



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 73

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Pages 3148 - 3192

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker
Hon. Shane Thompson
(Nahendeh)

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland
(Kam Lake)
*Minister of Education, Culture and
Employment*
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and
Investment*

Mr. Richard Edjericon
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Robert Hawkins
(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Lucy Kuptana
(Nunakput)
*Minister responsible for Housing
Northwest Territories*
*Minister responsible for the Status of
Women*

Hon. Jay Macdonald
(Thebacha)
Government House Leader
*Minister of Environment and Climate
Change*
Minister of Justice

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

Mr. Danny McNeely
(Sahtu)

Ms. Shauna Morgan
(Yellowknife North)

Mr. Julian Morse
(Frame Lake)

Mr. George Nerysoo
(Mackenzie Delta)

Ms. Kate Reid
(Great Slave)

Mr. Denny Rodgers
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Hon. Lesa Semmler
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)
Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. R.J. Simpson
(Hay River North)
Premier
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous
Affairs*

Mr. Kieron Testart
(Range Lake)

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek
(Yellowknife South)
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
*Minister responsible for Strategic
Infrastructure, Energy and Supply
Chains*
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power
Corporation*

**Mrs. Jane Weyallon
Armstrong**
(Monfwi)

Mrs. Sheryl Yakeleya
(Dehcho)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Mr. Harjot Sidhu

Deputy Clerks
Mr. Michael Ball
Ms. Miranda Bye

Committee Clerks
Ms. Katie Charpentier
Mr. Paul Mercredi
Mr. Angus Wilson

Law Clerks
Mr. Toby Kruger
Ms. Sandra Mackenzie

Box 10
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
www.ntassembly.ca

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER OR REFLECTION	3149
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	3150
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 168-20(1): SESSIONAL STATEMENT	3150
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 169-20(1): NOTICE OF BUDGET ADDRESS	3153
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	3153
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 806-20(1): CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW INUVIALUIT REGIONAL CORPORATION CHAIR ERWIN ELIAS	3153
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 807-20(1): GLOBAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION	3153
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 808-20(1): CLOSURE OF NORMAN WELLS OILFIELD AND IMPORTANCE OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY	3154
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 809-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LITERACY RATES	3154
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 810-20(1): 2026 ASSOCIATION FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION (AME) ROUNDUP	3155
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 811-20(1): RADON TESTING, EXPOSURE AND MITIGATION	3156
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 812-20(1): IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION	3156
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 813-20(1): OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMY	3157
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 814-20(1): AMANDA ANDRE-NIDITCHIE, FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE CANADIAN COAST GUARD DECKHAND	3157
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 815-20(1): TREATY OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO HEALTHCARE	3158
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 816-20(1): PRIVATE SECURITY LEGISLATION	3158
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 817-20(1): CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF TWYLA ISAIAH	3159
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 818-20(1): NATIONAL GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS DAY	3160
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	3160
ORAL QUESTIONS	3161
QUESTION 923-20(1): DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENTS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	3161
QUESTION 924-20(1): STATUS OF LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY GUARDS AND OTHER SECURITY OCCUPATIONS ACT	3162
QUESTION 925-20(1): DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE PROCUREMENT AND INVESTMENTS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND CONSTRUCTION OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY	3162
QUESTION 926-20(1): CONSTRUCTION OF MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY	3163
QUESTION 927-20(1): LITERACY RATES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	3164
QUESTION 928-20(1): RADON TESTING, EXPOSURE AND MITIGATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	3165
QUESTION 929-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACTIONS AGAINST MISINFORMATION AND DENIALISM REGARDING RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS	3166
QUESTION 930-20(1): MODERNIZATION OF MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICIES	3167
QUESTION 931-20(1): LAND TRANSFERS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENTS	3168
QUESTION 932-20(1): FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ASSAULT-STYLE FIREARM BUYBACK PROGRAM	3169
QUESTION 933-20(1): INVESTING IN YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS	3170
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTIONS	3170
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 771-20(1): NWT SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS	3170
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 784-20(1): SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONAL STUDENTS	3171
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 785-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE PROGRAM	3171
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 789-20(1): 2023 WILDFIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE AFTER-ACTION REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS	3172
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 792-20(1): NORTH OF 60 MINING TAX CREDIT	3172
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 796-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE CANADA'S CULTURAL SAFETY DESIGN COLLABORATIVE TEAM REPORT: "HONOURING THE VOICES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – ACTIONS FOR CHANGE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH CARE SYSTEM"	3172
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 801-20(1): YELLOWKNIFE PRIMARY CARE CLINIC LABORATORY WAIT TIMES AND SERVICE CAPACITY	3172
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 804-20(1): SUPPORTS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSES	3173
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 811-20(1): BACKUP POWER GENERATORS IN SENIORS' HOUSING	3173
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 813-20(1): SAME-DAY HEALTHCARE APPOINTMENTS	3173
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 814-20(1): HEALTHCARE PATIENT EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRES	3173
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 815-20(1): AFTERCARE SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS RETURNING FROM ADDICTIONS TREATMENT PROGRAMS	3174

