health, and the management of chronic disease. Untreated dental problems often lead to infections, pain, difficulty eating, and serious medical complications. These cases too often result in emergency room visits or specialist referrals that require costly travel arrangements, accommodations, escorts, and sometimes repeated follow-up appointments.

The result is avoidable strain on both residents and the government's already overextended medical travel budgets, yet many residents in small remote communities wait months, sometimes years, for a visiting dental provider, if one arrives at all. Others must leave their communities at significant personal and financial costs. These gaps in coverage create inequities that Northerners should not be expected to accept.

Mr. Speaker, we must do better; invest in reliable, community-based dental services. It is not only the right thing to do for residents; it is also fiscally responsible. Strengthening dental services contracts improve recruitment, retention, and collaboration with Indigenous

governments on local preventative programs. We will reduce medical travel costs and promote healthier communities. Oral health must be treated as a priority, not as an afterthought. This government must take meaningful action to ensure every community has dependable access to dental care. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of health.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 943-20(1):  
STILL DEAD FESTIVAL

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this Freaky Friday, I would like to build on our ITI Minister's statement earlier and highlight yet another of Yellowknife's burgeoning new arts festivals.

On February 16th, the Still Dead Film Festival rose like a zombie from the grave of the infamous past film festival Dead North and brought indie horror film back to life in Yellowknife. 350 excited filmgoers dragged, stumbled, and crawled their way into the sold-out Capitol Theatre to enjoy an evening of laughs and screams with the creativity and talent of Yellowknife's amateur filmmaker scene on display. I was lucky enough to get tickets, along with my colleague from Great Slave, and I really enjoyed the films.

In what is becoming a running trend for these local festival statements, again, I really enjoyed Johnny Vu's entry which disturbingly parodied the perils of trusting ChatGPT for life advice. Along with his co-creator Elliot Pope, they deservedly nabbed the audience choice award. Best film went to Heart Above All by Chris Aitken and Emmanuel Ramos. Best sound to Paired by Jocelyn Shepel, best acting to Paul McKee, best effects to Monsters by Tanya Krueger and Carson Asmundson. And a big shout out goes to Kai Walden who won the best emerging filmmaker award. Congratulations to all film members, filmmakers, crews, and actors on a job well done.

Mr. Speaker, festivals like this are so good for our community. They bring people together and give them a creative outlet when they might otherwise be shut in from the cold and isolated from connection. As one filmmaker I spoke to said to me, making that movie got me through the winter. It also highlights how important movies and gathering as a community at our beloved theatre are to Yellowknife. I have to mention the Capitol Theatre's contribution to making this festival happen and the great

support manager Chris Wood has always shown to our local film scene.

I'd be remiss if I failed to mention the brain trust behind bringing this mainstay of Yellowknife's film scene back to life, led by none other than former Yellowknife North MLA Rylund Johnson and his fellow organizers Heather Heinrichs, Qillulaaq Arngna'naaq, and Keelen Simpson. Thank you to them, the filmmakers and everyone involved in our incredible growing northern film scene. You are contributing so much to our community.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 944-20(1):  
INCLUSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, how many of us stopped playing sports when we were kids because we weren't good enough to make a team or because we kept getting benched in favour of the better players on the team? How many of us didn't try a sport at all because we thought well, I am not the athletic type, I'd never be able to compete with the athletic kids? Or how many of us were on a competitive team but there were so many practices and games, it was so intense, there was so much pressure, it took over our lives and then we quit because it just wasn't fun anymore?

Sports are supposed to be fun. It's supposed to be a game, play. As we get older, hardly any of us become professional athletes. We tell ourselves we should stay active but realistically, none of us are going to make time for sport in our busy adult lives unless it's fun. And yet for some reason, so much of our system of organized sport revolves around the idea it has to be competitive, that we need to focus resources on the most skilled players and weed out the rest. The idea that the drive to win is the thing that's going to motivate us the most, even from a young age, to try and push to be our best selves, that if we're out there giving everyone participation medals and no first place trophies that we will never develop excellence.

Well, we can look to the country that won the most medals in the recent Olympic Games, Norway, a country of only 5.6 million people, tiny even compared to Canada and yet they have the best winter athletes in the world. Yet, they do not have any system of competitive sports for youth under the age of 12.

Their national youth sports strategy is called Joy of Sport for All. It's about ensuring there's a place for every child in every sport and encouraging everyone in the family to play

sports together. Of course, there's also an emphasis on building competence in sports. It's more fun when you can feel confident in your skills. I think Norway's model is a good reminder that we can afford to shift resources towards more emphasis on inclusion in youth sports. We need to recruit more coaches who may not be or have ever been the elite athletes themselves, but they're able to create joyful spaces for kids to play and grow and build physical and mental resiliency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Yellowknife North. Members' Statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 945-20(1):  
ADDICTIONS AND WELLNESS

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of our term, this Assembly has identified addressing the effects of trauma as a key priority. The commitment recognizes what many of our residents already know, that individuals collective and intergenerational trauma lies behind many of our health and social challenges facing our small communities. To this end, the Government of the Northwest Territories has provided community-based programs, smaller healing initiatives across the territory, and this funding makes a big difference to my communities. But at the same time, a serious gap remains in our continuum of our care. The Northwest Territories has no dedicated territorial-wide trauma treatment centre. Now Indigenous-led efforts are stepping up to fill that gap.

Over years, I have learned about the work of the Endacho Healing Society which has been steadily advancing the establishment of a northern Indigenous-led trauma healing lodge. Unlike community-specific projects, their initiative can serve residents from across the Northwest Territories and generations. It is a lot of work that they have taken on, years of planning, feasibility work, and partnership building to integrate a culturally grounded approach with clinical support in a setting close to home.

As always, I remind my colleagues, health is a treaty right. Honouring that right means confronting the intergenerational trauma of colonialism that underlies violence, addictions, and upper representation in the justice system. Strengthening our trauma healing capacity through Indigenous-led initiatives is how we can truly uphold these rights and implement UNDRIP into the delivery of these critical health services.

A territorial-wide healing lodge represents the first major step towards long-term, systematic investment in Indigenous healing. Healing is health, and health is the foundation of community, safety, and well-being. There is still time in our term for this government to act decisively on our priority of adjusting trauma. We know that works, we know where capacity must be built, and we know where resources are needed. It is time to build a territorial-wide Indigenous-led trauma tragedy that honours treaty rights, strengthens communities, and ensures healing is finally accessible to all. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the health Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 946-20(1):  
IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL THERAPISTS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk today about something truly sparkling. And no, it won't be about the northern lights although they are pretty spectacular. Today I want to talk about healthy smiles and the amazing folks that make that happen.

There was a time when dental therapists were common which, you know, I hope to see again one day. Imagine this: We all know this story. You're down south, and even that could mean Yellowknife, that could mean somewhere else. You have a toothache, and you need to call a dentist. Boom, you get it done. Mr. Speaker, but that sometimes isn't as easy as you think. It's kind of like finding a polar bear who can do the dance of a ballet. Rare, serious, interesting, but difficult to find. But guess what? Northerners are known for standing up to challenges. They don't back down. We're known as tough. Mr. Speaker, that's why, in the old days, the northern dental therapist program was so successful. We need to bring them back.

Mr. Speaker, dental therapists, in their own way, were kind of like the James Bond of the NWT dental world. They were cool under pressure. They saved people day to day. Their dental tools were kind of even like their special gadgets. They were, at a time, fearless in the community, helping people far and wide. Mr. Speaker, they were giving kids check-ups, and hopefully they were not involving too much wiggling, teaching us about how to outsmart those sugar bugs. Mr. Speaker, they were patching up the chops and giving people good smiles, and they were doing it with great enthusiasm. Because without them, many of us may be eating lukewarm bannock and sipping tea in prayers.

Mr. Speaker, what's at this point is smiles are important. They can be bright like the aurora. They give people their own individual power. But the time has gone by long enough, we need to bring the dental therapists back.

Mr. Speaker, their honesty was truly appreciated. They were heroic in their efforts. They didn't do everything in the dental system, Mr. Speaker, but they did confront the challenges before them. Every moment we postpone in bringing back this program, we put people at risk. I don't want to see us putting our good old kiddos through a risk. I want them to be living a happy, cavity child-free experience, Mr. Speaker. I want our elders to feel more confident when they tell their stories of wisdom and the occasional fishing story that I am not so sure is truly accurate. But the truth be told is we have a vision, we can tackle this problem, we can get behind this. Let's make our communities stronger. And stronger communities are happier, Mr. Speaker, with a smile. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 947-20(1):  
ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF MINE CLOSURES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in communities across the Northwest Territories, the conversations have shifted. Instead of talking about the next shift or the next rotation, families are talking about layoffs, closures, and what comes after the mines.

Mr. Speaker, for many families, this is not just about economics; it is about the loss of stability, of long-term plans, and the trauma of watching that unravel almost overnight. Mr. Speaker, for many Indigenous communities, the mines brought opportunities, but they also came with enormous sacrifice. Mr. Speaker, pristine lands were altered and will never fully return to what they once were, even with reclamations. Despite these impacts, Mr. Speaker, the mines provided stable employment, good wages, and the ability to build a good life for employees and their families. Mr. Speaker, it has also allowed many to remain in their home communities, connected to their culture and heritage, in places where the cost of living is high and steady income is essential.

There were also personal sacrifice made, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, rotational work meant extended periods away from family and missing many milestones and important moments that could not be recovered. Employees and their families accepted that reality because each

rotation brought the security of a steady paycheque.

Mr. Speaker, today that security is slipping away. Families who sacrificed so much are left wondering whether they will be able to stay afloat or will have to rely on social assistance. Mr. Speaker, this is a grief. It is a loss of identity, loss of purpose, and loss of the security that people have relied on for years. Families who gave so much in good faith deserve more than uncertainty. Mr. Speaker, they deserve a government that stands with them, supports them, and protects them as they face this loss. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of ITI. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 948-20(1):  
IMPORTANCE OF POETRY

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a thought on this bright and cold morning as I walked into the Assembly this morning, and I know that when we get overwhelmed in this House we often go for a walk to get some fresh air and reinvigorate our spirits. In wintertime in Germany, residents throw open the windows to clear out the stale air, and I hope that I can do a little bit of that today. Poetry does this for the soul. So today I wish to share a poem by Mary Oliver with the House.

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and deep trees, the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting - over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 949-20(1):  
NAHANNI BUTTE HOUSING PROJECTS

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, I would like to share with you some very exciting news about housing in the community of Nahanni Butte.

The Nahanni Butte Dene band merits profound recognition for delivering 17 new housing units from 2023 to 2025, directly uplifting 17 families in this isolated northern community. This year marks further progress:

- One new transitional/short-term accommodation unit;
- Three additional rooms expanding the general store's capacity in 2024; and,
- A completed staff housing project.

Over four years, the band addressed minor and major repairs across 14 existing homes, with ambitious renovation plans extending beyond 2030.

These milestones gleam against Nahanni Butte's formidable challenges: No all-season road access and three months of annual isolation demands ingenuity at every turn.

Band staff demonstrated unrelenting commitment, partnering creatively to truck materials, coordinate fly-in crews, and navigate winter delays. Their solutions transformed housing to the number 1 priority identified in the 2021 community needs and demands study from aspiration to achievement.

As the keys transfer to shortlisted applicants today, the community extends heartfelt gratitude to vital supporters:

Housing NWT for core funding;

- Federal partners CIRNAC, CMHC, HICC, CanNor, and NICHI for bridging gaps; and,
- Northern Industrial Construction for their expert execution.

This coalition proves remote communities thrive through unified effort. Colleagues, stable homes restore dignity, anchor families, and foster self-determination. Nahanni Butte's success counters overcrowding, health risks, and youth exodus that plague small communities. Each unit signals hope, enabling elders to age in place and children to thrive locally.

I have had the opportunity to visit these homes and speak with the tenants and leadership. They are very happy and proud of the new units and the band's commitment to its membership. I hope you will join with me to celebrate this model of Indigenous leadership and partnership. I continue to urge sustained investment to match their vision through 2030 and beyond. Nahanni Butte Dene band, your perseverance inspires every Northerner facing isolation. Thank you for showing us what's possible.

