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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

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Send corrections to kate_covello@ntassembly.ca

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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UNEDITED HANSARD

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, May 28, 2026****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer or Reflection

---Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):

Please be seated. I'd like to thank Bertha Catholique for the opening blessing. Member from Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move to item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River North. Member from Hay River North is seeking unanimous consent to go to point 4 on the orders of the day. Seeing no nays --

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Minister from Municipal and Community Affairs.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 202-20(1):
READY FOR THE 2026 SEASON:
STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide an update on emergency preparedness in the Northwest Territories. The growing frequency and severity of climate-driven emergencies require a coordinated approach to emergency response. Our government continues to strengthen territorial readiness by improving interdepartmental coordination, community training, and response capabilities. These efforts reflect our responsibility to provide residents across the regions with a responsive, organized system rooted in northern realities.

A central component of this work is the Be Ready public awareness campaign. Its message is clear: Emergency preparedness is everybody's responsibility.

Residents, community governments, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the federal government, and our partners, all have an important role to play.

The campaign gives residents practical information and tools to help them understand local hazards, prepare emergency kits, make household plans, and stay informed during emergencies.

Communities are stronger when residents are better prepared. When communities are stronger, our territorial response is stronger as well. I encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to ask their constituents to take steps to be prepared.

Mr. Speaker, the Be Ready campaign promotes collaboration across all levels of government and with key partners. Community governments are encouraged to lead local preparedness initiatives, conduct exercises, and maintain community emergency plans that reflect local realities.

The GNWT provides training, coordination, and tactical supports, while the federal government supplies funding and national resources. Strategic partners like NGOs, industry, and volunteers are critical to public education, evacuation supports, and recovery operations.

Preparedness also means ensuring residents understand what to do during expected emergencies. To support this, the GNWT has developed a new evacuation preparedness brochure that provides clear information on how evacuations are coordinated, the services available, and what residents should do when leaving their community. It covers essential items to bring, identifies supplies for families and elders and considerations for pets, and how registration and re-entry processes work. The brochure is designed to reduce uncertainty, improve public confidence, and help residents make informed decisions during a stressful situation.

Mr. Speaker, a significant component of our broader preparedness strategy is our focus on wildland urban interface protection, which has

become increasingly important as wildfire behaviour intensifies across the North.

On May 21, 2026, the GNWT, in partnership with the NWT Fire Chiefs Association, launched a new wildland urban interface program to strengthen wildfire response to better protect our communities. This program addresses a key gap identified in the 2023 wildfire operations review. It improves coordination between wildland and structural firefighting during community wildfire threats. It establishes a territory-wide system for mutual aid, supported by comprehensive guidelines and a targeted training strategy to ensure the right expertise is applied for the right tasks.

By building specialized capacity in our communities and reducing reliance on private or out of territory resources, this program improves safety and strengthens effectiveness and increases local readiness.

Communities including Hay River, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, and Fort Smith have already received additional tools, training, and supports, demonstrating the value of sustained investment in the wildland urban interface. We plan to build on that progress across the territory through ongoing improvements and annual review.

Emergency preparedness is more than about wildfire response. It means planning year-round for floods, infrastructure disruptions, evacuations, and public health emergencies. The GNWT is continuing to strengthen training programs for local emergency management teams, modernize public alerting systems to ensure people receive timely and accurate information, and enhance coordination so resources can be deployed quickly as needed. This work is shaped by lessons learned from our recent emergencies and by clear expectation of Northerners that gave their government to be prepared, organized, and accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the dedication of community emergency volunteers, wildfire crews, municipal staff, and Indigenous government partners. Their commitment is vital to our territory's safety and resilience. Our government will continue to provide tools, training, and coordination required to protect the residents and communities. We remain committed to strengthening emergency preparedness across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

statements. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 203-20(1):
PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2026 WILDFIRE
SEASON

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, we are more prepared for wildfires this year than we have been heading into any other previous season, and that is good news for everyone. We have new initiatives moving forward. We are building facilities that we need, and we are getting more communities and local people trained and equipped. We have increasingly focused on prevention and mitigation, operational readiness, and strong coordination with communities, Indigenous governments, local fire departments, and other partners.

Mr. Speaker, wildfire management staff at the Department of Environment and Climate Change complete extensive off-season planning and training to ensure our workforce is skilled, qualified, and ready to respond to wildfires across the territory.

Our capacity is now greater and has been strengthened through expanded mentorship opportunities and cross-training, like supporting experienced staff to take on the crucial role of duty officer. This year, seven new duty officers are being trained through this program, which will encourage succession planning and help to ensure strong and sustainable leadership for our wildfire response teams.

Mr. Speaker, we know we cannot do this alone. Collaboration with communities, local fire departments, Indigenous governments and other key partners is essential.

The FireSmart program has been up and running for years, and each season we add a little more and more communities. This program, like many other pieces, is a tool in the prevention and response toolkit that has local fire departments taking on the FireSmart work after they have been trained by us. The more communities we have in the NWT taking part, the stronger and more prepared we are.

Another example of this kind of collaboration is the newly announced NWT Wildland Urban Interface program, or WUI, which provides a standardized framework for training, deployment, and integration of structural and wildland fire services when wildfires threaten communities. This program is one of the ways we are ensuring our communities are ready for emergencies. It is also a direct response and fulfillment of a 2023 after-action review recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, our 2026 preparations have also included additional investments in equipment to help protect communities, including the purchase of two new structural protection units, and funding for units for two municipalities.

Our establishment of the wildland urban interface coordinating group has led to the development of new program guidelines, a framework for operating safely within a wildfire impacted community, training materials, and an experience tracking system.

The GNWT worked hand-in-hand with the NWT Fire Chiefs Association to ensure this program is practical and responsive to community needs. We saw success last year with WUI-trained local fire departments stepping up and helping protect communities. With more departments this year, a framework and additional WUI training, they stand ready to respond again if needed.

Mr. Speaker, responding to fires in 2026 is not our only focus. We are making investments now to strengthen our readiness in the future. I am proud to say that earlier this spring, we marked an important milestone by achieving one of our longer term goals: The groundbreaking for the new Territorial Wildfire Centre in Fort Smith. This long-anticipated centre reflects our commitment to delivering high-quality public service, essential as climate change changes longer and more challenging wildfire seasons. With expanded warehousing, modern duty room operations, and increased space for personnel, this facility will significantly improve how we coordinate wildfire response across regions, manage and deploy critical equipment, and support the people on the front lines who protect our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the employees that work at the forest management division of environment and climate change. They work year-round to recover and ready themselves for the upcoming fire season. Over the next few months, they will work tirelessly for long hours, often under extreme stress, to manage wildfires and do everything in their power to protect our homes and the places we love.

Preventing wildfires and protecting our communities is a shared responsibility, and we all need to do our part. We all have a role to play in keeping our communities safe and lessening the burden on others.

I ask residents to please do not be the person who causes a wildfire. As people enjoy our beautiful NWT summers, I encourage everyone to be cautious when spending time on the land. Please make sure your campfire is entirely

extinguished before you leave. A single spark can start a wildfire. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Ministers' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery, up in the orders of the day, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake is seeking unanimous consent to move item number 4 up to replace number 3 right now. Any nays? Seeing no nays. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Hay River South.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. We have a bunch of grade 6 students here from Hay River who after this session or after this part here, they'll be driving back to Hay River for a long five-hour road trip back to Hay River, so I want to get them on the road here.