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 822-20(1): NO-SHOW APPOINTMENT RATES AND WAITLIST MANAGEMENT IN HEALTHCARE	3174
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 823-20(1): 2025 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	3175
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 835-20(1): STREAMLINING LIQUOR LICENSING	3175
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 840-20(1): MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT IN SCHOOL	3175
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 844-20(1): TRANSFER OF COMMISSIONER'S LAND WITHIN MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES	3176
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 848-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL EXPENSES	3176
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 849-20(1): ONLINE BOOKING FOR YELLOWKNIFE PRIMARY CARE APPOINTMENTS	3176
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 853-20(1): UPDATE ON PHARMACY ACT REGULATIONS	3177
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 860-20(1): MERGING OF HEALTHCARE CARD AND DRIVER'S LICENSE	3177
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 861-20(1): COMMUNITY LANDFILLS	3178
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 866-20(1): VACANCY RATES AT STANTON LEGACY HOSPITAL	3178
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 879-20(1): OUT-OF-COUNTRY MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY	3179
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 880-20(1): LATE PAYMENTS FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	3179
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 881-20(1): ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS	3179
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 883-20(1): LATE PAYMENTS FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	3180
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 887-20(1): LATE PAYMENTS FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	3180
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 893-20(1): DEVOLUTION INITIATIVES	3180
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 899-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CANCER STATISTICS	3181
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 901-20(1): ESTABLISHMENT OF YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT AUTHORITY	3181
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 902-20(1): HEALTH INFORMATION PRIVACY BREACHES	3182
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 903-20(1): ORIENTATION AND TRAINING FOR LOCUMS DIRECTING MEDICAL TRAVEL	3183
ORAL QUESTIONS	3183
QUESTION 934-20(1): ADDRESSING MEDICAL TRAVEL CHALLENGES	3183
QUESTION 935-20(1): FINE OPTION PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE COMMITTEES	3184
QUESTION 936-20(1): FORT LIARD COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAM	3185
RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS	3186
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 21-20(1): CHANGES TO CHILD AND YOUTH COUNSELLING SERVICES	3186
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 22-20(1): ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	3186
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 23-20(1): HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS RETURNING AS LOCUMS	3187
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 24-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MEDICAL STUDENTS REJECTED FOR RESIDENCIES	3188
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY	3189
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	3190
TABLED DOCUMENT 440-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 822-20(1): NO-SHOW APPOINTMENT RATES IN HEALTHCARE CLINICS	3190
TABLED DOCUMENT 441-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 899-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CANCER STATISTICS	3190
TABLED DOCUMENT 442-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY (PREMIER)	3190
TABLED DOCUMENT 443-20(1): JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF PUBLIC RADON TESTING AND MITIGATION SUPPORTS IN CANADA	3190
TABLED DOCUMENT 444-20(1): JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF PUBLICLY FUNDED FERTILITY PROGRAMS IN CANADA	3190
TABLED DOCUMENT 445-20(1): 2025 REVIEW OF MEMBERS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS REPORT (SPEAKER)	3191
TABLED DOCUMENT 446-20(1): SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION TO REVIEW MEMBERS' COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS (SPEAKER)	3191
TABLED DOCUMENT 447-20(1): LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY GUARDS AND OTHER SECURITY OCCUPATIONS ACT (NWT, 1991)	3191
ORDERS OF THE DAY	3191

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

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer or Reflection

---Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dear Mr. Speaker:

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

- Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) 2026-2027;

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

- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026

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

Yours truly,

Gerald W. Kisoun.

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

Ministers' Statements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

Members' Statements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 808-20(1):
CLOSURE OF NORMAN WELLS OILFIELD
AND IMPORTANCE OF MACKENZIE
VALLEY HIGHWAY

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the matter of profound urgency for my home community and the entire Sahtu region, a matter that strikes at the very core of our economic survival and our ability to exercise true sovereignty in Canada's North.

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

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

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

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

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

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

we only have a year and a half left. And cheaper because our debt's out of control.

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

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

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

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

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

---Unanimous consent granted

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

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 810-20(1):
2026 ASSOCIATION FOR MINERAL
EXPLORATION (AME) ROUNDUP

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

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

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

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

my work in a collaborative way as you have encouraged us to do, Mr. Speaker, as I really do think that is the key to our success. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 811-20(1):
RADON TESTING, EXPOSURE AND
MITIGATION

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

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

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

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

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

basements or crawlspaces. These systems range in price but are not cheap one-offs.

In speaking with the Minister of MACA before the holiday break, he agreed that radon is a concern in the territory and noted that he has seen high levels of radon in his region. Later today, I will table a jurisdictional scan of what provinces and territories are doing to test and mitigate radon for their residents. I will have questions for the Minister on what supports we can offer our NWT communities in taking on this health hazard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] Mr. Speaker, today the thing I want to talk about is regarding British Columbia legislature. In November, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, they are talking about doing without the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We celebrate that day, and it's a very important day for us. [Translation Ends].

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

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

Mr. Speaker, acknowledging this history does not detract from the achievements Canadians are proud of. Rather, it strengthens our national narrative by ensuring it is honest and complete. Reconciliation is not an accusation. It is a responsibility. It reflects our collective

commitment to healing, respect, and a better future for all who share this land.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the heels of this procurement announcement, now is the time to convince and lobby our federal government that the Mackenzie Valley Highway is a true nation-building project and that funding it and connecting the two northern operational support hubs will be significant for defence and sovereignty, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're

all pulling on the same rope on this one but we, as a government, as my colleagues in this building have to ensure, that we are, indeed, pulling hard enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 814-20(1):
AMANDA ANDRE-NIDITCHIE, FIRST
INDIGENOUS FEMALE CANADIAN COAST
GUARD DECKHAND

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

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

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

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

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 815-20(1):
TREATY OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO
HEALTHCARE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we signed treaties to secure enduring promises of continual livelihood and survival. Those treaties define our ongoing relationship with the Crown, and then the Crown's presence in the North has grown from RCMP patrol to Canadian coast deliveries, a sprawling network of department of public institutions. Amongst the most crucial to our people are the services they ensure: access to health care.