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

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize some Yellowknife firefighters who have joined us today, Christian Bittrell, Adam Katcher -- I am going to struggle with this one -- Justin Zawirucha and McKinley Moore. Thank you very much for being here today. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River North.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize some pages that we've had here from Hay River for the week. Natalie Boucher from Hay River North, as well as Kennedy Bolt and Malikai Beaulieu from Hay River South. We're always happy to have the youth in the chamber, and I hope they learned something. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Hay River North. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member from Hay River South.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would also like to welcome members of the International Association of Firefighters Union and the Yellowknife firefighters into the chambers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. We thank you very much for allowing us 19 people to represent the Northwest Territories, even if it is only for a short-term of four years. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 1120-20(1): DENTAL THERAPIST PROGRAM

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today, I talked about the dental therapist program. It was an enjoyed program in the Northwest Territories. It even had schooling and training in Fort Smith, then it went to Saskatoon, and then it went the way of the dodo bird. They're trying to revive it and hence that's the theme of my Member's statement today, which is trying to be very friendly and remind people how important and critical it was to service this.

So my question for the Minister of Health and Social Services is what is she doing to help bring back this program to life so we can have dental therapists in our communities where we need them most. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, right now I believe the only place in Canada, since 2011, is in Saskatchewan. They have just revitalized a bachelor of dental therapy and began intake in 2023. What happened over the history of this was that the federal government quit funding it, and we in the Northwest Territories were a satellite to the program that was federally funded. And, yes, it was an amazing program and we had many graduates into our communities. I believe we still have a couple that are within the system. And the Minister of ECE and I have had these conversations and also have had a conversation with the president; however, I will continue to follow up with the Minister on that conversation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister provide me, and certainly this House, some information with respect to what infrastructure the department of health is going to be moving forward on this in partnership with the current dentist organizations here in the Northwest Territories? In other words, they can't do it all. Can we build some type of partnership and infrastructure to meet the needs of Northerners? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, at this time, where we are focusing on is during COVID, as many people know, that we ceased to be able to send dentists into the community. Those RFPs that went out to the private dentists who do provide that support in small communities, right now we are working with

Indigenous Service Canada to be able to get that up and going, and we should be -- I believe we're ready to be putting out those RFPs soon so that dentists will be traveling back into the communities. We are not at the stage in health to be doing any of the training of that. That is a discussion that I can have with the Minister of ECE. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whatever follow-up the Minister can provide me would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, my last question is about recruitment, retention, and certainly about training and incentives. Mr. Speaker, as we are aware, Saskatchewan is moving forward on this. Is there a way to create some incentives so we can hook our northern students who are taking science who might be interested in this career? Is there a way we can create incentives so they may follow through and, again, so they can help serve Northerners where we need them best. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, when we look at all of our health areas, we at NTHSSA do provide a bursary to those that are accessing health programs and, you know, this -- I would have to follow up to ensure that this one may fall under that area. However, you know, we do know that dental hygienists -- you know, we're looking at the option of dental hygienists because they do have a much more expanded scope now than they did years ago, and so we're looking at how to be able to implement dental hygienists into our system as well. Going forward, you know, I will continue to have those conversations with the college with the hopes that one day we may have a dental therapy program in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 1121-20(1): EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS IN NORMAN WELLS

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement, and questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

My first question: What immediate relief and support measures can the Minister commit to providing the Norman Wells and Sahtu region to address the educational and economic

impacts of the Imperial Oil closure as well as the Jordan's Principle gaps? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has a suite of workforce development tools, working with existing employers to help do things like retrain, support through wage subsidies, and also ensure that we're helping businesses kind of shift their existing practice. In addition to that, industry, tourism and investment also has funding programs for people who want to start up businesses or who want to expand the existing practices and knowledge base through networking and skill development as well through the SEED program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very glad that I am getting some supports here. As my statement had mentioned on March 16th on the SEED, business side impacts by the ESSO closure, I am more specific to the students and the school impacts.

My second question there, Mr. Speaker, is what specific actions the Minister is taking to work with the federal government to restore or protect Jordan's Principles in the Sahtu region. Mahsi.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by saying that Norman Wells residents can rest assured that the delivery of junior kindergarten to grade 12 education in Norman Wells will remain, will be uninterrupted, and that access to high school programming will remain in the community. So that is not at jeopardy.

In regards to Jordan's Principle, we continue to advocate, not just myself as education Minister but also as a Cabinet, given the impact does absolutely have an all-of-government impact and all-of-Northwest Territories resident impact. In addition to that, I continue to work with education Ministers from across the territory given that we know the territories are absolutely built different and have a different ability to react and absorb changes to the Jordan's Principle program. With the announcement that happened yesterday, both from a political level and a departmental level, we've reached into the federal government to find out exactly what this announcement means, if they're changing criteria, if they're going to go back to working directly with schools, and how we can make sure that

northern families are served by this announcement as well. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for the reassuring potential of the incoming funding.

Mr. Speaker, situations like this needs more than three questions. But my last question is will the Minister commit to joining me and Norman Wells for a town hall to address the Imperial closures in the community underneath the portfolio of ITI and at the same time at a town hall to address the impacts of our education system, particularly our school and children and the teachers that come on in delivering education security. We need some supports from the Minister saying yes, I will come, but we'll iron out the logistics. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is absolutely right. Conversations like this take absolutely more than three questions and also making sure that the residents that we are trying to speak to are at the table is incredibly important, and I would be more than happy to travel to the Member's constituency and specifically Norman Wells. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from the Dehcho.

QUESTION 1122-20(1):  
IMPROVING DENTAL SERVICES IN SMALL  
COMMUNITIES

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Can the Minister outline what specific steps the department is taking to improve the consistency and availability of dental services in small and remote communities, particularly in communities that have gone extended periods without a dental visiting -- a dental provider. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member's question, right now what we are doing, immediate steps what we are doing is ensuring that there is a process for everyone who is covered under their insurance, applicable insurance. So for First Nation/Inuit, that would be through NIHB; Metis benefit, then they would go through that program or

extended health benefits or employer benefits. But while saying that, that will help to access the travel to get to the dentist in the capital, or if you're in the Beaufort Delta sometimes it helps to get you to Whitehorse, what we're doing right now is we've -- we have done and completed the analysis. As many of the small communities, the dentists have highlighted the equipment in the communities as not -- you know, it's broken, it's not working. So we have done an application to the oral health access fund, and we are just waiting on that to see if all of that will be funded therefore then we will move forward and replace all of the equipment that needs to be replaced in all of our small communities.

We are also working closely with health and social services and Indigenous Service Canada on an interim solution and getting those RFPs out to being able to -- for those communities that do have working equipment, to get the dentists traveling back into those small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you to the Minister for that lengthy answer. And I will have -- some of the questions I have is -- she's answering them. So given the significant and rising costs associated with medical travel for preventable oral health issues, can the Minister explain how improved community-based dental services could help reduce pressure on the GNWT's medical travel budget and what actions are being considered to achieve these savings? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, routine dental treatment services for NIHB-eligible residents are federally funded, and so anybody traveling for those dental services from the small communities that are 100 percent recoverable through NIHB for that travel and the appointment. While we don't fund the NIHB dental contract, what we're -- access to the community-based care would naturally decrease in the number of cases requiring out-of-community or out-of-territory travel that ISC is currently assessing on a case by case. So everybody has to put in the application before traveling, and those are assessed by ISC, because they're the payer.

One of the things that we are doing is we have -- we do have some dental therapists still in the system so those regional dental therapists are working with the regions. However we noted, to the previous Member's comments, is that there's not very many of them out there. So what we're looking at is the option of different, like dental -- or dental hygienists at this moment. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is what work is the department undertaking with Indigenous governments, local health authorities, and dental professionals, to develop sustainable, community-driven, preventable oral health programs that reduce long-term dental issues and improve overall health outcomes? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the communities, dental -- or sorry, community health reps can be doing a lot of that health promotion, especially in the public, in the schools, making sure that, you know, it's an important part of teaching kids to make sure they're brushing their teeth. Also, the other piece underway is the modernization of dental equipment as I mentioned. But I would like to say that there are some Indigenous governments that have taken some more leads in this area, and I would -- the IRC for instance, they have established their own program, you know, with funding from ISC, and they hire their own. They've trained community members to do health promotion on dental care in the communities. They've hired dental therapists that come in and meet with residents in those communities. So there are some areas that Indigenous governments are taking lead, and we're working -- we'll always work with them. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We just spent 15 minutes on three sets of questions. Please be brief with your questions and brief with your answers.

Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 1123-20(1):  
NURSE TO PATIENT RATIOS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2023, British Columbia became the first province or territory in Canada to establish minimum nurse-to-patient ratios. In partnership between the provincial government and BC nurses' union, implementation will occur over three years. It's worth \$750 million, and there's an additional \$237 million that's being spent for immediate recruitment and retention to fill an estimated 8,000 new nurses.

Has the Minister reviewed B.C.'s minimum nurse-to-patient ratio system and will she implement it in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that NTHSSA has assessed the ratios based on what -- our model of care is a little different than BC, and so what has happened is that they are -- the department is actually taking -- examining this to understand where and what the numbers would be based on our staffing model versus BC. And the chief nursing officer and the director of patient care are actually travelling to BC to meet with and learn from what BC has learned from this change. And so once they return from that, I am hoping that I would have a better understanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the biggest thing that BC is learning is that they don't have enough nurses. So some of the things they're doing is fast-tracking the licensing of international-educated nurses, providing financial incentives for retired or inactive nurses to return to the frontline, and expanding nurse seats in schools across the province. So will the Minister pursue those lines of incentives to ensure we are recruiting nurses along the same lines as British Columbia? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that we are working closely with CAN on how to move international-educated nurses into our system. We are working -- you know, we do graduate -- I believe this year is another large class that will be graduating from the nursing program. I am not sure how much more capacity our college could have to expand that. But I also know that we have many, many NWT residents that are also outside the territory currently training, and a lot of them want to come home and, you know, we have jobs for them. So we just need to ensure that we are making sure that we do set up the proper mentorship and on-boarding of these staff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And I think details are important here, Mr. Speaker. But, I mean, if anyone woke up this morning and felt the minus 40 wind in their face, they'll know that it's way more enjoyable to be working as a nurse in sunny British Columbia in Vancouver and Victoria. So we are now competing with a jurisdiction that is doing a hell of a lot to recruit 8,000 nurses. How is the Minister going to keep pace when a province is spending billions of

dollars on nurses and we are still struggling to figure out how to retain them? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Potato/potata. Well, I mean, I love the North. I would never move to Vancouver or anywhere in BC; I don't like the rain, I don't like the fires. So I believe that, you know, the North is a place where you go when you want a lifestyle and many people love and enjoy -- like, the nurses that I worked with in Inuvik, and they continue -- they're there, they love it, it's their home. You know, and I think this is the thing, is we have a work-life balance and, you know, unfortunately, sometimes, you know, we talk about, yes, there's times where nurses have to work overtime and, you know, those are the things that we are challenged with and I won't -- I won't, you know -- yeah, we have to compete across everyone moving here and when we -- you know, when we hear about the cost of what houses are here versus Vancouver, I mean, you could still buy a nice house and a lot here than you can in a condo in downtown Vancouver or somewhere. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1124-20(1):

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF MINE CLOSURES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that we have no control over the market but when I think and talk about the mine closure, I feel sad knowing the outcome for the people and the environment. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, my question is for Minister of ITI.

Given the fact that impacts of mine closures extend far beyond employment, how is ITI coordinating with education, culture and employment and health and social services to ensure a unified approach to workforce transition, mental health supports, and family stability for affected workers and communities? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Monfwi. Minister of ITI.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for the question. It's definitely top of mind for many that are supporting these workers, that are neighbours of these workers, that are employers of these workers, because it's certainly mine workers directly but then also those that are employed with contractors and subcontractors as well that will be impacted.

These are conversations that are happening not only with myself but also with the Minister of Health and Social Services and staff at department level and also with the mines themselves. So the mines do have mental health support staff. So for example, Diavik has people that they work with and that serve workers of the mine both at site and then also continued relationships away from site. And so some people I know have asked to stay on with the same people and indicated a desire to continue those relationships, and then also ensuring that the staff themselves are aware of what supports are available to Northwest Territories residents. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What specific mechanism has ITI established to coordinate long-term planning to maximize local employment and Indigenous business participation in reclamation work? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, certainly as far as connecting businesses themselves to different workforce development funding tools, so accessing those wage subsidies that I spoke with earlier to the Member of the Sahtu, and accessing those training dollars that are available to employers that want to be able to retrain their staff. There are employers in the territory that are working to do on-the-job training for workers that are shifting from one work environment to another. And then the good news is, though, is a lot of people coming out of the mines have skill sets that they're able to take to these new roles. Some of those supports include things like communicating to my federal government counterparts how the federal procurement processes sometimes don't serve our end goals and also supporting the messaging coming out of industry who are also taking those messages themselves to the federal government. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how is the department working with other departments and Indigenous governments to support the creation of new local industry to ensure communities can retain workers displaced by mine closure? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, we are working both here in the NWT to make sure that people can remain employed here in the Northwest Territories. And so that's everything from participating in career fairs that bring together multiple employers that are looking, including

the GNWT, that are looking to hire some of these workers that have been displaced. Some of them are looking to retire, so making sure that they have the support to understand, you know, what their rights look like from an employment standards perspective. And then some are looking to start up businesses and so making sure that they're connected with their regional coordinator if they're looking to pursue funding, for example like SEED funding or other funding sources from the GNWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1125-20(1):  
ADDICTIONS AND WELLNESS  
PROGRAMMING

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a follow-up on my Member's statement. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of health.