I want to welcome to the House here,

- Xavier Belarive
- Abriel George
- Ace Addison
- Molly Lafferty
- Daenerys Degnault
- Braxton Reimer
- Presley Beck
- Noelle Ruggles
- Noah Campbell
- Alexa Nason
- Sierra Lange
- Lincoln Fraise
- Tanner Braun
- Nox Paulus
- Zach Walsh
- Kelty Frocks
- Regan Webb, and
- Christine Dressel

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to welcome the grade 6 Princess Alexandra class. It's always great to see them. We had a great conversation beforehand, and it was the highlight of my day for sure. Probably the highlight of the week. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue the list of recognitions. We have,

- Addison Morrissey
- Hunter King
- Anna King
- Lennox Millett
- Carolyn Monkman
- Emery Lafleur
- Mika Duvall
- Aurora Tambour
- Danielle LeBlanc-Benson
- Olivia Pinton
- June Francis

And chaperones Stephanie Haas, Cherise Bouchard, Jason Freys, Mariah Hoyles, Steve Campbell, Nida Monkman, and Mrs. Bell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize our last day for the two pages from the Colville Lake school, Elijah Tutcho and Jayda Snow. Enjoy your last day before you head home. Mahsi.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize some staff from the Office of the Auditor General who are joining our session today: Joanne Schwartz, principal; Nadine Cognier, director; Emilien Duval, director of liaison; and, François Guilleau, principal communications. And they're also joined by Sarah McDermott who is counsel at the Office of the Auditor General. Thank you for all the work you do on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories and supporting the work of MLAs in this Assembly. Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Tino Mwani who is a page with us today. Tino is doing a great job, along with her page colleagues in the House helping us out. And I'd also like to thank my colleague who let me know that my own child apparently is above us, but I can't see him. So welcome to the gallery, Dalan Bowden. Thank you.

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

I'd like to welcome the Hay River grade 6 students as well. I had the pleasure of meeting them this morning on the tour. They asked some really, really good questions. And I appreciate the chaperones taking your time out and the teachers for bringing them here to our Assembly.

If we missed anybody else, I'd like to say thank you very much.

Oh, I should also say my favourite person, Dalan who is my partner's favourite person. If I don't recognize him, I will hear about it tonight on my phone call home, so.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1008-20(1): MINING SECURITIES AND RECLAMATION

MR. MORSE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about a notable issue in our regulatory system that is increasingly showing itself to be a concern, which is setting appropriate reclamation security to ensure mine sites are cleaned up if a site is abandoned.

There have been a few examples on the public record which indicate how big of a problem this may be. The Snap Lake mine, which closed a number of years ago, was secured for approximately \$70 million, but in their annual reporting they indicate they had spent around \$160 million cleaning up the site, more than double security estimates.

More recently, through the creditor protection process Burgundy diamond mines has entered, they have revealed by their own calculations the Ekati mine is undersecured by approximately \$100 million. And I understand from speaking with experts in the field it's

possible the gap could be much larger than this for a full cleanup of the site.

I believe resolving this issue is not as simple as just updating the security estimation tool. While that is a part of it, I think it is clear that costs can change over time or simply differ from a best estimate. When setting security, land and water boards and government also need to balance a number of considerations, including the fact that holding enormous amounts of money upfront in cash or trust is expensive and can be difficult for companies to sustain or come up with.

When considering assignments of licenses, the governments can be caught in the difficult quagmire of determining whether the best-case scenario is a site being owned by a smaller company with less financial capacity or that the site doesn't sell and potentially enters care and maintenance or closure, eliminating hundreds of jobs. That is the very situation that led us down the path to where we are with Ekati right now, Mr. Speaker.

I have investigated this issue and note that other jurisdictions are beginning to adopt different models to address mine security. Several jurisdictions in Australia maintain permanent funds that companies are required to contribute to and can be used to reclaim abandoned sites as needed. On top of this, companies are subject to annual risk assessments to determine whether additional security needs to be applied and held in cases where risks are identified. I am curious whether adopting a model like this, either hybridized with our current model in some way; or, instead of it, it could help resolve the shortfalls of upfront reclamation security we are currently seeing. To that end, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1009-20(1):
56TH ANNIVERSARY OF BUFFALO
AIRWAYS

MR. TESTART: [Translation] insert*
[Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Buffalo Airways and 56 years of service here in the Northwest Territories. For more than half a century, Northerners have relied on Buffalo to deliver everything from freight to fuel, carrying passengers, parcels, and provisions to communities and remote operations across this vast territory. 56 years ago, few could have

known Buffalo would grow from a small operator to an iconic institution. In those early days, both the company and the communities it served were still taking shape. But Joe McBryan knew one certainty - that aviation would always be essential here. And as Buffalo helped connect and build our territory, it grew into the company we know today.

That is how Buffalo Airways became a northern institution that reflects our ruggedness, resilience, and resolve to thrive in some of the most challenging conditions in the world. It also reflects a uniquely northern spirit of versatility. Where else do freight carriers also fight forest fires? This fact speaks to a deeper commitment, meeting the needs of communities no matter the challenge.

Yet when aviation enthusiasts around the world may delight when Joe or Mikey fires up the piston engines of a DC-3, these are not air show antiques; they are working tools in the hands of skilled pilots. Seeing WWII-era aircraft operating alongside modern jetliners at our airport are not a curiosity; they are part of everyday life. And for Buffalo, this is no hobby, Mr. Speaker, but a duty to service they have long committed to provide.

Colleagues, please join me in congratulating Buffalo Airways on their incredible contributions to the North. Their legacy is one of service, skill, and enduring commitment. Even as we speak, their pilots are in the air, their crews are on the ramp, and their engineers are keeping the fleet running, work that remains in constant motion as it always has and always will, hopefully, for generations to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1010-20(1):
2026 YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN ADRIANA
KABANGA

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to read my 2026 Youth Parliamentarian statement by Ms. Adriana Kabanga. It is a pleasure to read Youth Parliamentarian statements for my riding each year.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring forward the issue of climate change that has very much impacted many, if not all, the lives of the people in the NWT. The Government of Canada highlighted that the NWT is warming at an estimate of three times the global rate as of this year. Moreover, the next four-year period, 2026 to 2030, are foreseen to be profoundly hot and will absolutely alter our community, wildlife, ecosystem, and infrastructure for the worst.

In October of 2025, two reviews were sent to the government soliciting an emergency management organization for the territory in response to the 2023 wildfires and the 2022 spring flooding. Despite two independent reviews being voiced, the government finds it to be not feasible or appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, tell me, what is so inappropriate about ensuring the safety and well-being of our people? We can look back just three years ago, in the summer of late August of 2023, our community was urged to leave our homes and everything we'd ever known, not knowing when we'd return. The evacuation had a colossal effect on our community's routine, mental health, work life, and personal lives. I am speaking today as a person who was impacted by the evacuation, both physically and mentally.

I believe that with an emergency management organization, it can provide permanent firebreaks encircling parts of our territory. These firebreaks can look like man-made lakes, gaps in vegetation, and construction around our borders. I also believe that it could create standardized emergency plans in preparation for multiple crises.

Smoke, fire, and floods may be inevitable, but a plan will prepare our community for safety. 2023's evacuation was poorly structured, long, and pricey for our community. We need to make sure that this won't happen again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1011-20(1):
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today is about the importance of restorative justice options for those Indigenous people who have committed offences.

Restorative justice is an approach to addressing wrongdoing that focuses on repairing harm, promoting accountability, and rebuilding relationships rather than focusing solely on punishment. Restorative justice brings together all those affected by an offence.

Mr. Speaker, without access to restorative justice pathways, many Indigenous people are left with few alternatives other than incarceration and correctional facilities within and surrounding the Northwest Territories. Housing an inmate in these institutions costs an average of \$600 per day per person, far

exceeding the costs associated with community-based restorative justice programs.

Given the growing financial burden and ongoing concerns about the effectiveness of traditional correctional rehabilitation programs, restorative justice offers a more meaningful, culturally relevant, and cost-effective approach to accountability, healing, and rehabilitation.