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

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

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

The government must fully implement UNDRIP as a mandate by the last Assembly and implementing UNDRIP is not optional. It is a core feature of our own mandate letter, along with our own duty to work with Indigenous governments on medical travel policies. If the

GNWT cannot administer health care in a way that honours the Crown's obligations to our people, constituents are left out asking the question: Should the GNWT be administering the health care policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 816-20(1):
PRIVATE SECURITY LEGISLATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Colleagues, I can tell you Twyla faced life's challenges with kindness and grace. She reminded us that even when obstacles appear, we have the power to meet them with love. She showed us how to love our parents unconditionally, to care for others selflessly, and to lead with compassion. Today, as we

remember her, let us carry forward those lessons, to love as openly as she did, to be gentle yet strong, and to bring light into the lives of those around us.

Twyla's spirit will live on in every person she touched and in her family, her friends, and the community that had the privilege of calling her one of their own. Her legacy is one of compassion, selflessness, and love, and qualities that will continue to guide us every day.

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

Rest peacefully, Twyla. Your light will never fade.

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

Childhood Memories

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

As She Grew

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

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

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

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

Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

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

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

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

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

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

energy, but she's an inspiration with an endless battery life.

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

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone -- oh, man oh man,

I'm having a hard time with Kam Lake. Member from Kam Lake.

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

In addition, we have a great number of wonderful pages in the room today, including some from Kam Lake. We've got Mika Kotchilia, Avyannah Nataway as well Mia Dyson joining us from Kam Lake. Thank you.

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

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

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

Oral Questions

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

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

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the money the Member is referencing was made public through a -- I guess a pre-procurement announcement that was intended to allow potential contractors to prepare to bid on the contracts. So it's still a lot of details left to be hashed out on this but the whole purpose of this pre-procurement announcement is to ensure that people can get

prepared to do the work that needs to be done. And so people are already talking about ensuring that employees in the territory have the appropriate security clearances, that we have, you know, appropriate trades people ready to go. But it's unclear yet what those procurement notices mean, so we have to wait until likely a budget is passed, and then the Department of National Defence will provide more information. So it is a federal procurement, and I don't have many more details than what has been made public already. Thank you.

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

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

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I will ask one direct area of public policy. This requires an all of government approach. We need land. We need land available for the development in Yellowknife and Inuvik. My colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake mentioned this as well. Will the Premier eliminate all barriers within the GNWT policy realm to transfer the lands that the City of Yellowknife and the Town of Inuvik have been asking for, yes or no? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

QUESTION 924-20(1):
STATUS OF LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY
GUARDS AND OTHER SECURITY
OCCUPATIONS ACT

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

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

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

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the benefits of Ministers having dual roles, I get to ask the same Minister sort of the same

problem. Will the Minister of Justice work with the House Leader to bring forward this particular act so we can either review it or just simply enact it? Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I can speak to what I saw in that sort of pre-procurement notice, and that is that it is for things within those forward operating locations,

so runways, hangars, etcetera. It does not speak to major projects. That does not -- that's not to say that the federal government's totality of their expenditures related to defense in the territory will be limited to those two communities. So I'm still very, very hopeful and optimistic that there's other sources of funding from the federal government. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that little bit of a tease in there. I like that, that potentially we could have some funding for our highway.

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

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

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

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

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

Further to my Member's statement, it's got to be recognized that I sent out a briefing here earlier to this question. My first question to the Minister of strategic infrastructure: Will the Minister support and endorse the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Sahtu Secretariat Land Claims chapter 20 and 21 with the federal government which addresses access for Armed Forces division providing the capacity is there. Mahsi.

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

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

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

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are right now completing the work plan that was signed with the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation, and one of the deliverables there is that we will be submitting the (DAR) addendum report in July, and alongside that will go in the business case. So that is -- July would be the deadline on that but

in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, that is not stopping anyone, any Minister here from advancing and advocating for this project using already the very well-known principles of what will make this project such an important asset for the Government of the Northwest Territories, for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this is done in kind of two different fashions. So the first is ensuring that client navigators are serving residents with the supports that they need in order to

understand the paperwork that they're completing. We know that sometimes people need supports in other languages. Sometimes they need added support. Sometimes those supports come as well from Members in this House. And then the secondary kind of role with literacy supports is kind of those pathways to training or to supports for education that people might be looking for, supports for the knowledge of different programming that's happening in a community, for example, with the literacy council employability programming that's happening in some small communities in the territory right now as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTION 929-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES ACTIONS AGAINST
MISINFORMATION AND DENIALISM
REGARDING RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

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

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

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

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

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

of truth telling, honouring survivors, and educating the public? Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTION 930-20(1):
MODERNIZATION OF MEDICAL TRAVEL
POLICIES

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

The Premier made opening comments on this health today, and he talked about access, respect, and reliability. And in the 19th Assembly, we signed UNDRIP, so we talked about that a little bit as well. But, Mr. Speaker, part of the priority of this government, access to health care, is one of the three top priorities of this government -- or sorry, four top priorities of this government. And the letter from the Premier, June 12th, 2024, in that mandate letter from the Premier to the Minister of health, it talks about -- I'll just read the section here. It says that can the Minister start working with Indigenous governments to advance modernization of the GNWT medical travel policy.