Does the Minister agree that the Northwest Territories currently lack a coordinated territorial-wide trauma healing strategy, and will her department commit to developing one that integrates Indigenous-led initiatives and community-based programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, myself as Minister, and I know the Premier, have had discussions during my time as a Cabinet Minister, and I think these discussions started prior to this government, working alongside and supporting the Endacho Healing Society on their work towards a trauma treatment centre in the Northwest Territories. And right now we are, you know, collaborating with them and the work that they are working to get -- you know, the funding that they need to do this through Indigenous Services Canada, and we will continue to work with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister agree that establishing a dedicated, in-territory, Indigenous-led trauma healing lodge would strengthen the North's trauma continuum of care and reduce reliance on out-of-territory placement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, this is one of our

priorities of this government, that we all said that we needed and we wanted, and so that's why we are committed to working and moving this type of a project and supporting the Endacho Indigenous-led to being able to establish within the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given that the department currently funds out-of-territory trauma placements, will the Minister commit to funding in territory trauma treatment with equivalent service exits? And what is the concrete timeline for establishing a formal partnership with a northern Indigenous-led trauma healing lodge? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our whole point of supporting this is to being able to utilize the services within the Northwest Territories. So, however, we continue to work through these to support them be established, and then those conversations and how we, you know, ensure that residents who are needing this, that we're able to support them through that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1126-20(1):  
POWER OUTAGES AND REIMBURSEMENT  
FOR DAMAGES

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I have questions this morning for the Minister of the power Corporation, NTPC.

So we know we've experienced power outages, some lately, and these can be costly to households and businesses when it causes damage to equipment, appliances. So my first question to the Minister is are there any circumstances where NTPC or Naka Power would be liable to reimburse households or businesses for the cost of any damages to their equipment or appliances? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for NTPC.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, any payments on behalf of any utility, and in the case of Yellowknife it would be Naka most likely but they too would be subject to fairly standard

terms and conditions, standard insofar as they're utilized across Canada. And in those circumstances, it would really be only, you know, if there was something rising to the point of negligence and not an outage that is unfortunately a run of course type of outage. But short of that, Mr. Speaker, there's not a provision under which the utilities pay customers back for surge damage that they may experience. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So is the Minister aware of how this practice would compare to standard practices from other utilities or governments in other parts of Canada in terms of funds or opportunities for people to be reimbursed for damages due to power outages? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so, again, you know, I am cautious that I don't want to speak for Naka but certainly the NTPC and Naka's terms and conditions are, you know, I think fairly well known if not publicly posted on their websites, and they are, indeed, consistent with utilities across Canada. In speaking to the CEO of NTPC, I know there are quite a number of avenues where the utilities maintain contact with one another. And, lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would note that the public utilities board, for us, also provides oversight over all of those terms and conditions to maintain that consistency. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for NTPC. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So does NTPC provide any fact sheets or information to residents to help them understand what -- or businesses, to help them understand what they can be doing to prevent damage to equipment or appliances such as various types of surge protection devices? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question. The customer service branch does send out various bill -- the little stuffers that can go out now and again when folks receive their power bills. At least, speaking on behalf of NTPC. I would expect that Naka likely does that as well. But I also expect that both utilities put a fair bit of information out on their websites, on their social media pages, and I will happily ask them to do that again now, particularly in the winter months when we are experiencing -- or at risk of experiencing more outages. Folks can look to what to do in a power outage and they'd find information, I know, on NTPC's website. I think

BC Hydro has some good information. And I know I've looked, I think, at Hydro Quebec as well in the past for some of this type of information and would encourage people to have a look and to heed the advice. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for NTPC. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 1127-20(1):  
CLOSURE OF INUVIK LEARNING CENTRE

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on February 9th, I gave a Member's statement on the Innovate Centre in Inuvik and the dire situation that it's in and requested that the Minister speak with the chair of Aurora College to look at continuing the funding.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of ECE. I guess my first question is, is she aware that they've now been given notice that the funding will be done at the end of March and the Innovate Centre is to shut down maybe, Mr. Speaker, forever. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly the Member has raised this in the House and in this building before, and it's certainly a huge loss to the community. I definitely always think that there are creative ways that we can look at futures of buildings and programs and see how they can evolve and that often requires a broad conversation with lots of people at the table so that we can make sure that we're being creative in future uses as well. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I wholeheartedly agree but similar to what happened with CLCs, it can happen so quick. What the centre is looking for, Mr. Speaker, is one-year funding, approximately \$200,000, to continue and do that work that the Minister is talking about, to find new ways to kind of have the Innovate Centre amalgamate with the community. So what I am asking the Minister, can the Minister find a way to keep this centre open, to find that \$200,000 to keep this centre open for another year to do the things that she's suggesting they do?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is not dollars within the education, culture and employment budget that have been dedicated to this purpose. There is, however, the SEED programming which does and has seen applications come through, for example, in

order to hire and work with consultants on the evolution of businesses, and certainly a SEED application might be a space where some of those dollars can be discovered to really help plan for the next chapter and next phase of this program. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I agree, but as the Minister knows, SEED funding does not cover core funding and it would be good for the governance, absolutely to get that, but this is a volunteer board. Can the Minister commit to once again bring this up with the chair of Aurora College -- I had asked for that back on February 9th -- to implore him to find a way to -- and the board, to keep this centre open for another year so they can find a way to keep it open forever. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can certainly commit to discussing this with the chair of Aurora College board of governors. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1128-20(1):  
ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION  
SECURITIES

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in December, Burgundy Diamond Mines received a large enterprise tariff loan in the amount of \$115 million, as we saw in the news. Mr. Speaker, was Cabinet -- oh and sorry, my questions are for the Government House Leader on this item.

Was Cabinet asked for their views on the \$115 million loan and what should be done with it? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's more properly addressed to the Minister of Finance so I would like her to answer that question. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the LETL loans are arm's-length from the federal government but it is administered or overseen by the Department of Finance for the federal government, and so that's what brings it to me.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly were aware that there was a request being made for the loan. I know there was outreach from the company. There was outreach from Indigenous development corporations. I don't know if any of them were asked their specifics, what -- we were certainly asked for information about the state of the economy, the state of tariffs, the impacts of tariffs on the economy, impacts of tariffs on mineral resources, and we certainly were, in that sense, following up quite clearly. But our input was not as to what the details of what the loan would be used for. I am not -- I think that would have been between the LETL entity and the company directly. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think the Minister effectively just answered this question, but, Mr. Speaker, the news article on this mentioned that there's creditors to pay, severance payments to workers, local contractors. Did GNWT contribute in any way to any provisions requiring our northern workers and contractors are taken care of as part of the conditions on this loan? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, again, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily in the context, again -- I mean, I didn't have any direct contact, nor do I recollect any of us having direct contact with that entity from the federal government. But certainly raising the fact and raising very clearly the fact that a sudden and unexpected closure would have pretty dramatic impacts on a number of employees here, would have a number -- would have impacts on our government, and would have impacts on development corporations who are quite deeply enmeshed in this industry right now, and certainly made that point quite clear, as I believe they were as well. And in that sense, the implication being, Mr. Speaker, that we are concerned, as we were when we offered relief in the spring. We're concerned about jobs in the North. We're concerned about contractors in the North. And we're concerned about procurement in the North. So I am confident that message was heard. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for those answers. Finally, Mr. Speaker, is funding for the independent environmental monitoring agency up to date, and was that considered in provisions in this loan as well? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is up to date, Mr. Speaker. Again, I don't know what specific details were discussed on the loan, but it is up to date and

we are certainly monitoring ongoing. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from the Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 1129-20(1):  
CAPACITY OF ADULT CORRECTIONAL  
FACILITIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just about two weeks ago, when my colleague for Range Lake and I were holding our discussion on public safety and concerns and hearing stories, one of the things that came up was the fact that the NSCC is full, and I think my colleague brought that up the other day. I am asking the Minister of Justice, what does the department do when the corrections centre is full; what is their plan to deal with that challenge? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have not looked at the current numbers. The numbers within the facility fluctuate on a daily basis, and I am certainly given consistent information on that plan. Currently, we're are looking at some changes to the facility in Hay River to allow another grade of inmate to participate in the programming in that facility, and that will help us to address the capacity challenges. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, you can only keep filling the cup so much until it spills over. You can only keep putting inmates into cells that no longer fit. Mr. Speaker, what does the department do when you have reached 100 percent capacity? What is the trigger point to ask yourself we need expanded space? Schools have it, why doesn't the jail system have it? Or maybe the Minister can enlighten the House. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are provisions within the facility to allow some doubling up of inmates and to help to increase capacity. Currently, we are looking at -- full capacity is 207 inmates, and we currently have 139 male inmates and two female inmates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to say the numbers are wrong. What I am going to bring it back to is

what triggers an expansion in the jail system -- and that's ultimately the question -- to ensure that we are meeting the inmates' human rights version of the necessity there and as such there must be a trigger point to consider that capital response. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are -- within our system, we currently take inmates from other jurisdictions. So there are some federal inmates. There are some inmates from Nunavut. So if the capacity requirement for inmates from the Northwest Territories was to rise, we would have to go back and look at the agreements we have with the other jurisdictions and focus on the requirements of the territory first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1130-20(1):  
PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION CENTRE  
EARLY RETIREMENT PROGRAM

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I have a question for the Minister of Finance. So within the past few months, many GNWT employees have received a letter from the public service pension centre about an opportunity to participate in an early retirement incentive program that was proposed in last year's federal budget. In the case of federal employees, the program is meant to help manage workforce reductions by encouraging federal workers to retire early voluntarily. So my first question is does this mean that the GNWT is also now encouraging its public servants to retire early in order to allow for workforce reductions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're not encouraging but members of the GNWT's public service are members of the same pension plan. I believe all three territories are in the same situation. As such, when this change was made by the federal government, it impacts our employees as well. And we were given the opportunity to give employees this choice if they want to take it at no cost to us. It would be under the federal budgeting process. So it's really at this point that we're not taking this choice or opportunity away, that if people -- if this is passed finally at the federal level, that GNWT employees who wish to take this opportunity will have it available to them. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that clarification about workforce reductions. So does this mean that right now GNWT employees can go ahead and take advantage of the early retirement incentive program if they wish to retire early? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And no, not yet. So at this point in time we were still waiting for final approval from the federal government. I believe that the Department of Finance for the GNWT does have a follow-up scheduled in the next week or so to see where things are at on the federal system but also to get the details as to precisely how this would roll out and when. There's two different groups that would be potentially eligible, depending upon age and length of service. And so those exact details, again, we would need to get that from the federal government to then roll that out to our employees. And, you know, again, Mr. Speaker, at this point it's not a finalized program from them so it's certainly not a finalized program from us, but just wanted our staff to be aware they were going to get these letters from the federal government. We want them to know that we'll work with the federal government and more -- so it's really a more-to-come situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I guess my final question is, when can employees expect to know for sure, and how are they going to be informed? Are they going to wait to hear from the federal government directly? Are they going to hear through Bear Net? I hope it might be more than that because many might miss this important information. So when and how can employees expect to know for sure about this opportunity? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the federal system is at its decision point now which then means we have the opportunity to get that final confirmation and detail over here. It would still need to go through some review on our end just to make sure that we are aware of, you know, exactly for whom it would apply to. And because they are part of that pension plan, there will be letters that go out directly to all pension benefit members from the federal government. Just as we communicated initially when those letters went out the first time, there will be communications that go out from the GNWT as well. I take -- and I appreciate the point. It'll go to Bear Net, but we'll also make

sure that -- some folks don't access Bear Net or don't have access and so we'll take that under consideration and make sure that everyone has access to information from our government as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1131-20(1):  
SPENDING ON CONTRACT AND AGENCY  
HEALTHCARE STAFF

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, heavy reliance on contracting out healthcare staff is expensive and doesn't build local capacity. Investing in permanent northern staff will save money long term and improve continuity of care, particularly in regional and small communities. My question for the Minister of health is how much money are we spending annually on contract and agency staff? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that level of detail; however, I do know that I do get monthly updates when I have my meeting with the NTHSSA. And since December, I believe we've used two and that is to ensure that the Inuvik obstetrics stays open. However, we are more and more relying on just continuing with our long-term casuals and our terms that do come back. A lot of the recruitment and retention that's been done has -- although it's not filling all our vacancies, they are filling job shares which are more permanent in the communities and that's -- you know, we're trying to change the way we're staffing. That's how we got the nurse practitioners into the Dehcho, is just trying to look at different ways to permanently staff in different ways. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the numbers would be good because my next question is how does -- how much do we spend on contracts and agency workers compared to what we spend on recruiting permanent healthcare workers? Because that -- if there's a deficiency there and it's significant, then we need to ask ourselves the question are we really investing in a northern workforce. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that, I will have to take back as I don't have that information, and I'd have to work with my colleague, Minister of Finance, to be able to come up with that type of information. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to that information and so do healthcare workers.