Currently, individuals charged with offences requiring incarceration are removed from their communities and placed in one of Northwest Territories' correctional facilities. For many Indigenous individuals, incarceration away from their home communities has proven to be costly and often does little to address the underlying factors of contributing to their criminal behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, evidence shows that restorative justice is often more effective than traditional correctional approaches in promoting re-application, lowering re-offending, and supporting victim healing and closure. Its purpose is to foster accountability, healing, and safer, healthier communities through open discussion of a harm caused and collaborative approach to developing meaningful solutions. A key advantage to restorative justice is that programs are typically delivered within an individual's home community or through regional and on the land initiatives, helping them maintain cultural connections and community involvement through the healing process. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, restorative justice is often the preferred option for first-time and non-violent offenders, providing opportunities for healing, accountability, and rehabilitation within the community while correctional centres remain appropriate to managing high-risk and violent offenders. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1012-20(1):
CHILDREN IN CARE

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, would you believe that 12 percent of NWT children have received prevention or protection services from CFS?

Children in care are some of our most vulnerable community members, and the vast

majority are Indigenous. We know that this is a result of a colonial legacy that is hard to break and must be broken. We know it is all of our responsibility to protect children in care but even when we're trying to protect them, somehow it's easy to forget that children are not just a thing, a case file, an administrative exercise, something to be put somewhere.

This past March, the auditor general issued its report on Yukon's family and children services, which highlighted many systemic problems that should be familiar to all of us as well. High staff vacancies and turnover, unmanageable workloads for social workers, many missed reviews and check-ins. But in any auditor general report, just like reports issued by our own child and family services, we don't hear the voices of children. We don't hear what it means for children when there's high staff turnover, when they don't know who their social worker even is, when no one is available to help them arrange visits with their aunts and their cousins.

In the Yukon, child and youth advocates' response to that audit, they said the experiences of children in care are often invisible to the public. These are sensitive, confidential matters, and young people involved with FCS, many of whom are quite young, rarely have opportunities to share their perspectives publicly.

Now, to ensure that children are meaningfully included in decisions that affect their lives, the Yukon advocate recommended that mandatory processes be set up to ensure children and youth are heard or represented in all key decisions, including care planning, placement changes, and case reviews. Social workers and children themselves need to understand what children's rights actually are, and then you need an independent children's advocate to take what they're learning from working with hundreds of children one on one and share that with the public and with policymakers so those experiences become visible. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So here in the NWT, we don't yet have an independent child and youth advocate, and we desperately need someone to take on that role. We need to stop seeing children in care as a thing that we just need to better administrate, and better support children in taking back some control over their own lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1013-20(1):
RISING COST OF LIVING AND INCOME
SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many seniors in the Northwest Territories are facing growing financial pressure because of the cost of living has risen dramatically. While government subsidy programs have not kept pace with the realities, essential expenses such as food, housing, fuel, transportation, and utilities continue to increase, especially in northern communities where costs are already among the highest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time the income thresholds used to determine eligibility for senior support programs remain outdated and unrealistic. Seniors who have worked their entire lives and received modest or moderate pension incomes are often excluded from assistance because they technically earn too much to qualify; however, in practical terms, their income is still not enough to meet the high cost of living in the North. This creates a serious gap where many seniors are left without support despite struggling to afford basic necessities. No senior should be penalized for having a modest pension or forced into financial hardship because government programs have failed to keep pace with the economic realities.

Mr. Speaker, we need a review of these subsidy programs and eligibility thresholds to ensure they reflect the actual cost of living in the Northwest Territories today. Seniors deserve policies that recognize their contributions, protect their dignity, and allow them to live safely and affordably in their own communities.

When reviewing these policies, cultural and family realities in the Northwest Territories must also be recognized. Many seniors are not only supporting themselves; they are also caring for and providing for extended family members. In many households, grandparents are raising younger children and take responsibility for ensuring they have nutritious food, proper clothing, school supplies, transportation, and opportunities to participate in sports, recreation, and community activities.

Mr. Speaker, these responsibilities are deeply rooted in northern and Indigenous cultural values of family care, intergenerational support, and community well-being. Current policies often fail to recognize these realities and instead assess seniors based only on income without considering the number of dependents

they support or the broader role they play within their families and communities. Mr. Speaker, this creates a serious gap where many seniors are left without support despite carrying significant financial and caregiving responsibilities. We need a comprehensive review of these subsidy programs and eligibility thresholds to ensure they reflect the true cost of living and the lived realities of seniors in the Northwest Territories. Policies must be flexible, culturally informed, and responsive to the important role seniors play in maintaining strong families and healthy communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1014-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR FORMER CHIEF JIMMY
BRUNEAU SCHOOL STUDENTS

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] insert* [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, the experience of former Chief Jimmy Bruneau School students have been overlooked for too long. Students who attended Chief Jimmy Bruneau School and lived in the residence from 1971 to 2006 should be recognized as residential school survivors. The school may have operated under an Indigenous school board, but students were still taught under a colonial curriculum and by teachers brought in from down south. The racism, violence, displacement, and vulnerability were real, and they followed many young people for life.

Mr. Speaker, parents sent their children to Chief Jimmy Bruneau School because they wanted them to have a chance at a better life. They trusted that while their children were away they would be cared for and protected. Instead, their children were left vulnerable and forced to fend for themselves in an unsafe residence. Sons were exposed to violence, drugs, and alcohol before they were old enough to understand the damage it would cause. Daughters were taken advantage of and some became pregnant while they were still children themselves.

Mr. Speaker, these parents sent their children to school with hope for a better future. They had no idea that many would come home and never be the same. Some, I can tell you some never came home at all.

The GNWT funded the school these children were sent to. These were children born and raised in the NWT. They were Indigenous to this land. They are the very people that

government says it is here to protect. They should not have to keep fighting to prove that their residential school experience matters.

Mr. Speaker, former Chief Jimmy Bruneau students deserve recognition, compensation, and support. This government must stop dismissing this as a technical issue and start treating it as a matter of justice. I will have questions for the Premier. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1015-20(1):
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
2026 BARGING SEASON

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the marine transportation services. The Sahtu is totally reliant on essential, affordable access for resupply. Number one, the winter road access season. Number two, the river barging services.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Sahtu has experienced many challenges in recent years, climate change interruptions over the previous years, summers, and even the high cost of airlifting fuel into the community and total cancellation of barging season altogether. Mr. Speaker, these cancellations are impacting our government's ability also in providing project materials, services, and preparation for this summer sailing season. Water levels are critical in supporting this affordable sailing season. Preparations are underway, or must be. Mr. Speaker, later I will have questions to the Minister of Infrastructure on notices and preparations and action taken for this sailing season. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1016-20(1):
2026 YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN PRESLEY
SIMBA-CANADIAN

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am proud to recognize Presley Simba-Canadian who served as a Youth Parliament MLA for the Deh Cho last month. Presley made her communities proud. She carried herself with maturity and confidence and showed that the future is bright for youth in the Deh Cho. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share Presley's words from her Youth Parliament Member's statement.

Over the past few years, many families have seen their everyday expenses go up. Prices for

basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, and school supplies, continue to increase. When the cost of living rises faster than people's incomes, families must make difficult choices that affect their well-being and future. Housing is one area where people are feeling the most pressure. Rent is going up in many communities, and buying a home has become more expensive. According to a 2024 housing report, 12.8 percent of housing in the NWT is unaffordable.

Groceries are another major concern. The price of food has increased in almost every category, from fresh produce to basic staples like bread, milk, and pasta. For many families, this means looking for cheaper options or cutting back, even when they want to make healthy choices.

Transportation costs have also grown. Gas prices, bus fares, and the cost of maintaining a car have increased. When transportation becomes more expensive, it can limit a family's ability to get to school, to work, or community activities.

School supplies are also important. Without affordable supplies, it is harder for NWT students to get the education they need. Laptops cost hundreds of dollars, and students need them to keep up with schoolwork.

If prices do not become more affordable, people could decide to move down south. I want people to be able to stay in the NWT.

I thank Presley for her leadership and for making the Deh Cho proud. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1017-20(1):
MEDICAL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's stop pretending that health care is simply just stethoscopes and clinics. For many of the people I represent, Mr. Speaker, health care can be a brutal challenge from day to day. It also represents other areas of care, such as people going through airports or even the grueling, kidney-rattling ride down hundreds of kilometres of the gravel highway known as "the Dumpster."