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

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are many things that are ongoing right now, but one of the things that we had to do that was really priority was the medical response. So that's our air ambulance. We had to negotiate a new contract, which is only negotiated every ten years. This is to make sure that anybody who needs emergency air ambulance out of a small community into the capital or from a regional centre to the capital or to the south for whatever care that they need, that was a priority that was done. The other piece is that we are working on right now is we are working with NIHB. As the Member has stated in his Member's statement, the medical travel pieces are to surround the patient and getting them access to care; however, for First Nation and Inuit, we administer those on behalf of the rules that the federal government give us to do their program. They are the funder of the program, and if we do not administer their program under their rules then they do not give us the money to run the program. So one of the things that we have been doing is to -- working with our counterparts in Ottawa is to ensure that they understand the logistics of the North and

our small communities and how our small communities and our seniors, our elders in our communities, don't comprehend a lot of English. And this is some of the work that we were able to take them with us on the Nahendeh tour, and they went into the small communities, heard from those communities. And so the work that we did through that, the work that we are doing on modernizing the medical travel that will also aid in some of the things that -- you know, I can't speak to the upcoming budget, but it's the work that we're doing that's going to help to make those changes. However, there is still many areas that we are working on and throughout the rest of the term of this government that hopefully that we'll be able to finalize that and implement those changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the piece around air ambulance and medivacs is to get the patient to care. And sometimes, unfortunately, there is no -- patients can't take -- or the plane can't take other family members due to the amount of space and getting -- it's about getting the patient to the care that they need. What I would recommend is that anybody who -- you know, if their family members are leaving, it's reaching out to medical travel prior to, you know, jumping in your vehicle and driving because there are processes in place and sometimes, you know, it's unfortunate we're looking at the air ambulance because right now there isn't an exception or there isn't a policy around escorts when there's air ambulance. However, with NIHB -- which they will not delegate that to us -- they can, with the doctor and everybody can put in an exception request. With that exception request, sometimes there's an approval and sometimes there's not. But they don't delegate that to our administration. They hold that to them because that's up in their -- you know, for their decision-making. We are working with them right now to look at all of the things that they have approved to see if

there's a way that they can delegate that to us, which we could do an approval a lot faster. And we're hoping within the next -- you know, within these next couple of months that we will have that work done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am a little concerned that our Treaties number 8 and 11, signed in 1900 and 2000 -- or sorry, 1921, and we have rights on health. And, Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the policy on government now is overriding our treaties. And so when they turn down help for our constituents, who are treaty members, and we deny them because we're hiding behind policies, in terms of moving forward in collaboration and implementation of UNDRIP, what can we do different now as we develop new policies to work with treaty communities and without impacting their treaty rights on health? Thank you.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has been criticized by being a cumbersome process in the transfer of

land by the city of Yellowknife. But not just them. Indigenous governments, businesses, and industry, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are directed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

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

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

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

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly recognize the opportunity here. I think it's a tremendous opportunity for the Northwest Territories as a whole. One of my priorities as Minister has been to focus on land and the ability to transfer land to communities. That's through collaborative work with housing, with MACA, to ensure that we are putting forward our resources in a way that maximizes those opportunities. We've added additional resources, and we've really gone on an effort to

focus. Our primary focus was on housing, but it's very clear to me that working with the communities to advance the land requirements for these mega projects, to ensure that we get the maximum benefit from the \$10 billion, is certainly a priority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, just a few short weeks ago, the city was telling us that the land process and transfer process continues to be bogged down. Mr. Speaker, I know a lot of numbers get confusing, but I am going to say one land's employee, using round numbers, is \$150,000. I would hate to think 0.000015 would stand in the way of \$10 billion. That's the percentage, Mr. Speaker. So would the Minister take action to ensure the ball isn't dropped, and can the Minister explain what type of action he's going to do and accelerate to ensure this investment opportunity isn't lost in Inuvik and in Yellowknife and Northerners at large? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take an opportunity to ask the Minister of Justice. A few weeks ago, the GNWT announced its position with regard to the federal government's assault-style firearms buyback program, and it was reported in the

media, as the GNWT stated it would not be involved in the federal buyback program and that our territory's RCMP would be directed to not get involved. So that's left many residents, particularly those concerned about rising gun crime in our communities, confused as to whether the program applies in the territory at all.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I understand it the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The strategic planning and the work that's been going on has actually been slowed down in order to wait for DND, essentially a What We Heard was coming, and now that we

know a little bit more, the work is ongoing and there is plans with the strategic planning and everything else that's been going on with the Department of National Defence to build that all into the Yellowknife airport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the pace is what worries me. Plans within plans within plans; it does not sound like we're getting anywhere very quickly. So will the Minister -- can the Minister reassure me and Northerners that that plan and the necessary investments in that airport will be done by the time this money starts rolling out? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Follow-up to Oral Questions

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 7.2(7)2, I've received follow-up information for the following oral questions from the first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly:

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 771-
20(1):
NWT SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF
CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on October 16, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) understands the importance of the services that the NWT Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NWT SPCA) coordinates through its organization, not only to the Northwest Territories, but also Nunavut.

Since 2010, the NWT SPCA has received a total of \$193,390.71 from the GNWT, coming from a variety of sources, including:

- donations made by retiring GNWT employees;
- project-based funding through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment for clean-up activities at Fred Henne Park;
- support provided through the former Volunteer Organization Development Fund administered by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA); and
- funding received through the Non-Government Organization (NGO) Stabilization Fund administered by the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA).

During the recent review of the NGO Stabilization Fund, the NWT SPCA was invited to participate in engagement discussions and will continue to be part of these engagement opportunities going forward.

Dog control is a significant problem in some communities in the NWT. The GNWT is appreciative of the spay and neuter assistance programs that the NWT SPCA directly supports, as this is important in helping to mitigate safety issues and concerns with stray dogs. MACA continues to provide all community governments with Operations and Maintenance funding which, if the community government chooses, can be used to fund measures for animal control. That said, MACA does recognize that community governments must make their own decisions about what services they provide and how their budgets are allocated.

During emergency events, MACA's primary responsibility is the protection of human life and critical infrastructure. As such, MACA does not provide dedicated or standing emergency funding to animal welfare organizations, although animal-related considerations may arise indirectly in the context of broader community emergency response and recovery efforts.