Mr. Speaker, how is this government balancing permanent staff and contract agency workers in northern health care? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated that the reliance on agency nurses is declining in the Northwest Territories as we are strengthening the way that we are recruiting and the type of -- you know, we're recruiting half-time positions and job shares and we're looking at different ways to meet the needs of the workforce today. So that is one of the most important pieces is that we're not solely reliant on filling a lot of the needs. There's a lot of misunderstanding because there are casual term nurses that do come into the system but they are paid under the collective agreement the same as all the other nurses that are on the floor. And those are to ensure that we -- you know, we have enough staff to be able to take care of the residents when they're in our hospitals and our facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. 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 of the first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly: 977 and 1007. These follow-ups will be printed in full in today's Hansard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Oral Questions (Reversion)

QUESTION 1132-20(1):  
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you for your both kindness and generosity, Mr. Speaker. Good Speaker. Greatest Speaker. Best Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I got some information with respect to the speech and language pathologists back, and I am curious if the Minister can talk about the challenges of how many young people time out of speech and

language support given the fact that there's an age limit and then they get kicked to ECE for responses. Because the challenge, of course, is always to help young people early when it comes to speech and language pathology therapy. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when there's people on the waitlist, whether they're children, adults, you know, from birth to end of life, they are triaged as to the need. And so the waitlists, they will remain on there and be seen based on availability and where they are triaged on the list. So they don't get kicked off the list. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister speak to the fact that Northerners, they're triaged out of the system based on the government servicing Nunavut clients first? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that Nunavut has a contract with the Northwest Territories to be able to provide those services; however, I do believe that we prioritize, you know, all of the -- everyone that's coming into the system, but I'd have to take that back and get more detail on how that would work. But I do believe that if we weren't able to meet the needs, you know -- like, I don't have that level of detail here in the House. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer, who will get back to me on that particular thing. I just want to return for clarity.

When a young person is being served between the ages of one and four and they time out of support and services, then they're timed out. That means their time is gone. Just like question period at the end of it.

Mr. Speaker, the issue is, is if they're on the list and approved to get supports but supports aren't available, can the Minister change the policy to make sure that those young people aren't lost in the system because the system is unable to rise to the need or is just incapable. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, they would just -- everybody would remain on the list to be seen and assessed based on their assessment. I believe that we

work collaboratively with doing the assessments and then within the schools, they might make recommendations, if the support is being provided in the school what those supports will continue to need. However, as I stated before, that with the staffing levels that we have and the vacancies that we have, we continue to try to manage all of our waitlists within the Northwest Territories. We pull from the different regions and so if there's a higher need, we may send our speech to a region that may need them. However, we will continue to, you know, triage the list. So those that are higher needs, swallowing and things like that, will be assessed first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1133-20(1):  
SAFETY IN PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to ask some questions of the housing Minister. I know we're all concerned about safety and security in our communities, and I know there's a lot of concerns too about safety and security around public housing units and within those units of the people that live there. And so we see in the Housing NWT business plan that one of the things to try to address safety and security related to public housing specifically is something called safe growth training and a safe growth program.

I wonder if the Minister can actually explain what that safe growth training and program actually involves and how it would enhance security either for residents in public housing or anyone else in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Yellowknife North. Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for the question. Safe growth training is going to be instrumental in this territory over the next number of years. We've begun with three communities and three communities that are facing a lot of illegal activities within their community. So we pulled in safe growth to work with our LHOs as partners within the community with the RCMP, with the local housing organization, with the municipality, with Housing NWT and the district office, to work together on identifying issues within that community and how we can prevent that or how we can look at things in advance so the community is not faced with a lot of the issues that are currently faced with today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I wonder if the Minister can explain, does this have to do with just, like, changing protocols or behaviour, or are we changing physical structures or arrangements? Is this, like -- is this an infrastructure changing program or just sort of sitting people down and changing policies and protocols? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now our local housing organizations are faced with a lot of violence within housing, and these are staff that are not necessarily trained with crime and crime prevention but they're facing it every day in our communities. And it's a really tough situation, especially for our local housing organization staff. In terms of safe growth, it's more about policy and protocol, what to do next in certain situations, how do you work with partners like the RCMP or the sheriff or the rental office or the local housing organization. But we are also expanding how we look at our future designs for housing. What are we looking at in terms of infrastructure builds and how do we prevent -- like crime for example, what are we building and how are we building apartment blocks for crime prevention and environmental design. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So which communities have these trainings or this environmental design work -- which communities has it been completed in already and will it be expanded to more or even all of the communities in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we've begun with is we found that Hay River is hit with a lot of illegal activities. Considering the situation, the geographical location and the highway system, Hay River is hit with a lot of legal activities. We see a lot of illegal activities within our public housing. So we began with Hay River. We've reached out to Fort Smith to begin the work there. Again, a highway system. We're having discussions with another community. We haven't finalized that community yet, Mr. Speaker. We were thinking perhaps Fort Resolution. We have to do more discussions with local chief and council to see if they'd be up to having those conversations about safe growth within their community. But I think the work with safe growth is going to be instrumental in how we think about housing and how we think about community, especially around illegal activities and just making sure that the local housing organization staff and also the district office understand that policies and protocols are in place to keep them safe, to keep the tenants safe within the units, but also to keep the community safe. And that's why the

crime prevention for environmental design, looking at the Hay River build, the 30-unit build, how we're building that. Instead of having hallways, you know, inside the building, we're looking at exterior access. So that's really important to have as part of our crime prevention for environmental design. I think of, like, when we look at parks around housing units, to make sure that they're properly lit. That exits -- when I first went into Bigelow, my experience here in Yellowknife with Bigelow, I was really struck by a lot of the hidden entrances and exits. So housing is looking at that as part of our territorial expansion with infrastructure build, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1134-20(1):  
LOCAL CONSULTATION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Yay, Best Speaker ever, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have some easy questions for the Minister of housing but they're critical, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem right there, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, when there's a new initiative in a community, is it normal to invite the housing authority that will be overseeing or managing, running or coordinating the programs involved with those particular initiatives? Because there was two recently worked on and developed, the Aspen building down from the bowling alley, and the future Tony Whitford building. So I look forward to the Minister's answer. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Yellowknife Centre, Minister of Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Mr. Speaker, of course, we work with the local community in partnership. We have consultations with town councils, city councils, hamlets. Just to have conversations around build development permits are instrumental in our building and design. So these are all conversations that we have at the local level to make sure that everything fits in place and is appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's all fantastic. Can the Minister confirm that the local housing authorities are a standard invitee in any of these types of initiatives when it comes to public announcements, public tours, public engagement. Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't confirm at this moment because I don't know if it's absolutely true or

not, So I can't stand here and say I can't confirm. But as the Minister and as working with the president and working with Housing NWT, we are strong believers in collaboration and partnership and that means at the local housing level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't try to get the Minister in a pickle on this one. But I will say, can the Minister guarantee that all future events that involve, you know, goodwill, cutting ribbons, talking about programs, those types of things, will she guarantee and direct the department to ensure that these local housing authorities are involved in that process, because they deserve to be part of the initiative. Thank you very much.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure what the Member is getting at. I talk about partnership and collaboration and working together. I can't make any guarantees. I am not the one operating Housing NWT. But, again --

**MR. HAWKINS:** -- you are the Minister.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** I am the Minister but I am not the daily operator of housing. But we work together in partnership and collaboration, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions.

Oral questions. Written Questions. Returns to Written Questions. Mr. Clerk.

### Returns to Written Questions

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 26-20(1): APPLICATION OF WATERS ACT PROVISIONS TO THE SALE OR TENDER OF MINING ASSETS

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr Harjot Sidhu):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 26-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife North on February 6th, 2026, regarding the Application of Waters Act Provisions to the Sale or Transfer of Mining Assets.

The Member asked what legislation, regulation, policy, or best practice supports the Department's stated position that the applicability of financial testing under the Waters Act depends on whether a transaction

is structured as an asset purchase or a share purchase.

Section 39(1) of the Waters Act is clear that financial testing only applies when there is "a sale or other disposition of any right, title or interest of a licensee in an appurtenant undertaking".

In a share purchase transaction, there is no sale or disposition of the undertaking itself, only the ownership of the licensee changes. As a result, a share purchase does not constitute an assignment of a water license.

The Member also asked the Minister to explain how Section 39 of the Waters Act is applied in cases where mining assets change ownership through a share purchase, including situations involving a change in controlling shares.

Section 39(1) of the Waters Act does not apply to any share purchase transaction even if the transaction results in a change in control of the company. The applicable land and water board is responsible for administering section 39 of the Waters Act when that section applies.

Further the Member asked the Minister to provide either publicly, or confidentially, to Members, any existing analysis by the Department on how Section 39 of the Waters Act has been applied thus far to sales or transfers of mining assets, over the last ten years.

Section 39 of the Waters Act is administered under the responsibility of the applicable land and water board. The Department is not aware of any existing analysis undertaken by the Board on how it has applied Section 39 of the Waters Act historically.

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 28-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 28-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife North on February 6th, 2026, regarding Medical Travel.

The Member asked for a status report on the Referral Coordination Project identified by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority in its 2023 Deficit Reduction Plan as an initiative to improve the coordination of air ambulance and medical travel, including information on the project's objectives, timelines, activities undertaken, milestones achieved to date, and any measured impacts on service coordination and costs.

The objectives of the Referral Coordination Project were to achieve a coordinated approach to referral management, optimize

travel clinic appointments to streamline medical travel for specialty services, and develop a user interface or dashboard to illustrate waitlist pressures. The project was focused primarily on outpatient specialist physician services provided by Stanton Territorial Hospital.

Successes include the creation of waitlist standard operating procedures, and the piloting of centralized territorial waitlists in selected specialties. As well, the project gathered data for future implementation of a waitlist dashboard, and applied improvements related to 'max packing', for example, scheduling coordination of appointments across multiple specialties.

The project encountered several challenges that will inform future improvement work and system development. Challenges included patient safety risks that exist as a downside of the 'max packing' approach, for example, higher acuity patients cannot be bumped to allow for appointment coordination. Data challenges were also recognized and will need to be resolved through the future Electronic Health Record to support a dashboard creation.

The project officially ended in 2024 when the Territorial Health Investment funding for the project manager sunset, and the Healthcare System Sustainability Unit was established. Standardized formats and processes for waitlist data entry are still being expanded to support high-quality, analyzable data along with guidelines for travel clinic operations are also being implemented. The Member asked for a detailed policy rationale which links the outcomes of the Referral Coordination Project to the proposal in the 2026-2027 Main Estimates for three new Medical Travel Case Managers, including how these positions will operationalize referral coordination, reduce duplication or rebooking, and improve patient experience.

The introduction of Nurse Case Managers in the Yellowknife Region primary care is for a two-year initiative. This expands Referral Coordination Project work to patient case management and a focus on out-of-territory care. The Nurse Case Manager pilot offers a proactive strategy that includes coordinating with providers and programs that frequently refer or receive patients for out-of-territory care, evaluating opportunities for virtual care alternatives, and helping patients receive care closer to home whenever possible. While these roles may generate broader system insight and impact across other areas of case management, the priority focus is on medical travel as a cost driver and patient burden.

The goals of the initiative include guaranteeing real-time case management to ensure travel is necessary and that virtual options are considered as well as timely redirection of patients to in-territory options when clinically appropriate. Work will include the development of best practices and data on how to reduce travel-related expenditures, improve patient navigation, and achieve cost savings to the system.

The Member asked what performance measures the department will use to assess the effectiveness of the referral coordination project and the proposed medical travel case manager positions, specifically which indicators will be used to evaluate outcomes. The key performance metrics for the nurse case manager pilot are still under development. However, the indicators being considered include the volume and type of referrals reviewed, the number of cases redirected from out-of-territory travel, the number of medical travel episodes avoided, estimated cost savings, the number of bundled appointments created, patient experience and satisfaction, and staff feedback regarding workflow impacts.

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 30-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY ACTION PLANS

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 30-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife North on February 9th, 2026, regarding the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority Action Plans.