Mr. Speaker, in a territory of this scale, medical travel assistance to some is not a luxury perk; it is a fundamental lifeline. And to those people who call me, they feel it is failing.

Let's be completely honest. When your sick kid, you have to focus and sometimes even

moonlight as a travel administrator trying to make sure you meet the obligations and expectations of the doctor's instructions, follow the medical travel directions, and everything all in between. Yet the rigid system sometimes goes sideways because the bureaucracy immediately plays the blame game and can leave you hanging. So let's take a look at our process, Mr. Speaker.

Well, you know, if you make an error, they will often say you didn't follow the instructions. Mr. Speaker, it remains -- it's remarkably easy, sorry, to be sitting back and passing judgment on constituents' competency when someone's perched in a cosy, climate-controlled office, sipping coffee, eating those little tiny crackers, and all while denying file XYZ123 simply because they made some errors. But the real world is, for people like me, when you see folks under the blindness of fog of stress and anxiety, it's easy to make mistakes and lose focus.

Look around this room, Mr. Speaker. I bet 9 out of 10 of us would have trouble fixing the old VCR time let alone navigating the medical travel process when you're in that emotional crisis. So let's not get caught up in the difficult rules of process. How can we fix this?

Opportunity before us, Mr. Speaker. We could hire and start setting out the fact that we need a navigator through the medical travel process. When we have constituents such as I who had been given approval to proceed with your own travel arrangements on a particular health journey but then told the subsequent appointments needed specialized approval each way along, common sense tells me that just created red tape, bureaucracy getting in the way. The hollow promise of health care is it should be about how can we help you, not did you fill out that form. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1018-20(1):
CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF LOUIE
BETHHALE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, today I am here to remember and honour Louie Bethhale, a man whose life was deeply rooted in the land, in family, and in tradition. Louie was born on January 4th, 1942, at Coles Lake, BC, to William and Germaine Bethhale.

From the very beginning, his life was shaped by the bush, by the seasons, and by the people he loved. He grew up learning the ways of the land alongside his father, his brother William, and his in-laws, hunting moose, trapping along the trapline with dog teams long before skidoos,

and living a life that demanded resilience, skill, and heart.

Louie was a natural hunter. By the age of nine or ten, he had already shot his first three moose. He was trusted in ways that spoke volumes, the only one his grandpa would allow to carry his rifle. That bond meant everything to him. He followed closely in his grandpa's footsteps, quite literally stepping into his tracks, learning by watching him and imitating him with a small stick as if it were an axe. These quiet moments checking rabbit snares and walking together on the land stayed with Louie for life.

In the summer, Louie took on a very different role as a cook for the firefighters. And no matter what he was doing, he always had a cigar in his mouth. That's how many came to know him in Fort Nelson, Cigar Man or simply Cigar. It became part of who he was.

Louie had his moments, as we all do, but at his core he had a good heart. He helped people, whether they needed it financially or spiritually. He gave what he could without asking for anything in return.

Many remember him riding his red quad all year round, visiting, helping, and staying connected. He supported people in quiet ways, buying crafts to help them out, selling them at Christmas bazaars, and then passing that kindness forward to young people who lent him a hand.

Louie had a full, rich life, one filled with hard work, laughter, stories, and deep connections. He leaves behind memories that are both joyful and heavy and the kind that reminds us of how much somebody truly matters. He always loves travelling with friends and family to Muskeg River, Big Lake, Maxhamish, Coles Lake, Trout Lake, and Fisherman's Lake.

Being respectful of time, I ask the remaining of this Celebration of Life be deemed as read and printed in the Hansard.

In his remaining life, he lived comfortably at the old folks home. Louie left us on April 16, 2026. He will be deeply missed. There's no one who can quite fill his shoes, especially not those dancing and jiggling shoes.

Rest in peace, Louie. You were loved, and you will never be forgotten.

Stories

His sister Laura shared many stories that captured Louie's spirit. One time, while out moose hunting, Louie was the only one allowed to carry a rifle. When a bull moose answered his call and came in close, Laura and William

got scared and ran to climb a tree. The moose ran off, and Louie, frustrated, told them plainly: "If you're both scared, next time, stay home." That was Louie, direct, honest, and serious about the work at hand.

Another time, still young, Louie and his sister Laura were tasked with bringing moose meat home by dog team. With steep riverbanks and heavy loads, it was no easy job. But they did it. That determination and toughness stayed with Louie his entire life.

Louie faced hardship too, and he faced it with strength. He survived an Air Tindi plane crash in 2014, along with five other passengers and the pilot. He was deeply grateful that they all made it out alive, and true to his nature, he didn't let it stop him from getting back on a plane. Years earlier, he also survived a house fire, escaping in the dead of winter with nothing but his long johns and a T-shirt, running to a neighbour for help.

But Louie wasn't just a survivor he was someone who truly lived. He loved fishing, and anyone who saw him at the spring Fishing Derby knows he had a real talent for it. And he loved dancing just as much. Louie could jig like no one else. Even at 84, he could out dance just about anyone in town. You get the feeling that even at one hundred, he would've still been out there, two-stepping with a smile and a partner in his arms.

The family would like to thank everyone who has helped prepare for Louie's service. Your kindness and support during this time are deeply appreciated.

Leaves to mourn him: Sisters (Laura Nande & Susan Kotchea (Steve)); Brothers (Jerry Betthale and Philip Betthale), Uncle (Harry Deneron) and numerous of cousins, nephews, nieces, friends from all over. Sadly, most of them are gone too.

Predeceased by: Parents (William and Germaine (Deneron) Betthale); Grandparents (Andre and Mary (Ekenele) Betthale & Laurent and Marie Angele (Cordille) Deneron); Brothers (William Betthale and Unnamed Newborn Brother) and Sisters (Adele, Maryrose (Jimmy) and Rosie (Kyle)).

Members' statements. Notices of motion. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1213-20(1):

SUPPORT FOR FORMER RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL SURVIVORS FROM CHIEF JIMMY
BRUNEAU SCHOOL

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement is sensitive, especially for the survivors of the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, students and residents. So what I would like to suggest is that I encourage them to reach out and talk to a counsellor or a trusted person in their respective community. Now my question is to my favourite person, the Premier.

Will the Premier acknowledge that former Chief Jimmy Bruneau students lived through a residential school experience no different from those that have been formally recognized? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chief Jimmy Bruneau of course does have a residence. There were students from outside of the community who attended. I don't want to paint every residential school experience with the same brush. I know people who have had different experiences, and I think it's out of respect I wouldn't say that everyone has had the same experience. That being said, I do recognize that it is a residential school, and I am not familiar with the day-to-day of the operations while it was a residential school, but I am taking the Member and, you know, the messages she is bringing from her constituents at her word and recognizing that -- or acknowledging what the Member is saying, that there were experiences that people had that were similar to others. That being said, I don't want to paint everything with the same brush. There's nuance to this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. In 1971, many of the students were returning, and some of them were transferring from Fort Smith, some of them were coming back from Fort Simpson, and some of them were coming in from Inuvik. They were sent as far as Inuvik, some of our students. But a lot of Yellowknife went to school at the Chief Jimmy Bruneau residence, which I talked about already before, so -- and I would like to take Premier over there to look at the residence, you know, the residence itself.

So will the Premier work towards formal recognition and compensations for former Chief Jimmy Bruneau students and residents?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been to the school. I've seen part of the residence. I believe it's not in great shape, so I don't think I've toured the entire thing for safety issues, but I am happy to sit down with the Member and discuss this further.