At this time, the GNWT does not have plans to provide ongoing operational funding to the NWT SPCA through either EIA or MACA.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 784-
20(1):
SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONAL STUDENTS

Further to the response provided by the Member for Monfwi on October 17, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has a variety of programs to support individuals, including the Skills Development Program. This program provides eligible individuals with up to \$26,000 to access short-term skills development and upgrading programs that are up to 52 weeks in duration.

Skills Development Program funding assists with tuition, living allowance, travel, child care, books, tools and equipment and other fees, and eligible programs can include academic upgrading, life skills, employment readiness programs, pre-employment training courses, skill-specific training programs and post-secondary programs.

Interested individuals are encouraged to reach out to their Regional ECE Service Centre and request to speak with a Career Development Navigator to determine eligibility and suitability for the Skills Development Program and any other ECE labour market programs, services and supports. Individuals in high school are also encouraged to connect with their Career and Education Advisor who can direct them to appropriate ECE supports for their career goals.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 785-
20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE
PROGRAM

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on October 17, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment is the lead on immigration in the Northwest Territories. Its role is to work closely with the federal Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to manage the Northwest Territories Nominee Program and to address labour needs, promote economic and population growth, and support applicants and employers through the nominee program process.

The Department has consulted with the Department of Justice on the question of legal aid coverage for immigration matters, and they advise that while there can be some legal aid coverage in other provinces and territories for immigration matters such as deportation and refugee status, no province or territory to their knowledge provides legal aid for their nominee programs. Currently, demand for legal aid

services exceeds available resources, and the Legal Aid Commission is not in a position to expand its services. However, Legal Aid does offer a free outreach program to individuals that is not means' tested, which can provide up to one hour of limited, confidential legal information or advice. The Outreach lawyer's role is only to provide advice, and they cannot represent persons in court. The Outreach Legal Aid Clinic can be contacted by telephone at 1 867 767 9384, or toll-free at 1 844 497 1319.

Assistance with immigration legal questions may also be obtained by contacting the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or hiring an immigration consultant or lawyer.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 789-
20(1):
2023 WILDFIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE
AFTER-ACTION REVIEW
RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on October 17, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The 20th Legislative Assembly shares a strong focus on emergency management and there are several commitments included in the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories 2023-2027. To ensure transparency and accountability, the GNWT will begin tabling an annual report that will provide information about the structure of the NWT Emergency Management System and how it works, outline the roles and responsibilities of emergency management partners, and provide an update on activities undertaken during the reporting period to improve the system. These reports will supplement information shared through the Business Plan annual updates.

The first report will be tabled in February 2026.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 792-
20(1):
NORTH OF 60 MINING TAX CREDIT

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on October 17, 2025, regarding whether the Northwest Territories Council of Leaders is supportive of the idea of a federal North of 60 Mineral Exploration Tax Credit, the following additional information is provided:

A federal North of 60 Mineral Exploration Tax Credit has been an interest of the Government of the Northwest Territories for some time. GNWT priorities, including the North of 60 Mineral Exploration Tax Credit, have been shared with Indigenous governments through

the NWT Council of Leaders as part of the joint priority identification process. Indigenous governments did not express any concerns about the GNWT's efforts to include this as part of the GNWT's federal engagement activities and some governments are very interested; however, it was not specifically identified or agreed to as a joint priority by consensus of the NWT Council of Leaders.

NWT Council of Leaders federal engagement priorities are focused on unlocking critical minerals more broadly, including highlighting the need for transformative, strategic infrastructure to help strengthen the NWT's position to attract investment. This is also the focus of GNWT priorities.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 796-
20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTHCARE
EXCELLENCE CANADA'S CULTURAL
SAFETY DESIGN COLLABORATIVE TEAM
REPORT: "HONOURING THE VOICES OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – ACTIONS FOR
CHANGE IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES HEALTH CARE SYSTEM"

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on October 20, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Honouring the Voices of Indigenous Peoples Actions for Change in the Northwest Territories Health Care System report represents a foundational document from which the development of both the People Strategy and the Public Administrator's activities were drawn.

A working group has been established to determine how the recommendations can be integrated into the ongoing work of the health and social services system. Once the working group completes its review, I will have a clearer sense of which recommendations can be implemented within existing resources and which will require us to identify new resources to move forward.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 801-
20(1):
YELLOWKNIFE PRIMARY CARE CLINIC
LABORATORY WAIT TIMES AND SERVICE
CAPACITY

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 20, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority receives funding to operate labs in the NWT as well as funding for 'referred

out lab testing'. These are distinct 'pots' of funding.

Lab testing is referred out of territory when required testing is specialized and cannot be performed in the NWT, when the test is out of scope for the current set of lab services performed in territory, and when in-territory processing and services cannot meet the demand due to volume or other factors.

From April 1 to December 31, 2025, the NWT sent 128,203 laboratory tests to Alberta, at a cost of \$2.9M. In 2024-25, 125,774 lab procedures were referred out of territory.

Out-of-territory lab referrals continue to increase to accommodate increased demand. This current fiscal year's volume of lab procedures, both in-territory, and out-of-territory referrals, is on track to outpace previous year's volume.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 804-
20(1):
SUPPORTS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH
NURSES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on October 20, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority continue to provide physician services to both the Tlicho Community Services Agency and the Sahtu Region.

Since 2021, a pilot project under the Primary Care Reform Initiative in Fort Good Hope has added a dedicated physician who provides services via Telehealth two to four times per month, bringing an additional 24 to 48 physician appointments each month. More appointments help improve access and, because the same physician delivers the virtual appointments, continuity of care is also improved. This model provides consistent access that aims to improve the experience for residents through relationship-based care. Data collection is currently underway for a formal evaluation with the results expected in the spring of 2026.