The Member asked the Minister to provide the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority's 30-, 60-, and 90-day action plans referenced during the December 4, 2025, public briefing to the Standing Committee on Social Development.

The 30-60-90-day action plan that the Public Administrator referenced during the December briefing was specific to the Dehcho Cabin Community Patient Journey Mapping work. Later today at the appropriate time, I will table the 30-60-90-day action plan.

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 31-20(1): PRENATAL AND PREGNANCY AND POSTPARTUM COSTS

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 31-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife North on February 9th, 2026, regarding Prenatal and Pregnancy and Postpartum Costs.

The Member asked about the average cost per appointment for prenatal care in the Northwest Territories and the average total cost of prenatal care per person throughout a pregnancy, and what specific services or line items are included in this calculation. The Member asked about the cost per day for a patient's admission to the hospital for birth and postpartum care and average cost of postpartum visits per person following discharge from the hospital.

The level of costing detail requested for these services is not available.

The Member also asked the average length of stay in hospital for birthing and postpartum care.

The average length of stay in the Hay River Health Centre is approximately eight to ten hours. This can extend to twenty-four hours or beyond depending on the individual case and could result in a medevac if required.

The average length of stay at Stanton Territorial Hospital is two days and four and a half hours. At Inuvik Regional Hospital, the average stay is two days, eight hours, and forty-six minutes. In Fort Smith, the average stay is significantly shorter at twelve hours and twenty-nine minutes.

Stanton Territorial Hospital and Inuvik Regional Hospital provide obstetrics services, while Fort Smith and Hay River provide midwifery services. Average lengths of stay are higher at obstetrics sites because they manage more complex births and often need to monitor mothers who have travelled from out of town. In addition, these locations have limited commercial accommodations available for new mothers to stay in after being discharged. As a result, mothers who cannot immediately return to their home community often remain in the hospital longer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member from Frame Lake.

### Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 29:  
FIRST RESPONDERS WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report on

its consideration of Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act.

Bill 29 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on May 29th, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

Motions extending -- sorry, Mr. Speaker, it's just distracting with the loud voice in the chamber. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 29 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on May 29th, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. Motions extending the committee's review of Bill 29 were adopted by the Assembly on October 16th, 2025, and February 13th, 2026.

The committee completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Member for Range Lake on February 25th, 2026. During the review, committee members moved four motions to amend two clauses of Bill 29. The Member for Range Lake conferred with each of those motions.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 29, First Responders' Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, as amended and reprinted, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### MOTION TO MOVE TO THIRD READING

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 29 moved directly to third reading later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Range Lake is seeking unanimous consent to move Bill 29 to third reading of bills. Are there any nays? Nay has been recorded. Member from Thebacha.

### POINT OF ORDER

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order on Private Member Bill 29, First Responders' Workers' Compensation Act. The point of order relates to Rule 1.2(i) of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly and the parliamentary convention across Westminster-style Parliaments which prohibits Private Members' bills from requiring expenditure of public funds. I am rising at the first opportunity in the House now that the standing committee studying the bill has reported the bill, as reprinted, back to the House as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

To be clear, we support the principle of the bill. I rise at this point of order because Bill 29 would require the GNWT to pay a one-time liability payment estimated to be \$4.3 million that is separate and distinct from any existing appropriation. This one-time payment is in addition to an increase of an estimated \$409,000 to the annual rates that the GNWT pays to the WSCC.

Rule 1.2 of our rules defines what a Private Member's bill may not involve. This definition limits Private Members' bills to bills that do not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of any tax. While Bill 29 does not expressly set out the appropriation of a specific amount of funds, over the course of the standing committee's review of the bill, it became clear that the effect of the change put forward in Bill 29 would result in the requirement to allocate new public funds which would need to occur by appropriation. These anticipated amounts go beyond incidental implementation costs that would fall under an existing appropriation.

Bill 29 proposes to change presumptive coverage of listed diseases for firefighters. Bill 29 also proposes changes to the minimum employment period for such coverage. While workers' compensation programs are typically considered as self-funded because the costs of the programs are covered by insurance premiums or assessment fees that are collected from the employers based on set collections in the Northwest Territories, presumptive coverages that are provided for in Act are a bit different. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission governance council approves the model for setting rates payable for workers' compensation coverage in the Northwest Territories.

The rate setting model approved by the governance council for presumptive coverage for firefighters places all insurance liability for presumptive coverage for Northwest Territories workers with the GNWT. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission has estimated the proposed changes to presumptive coverage put forward in Bill 29, as introduced, would have resulted in a one-time insurance liability payment of \$17 million. The amount of the liability payment for the bill, as modified in standing committee, will be lower but as mentioned is estimated to be nearly \$4.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this bill would come into force one year after the date the bill receives assent. This static coming-into-force date does not allow the executive council to have any ability to control incurring the costs associated with the bill.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would involve an appropriation of public funds necessary to implement the amendments according to the WSCC rate setting rules according to a timeline over which the government has no control. The one-time liability payment would be a new and distinct expenditure that is not contemplated in an existing appropriation. This makes such changes improper to be advanced in a Private Members' bill which cannot involve the appropriation of public funds.

Mr. Speaker, I should clearly state that this point of order is not raised about the merits of the changes of presumptive coverage presented in Bill 29. It is simply raised because we have a rule that limits what the Private Members' bill can do. If the effect of Bill 29 is that it results in new and distinct amount that will have to be appropriated, it does not appear to be within the authority of the Private Member to bring it forward. The authority for recommending spending of public money lies with the executive council. This is the source of the limitation on Private Members' bill as reflected in the rules.

As such, I believe this bill is out of order. I look forward to the Speaker's ruling which would provide clarification on the matter that will be of assistance to all Members going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the mover of the bill. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Rule 1.2(i) states Private Members' bills are bills introduced by a Member who is not a Minister which does not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of tax, which is the subject of the point of order.

I would point out, however, that when signing the Minister -- the Minister moving the point of order cited Westminster parliamentary traditions around Private Members' bills. It is very important to consider that Private Members' bills are different and distinct in each legislature in Canada and, indeed, in the Commonwealth as well, and our Rule 1.1(2) states: In all cases, not provided for in these rules or by other orders of the Assembly, the customs and procedures of this Assembly, the principles and process conventions of consensus government, the House of Commons of Canada, provincial and territorial legislatures, and parliaments and the Commonwealth shall be followed in that order.

So if we are to assess the parameters of a Private Members' bill, we need to look at our precedents first. And there are many

precedents for Private Members' bills in this Assembly. So we don't need to look elsewhere because it wouldn't be a fair comparison because the House of Commons has very different rules that are spelled out in their standing orders, and we have different rules here, which I just quoted, Rule 1.1(i).

So let's look at that rule. So first, the test is, am I a Minister? No, I am not. I am a Member. The second is, does it appropriate public funds or impose a tax? It does not, Mr. Speaker. The bill does not speak to appropriating money the way an appropriations bill does. It does not seek to raise a tax the way we would in an appropriations bill as well or a financial policy instrument.

Mr. Speaker, any action by government will always come at a cost, whether it is the implementation of a Private Member's bill, a government bill, policy work, or programming work by departments. It is the responsibility of the government to make the necessary appropriations to meet their commitments and fund these activities. The coming into force date of this bill has been amended by the standing committee, as mentioned, with my concurrence, to give the government sufficient time to plan their appropriations for future fiscal years. It is 12 months from the day of assent which allows for an entire budget cycle to take place.

In the past, there have been numerous bills introduced by both government and Regular Members that have similarly created situations where subsequent spending was required. Our practice has never been such that a recommendation from our Commissioner for the appropriation of funds is required as long as the bill itself does not appropriate the funds.

I understand that in some jurisdictions, as I mentioned, a similar bill might require a Royal recommendation or Commissioner's recommendation, but that is not and has never been the case in our practices and precedents.

While the bill does not directly appropriate funds, it does strengthen the comprehensive workers' compensation coverage for firefighters and first responders, which is an employer-driven system. Employers will pay more going forward, and that is exactly how the system is intended to work for the benefit and protection of all employees in the territory. The notion that the Government of the Northwest Territories is required to fully and solely fund any outstanding liabilities of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission is outside the scope of this bill. It is a result, instead, of the policies of the Commission, the WSCC governance council and, by extension,

the government. This is the reason why the coming-into-force date has been amended, to give our government and, indeed, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, more than sufficient time to explore their policies and options, determine their liabilities, and appropriate any necessary funds through the regular budgeting cycle, Mr. Speaker.

And just to demonstrate this, in the life of this Assembly, Bill 8 received assent on November 1st, 2024. That bill, moved by the Member for Yellowknife Centre, require -- lifted the total funds available for SFA. The government subsequent -- although -- and that was not an appropriation, Mr. Speaker. It was changing a policy. It was changing the limit of those funds. The government subsequently came forward with a supplementary appropriation to fund that change by enhancing the total amount available to SFA funding.

When Bill 8 passed through second reading, committee review, and third reading, the government did not rise a point of order to that bill despite the fact that it followed a very similar path and created very similar obligations on -- you know, according to the logic behind this point of argument.

As for timing, the government -- the bill received first -- Bill 29 received first and second reading in May of 2025, approximately nine months ago. No concerns regarding order or procedural matters were raised when the bill was introduced and read into the House. In fact, when the bill was read a second time on May 29th, 2025, the responsible Minister spoke favourably about it, even stating that Cabinet was in support of the principle. And at that time, no Member of the executive council raised a point of order questioning procedural matters related to the appropriateness or properness of the bill as it relates to our standing orders.

Mr. Speaker, if they're prepared to support -- the government that is -- the government Members to support the principle of this bill and have even suggested in correspondence and conversations that they would bring forward an equivalent piece of legislation to make similar changes, that it stands to reason that the government is, indeed, prepared to appropriate this money. The amendments made by committee, as I said, extend the coming-into-force for 12 months. That's a year of time, Mr. Speaker, plenty of time to manage the appropriation and assess those obligations, as much as they did with Bill 8.

Mr. Speaker, one more thing. The policies of the WSCC -- I want to state this very clearly -- are a decision of the WSCC. They are

making a decision on how to fund liabilities, on what those liabilities are. These are policy decisions that they can make and change and assess as circumstances change. It is not required by Bill 29. Bill 29 does not speak to liability costs. Bill 29 does not speak to employer fees. So it is not an appropriation bill, not in any sense of the word, Mr. Speaker. And, again, I disagree with the Minister. He had plenty -- he had an earliest time to raise concerns with the bill, and that was at second reading. The financial obligations, as he said, were initially assessed at \$17 million, and when the WSCC came before standing committee they brought detailed facts and figures and projections. They were well aware of the financial implications of this bill at the time it was read a second time. That was the earliest time to do so.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons I believe this point of order is not a question of procedure. Rather, it is a question of politics.

In this chamber, we resolve those questions through decisions. And I recall a conversation I've had with the previous clerk who says -- who's told me, in consensus government, when I was a young Member, procedure is a means to an end not an end in itself. It should not be used to resolve questions that should be resolved through the decisions of Members by way of voting. Accordingly, I ask that you dismiss the point of order and allow this Assembly to decide on the merits of Bill 29 for what they are by voting on it.

I look forward to your decision, and say mahsi cho for allowing me to speak to this question of order. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, I thank both the government leader and the sponsor of the bill for their debate on this matter. I will take this matter under advisement, allowing myself time to thoroughly review the transcripts here today, as well as undertake some additional research, as it is something very unique. And I will return my ruling at a later date. Thank you. We will now continue orders of the day.

Reports on the standing committee -- actually, colleagues, being in recognition of the time, we will have a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member from Frame Lake.

## Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 36-20(1):  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT  
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 29, FIRST  
RESPONDERS WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT,  
DEEMED READ, RECEIVED AND  
ADOPTED. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE  
REQUESTED,  
CARRIED

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, and commends it to the House.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bill 29: First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act is a Private Member's Bill that originally proposed substantial amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act, including establishing presumptive coverage for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for frontline emergency workers and expanding presumptive coverage for firefighters to include all cancer types and heart related conditions, subject to a minimum two-year employment requirement. These changes were proposed to take effect on October 27, 2026.

Given the breadth and potential impacts of the bill, the committee undertook an extended and comprehensive review. This work included engagement with the bill's sponsor, the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, the Minister of Finance, key stakeholders, specifically the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 2890, and the public.

The committee's study focused on the importance of timely and accessible compensation supports for first responders and firefighters who face elevated occupational health risks. The Committee examined the operational, financial, and interjurisdictional implications of expanding presumptive coverage, including the potential financial impact on the Government of the Northwest Territories and impacts on the shared workers' compensation governance framework with Nunavut.