When we talk about compensation, that's -- you know, we're getting into a different area here. The residential school compensation, IRSSA -- I don't know the acronym, but the settlement agreement with residential schools, that was an agreement with the Government of Canada, the churches, the Assembly of First Nations, and the survivors, and that was something that was hashed out over many years and so it's -- I can't stand here and say that we're going to do something similar because that is a significant process. It's not the kind of thing that you just stand up and say yes to, you know, in the House here without any sort of, you know, discussions or things like that. So that being said, I am happy to sit down with the Member and discuss this further. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was a residential school similar to western Arctic leadership. It's another form of residential school. So will the Premier take steps to ensure former CJBS -- or former Chief Jimmy Bruneau School students and their families have access to targeted mental health, healing, and other supports? And when we did a constituent's touring to Gameti, one of the young person approached me, and they were right beside me, two Ministers, when a young man was talking to me. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were residential schools across the territory. There were individuals who suffered harm at those schools across the territory, and it's a big part of the reason that we're in the situation we're in, in the territory. The effects of trauma, we see that every single day, and I attribute that to the history of colonialism in residential school. So everything we do when it comes to mental health and wellness has a focus on that healing component. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1214-20(1):

MINING SECURITIES AND RECLAMATION

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions, as I indicated in my statement, are for the Minister of ECC.

Mr. Speaker, considering the issue noted in my statement of undersecured mine sites, can the Minister detail for the House the steps his department is currently taking to review their security estimation tool and make changes where necessary to ensure sites are not undersecured in the future? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the Member is aware, securities in the NWT are set by the land and water boards under legislation and estimates on reclamation securities are based on current versions of closure and reclamation plans which are also approved by the board. This is a multiparty process which -- and the figures are provided through an estimating process, part of which the company participates in. The exact makeup, so there are -- I am sorry, I've lost my -- the board runs a multiparty process, and as the -- I would ask the Member to repeat the question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Member from Frame Lake, can you repeat your question.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do understand it's a pretty technical issue.

Mr. Speaker, considering the issue noted in my statement of undersecured sites, mine sites, can the Minister detail for the House the steps his department is currently taking to review their security estimation tool and make changes where necessary to ensure sites are not undersecured in the future. Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And my apologies for the earlier response.

Mr. Speaker, the tool that is used in the Northwest Territories for estimating the requirement under the security deposit is the Reclaim tool. That model that we're currently using is an old version that's been around for a number of years, and we are currently working with the Government of Canada on a revised version of that tool to improve the way in which the estimates are developed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Second question. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister give us some more details, what exactly is changing in the tool? What steps are being taken to address this issue, noting that, you know, once a security estimate is put in, it can quickly become out of date as inflation takes hold and things change on a site. So can the Minister help us understand how Reclaim is being improved to help ensure that security estimates are up to date for the site in any given moment. Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so the Reclaim model is based on current northern estimates, and those estimates would come from the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. And so the estimates within the tool would be brought up to more current to date estimates, and that part of that model update includes the different components that feed into that. So there is estimation and information that's provided by the proponent. That information is shared with the department. The department also contributes to that. And all of this information is then relayed to the land and water boards who ultimately set the level of security required. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am realizing this is quite a complex topic and maybe some written questions will be necessary as well.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister -- considering what I've raised with the shortcomings of security estimation, I am curious if the Minister would commit his department to researching and considering the possibility of adopting a different or additional model for reclamation security as demonstrated by jurisdictions like western Australia in Queensland, and reporting on the results of this work to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of the other methods that have been used in other countries, such as Australia, is a pool method, where they're pooling resources. I've just provided an example here. And, you know, at our peak we had four mines in the Northwest Territories so that type of approach is not likely to work very well within the Northwest Territories, but I am happy to take that question away from the Member and get back to him with a more detailed response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1215-20(1):
CLIMATE AND ENERGY STRATEGY

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of ECC.

As we all know, climate change is making our wildfire seasons longer and more intense, and that is -- sorry, Mr. Speaker, I am also having a bit of a brain fart.

Mr. Speaker, every time I am about to go into session, inevitably somebody asks me, you know, when is the new climate plan going to be available. Can the Minister please give an estimate as when the updated climate and energy strategy will be made public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has developed a new energy and climate change strategy which is planned to be released later this summer. That strategy is currently with the standing committee for input, and we will be addressing some public feedback on both -- requesting public feedback on climate change strategy framework and energy strategy calling for a more clear, coordinated approach on climate change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to see the work that ECC and MACA have done to create the wildland urban interface program which fulfills one of the commitments in the after-action review on the fire response from 2023.

Can the Minister please let us know how many outstanding commitments from that review for ECC remain and what the timeline is to complete them.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department certainly takes lessons learned from the 2023 wildfire season and the recovery review very seriously. We've accepted all 25 recommendations, and work has begun on those. We are prioritizing certainly the implementation of these actions with the ones that have the greatest impact on public safety and community protection first, and we can be supported by the current resources that we have. We are certainly committed to the wildland urban interface

program. We're very proud of that program, and that has just recently been put out. The specific dates for completion I don't have available today, but I am happy to provide those to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about FireSmarting for residents, we're often talking about a home or a cabin's structural protection. At my constituency event last week, one constituent had a really interesting suggestion for the Minister. Will he consider amending timber harvesting permits and any associated regulations so that residents might harvest firewood at municipal firebreaks? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly a very good point. I think that, you know, as we look at FireSmarting, it's also about fuel reduction in the broader landscape. And, you know, there are certainly some limitations in the current legislation such as the harvest distance from roads that must be met. However, in the new Forest Act, we will provide tools that have more flexibility when that Act comes into force. And we're certainly happy to have the department examine whether there are opportunities within the current system that could better support the use of timber cutting permits and reduce the fuel loads around communities.

We will also make sure that, as we're doing this, it can be done safely and in compliance with the Acts. We'll also be happy to consider this as a suggestion as we move forward in the development of the final regulations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1216-20(1):
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMMING

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement, my questions will be directed to the Minister of Justice.

We have a lot of offenders who continuously go into the correctional institution without being rehabilitated, and once released they don't have the tools to deal with their trauma that keeps them going in and out of these correctional institutions. So what steps is the government taking to expand access to restorative justice programs so that more

Indigenous offenders can be diverted from costly incarcerations through community-based and on-the-land healing programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly community justice and restorative justice is one of the priorities of this government and of this Assembly. And, you know, we're very engaged on the fact that Indigenous people are more over-represented in the justice system across the NWT. So currently as of April 2026, we have six multi-year agreements and 13 single-year agreements in the community justice file across the NWT. This is one of the ways that we're certainly working with communities in addressing this challenge.

We also have a large number of programs available across the NWT. So I will focus on one, but there are many. There's community -- there's the wellness court. There's intimate partner violence treatment option. There's justice navigators. But I will focus on the men's healing fund which is one of the programs that is highlighted here.

Currently, there are six communities that are participating in that fund, and two of those communities, Aklavik and Fort McPherson, are from the Member's riding. So we're very happy to report on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's, on the average, costing about \$600 to house an inmate per day. And with the money going to the community programs for the -- it's less than what it costs to house an inmate in the correctional institution. How does the government justify that continued reliance on correctional facilities at the cost of over \$600 per day per inmate when evidence shows restorative justice programs can be effective in reducing re-offending and supporting rehabilitation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it just so happens I was looking at the rate or the total count of inmates in the North Slave Correctional Centre this morning, and currently there are 12 incarcerated people that are actually serving time in the North Slave Correctional Centre. There were two federal inmates and the remainder, which was 130-some, were remands. So there's a small number of inmates that are actually serving time in the Northwest Territories.