Like all regions and communities in the Northwest Territories, the availability of physician services may be impacted by intermittent staffing gaps.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 811-
20(1):
BACKUP POWER GENERATORS IN
SENIORS' HOUSING

Further to the response provided to the Member for DehCho on October 21, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The South Slave District Office will contact the Deh Gáh Got'ie Koe Seniors' Complex in Fort Providence to discuss the potential options for a backup generator. The South Slave District Office will be able to provide information on different Housing NWT programs that could possibly be used to provide funding for this project.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 813-
20(1):
SAME-DAY HEALTHCARE APPOINTMENTS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on October 21, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

There are 24 weekly same day appointments available and 18 appointments on Saturdays. These appointments are available at the Yellowknife Primary Care Centre located downtown. These are clinic appointments only and not for laboratory services.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 814-
20(1):
HEALTHCARE PATIENT EXPERIENCE
QUESTIONNAIRES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on October 21, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The 2022 Patient Experience Questionnaire Report was publicly released on January 26, 2023, and posted on the GNWT public website. It can be accessed on the GNWT Health and Social Services Resource page.

The Department of Health and Social Services supports all three health and social services authorities to develop and administer the questionnaire every 2 to 3 years. Patient experience feedback is collected from all regions of NWT and across all three health and social services authorities. The results of this territory- and system-wide initiative are published as a final report on the Health and Social Services website.

While each health and social services authority has its own annual report, it is the Department that leads analysis and reporting on the 40 performance indicators on behalf of the health and social services system. The Department has tracked these indicators since 2019 and reports on them in the NWT Department of Health and Social Services Annual Report. The most recent annual reports, for the three health

and social services authorities and the Department, were tabled on October 31, 2025.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 815-
20(1):
AFTERCARE SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS
RETURNING FROM ADDICTIONS
TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Mackenzie Delta on October 21, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

There is a planning process that occurs prior to a resident attending a treatment facility. Part of this process includes a case worker exploring what aftercare will look like for each person. Several territorial mental health services can be accessed as part of a person's preferences for aftercare when returning to a community. The Community Counselling Program is available to all residents. Trained counsellors are available either in person, over the phone, or virtually. They can talk about any issue and provide referrals or recommendations to additional services, including online supports and community-based programming. To connect with a counsellor, a call can be made to the counseling program's phone number in each community.

Staffing for the Community Counselling Program in the Mackenzie Delta district includes Aklavik, which has one full-time Community Wellness Worker and one Community Counsellor on a two-week rotation and can be reached at 867-678-8092; Tsiigehtchic, which has one full-time Community Wellness Worker and can be reached at 867-953-3041, and Fort McPherson, which has two full-time Community Wellness Workers and one full-time Community Counsellor and can be reached at 867-678-8092.

The Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Fund provides \$3,055,000 in annual funding for culturally relevant and community-led mental health and addictions programming and supports. Programming can include any of the following components: on the land programming, hiring local people with specialized training, outreach programming, trauma based work, or spiritual and cultural healing. This funding is available each year, with applications due by January 31 for the upcoming fiscal year.

Applications for the 2026–27 fiscal year are due by January 31, 2026. Funding of up to \$303,164 is available for Regional Indigenous Governments and up to \$208,164 for

Community Indigenous Governments. Both funding streams can be used to support multi-year projects.

After April 1st each year, Community governing authorities and non-government Indigenous organizations may apply for funding, with a maximum amount of \$208,164 available and no option for multi-year project support.

There were no applications from the Mackenzie Delta Electoral District for the 2024–25 or 2025–26 fiscal years; however, funding was provided in the region through other initiatives. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation holds a five-year agreement for 2021–26 to fund Project Jewel, an on-the-land healing program open to all residents of the region, with a new application to be submitted for the 2026–31 period. Additionally, the Gwich'in Tribal Council received funding in 2024–25 to support an on-the-land healing program at Rachel Reindeer Wellness Camp.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 822-
20(1):
NO-SHOW APPOINTMENT RATES AND
WAITLIST MANAGEMENT IN HEALTHCARE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on October 21, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Primary care teams in Yellowknife actively use short-notice and same-day booking processes to maximize available appointment capacity. When cancellations occur, Program Assistants contact clients on a waitlist who have previously expressed a need for same-day or urgent care.

Each team keeps its own up-to-date waitlist to help administrative staff quickly fill openings as they arise. The system tracks call volumes, unfilled appointment requests, and declined offers, providing data that supports ongoing improvements to scheduling and access. This approach supports equitable and timely access for clients and optimizes provider capacity.

These processes have resulted in Yellowknife Primary Care performing better than the national benchmark of under 10% for no shows, reflecting the success of reminder processes and improved booking practices.

Later today I will table a document which provides a summary of no-show rates for the past three complete fiscal years, and the current fiscal year up to the end of September 2025. The associated trend line indicates a downward trend in no shows.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 823-
20(1):
2025 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT REPORT
RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Frame Lake on October 22nd, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The GNWT has prioritized its responses to recommendations in Part 3 of the 2025 Northwest Territories Environmental Audit as they directly relate to the effectiveness of regulatory regimes in the Mackenzie Valley. The three recommendations the GNWT will prioritize for action this fiscal year are:

2020-1-17 – The GNWT will engage with participant funding (Interim Resource Management Agreement) recipients to verify whether there is interest and/or benefit in having program staff help to facilitate coordination opportunities between applicants where appropriate, and how this could be achieved.

2025-3-6 – The GNWT will provide regular updates on the status of the review of regional land use plans or land use plan amendments to the respective Land Use Planning Board.