The committee weighed these factors alongside the need for a consistent, evidence-based approach to presumptive coverage that is informed by national standards while maintaining the integrity of the workers'

compensation system. These considerations informed the committee's four motions to amend Bill 29 to limit presumptive coverage to 23 cancers to be set out in regulations, to separate the eligibility criteria for presumptive coverage of heart disease and heart injury from those for cancer, and to change the coming-into-force date to be 12 months from the date of assent.

The committee also presents four recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories addressing future work on presumptive coverage and legislative initiatives. I will summarize those now.

**Recommendation 1:**

The Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories improve its responsiveness to public and stakeholder requests for legislative reviews and amendments to ensure its legislation remains modern, reflective of the needs of residents, and aligned with other jurisdictions. Enhanced responsiveness would also reduce reliance on Private Members' bills, which do not undergo the same comprehensive planning and development processes as government-sponsored legislation.

**Recommendation 2:**

The Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct detailed public and stakeholder engagement when proposing any future changes to regulations related to firefighter presumptive coverage.

**Recommendation 3:**

The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake a review on providing presumptive workers' compensation coverage to wildland firefighters similar to other jurisdictions in Canada, given that the Northwest Territories is experiencing more frequent and severe wildfires, which may have a corresponding effect on the health of wildland firefighters.

**Recommendation 4:**

The Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that the remainder of Committee Report 36-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 29, First Responders' Workers' Compensation

Amendment Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**\*Deemed Read**

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. All those abstaining, please raise your hand. Motion carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 36-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. All those abstaining, please raise your hand. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining, please raise your hand. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees.  
Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 482-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN  
QUESTION 30-20(1): NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES AUTHORITY ACTION PLANS

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Additional Information for Written Question 30-20(1): Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority Action Plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 483-20(1):  
2025-26 ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES  
COMMISSION FINAL REPORT

I wish to table the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission's 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission's Final Report.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Mr. Testart.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 69-20(1):  
TAKING ACTION ON ENERGY  
AFFORDABILITY AND SECURITY IN THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, March 2nd, 2026, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Yellowknife Centre, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to establish a Contingency Support Fund to assist Northwest Territories businesses experiencing financial losses due to power outages, including compensation for verifiable outage-related losses and support for preventative measures such as surge protection and continuity planning;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories expand and revise existing electricity rate subsidies to mitigate the escalating cost of power for both residents and businesses, recognizing the disproportionately

high cost of electricity in northern and remote communities;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories direct the Minister responsible to work with utilities, Indigenous governments, and federal partners to create a territorial grid reliability and modernization investment plan to address upgrades to aging transmission and distribution infrastructure and invest in reliable and alternative energy sources to reduce diesel use and long-term costs;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories invest in emerging and proven technologies that reduce power costs, increase system efficiency, and improve grid reliability, including but not limited to community-scale battery energy storage systems and advanced artificial intelligence-based energy management solutions to ensure sustainable, affordable, and resilient energy delivery for all residents;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion in 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Range Lake. Notices of Motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

### Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 45:  
CIVIL FORFEITURE ACT

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice on Wednesday, March 4th, 2026, I will present Bill 45, Civil Forfeiture Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh in the chair.

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

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider 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. Mr. Chair, the committee also wishes to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, the department of EIA.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates. We will now resume on consideration of the Indigenous intergovernmental relations key activity of the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs on page 142. Does the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs wish to bring witnesses into the House.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I do.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Tram Do, director of shared corporate services; John MacDonald, deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Thank you. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My presentation is more of a comment. After we left here yesterday and the Member from Frame Lake sharing issues of concerns on progress, and the Member from Yellowknife North as well on the ongoing of the IGC and this department,

I totally agree with the partnership, the discussions that have been going on, and the presentation and replies from the Minister saying that this organization meets once a year. But considering our recent changes to the economy and the declining departures of resource development and the players being Imperial Oil and the diamond companies, considering that, considering the royalty losses and issues at hand being Arctic sovereignty, energy security, devolution, co-drafting of regulations, claims, land claims and self-government, all that in one basket I

recommend to the Minister that maybe, in consideration, one meeting per year is not enough. Maybe a review of a new mandate for the remaining term of this Assembly is needed to expedite some of the rules for conclusion to welcome investors from the investment community, whether they're national investors or international investors. So I just bring that up and also take it into consideration there's different rules of engagement for the whole territory. Some of the rules in the North are really totally different because of the entrenched land claim. We have Chapter 21, for example, that give rights in the Sahtu land claim for incoming developers. So that's just one example.

So at the end of the day there, Madam Chair, half of the territory is split with a modern set of rules in your modern treaty, and the other half is still underneath negotiations. So maybe that should be an element for consideration in restructuring the mandate of these two groups going forward. So I share that, Madam Chair. And maybe the Minister is going to respond with some previous discussions that happened between both parties that would take this into account, but that's my recommendation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I will start with a question the Member asked yesterday, and it's about our meeting fund. And there is an increase in our intergovernmental meeting fund to ensure that there is more participation, more ability to participate for Indigenous governments.

In terms of the meeting frequency of the IGC, that is something that I am considering. Again, we are only one partner at that table, but I do see that there would be value in more communication. And so we don't have a plan on that yet. We have to go and speak with the secretariat, and there are a number of pressures on the time of the Indigenous governments and their officials as well, so I can't say for certain what will come of that but I do agree with the Member that more frequent meetings could be useful.

And in terms of the structure of the Intergovernmental Council, so I have an interest in ensuring that we have, as much as we can, a cohesive system across the territory. We have one system across the territory. And so the way it operates now, it is essentially -- it's all under the one Act. And I want to ensure that we can provide that -- continue to provide that level of certainty to industry and developers and the people of the territory as well. But, you

know, these are all -- as was pointed out yesterday, there's no precedent for a lot of the things that we do in the territory in regards to Indigenous governments and the public government in that relationship and so there is -- we have to figure this out. Devolution has been around for about a little over ten years now, and I think it is time to assess how it's working and how it can work going forward. And so that's all part and parcel of the review that is beginning shortly. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've got nothing further to add but if I do down in the coming weeks there, I will certainly share to the Minister via email. Mahsi.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Madam Chair, allowing me the opportunity to ask a couple more questions to the Minister. For the Dehcho process or the Dehcho land claim process, what is the major blocks to concluding the negotiations in this process? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I want to be careful not to try to -- or be seen as negotiating on the floor of the House. Like those types of discussions need to happen at the negotiation table. But there are disagreements about -- or not disagreements. There is differences of opinion on some significant issues related to land and wildlife and some of these things. But that being said, we are making progress on those and there is progress in other areas as well. The Dehcho are very committed to advancing this, and so are we. And so we're seeing progress. As I've said, I've had a number of meetings with representatives from the Dehcho this week and over the past number of weeks, and I am going to follow up with them and continue those discussions. So I think the hurdles are traditional issues that have been around for decades, and I think they're laid out in some of the early documents. But I don't think that they're insurmountable, and I think we can find a way to work together and come to a solution. It would mean being creative, and it might be a solution that doesn't look like anything else in the territory. But that's fine. But we just have to get there, and I think we can. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister tell me which First Nations and organizations in the Dehcho that are involved in this land claim negotiations? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I can try and find a list here of everyone. But essentially the Dehcho is represented at the table by the grand chief, negotiator, and I know that they represent a number of communities in the Dehcho region. I am just trying to find it here so I can give everyone an accurate list.

No, it's in my other binder, so -- or it's not in this list here. So I can provide the Member with a list of the communities. I just don't want to leave anyone out, and I want to make sure I get it right, so. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My next question is going to be kind of a funny question, but nonetheless I am going to ask it. Can you tell me why the GNWT is part of this negotiation process? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So from what I understand, the GNWT has responsibilities over lands and resources, and there's a desire on behalf of Canada to have the partner who has that responsibility and that awareness of the situation at the table. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have nothing further. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any other questions from Members? Seeing none. Okay, no further questions. I am going to continue on to page 143.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous and intergovernmental relations, \$8,469,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to the Office of the Secretary to Cabinet on page 146, with information items on page 148 and 149. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, I have a question just in the -- that is building upon some of the questions we were just asking on the previous page and we were discussing last night. It notes here that in the Office of the Secretary to Cabinet, some of the responsibilities include formalizing how the GNWT works with its partners when developing land and resource legislation.

So I am not going to repeat and tread back over the conversation we had last night regarding the IGCS, but something I did note in conversations with stakeholders who have kind of more knowledge of that table than I would, did note that it was felt that GNWT could be offering perhaps some more leadership at that table. And so regarding the fact that, you know, that I think it's been talked about that, you know, we are trying to operate that table right now on a true consensus model, my understanding of it is that we effectively don't move issues forward unless everybody at the table agrees which is, like, that's pure consensus, and all of us understand in the operation of consensus that's a pretty tough one to reach. And so I am wondering in terms of formalizing how the GNWT works with its partners, noting that most of the time when this stuff is proceeding -- or sorry, most of the time when items at the IGCS are proceeding, it's not politicians who are in the room, it's staff, so I am just curious what kind of direction, what kind of policy informs how staff make decisions and work at that table. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I'd like to go to the deputy minister.

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

**MR. JOHN MacDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So when it comes to IGCS, typically the table is represented by the GNWT at deputy secretary to Cabinet level, so ADM equivalent. Also, there are director level representation present at all times. Deputy ministers, including myself, attend periodically, often when presenting new projects or dealing when issues are contentious, if that should be the case. But, typically, it would be at the ADM level where sort of the routine meetings are happening and updates are occurring. I should also mention that with existing initiatives such as a legislative initiative, there would be technical working groups where officials would be participating from the requisite departments relative to that project in addition to the representation from Indigenous governments and organizations who are participating on that working group. So,

really, it depends on the conversation that would be happening per the agenda of any IGCS meeting and also in relation to any of the initiatives that are being advanced through that table. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that response. So that response gave me the who. I think what I was trying to get at with the question was the how and what is informing the how. So to reiterate the question maybe to make it a bit more clearer, what I am looking for is what kind of policy direction are staff operating under. You know, I mean, I shared a perception that we're working in true consensus. I'd be curious to know if that's actually the case. But what I am wondering about, to get a bit more clear here, is how we're maintaining timelines, how we're maintaining timeliness. And, you know, this is a big subject to open up but just noting that, you know, for example, it's come up at a constituency meeting of mine that the long process that the Forest Act had to go through. You know, we've talked on the floor a fair bit about the targeted amendments to the Waters Act. Even targeted amendments take a certain amount of time. I am pleased to hear that those are proceeding, and it sounds from the people I've talked to that things are going well there. And, you know, for example, if we went to do a major amendment to the Waters Act, which was planned for this Assembly and ended up off the table, you know, that could potentially take multiple terms of the Assembly. And so the place where that work gets done is at this table so I am really glad that Members are paying attention to it, it's coming up, and that the table's work is being reviewed this term, in the seven-year review. And so that's what I am trying to understand, is how are we -- are we considering any changes, or how are staff being directed to work at that table in order to get things moving and potentially improve those timelines? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And so the IGC is set up through the NWT intergovernmental agreement on lands and resource management through the devolution agreement, so that's sort of the primary framework. In terms of GNWT-specific policy documents, direction, we do have the legislative development protocol on how we work with Indigenous governments. But if the Member is talking about, on a specific issue, how do -- what direction is given to advance a specific issue or a specific file, well, that would

be then what's the issue, what's the file. If there's political direction or a desire on Cabinet's part to see something happen, then that's the direction that would be provided. And so if there's a certain regulation that we would like to see advanced, then that would be the direction that we would provide, is, you know, move forward and try and figure this out. And if we need to come back because there's not agreement at the table, then -- and we need to make some calls to leaders, then let's do that. So there's not an overarching policy saying, you know, this is our position on every item. It's often item by item. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate that answer. I guess, so I can understand that it would be issue by issue. You know, something I have floated to the Premier previously is whether we need to establish timelines around our processes. I am curious while we're here to get a comment on that.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And the Member has raised the timelines, and I think that that's -- well, that is something I will bring forward to the IGC. Because as I mentioned, the elected leaders around the table, I am not sure if all of us always know what's going on and it's not always possible to keep track of every discussion that's happening related to legislative development, so ensuring that, you know, we have things like that in place would help us all stay on top of these. And if there's a timeline, if you're working towards something, obviously there's a greater sense of urgency, there's going to be more involvement from -- at our level to ensure that things are on time. So I know that's something that I am very much interested in, and I will bring forward to the table. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And just to be clear, I think that that should be considered within the seven-year review.