We have a tremendous investment in many of the community programs besides what we

invest in the rehabilitation side. So there's \$2.3 million that's in community justice committees. There's \$800,000 in the justice navigator pilot program. We have a special funding project fund also that can be accessed by communities if they want to do some work in that direction of creating a special project within their community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These community-based programs are not funded enough to take on the responsibility of restorative justice in terms of going out on the land. It's where the healing is. And, you know, what measures are in place to ensure that first-time and nonviolent offenders are consistently assessed and directed toward restorative justice options within their home community or out on the land? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, through the community justice program there are outreach workers that assist community members in accessing these programs. The idea is to have, you know, early offenders be able to access this resource and participate. And we're certainly happy to share information with the Member about the many programs that are available across the NWT in the process in order to access those resources for his communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1217-20(1):
IMPACTS OF STAFF TURNOVER ON
CHILDREN IN CARE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

I know we've spoken a number of times in this House about the high rates of staff vacancies and turnover among social workers, particularly within NWT child and family services. I am wondering if the Minister has any insights into how that high staff turnover and high caseload for the rest of the social workers, how that affects children in care. So specifically children in temporary or permanent custody of CFS, for example when it comes to those children being able to establish a meaningful relationship over time with the social worker assigned to them or a revolving door of staff assigned to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we do know is stability does matter. Child protection workers are not a replacement of caregivers. They are facilitators on a pathway to family reunification and healing. A lot of our stats show that many of the kids that are in the program of child and family services are under voluntary service agreements and a large portion of those children still remain at home with their families. So the main caregiver for those children and supports are their family at home; however, I understand that when they're in foster care their child protection worker may be the one consistent when they become in that area. But the change from individual child protection worker to another, the child protection workers are trained through their training, the training system, and they follow territorial standards to try and focus on cultural safety, trauma-informed practices. So, I mean, and that's why the emphasis is always trying to keep them with family and in their homes or in their communities as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that CFS workers sometimes have the power to make really fundamental decisions about children's lives, including who they stay with, if or when they might be put up for adoption or how often they might get to travel to see relatives, how can we be confident that those workers are making decisions that are in the best interests of children in their custody given that those staff are so overworked and may struggle to even maintain regular contact with the children? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, decision-making at child and family services are guided by what is the best interests of the child. Child protection workers do not act or make decisions in isolation. Their decision is guided. Decisions regarding safety, protection, permanency, reunification, and adoption, are considered with supervisors and managers, are often reviewed by the regional directors. And in cases of adoption and even kids coming into care now, Indigenous children, you know, with the new federal law, there's discussions with notification to Indigenous governments. So there's many different areas where they take into account when making these decisions. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, finally, can the Minister explain how the children and youth that are in care, how they themselves are involved in making those fundamental decisions about their own lives? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children and youth have rights when involved in child and family services, and the right to be heard is very critical for the department. The Child and Family Services Act emphasizes that wishes of the children over 12 must be considered in case planning and in drafting care agreements and minimum contact with children emphasizes the inclusion of a child's voice in decision-making. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1218-20(1):
MEDICAL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on my Member's statement where I am suggesting that we need pathways or navigator people to work with the medical travel system because people often, I find, are overwhelmed by the process and whether they understand it fully or not, they're under the fog of stress of the challenge before them, Mr. Speaker. And I am going to say, as an example -- it's not a real person, but I am going to -- the name that is, but it's a real circumstance is, you know, Yvette got approval for her medical travel to book her own travel arrangements, but when she did the follow-ups she was told no. And it only seems fair that the subsequent journey is supported.

Mr. Speaker, is there a way that the Minister can create or develop or redistribute resources to ensure that patients get the navigation and support during the medical travel process so they know they have to keep going back for approvals thereafter? Because they were quite upset the second and third time on the same journey they were denied. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the scenario but without -- and I wouldn't speak to details on any personal medical travel on any individual. But every medical travel case that goes through medical travel, you know, it depends on what insurance that covers them that's covered for them. It depends on the point of nearest facility

available. It depends on, you know -- the follow-up appointments can be -- every single time there's a travel, it has to be initiated with a new medical travel process. So, I mean, I appreciate the Member trying to create a scenario but whenever we deal with medical travel or any BFs, it's every single -- it's a complex system and so I wouldn't be able to respond to just that. However, we have put navigators throughout the system over the years, like the cancer navigators that really help with patients that are travelling for cancer issues. We have recently approved the case managers for medical travel that are going to be overseeing, making sure people are travelling when they need to travel. And then we also have the client of office experience and the medical travel office themselves and the staff there themselves, so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have to take the context here. Yvette's not the real name, but it's personalized because it's true to real people, and I've even talked to some of my colleagues who've had similar examples.

Yvette goes for her treatment and told you can book your same -- your travel and make arrangements, but she goes back for the follow-up for the exact same process and under the fog, whether she was told or not, it doesn't matter, but natural justice would think it's supported. So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I am asking for, would a navigator keep checking in with these people.

Mr. Speaker, is there anything the Minister can do to, A, correct the situation I am describing; and, B, move forward in a more positive supportive way.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, that is why we initiated the medical travel case manager pilot so that they can make sure that the process and people are travelling and whatever paperwork and processes are needed to be done are getting done. And as anyone -- as medical travel is initiated, it has to be pre-approved for travel and so if they were approved for the first travel, the second travel still has to be pre-approved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from the Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And under the fog of stress and focus, that's the problem, is those messages get lost and the relationship is important so, Mr. Speaker, I reaffirm once again the same point which is, is there any way to revisit this challenge? Looking back as well as looking forward, today

we could do something for a family that feels very stressed. And I am not representing the only family who's gone through this experience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we have implemented the -- you know, the nurse case managers for medical travel in -- as a pilot right now because we know that there is an issue. And so that is what we have initiated to try and -- try to resolve some of these issues. And once this is rolled out, we'll be able to assess that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1219-20(1):
COST OF LIVING AND INCOME SUPPORT
PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think my statement kind of clearly states my concerns around the cost of living for seniors, and I understand that the solutions I seek may cross several departments. I will start with one, Mr. Speaker, on my questions. That will be for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I know we've had this conversation before in this House around the thresholds for income, and I guess what I am looking for, Mr. Speaker, is recognition that there is an issue here and recognition that there are different circumstances for not only the territory but to individuals themselves. So I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment whether her department is willing to, again, look at the income thresholds for these programs that are offered to seniors. 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, and thank you to the Member for raising this. Certainly, we want to make sure that we are staying on top of where our cost of living is going in the territory and in that process definitely looking out for our most vulnerable residents when we're talking about children here today, we're talking about elders and seniors, and we want to make sure that we are constantly reviewing trends as far as fuel prices and cost of living. So this is something that the department does continuously to make sure that we are doing our best to understand the pressure that is on residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think I can read a sentence that sums it up here, and it's that no senior should be penalized for having a modest pension, for stepping forward to care for children and family members when that support is needed most.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, when we look at our policies, when we look at these income thresholds, do we or is there an appetite to look also -- not only yes, we understand the income portion of it based on the economic realities and based on cost of living, but the cultural aspect of it as well, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, recognizing what the Member has said in regards to, yes, there's economics to it, but there is also understanding that regardless of if a senior is living with multiple generations of family members for example, that does not have an impact on consideration of a senior's income in deciding if they qualify or not. So if a senior is living with people that are part of their family or out of their family, only the senior's income is recognized in determining if they qualify or not for the program. So certainly not looking to control or have an impact on who people live with because recognizing that we all need support, especially we need to make sure that seniors have support as well. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. And I understand that, but I think the point I was making, not that there's going to be other income in the household considered for the subsidy but the fact that typically there's not, typically there's one. And if that senior is actually in that home caring for members of their family for various and whatever reasons -- that's other issues I know we deal with. But if they have care of their grandkids, their children that they also have to provide for, then there should be a cultural aspect taken into that when looking at these programs and whether or not these seniors qualify for it.

My final question -- and I am going to hopefully at round 2 get some more, and maybe I will ask the questions of the Minister of housing as well.