2025-3-12 – The GNWT, CIRNAC, and Land and Water Boards will collaborate to create communication material that explains the securities process in an accessible way.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 835-
20(1):
STREAMLINING LIQUOR LICENSING

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on October 22, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Special Occasion Permit (SOP) eService Portal was launched in March 2025, providing applicants with the ability to submit their permit applications online and upload required documents directly through the system. This transition to a digital platform marks a meaningful step toward a more accessible and efficient licensing process.

Under liquor legislation, events held under a SOP are subject to statutory occupant load certificate requirements. The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) is responsible for determining and issuing an occupant load certificate specific to each event, using a separate form, as the information required for fire and building safety compliance is distinct from what is required for liquor permitting. However, the Department of Finance acknowledges that this process can be cumbersome for applicants seeking SOPs.

The Department of Finance is currently working with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' Public Safety Division to assess the feasibility of a more integrated submission process. The goal is to provide applicants with a single, streamlined application through which they can request an occupant load and apply for a SOP, with implementation anticipated in the 2026–2027 fiscal year.

This work is in addition to other efficiencies being pursued through issuing regulations, including allowing frequent SOPs applicants to apply for a licence instead of submitting repeated SOP applications; removing the requirement for a new occupant load certificate when an SOP is hosted in an already-licensed premises; and, issuing multi-day permits for multi-day events rather than one permit per day.

Overall, as the Department of Finance continues to work towards the development of new liquor regulations and prepares for the implementation of the new Liquor Act, improving and simplifying licensing and permitting processes are a key priority.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 840-
20(1):
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS
SUPPORT IN SCHOOL

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on October 23, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, along with education bodies, is publishing information and engaging with families to support access to the School-Based Mental Health and Wellness program. ECE's communication efforts include actively promoting awareness of the program through multiple channels, including:

Social media campaigns: ECE makes scheduled posts to raise awareness of the program and its intentions for students and schools.

Website resources: The ECE website provides an overview of the School-Based Mental Health and Wellness program, including how it may look in schools. It encourages students to connect with their teachers to learn more and includes contact information for regional leads.

Ongoing collaboration: ECE meets with regional leads bi-monthly to discuss program implementation, share updates, and identify opportunities to strengthen communication strategies. During these bi-monthly meetings, education bodies have shared a variety of

approaches they are using to communicate with families about the School Based Mental Health and Wellness programs, including:

School newsletters. Some schools include a section for the mental health and wellness program provider to write about what they are doing and services they are offering.

Some schools are sharing program highlights and resources through school social media posts on their social media platforms.

Some schools connect with families individually through direct engagement to provide information and answers to questions.

ECE will continue working closely with education bodies to support timely and clear information about the School-Based Mental Health and Wellness program and the benefits for students.

Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority Child & Youth Counsellors work in partnership with School-Based Mental Wellness programmes to promote a range of flexible mental health resources and supports including information on community specific mental health programs and services, including counselling and eMental Health resources, available for NWT students.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 844-
20(1):
TRANSFER OF COMMISSIONER'S LAND
WITHIN MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Frame Lake on October 23, 2025 the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is currently processing applications for land transfers to the City of Yellowknife of nine parcels or areas. Specific applications and their status as of October 24, 2025 include; two water lot parcels east of Rotary Park that are currently with the Land Titles Office for final registration of the title transfer; two parcels south and east of Lundquist Road that are in consultation; two parcels at the end of Ptarmigan Road that are in consultation; one area of shoreline at Samba K'e Park that is in consultation; one area north of Frame Lake that is in consultation; and one area for the expansion of the landfill that is pending a legal survey by the City of Yellowknife.

In addition, the City of Yellowknife has applied to have all unsurveyed roads within the city transferred and has indicated that this work is a lower priority than other applied for transfers. This application is currently under review by the

Department of Environment and Climate Change.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 848-
20(1):
MEDICAL TRAVEL EXPENSES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 23, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The current per diem rate of \$18 was initially aligned with Non-Insured Health Benefits rates for medical travellers and this rate has existed since 2003.

Rates have been reviewed in previous years. When the income threshold was expanded to allow more low-income travellers to access boarding home accommodations, transportation services, and meals, the existing rate was maintained for higher-income travellers. The \$18 per diem is intended to help offset travel costs, but it is not meant to cover them in full.

Reviewing this rate, and other rates, is a priority and is part of the Medical Travel Modernization work currently in progress, with this specific piece expected to be complete by Fall 2026.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 849-
20(1):
ONLINE BOOKING FOR YELLOWKNIFE
PRIMARY CARE APPOINTMENTS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on October 23, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

When comparing the implementation of an online booking system in a private clinic versus a public clinic, it is essential to understand the associated challenges.

Private clinics typically have greater flexibility in managing processes and technology. They can choose a booking system that aligns with their workflow without adhering to government IT policies. Additionally, they can integrate the booking system with their Electronic Medical Record, enabling seamless synchronization of appointments from multiple sources, such as in-person or phone bookings. In the Northwest Territories, private clinics operate at a much smaller scale than public clinics and they manage a significantly lower volume of patients and provide a specific and limited suite of health care services. Public clinics work under a "one territorial system" in support of all Northwest Territories residents, offering a variety of services to a larger clientele.

Public and private custodians who operate healthcare clinics in the Northwest Territories are subject to strict regulatory requirements. Any new system must comply with territorial and federal standards such as the Northwest Territories Health Information Act, including strong encryption, audit trails, and data residency rules, for example, storing all data within Canada.

The Health Information Act governs and makes rules about collection, use, disclosure, access and security of personal health information. Health information custodians have specific duties and responsibilities when complying with the Health Information Act.

Implementing an online booking system would introduce a new technology for a health information custodian. To comply with the Health Information Act, a privacy impact assessment is required whenever a new or updated information system or communications technology is proposed for the collection, use, or disclosure of personal health information.