If I could, with the time I have left, I'd like the Minister -- or sorry, the Premier to comment on the idea that perhaps GNWT could be providing better leadership at these tables, so. And what I am referring to there is often when I've asked about this on the floor, a process, the one that comes to mind for me, is the targeted amendments to the Waters Act. The Minister has repeatedly said, well, we are one member at the table and speaks of GNWT as being

equal at the table. And I understand that that is the case; however, I think it's worth noting that GNWT is also very much the elephant in the room, right. GNWT is the government with a \$2.6 million budget. GNWT is the government with significantly more resources than other partners. And so I think it needs to be looked to for leadership. And for what it's worth, it is still GNWT-owned legislation that is moving through that table. And so I am curious to hear the Minister's perspective on that thought, that perhaps GNWT could be providing stronger leadership on getting things moving. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I think there is an opportunity to look at the direction that is provided to the officials at that table on the GNWT side. I think government sort of moves at a certain pace, but there's clearly a desire from the Assembly, and I know from Cabinet, to move more quickly on things. And I think that might fall under the category of providing more leadership. Because the Member's right, we do have more resources. You know, we've -- so, I am trying to avoid talking about the GNWT as being the boss at the table and being able to push things through against the wishes of everyone. The leadership that is being provided now, a lot of it is trying to bring people together, find a common ground, get to a point where everyone can agree on. Like, that's the negotiation. And I don't want to say we're just going to start trying to bulldoze over or push too hard on things. It is a balance, and we are one partner. But I take the Member's point that this whole discussion about meeting more often, about having some timelines, those are the types of things, areas, where I am going to bring those forward as part of this review so that we can -- and I see that as a way of sort of providing that type of -- that leadership. These are ways to advance those projects, so I will just leave it at that, sorry. Thanks.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first question is an easy one. Just wanted to confirm that the \$695,000 in the budget for contract services, is that related to the establishment of a residential schools monument or something else? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The monument. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Next, I wanted to touch on something more broad. It's related to some of the overall goals that we have in the business plan for this department around integrating, in general, programs and services and also trying to empower the public service to deliver things in ways that better serve residents. So something I've heard about often and seen myself is that the way we do sort of consultation, even just about sort of day-to-day programs, policies in communities, we tend to send just a constant stream, army of different people from different government departments into various communities. You know, like every day, every week, there's different people flowing through, trying to each consult about their one little thing and they're often not very coordinated with each other. So, for example, there might be a public meeting or consultation in a community one week about something and then something very similar the next week, and people think why are we here again. We just talked about this. We just told you everything. You know, we answered your questions, and now you've sent someone else to ask similar questions or the same thing; what are we doing here all over again. And also I think there's a pattern sometimes of, you know, we may send people -- you know, again, a huge selection of different people to go and consult in communities who may be experts in their very particular field but they may not have any experience with public consultation or have any -- have ever been in that community, they don't have any relationships there. So every single person we're sending is trying once again to establish a new relationship but they might only be there once. And so it's often occurred to me can we do this more efficiently in ways that actually better serve communities and build better relationships so these consultations, we get more out of them and we stop sort of spending so much time going over and over and over and over the same things. And so I wonder if there's a role for EIA in better combining or coordinating the kinds of consultations and sessions and meetings that happen in communities, ensuring we're not duplicating with the same questions. And even having, say, a team of people that do know the community well, maybe they're even based in the region or in the community, and they can be the ones who are on the -- in front consulting with the community on a range of different topics, and maybe they're not the experts in

wildlife, in engineering, in infrastructure, in all the things, but at least they have that relationship. And so they can be the ones -- instead of perhaps sending every single expert from every GNWT department, they can just get the information they need from those experts, but they can be the ones interacting on an ongoing basis with people that they've built that relationship with and in that way, we could get more out of these sessions.

So that's a long little speech. But I wonder if EIA has considered anything along these lines of better coordinating the public meetings and consultations and integrating things coming from different departments into sort of funneling or streamlining through some sort of community consultation team that may or may not be linked to EIA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I can say that I have not put my mind to having a single GNWT consultation team that would travel around and do all different types of consultation, but I understand what the Member's talking about, the consultation burden that Indigenous governments and communities outside of -- especially outside of Yellowknife and the regional centres feel. So EIA's role in that is that we do speak with the Indigenous governments and we talk to them about the consultation burden and if they're experiencing it. And so if we learn that this community is, you know, seeing lots of these things happening, we'll relay that to the departments so that they're aware of it. It is a very large organization, the GNWT, and it's hard to keep an eye on every piece of consultation that's happening and, you know, sometimes people will go out because there's a timeline that they need to hit and they need to get that consultation. But we've made efforts to try and tighten things up a little bit. I think the Council of Leaders is an example of that where it's not necessarily consultation on a specific issue, but it gets people together, it gets people aware of the general issues. And I know that some departments do go out. They bundle their consultation. They'll do a couple of pieces of legislation or a few different initiatives all at the same time. I know the Department of Justice has been doing that. But yeah, to the Member's point about a unit, a consultation unit that would sort of encompass all consultation, I have not considered 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 mean, I am just throwing things out there now, maybe planting a little seed but hope to maybe continue conversations on this idea. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I brought up in the House before the potential of looking at having some more senior people in the regions, and specifically Inuvik. And I know we have superintendents there. I know we have regional management committees. But more specifically, you know, would the department consider having a more senior position kind of beyond that level of regional superintendent? Maybe someone who can actually work as well with the -- you know, department's envoy in Ottawa as well. Because given if you look at what's happening around with DND up there, with what's happening with LNG development, we've talked about several times in this House around land transfer, but actually having some boots on the ground in a region such as Inuvik at a senior level I think would not only benefit the government for having that, again, someone who knows the needs of the region, but also give the residents, you know, the -- you know, I guess, see that we're actually listening and have someone there on the ground to interact with senior officials in the community and relay that directly you back into the Office of the Secretary of Cabinet. Is that something, Mr. Chair, that the Minister would consider? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And the Member has raised this a number of times with me, and I appreciate his enthusiasm for the work. We do have a regional director in the community right now under EIA, but in this activity here, Office of the Secretary of Cabinet, there's actually only two employees. There's a deputy minister and the executive assistant for the deputy minister. So from this budget here, we would not be looking at doing that. That being said, EIA has the GSOs, the government service officers, which are stationed all over the territory and we have a regional director, and so we're -- and now we have integrated service teams -- or service integration teams. So we're looking at how we structure ourselves in the regions. And maybe the deputy minister can speak to some of this because it is a good time to have this discussion. Thank you.

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

**MR. JOHN MacDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, maybe just to echo the Premier, we do have a regional director, a regional manager in Inuvik, and we're also looking at a new framework for our regional leadership teams. From region to region, various departments have superintendents that operate out of those regional centres. And we're looking at how we might be able to enhance their coordination and their situational awareness, and it does harken back to a mandate priority from the last government and from the 19th Assembly which was around strengthening regional decision-making. We've not lost sight of that. So what we're looking at is, you know, how we can build in some greater accountability for those regional leadership teams, bringing them to ADMs and deputy minister committee meetings for example, where they can provide an on-the-ground update on what they're seeing and then also can be provided further direction as well so that they can go out and more accurately represent the government and respond to issues that are arising in that region. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** You know, I appreciate that. And I know, I mean, the regional director is often kept busy enough. I know they're there, you know, looking at each department in the region, you know, fielding questions from that, organizing -- organizing, I guess, departmental work on the ground up there as well, working with the interagency committee. I see our regional director there when I attend those meetings when I am in town. I guess what I am thinking is work beyond that. I mean, that person is busy enough. They have -- you know, they have that work to do. But I am thinking more of at a strategic level, you know, at kind of a more senior position there, reporting directly in to the deputy minister from the region on things, like I talked about, on the bigger things that are happening and ensuring that -- because we've talked about before, one little misstep, Mr. Chair, or one little thing can delay a project for a year, you know, if you're not aware of the cultural relevance of a lot of issues, decisions that are made up there -- we have two Indigenous governments up there -- like, and I am not saying that the department is not aware of any of that. But, again, having someone in the region on the ground, I think would be just beneficial and would help move things forward a lot quicker and avoid any of those pitfalls where you can have, again, one small misstep that may not seem like a big thing, as we've seen in the past, can, you know, cause way more damage than it should. So, again, and it's more of a comment,

but, you know, I do think the department should consider that. Even at an ADM level, Mr. Chair, you can -- you can have an ADM outside of Yellowknife. I know it's not something that we've normally done. I think it's been contemplated, I think, in Fort Smith, but -- one in Fort Smith. But we need -- you know, even at that level up there, I think would be something that would go a long way for the residents of that region, certainly for the Indigenous governments of that region, to know they have one there, and something that I think the department should at least consider. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to go to the Minister regarding the comments. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the Member's comments. When we're talking about projects and the Member mentioned that some missteps could delay projects, we are looking at the work that is happening, or that will be happening around the territory, in Inuvik specifically with the Department of National Defence, and trying to determine how we can best structure ourselves to ensure that we don't have those missteps and there's support when available. So I will take the Member's comments and consider that as we are looking at how we structure ourselves to advance these big projects that we're going to be seeing around the territory, hopefully. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that. I certainly appreciate you spending some time to think about that and see how we can move those forward at whatever, you know, level the department deems fit. But no further questions right now, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, seeing no further questions, please turn to page 147.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Office of the Secretary to Cabinet, \$2,747,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Members, for the consideration of the Status of Women Council, we will excuse the Minister of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs and have the Minister responsible for the Status of Women before us.

I will just continue on. There are additional information items from pages 150 to 152. Oh, hang on excuse me for a second.

My apologies. Thank you for further clarification on that. If there's no further questions on the status of women council, I will just continue to move on.

Thank you, Members. We will now -- thank you. Before I go to the Member from Monfwi, is your question for the status of women Minister?

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Department summary.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. We're going to continue on.

Members, please return to the department summary found on page 117, with items on pages 118 and 121. I am going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. GSO, for Tlicho region, there's four. It was like that within the 2024-2026, and it's the same. But it's part-time, on a part-time basis. I just wanted to ask the Minister if they have any plan of changing the status from part-time to full-time. Because I can -- I get a lot of phone calls from my constituents, especially elders, and they said I can't wait -- because this is an emergency. I can't wait for the workers to be in the office in the afternoon. And most of the phone calls I get are in the morning, so I just -- I know they're -- you know, they can -- they're flexible with their time but I just wanted to ask the Minister -- or Premier, because it's his -- it's a good program. It's a good service, because they provide a lot of services, especially dealing with the elders and unhoused people. It's a good program. I like it, I do support that. It's just that it's part-time. So I just wanted to know if it's -- do they have a plan to change the status from part-time to full-time? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there is no plan currently to make that change. We have not heard that there are workload issues that would require additional time. I understand what the Member is saying, though, that maybe some times of day are less convenient for some residents than other times of day. But given the workload, the plan is to continue forward as a part-time position. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** No, that's -- it's a real good position, you know. They provide lots. And the people that I know that are in that job in my region, they all speak fluently in Tlicho so they can provide both members, and I really do appreciate that and I know they're doing an excellent job. But it's just that it's, you know, given the time of day, you know, it's -- sometimes the elders, they don't know what to do, where to go, and that's when they call me. And I always tell people that, you know, okay, go to GSO office, go to GSO office. And then -- and they're, you know, like, I explain, the office, because it's a wraparound services or the way that it was explained. So it would be nice, you know -- I know they're -- I understand about the workload but there's more that they can do. So it would be nice if -- and with the mine closure and not enough jobs, maybe these workers have spouse that was working or -- you know, is working at the mine and there's going to be interruption with their pay so maybe it's a -- maybe the Premier's office can reconsider trying to change the status from part-time to full-time. That's my main questions regarding that, issues that I have with that. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I will consider the Member's comments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Seeing no further questions, I will now call the department summary.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, 2026-2027 Main Estimates, \$39,529,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us today. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Then I am going to go to the Member of Inuvik Boot Lake.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 35-20(1), Standing Committee of Public Accounts Report on the Review of Auditor General's 2025 Report on Protected and Conserved Areas in the Northwest Territories. I will now go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for opening comments. I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to speak to committee's report and its recommendations. The auditor general's report evaluated the Government of the Northwest Territories work on implementing the Healthy Land, Healthy Peoples work plan, focusing on the GNWT's work to establish new protected areas, support the management of existing protected and conserved areas, and secure long-term funding for conservation activities.

The committee's review was informed by in-camera briefings and the exchange of correspondence between the committee and the GNWT.

The committee held a public briefing on October 29th, 2025, with Jerry DeMarco, Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, staff from the Office of the Auditor General, and the deputy ministers and staff from the GNWT's Departments of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Environment and Climate Change, and Industry, Tourism and Investment.