But, like, our income thresholds are all over the place, across different departments, across different programs. And has there ever been a consideration to look why don't we have one? Why don't we look at least -- and it may be one for different regions and different scenarios, but one income for every program rather than

\$80,000 for home heating and whatever it is for home repair and so on and so forth. Is that something that this Minister could advocate for and possibly take to her counterparts to look at evening the board across for these. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that some of the work that has definitely been done on both sides of this House this term is how can we, you know, reduce some of these administrative impacts on residents of the territory. I appreciate the Member bringing forward another instance of potentially red tape in the government and so certainly happy to commit to the Member to discuss this with my Cabinet colleagues and see if there are things that I don't know about that would be, you know, a reason for this, but certainly want to make sure if there is room for us to have unity across government programs that we are taking the opportunity to do that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1220-20(1):
PROGRESS ON CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we await for the tabling of the auditor general's report, I do want to turn back to a previous auditor general's report into child and family services that the Minister provided an update to this House in 2024 saying 88 percent of the commitments were on track. Can the Minister provide an update to that action plan that was previously worked on that was at 88 percent. Have we completed it as of today? 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, as of right now, we have a child and family service strategy and action plan. That's a five-year plan, and we're two years into it, just over two years into it. But I don't have that level of detail. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of the actions that were reported on were process review based, ongoing, as we know the Minister just said. Some are pilot, some are engagement exercises, some are framework development, and some are still in review stages. So my question is, is that progress, or are we actually making tangible difference to the day-to-day operations of this system that,

again, deals with our most vulnerable youth in the territory? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So when we look at the past auditor general reports, with 2014 and then 2018, you know, there has been some -- there has been progress and there was evidence in progress between 2014 to 2018, you know, and now where we are with tracking with the progress. And I do like to highlight that. When we look back at this system, this is a very complex system. It's a high turnover system. We have, you know, many communities that -- that, you know, as we said, like we struggle with recruitment into some of the smallest and remote communities. And now we're, you know, over the years, we've been struggling with the change in what has been going on in homes. Because when you look at things that have been happening in homes from prior to the first audit to now to where we are today and all of the review that we've done, we've had to constantly pivot to how we support families. And with the recruitment challenges, you know, the training that we're doing to support and reinforce, and the prevention and the positions that we're putting into family preservation is a huge difference, and it's something that was never seen before. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we know it's complicated. We've brought these issues to the floor many, many times. Mr. Speaker, this will be the third audit that is tabled by the Office of the Auditor General into one program area. Mr. Speaker, the problems are well known. They often repeat.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister today accept responsibility for the results of -- or does she agree that she is ultimately responsible for the outcomes of the child and family services system in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this area, this is not just a department. This is the North. This is what has happened to Indigenous people in Canada. And my commitment has always been to every person in this territory and every Indigenous family is that we are doing everything that we possibly can to ensure that those children are safe. And, you know, when we -- yes, the audits are just another tool to make sure that we have outside -- you know, somebody looking in and saying we need to still continue to focus on this. And I said -- but if you look at government, every single department, auditor general is

always going to be there and is always going to find some improvements as we change, as AI gets involved, as social media has blown up, you know. I said everything has changed in this world. And so we're always going to have to -- and I've always -- I will always accept any responsibility for any of the work. And, you know, and the staff. The staff that are working in this department, these staff see the worst in this territory. They see our children and families at their worst, and we need to make sure that as a government that we are there to support them and these children to have the best life that they can have in our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1221-20(1):
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
2026 BARGING SEASON

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my bargaining statement earlier, my question is to the Minister of Infrastructure.

My first question there, Mr. Speaker, what coordinations, communications, are underway between the marine transportation services department and the Canadian Coast Guard on navigation routes, depths, and channel markers? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always appreciate the opportunity to speak "aboot" MTS. However, we've been in close contact with coast guard over the last few months. Coast guard's been communicating with MTS. MTS has been trying to find out details on when they're able to put the buoys in. We've been working with ECC also to get water depths so that we're aware of what's going on. I've actually had some correspondence with the Minister for National Defence who's now in charge of Canadian Coast Guard to -- not put pressure but, you know, express to the Minister how important this is to the North and how important it is for the Canadian Coast Guard to get out there and put navigable buoys out there so that we can get our boats out there as soon as we can.

We have a commitment from the Canadian Coast Guard to get out there as quick as they can. For the first time, from my understanding, in a long time, that we actually have a date of June 13th that they're hitting the waterways and they're steaming down the river to put buoys in, and I assure you that our MTS team will be right

behind them with the shipment. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for that information from the Minister.

My next question there, Mr. Speaker, is huge concerns from last year was, in particular, rates and the short notices for sailing, which really put challenges on the shipment of southern vendors to get their cargo to Hay River. Can the Minister share preparations or practices or mitigations to these two particular concerns. Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the first part I will talk about is the rates. Earlier on this year, a team from MTS traveled the Sahtu area to speak to customers, and customers have been spoken to in all our shipping routes to talk about rates, you know, and the potential changes and impacts to improving them. So that's on the works.

Secondly, in regards to the sailing season last year, very unique situation of course. We had water that we were unsure of that would be able to operate our sailing of the boats. So we were concerned throughout the whole season. And as coast guard was able to put the buoys in, our boats followed them. And that was the point of getting the high water and making sure we were able to do it. However, they weren't sure at the very beginning. So, you know, we were able to get communication out as soon as we could. As soon as we found out Coast Guard was sailing, we were sailing. So we don't determine whether or not the waterways are navigable, Coast Guard does, and as soon as they give us the okay, MTS is right behind them.

The fortunate thing this year is everything is looking promising for water levels. So the snow pack in the mountains, the water levels in all the river systems, the Liard Basin, the Peace River, the Slave River, the Hay River, all the water levels are high, and that will definitely help the Mackenzie River with the flow so we can get our boats going up to the Arctic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for those replies. Those are just identifications of challenges that we face at the other end.

My last question there, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister, within his portfolio on the petroleum products division side, share some of the fuel volumes that are going to be barged down to the Sahtu communities. It really relieves the

shipment over the winter road season as we get more volumes during the summer. Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were fortunate with our winter haul again we were able to get a lot of fuel to the communities. But, again, we will take advantage of a good shipping season and haul more fuel. So we're forecasting deliveries to the Sahtu this year of -- to Fort Good Hope, 650,000 litres of gasoline and 3.4 million litres of diesel. And to Tulita, we're looking at about 300,000 litres of gasoline and 3.3 million litres of diesel. As always, these volumes are subject to change depending on demand and if there's a possibility of adding more, we always can. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1222-20(1):
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TESTING
FOLLOWING LEAD DETECTION IN
SCHOOLS

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. And we need to be mindful that, you know, as an Indigenous of the Northwest Territories, this is our land and our people that we are talking about. So, Mr. Speaker, a question for -- to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Can the Minister explain why Yellowknife students were given priority access to blood lead level testing when elevated lead results were first identified but that same access has not continued for students in small communities where positive results have since been confirmed? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what was done in -- when the first school was identified to have lead, health and social services within the city, within Yellowknife because that's where it was, made the public announcement if there were family or staff or parents of children who wanted to have their children assessed that they could contact the health care provider. Yes, in the capital, there was an email I believe, or a site where you could contact. However, in small communities, any small community that has tested positive is to contact your health centre. Many of the health centres are aware of this and so if they do the assessment and the assessment does call for needing a blood test, whereas even in Yellowknife when it said that

they need an assessment, not necessarily did they all need a blood test. So it's based on the recommendation of the practitioner. And so that still stands for any of those health centres in small communities, that they just need to access their health care provider. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, Mr. Speaker, it's kind of disappointing. It would be nice if, you know, the Minister would be, you know, if the Minister was working well with the other health centre, so. But anyway since the public briefing, additional test results from NWT communities have shown lead levels far higher than what was known at that time. Can the Minister explain why that department has not provided updated public information on the potential health impacts for students in those communities? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, information that I have received from the chief public health officer is overall lead exposure has dropped dramatically in Canada and the NWT over time, and children's blood levels are at historic lows across the territory. Remaining sources of lead are well understood and manageable. GNWT has an effective testing and mitigation process in place for schools. Parents can feel confident that right now in schools drinking water is safe. And if people are concerned about their health and lead exposure, they can speak to their health care provider for more information and a health assessment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, my next question is not to health and social services but it's to the infrastructure. Can I -- or I go back on the list then?

Then I will wait because it's for the infrastructure, McKay.

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

QUESTION 1223-20(1):
SECURITY IMPACTS OF THE EKATI
DIAMOND MINE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions continue to be for the Minister of ECC, digging a bit more into detail on specifics now.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please detail for the House what his department is doing in response to the revelation that the Ekati mine site may be undersecured? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Member is referring to some numbers and information that was included in their CCAA filing. That information has not been shared with the Government of the Northwest Territories or the land and water boards so we're unable to assess that information at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am a little bit confused, I must admit. It seems like the information is on the public record. How could the department not simply access it and assess it to determine if any action needs to be taken? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we work through the assessment and the establishment of securities processed with the land and water boards, that information is generated through a process that we work collaboratively with the boards. We do an evaluation through our process. This information was not given to us directly. We don't have that information available to do that assessment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to have to reflect on that a little bit and come up with some additional questions. I am going to move on to another one.

Mr. Speaker, I note that Diavik is already proceeding with closure and De Beers has indicated closure of their site is likely to commence soon. Has the Minister considered the risk that the longer the Ekati site is in a limbo state we could end up in a situation where GNWT takes responsibility for the site and would then have to operate the winter road alone potentially increasing the reclamation costs even further? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, currently the team is looking at all the potential outcomes from the potential that the one or three diamond mines potentially no longer exist in the Northwest Territories, and part of that is being calculated in the plan as we move forward with the reclamation planning process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1224-20(1):
TRANSBOUNDARY WATER IMPACTS OF
WONDER VALLEY AI DATA CENTRE
PROJECT

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had a constituent reach out to me yesterday about the Wonder Valley AI data centre. It's backed by a celebrity investor, and it's to be built near Grand Prairie, which is in the Mackenzie Basin watershed. It's expected to be 65 square kilometres in size and estimated to use up to 24 million cubic metres of clean water annually. To put that in perspective, 24 million cubic metres is lifetime consumption of 460,000 people, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has decided there's no environmental assessment needed, just permits. So my question for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is how will the GNWT assess impacts on water quantity or quality and intervene if required? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member has indicated, the Wonder Valley AI data centre project is a large project. It certainly is a large water consumer and currently there are no regulatory submissions within the province of Alberta so therefore at this time there is no project to do an evaluation on. We will continue to monitor the situation and evaluate -- participate when the opportunity arises. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, without an environmental assessment I don't know at what point the Minister could intervene. Could he clarify? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, without the ability to intervene in a non-existent environmental assessment, we will certainly use the tools that we currently have through our transboundary water agreements to monitor, continue to collect the data, look at the flow rates that are flowing into the Northwest Territories, and use that as an assessment tool as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recognizing that 24 million cubic metres a year might be removed from the water system, can the Minister commit to crunching the numbers and letting us know in the House

what that might look like for the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, water certainly is an area that's top of mind to me. I recently had a number of conversations with the Minister in Alberta and certainly, you know, we will continue to monitor the situation, monitor the flow of water into the Northwest Territories, and continue to report that data in our regular reporting process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1225-20(1):
WASTE MANAGEMENT AND EXTENDED
PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I have questions for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change on a different subject, on the topic of waste management and particularly the extended producer responsibility program. So that means trying to get producers of things like tires and electronics to take responsibility for those things when they go kaput, when they become waste, instead of dumping that responsibility and cost on our community government landfills.

So when I last asked the Minister about this exactly two years ago, we were told regulation updates would be complete in 2026. So can the Minister tell us what is the status of the work to update regulations that would bring the new Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Act into force? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, back in 2024, when I committed to that work, you know, since then we've refocused our priorities from the Legislative Assembly, and so we continue to work on this from a policy perspective. The work is not yet complete, and we are -- it likely won't be complete until the next Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that is disappointing to hear. I wonder if the Minister can update us on anything the department has learned from the past several years of ongoing research into, for example, what mechanisms for extended producer responsibility could be feasible or enforceable in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Certainly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've really looked at the Yukon experience. That's where the focus of the work has been, a jurisdiction very much like ours. And part of the experience that they've had in the Yukon is because of the economy of scale in small territories, it's really hard to implement a program that is specific to one territory. So a big part of what we've learned there is that, you know, we need to probably partner up with a southern jurisdiction to ensure that we have that economy of scale to be able to better deliver that type of a program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that community governments are currently managing waste and landfills in our communities, does the Minister yet have any clear idea what would be the role or expectations of community governments in the rollout of extended producer responsibility? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think as we work on developing this program and what it potentially looks like, part of that framework of the final delivery of the program would include the role of different community governments and what that would look like in the way of collecting or delivering the program. I don't have that specific level of detail here with me today, but I am happy to get it for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Oral questions. Mr. Clerk.

Follow-Up to Oral Questions

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 7.2(7), I have received follow-up information for the following oral questions from the first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly: Oral Question 1087 and Oral Question 1194. These follow-ups will be printed in full in today's Hansard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Follow-up to Oral Questions to be printed in final Hansard

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 9 on the orders, oral questions.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. The Member from Range Lake is seeking unanimous consent to return to oral questions. Are there any nays?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: 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

COMMITTEE REPORT 42-20(1):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW
OF BILL 41:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE REAL ESTATE
AGENTS LICENSING ACT,
RECEIVED AND ADOPTED, DEEMED
READ, RESPONSE FROM GOVERNMENT

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents Licensing Act.

Bill 41 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on February 11th, 2026, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. The committee completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs on May 27th, 2026. No amendments were proposed.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents Licensing Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favor? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Bill 41 has been received and will be moved to Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents Licensing Act, and commends it to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 42-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents Licensing Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been called. All those in favor? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The 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 Committee Report 42-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents Licensing Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Members. 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. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Reports on Standing Special Committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for WSCC.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 507-20(1):
WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION
COMMISSION 2026 CORPORATE PLAN

TABLED DOCUMENT 508-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC
UTILITIES BOARD 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission 2026 Corporate Plan, and the Northwest Territories Public Utilities Board 2025 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for WSCC. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Status of Women.

TABLED DOCUMENT 509-20(1):
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND GIRLS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Advisory Committee Terms of Reference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Tabling of documents. Member from Great Slave.

TABLED DOCUMENT 510-20(1):
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY BRIEFING
PAPER: "IT COSTS MORE TO DO
NOTHING: PREVENTING MALE
PERPETUATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE"

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a briefing paper from the University of Calgary School of Public Policy titled, It Costs More to Do Nothing, Preventing Male Perpetration of Domestic Violence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 511-20(1):
2026 REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
OF CANADA TO THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ON CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES.

Colleagues, in accordance with Section 41 of the Northwest Territories Act, I wish to table the 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly on Child and Family Services in the Northwest Territories in English and in French. Thank you, Members.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Member from Yellowknife Centre, and please make sure it's on the agenda next time. Thank you. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

TABLED DOCUMENT 512-20(1):
CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE PUBLICATION:
"WORKING TOGETHER TO UNLOCK LAND
FOR YELLOWKNIFE'S FUTURE –
SUPPORTING HOUSING, INVESTMENT
AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY"

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't realize the rule changed to be on the agenda. I had my hand up the whole time.

That said, Mr. Speaker -- a document from the City of Yellowknife. It's titled Working Together to Unlock Land for Yellowknife's Future - Supporting Housing, Investment and Long-Term Sustainability. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 49:
SAFER COMMUNITIES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS ACT

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, June 1, 2026, I will present Bill 49, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. 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 the Sahtu.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wishes of committee? Member of Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you to the Member. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Mahsi cho.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 4, Tabled Document 445-20(1), Tabled Document 483-20(1). And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Can I have a seconder? Member from Yellowknife Centre. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third Reading Bills. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item number 9, oral questions, on today's orders. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member from the Yellowknife Centre is requesting unanimous consent to return to oral questions. Any nays?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Friday, May 29th, 2026, at 10 a.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements

3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 48, An Act to Amend to Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2
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 445-20(1), 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report
 - Tabled Document 483-20(1), 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission Final Report
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 Friday, May 29th, 2026, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

UNEDITED HANSARD