The committee is supportive of the progress made by the GNWT to advance the conservation of the lands and waters of the NWT, and the territory's prominent and leading contribution to Canada's conservation targets. The committee is also pleased to note that GNWT agreed to the audit report's recommendations. However, the committee remains seriously concerned about the rate of progress towards fully responding to the recommendations. The committee is also concerned about the stability of future long-term funding for conservation efforts and management of territorial protected areas and believes that the Department of Environment and Climate Change remains overly reliant on short-term funding. Several of the committee report's recommendations focus on these concerns.

The committee report also focused on the GNWT's co-management relationships with Indigenous governments and organizations. In particular, the report calls on the GNWT to expedite progress on advancing Dinaga Wek'ehodi and the four Dehcho candidate protected areas while respecting ongoing land claim negotiations. The committee notes that effective protection and conservation relies on healthy underlying relationships between the GNWT and Indigenous governments and organizations. Several of the committee's recommendations identify measures that the committee believes will improve these relationships and advance reconciliation.

At the same time, the committee believes that the GNWT still has a role to play in providing

direction, fostering capacity-building, and in resolving disputes when asked.

Individual Members may have additional comments on the report and its recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 35-20(1). Are there any questions?

Okay, seeing no further comments, I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 139-20(1):  
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 –  
CONSERVATION AND PLANNING AND  
IMPLEMENTATION LINE ITEM IN 2027-2028  
MAIN ESTIMATES,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create a program line for conservation planning and implementation in the 2027-2028 Main Estimates and adopt staged funding triggers tied to milestones under the Protected Areas Act. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 140-20(1):  
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 –  
STABILIZING OPERATIONAL CAPACITY  
FOR TERRITORIAL PROTECTED AREAS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories stabilize its operational capacity for territorial

protected areas by increasing capacity funding to support management boards and by fully funding the staffing of positions identified in the establishment agreements;

And further, the government should allocate sufficient resources in the 2027-2028 Main Estimates to close capacity gaps and ensure the effective delivery of management plans, monitoring programs, and guardians initiative. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** The motion is in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 141-20(1):  
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 –  
CONSERVATION INITIATIVES OUTSIDE  
THE PROTECTED AREAS ACT,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories identify its financial obligations and resource requirements for conservation initiatives outside the Protected Areas Act and provide the necessary funding, including working with the federal government, to secure appropriate long-term resources for these activities within one year and report back to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on its progress. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** The motion is in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 142-20(1):  
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 –  
FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR INTER-  
GENERATIONAL CONSERVATION  
COMMITMENTS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish more flexible multi-year financing tools by amending the Financial Administration Act and related policy instruments to enable funding mechanisms suitable for intergenerational conservation commitments and to complete this work in time for it to be reflected in the 2027-2028 Main Estimates. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to draw attention to this recommendation in particular because it's broader. It is targeted towards the nature of this audit but the issue of multi-year financing tools and policy instruments, and even changes to the Financial Administration Act is becoming increasingly important to many of the organizations that depend on the GNWT for capacity. So whether that's Indigenous governments, non-government organizations, municipal governments, what have you, not having stable, reliable funding afforded over a period of time does create challenges with planning for operational certainty. And in the case of a lot of conservation commitments, that is really required because even though we have great tools like Our Land, Our Futures trust, which this Assembly put in place, there are still a number of obligations that the government has that are not covered by that trust because that is, of course, a private trust that's there to support Indigenous conservation efforts. So by adopting these more flexible tools, we hope that not only conservation targets will be better addressed but we can also expand those changes to other areas of public policy, in particular around supporting non-government organizations that do crucial work in our communities and are often struggling with core funding to succeed in keeping the lights on,

maintaining appropriate staffing, and continuing to provide the high-quality services they do in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go to the Member from the Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 143-20(1):  
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 –  
CONSERVATION WORK NOT COVERED BY  
PROJECT FINANCE FOR PERMANENCE  
FUNDS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide new capacity funding, including new grants and contributions, to provide dedicated new budget and resources to Indigenous governments to support their participation in conservation work under the Protected Areas Act that would not otherwise be covered by the project finance for permanence funds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 144-20(1):  
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 –  
COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN FOR  
DINĀGĀ WEK'ĒHODÌ AND DEHCHO  
CANDIDATE PROTECTED AREAS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories table, by the end of May/June, 2026, setting a comprehensive action plan for advancing Dinaga Wek'ehodi and the four Dehcho candidate protected areas. The plan should set clear timelines, milestones, and accountability measures aligned with the 2028 nature agreement targets and include a strategy for resourcing and capacity support. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 145-20(1):  
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 –  
COORDINATION OF STRATEGY FOR  
ADVANCING CANDIDATE PROTECTED  
AREAS IN DEHCHO,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories table information by the end of the May/June 2026 sitting on how its strategy for advancing candidate protected areas in the Dehcho is coordinated with ongoing land claim negotiations in the region. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? And all those abstaining?

---Carried

All right, I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 146-20(1):  
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 –  
ANNUAL REPORT COMMITMENT IN  
NATURE AGREEMENT,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories publish the annual report committed to in the nature agreement, including progress on commitments scheduled for the previous fiscal years and anticipated timelines for establishing the candidate protected areas under the Healthy Lands and Healthy People work plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 147-20(1):  
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 – HIRING  
FOR POSITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH  
TERRITORIAL PROTECTED AREAS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories demonstrate how current measures to involve management boards and hiring are improving Indigenous representation and how these measures will be sustained and strengthened;

And further, that the government establish timelines, metrics, and clear indicators of success to show how these actions ensure meaningful community representation in hiring for positions associated with territorial protected areas. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 148-20(1):  
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 –  
RESPONSE TO AUDITOR GENERAL'S  
RECOMMENDATION AT PARAGRAPH 56  
OF AUDIT REPORT,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories table, by the end of the May/June 2026 sitting a detailed update, including an implementation framework for territorial protected area agreements that responds fully to the auditor general's recommendation at paragraph 56 of the audit report. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 149-20(1):  
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 –  
REGULATIONS AND POLICY  
INSTRUMENTS FOR THAIDENE NĒNÉ AND  
TS'UDÉ NILJNÉ TUYETA,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories finalize the regulations for Thaidene Nene and bring forward any outstanding policy instruments required for Thaidene Nene and Ts'ude Niline Tuyeta sequenced with the approval of management plans and supported by publicly shared target dates within one year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 150-20(1):  
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 –  
TERRITORIAL PROTECTED AREAS  
REGULATORY, LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY  
FRAMEWORK UPDATES,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories update the regulatory legislative and policy framework so that it works coherently with territorial protected areas under the Protected Areas Act and resolves existing gaps;

And further, the Government of the Northwest Territories should begin the required policy work to identify and assess options for legislative amendments and bring forward recommended changes for decision. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining?

---Carried

I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 151-20(1):  
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 –  
CONSERVATION PLANNING WITH  
PARTNERS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories table in the May/June 2026 sitting a plan that sets out how the government will lead conservation planning in collaboration with partners through the Northwest Territories Council of Leaders and the Intergovernmental Council of the Northwest Territories with overriding Indigenous authorities;

And further, that the plan outlines the sequence of Government of the Northwest Territories decisions required to advance each protected area. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I am going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 152-20(1):  
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 –  
PROCESS FOR INDEPENDENT REVIEWS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish a process to obtain independent

reviews, including legal or analytical reviews conducted through an Indigenous lens when co-management partners encounter an impasse. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I wanted to draw attention to this one. The committee -- I don't think struggle is the right word, but really carefully considered how we wanted to address one of the audit findings which is that the government could have provided more leadership at the spaces they're creating. Commissioner DeMarco was very kind of clear in that assessment, that the GNWT was excellent at establishing bodies where Indigenous governments could come forward to collaborate but the decision-making at those bodies was often -- challenged, I suppose is a good word. Not compromised certainly, but challenged by a lack of clear leadership from the government's side of the table on certain issues. So in one case, there were two Indigenous parties that were asking the government to solve an impasse or a disagreement they had, and the government was unable to do so for whatever reason. And through our inquiry, in particular with the secretary to Cabinet, who is also the deputy minister responsible for executive and Indigenous affairs, it became clear that there are very clear policies guiding the relationship with Indigenous governments that are emphasizing -- and we do hear this from Cabinet Ministers as well when queried on -- in this House, that the -- you know, nothing without -- nothing for us without us is very much alive and well as a policy direction, and the government is not going to push harder than it needs to to find unanimous consent wherever possible. But there does come a time when an impasse is an impasse, and if you can't obtain consensus, then that may delay a decision from being made, which might jeopardize a conservation plan, an area, whatever it happens to be.

So what we felt would be an appropriate way to address this is this recommendation, which is to obtain an independent review which would allow kind of a third party to say here's how you can solve this issue and move forward. And hopefully that would be an important tool in allowing progress to be made on these decisions where they need to be made without damaging any relationships, which we know, through 150 years of colonialism, has created very challenging relationships in many cases with Indigenous governments and trust in public governments. So the committee wanted to respect those relationships and ensure they're

maintained but also find a way to address these areas of impasse. And I think this motion is novel in that approach, even though it -- you know, going to arbitration or something, it's not that robust but it certainly does speak to similar things that do work when there's labour disputes, for example. So we hope that this recommendation will be adopted and we will find better ways to deal with disagreements wherever consensus can't be reached, and we'll ultimately get better results for people who are relying on these policy objectives to be met, in this case conservation areas, so we can see all of these plans come to fruition and even more of the government's goals towards environmental conservation achieved within the coming years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

I am going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 153-20(1):  
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 – AUDIT  
PERFORMANCE PLAN FOR DEPUTY  
MINISTERS,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish an audit performance plan for deputy ministers;

And further, the plan should link performance pay to timely implementation of Office of the Auditor General of Canada audit recommendations that have been accepted by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. I think committee is always going to make this recommendation for every performance audit we go through, and I stand by them very strongly. This is something

that kind of came out of our deliberations as a way to tie the performance of a government to audit plans and make sure that there's some incentive to see that they're done. Far too many audits have kind of action plans that often due to, you know, resource restrictions or timelines or other competing priorities don't get implemented to the fullness extent that they can, and that is always something the public accounts committee is mindful of. We want to see when action plans are delivered that they're actually implemented. So by tying performance, like a pay of deputy heads to the outcomes of audit implementation plans, we think will create more incentive to get that done. And I would note too that this recommendation only applies to recommendations that had been accepted by the Government of the Northwest Territories because it would be inappropriate for the auditor, or certainly the committee, to kind of weigh in on those kind of performance issues or performance benefits when the government has not accepted it. So to be crystal clear, when the government says we're going to do something, the committee wants to make sure that they're going to do it and we want some performance pay for deputy heads to make sure that there's an incentive to get it done. So we're not calling them in front of the committee in a year and saying what have you done, and nothing's happened, right. There's some real attention to resolve the issues that are before the committee. Thank you.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

I am going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 154-20(1):  
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 –  
HISTORIC HARMS RAISED BY  
INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS AND  
COMMUNITIES,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories examine specific historic harms that have been

raised by Indigenous governments and communities, identify those that warrant a formal apology and compensation, take timely actions to deliver those apologies along with appropriate reparations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried. Thank you. I am going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 155-20(1):  
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 –  
STATUS UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN  
UNDER SECTION 10 OF UNDRIPIA,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide an update on the status of the action plan required by Section 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Implementation Act. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 156-20(1):  
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 –  
FUNDING FOR SUSTAINED  
PARTICIPATION IN UNDRIPIA  
IMPLEMENTATION,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the

Government of the Northwest Territories provide sufficient funding in the 2026-2027 Main Estimates and establish ongoing multi-year implementation funding, including capacity funding for Indigenous governments and organizations, to support and sustain participation in the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Implementation Act until implementation is fully achieved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 157-20(1):  
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 –  
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE,  
CARRIED

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 35-20(1), Standing Committee on Public Accounts Report on the Review of the Auditor General's 2025 Report on Protected and Conserved Areas in the Northwest Territories? Committee, agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will have concluded consideration of Committee Report 35-20(1),

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Report on the Review of the Auditor General's 2025 Report on Protected and Conserved Areas in the Northwest Territories.

I will go to the Member from the 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.

I will now rise to report progress.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 448-20(1) and Committee Report 35-20(1) and would like to report progress with 19 motions carried. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder? Member from Hay River North. All those in favour? All those opposed? Anybody abstaining? Motion passed.

Reports on Committee of the Whole. Third Reading of Bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr Harjot Sidhu):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 1071-20(1), Cost of Living
8. Acknowledgements

9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
  - 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
12. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
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
  - Bill 3-20(1), Carbon Tax Repeal Act
  - Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, at 1:30 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:54 p.m.

UNEDITED HANSARD