The custodian must also assess existing privacy safeguards and, where necessary, develop and implement reasonable and effective administrative, physical, and technical safeguards that are relevant and appropriate for the new system.

The current Territorial Electronic Medical Record, known as Wolf, is at the end of its service life, and the vendor no longer supports system updates or integrations. As a result, there are challenges in synchronizing appointment availability across multiple booking channels, including appointments scheduled by phone or in person, as well as cancellations and rescheduling.

Implementing an online booking system that cannot integrate with an Electronic Medical Record is not recommended due to significant operational, clinical, and patient experience challenges. A standalone online booking system without Electronic Medical Record integration introduces inefficiencies, risks to patient safety, and compliance challenges. It is recommended to defer implementation until a solution with full integration is available. Additionally, an online booking system would not increase the availability of appointments, which is one of the main underlying problems.

The Health Information Act does not prohibit the implementation of an online booking system. However, a health information custodian must comply with the Act's requirements related to privacy safeguards when considering and implementing such a system.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 853-
20(1):
UPDATE ON PHARMACY ACT
REGULATIONS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 23, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Health and Social Services is currently working towards bringing the pharmacy profession under the Health and Social Services Professions Act through new Pharmacy Profession Regulations.

The Health and Social Services Professions Act amendment activities will address the consequential amendments required to support transitioning the regulation of the pharmacy profession to the Health and Social Services Professions Act and repeal the Pharmacy Act. Other related work to amend the Health and Social Services Professions Act will impact the coming into force timeline for the Pharmacy Profession Regulations.

The targeted coming into force date for the Health and Social Services Professions Statutes Amendment Act is April 1, 2027. The Department intends to bring the new Pharmacy Profession Regulations into force around the same time.

The purpose of these new Regulations is to modernize pharmacy practice in the Northwest Territories so that it aligns with current standards across Canada.

This will result in the expansion of Northwest Territories' pharmacists' scope of practice, which will increase residents' access to certain prescription services, immunizing agents like vaccinations and point-of-care testing where pharmacy services are offered. While improvements in access may alleviate some of the significant strain that continues to be experienced by the health system, it is not expected to reduce costs.

The Department continues to work with representatives from the Northwest Territories Pharmaceutical Association to advance this work, including to explore how the expanded scope of practice for Northwest Territories pharmacists can be best integrated with the Northwest Territories health and social services system.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 860-
20(1):
MERGING OF HEALTHCARE CARD AND
DRIVER'S LICENSE

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 861-
20(1):
COMMUNITY LANDFILLS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 28, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Health care cards with a photo are not standard across Canada. Adding a photo to the Northwest Territories health care card presents some challenges including logistics and availability of necessary infrastructure in communities. In the Northwest Territories, health care cards are renewed on-line, via email or fax, not requiring applicants to present in person.

Adding a photo on the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan card does not align with the legal authorities in the Medical Care Act and the Health Information Act that sets out the information that can be collected for a specific purpose. Collection of non-identifiable data is prioritized unless essential for providing care. In this instance, a photo of the card holder may not be considered necessary for the delivery of health care services and would require further consideration.

Integrating the Northwest Territories Driver's License and the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan card will require further analysis to review options, limitations and financial impacts of implementation. This assessment has not been completed; however, the Department commits to providing this information at a later date.

To confirm the identity of those applying for health care coverage in the Northwest Territories, first time applicants are required to provide two valid documents demonstrating proof of residency in the Northwest Territories. Once approved for coverage, card holders are asked to keep their information current, including name, address, etc. to ensure coverage is not interrupted. A temporary absence form is available to individuals who plan to be outside the Northwest Territories for more than 90 days. Additionally, residents are required to renew their registration for the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan every three years, which ensures only individuals who meet the required residency criteria are eligible. The Health Services Administration Office routinely reviews individuals who regularly receive medical and health services in southern locations. Suspicion of fraud or health care plan abuse can be reported to this office.

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on October 28, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The City of Yellowknife is the only community in the Northwest Territories with a lined landfill where leachate is collected. Lined landfills increase capital costs and add complex operational procedures to collect the leachate and transport it for treatment. Since most NWT community governments use sewage lagoons for wastewater treatment, collecting leachate to transport it to another location in the community is an added procedure.

Community governments operate their solid waste sites according to the terms and conditions of the water license issued by the applicable land and water board to ensure environmental protection. Community governments can access their annual Community Public Infrastructure Funding or Canada Community-Building Fund to make upgrades to their solid waste sites. There are other Federal funding programs, such as the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, that provide funding for solid waste infrastructure.

Although the Guidelines for the Planning, Design, Operations and Maintenance of Modified Solid Waste Sites in the Northwest Territories were published in 2003, the information in the guidance document continues to be relevant to NWT community governments. Environment and Climate Change Canada issued the guidance document Solid Waste Management for Northern and Remote Communities in 2017. Government of the Northwest Territories staff and other NWT specialists also participated in the development of the CSA standard: Solid Waste Sites in Northern Communities: From Design to Closure. Municipal and Community Affairs delivers a Solid Waste Operator Training Course and promotes these current guidance documents.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 866-
20(1):
VACANCY RATES AT STANTON LEGACY
HOSPITAL

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 28, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

As of January 14, 2026, there are no vacant long term care beds at the Łiwegǫ̀atł, previously known as Stanton Legacy Hospital.

Łiwegq̄ati long term care was opened in January 2025. The building was renovated and now includes 74 long term care beds, 6 of which are respite beds. In 2025-26, 17 beds were budgeted for including 16 long term care beds and 1 respite/palliative care bed.

As of January 14, 2026, there are 4 vacant extended care beds at Łiwegq̄ati.

Łiwegq̄ati extended care was opened in December 2024. The facility has 15 extended care beds and 1 respite/palliative care bed.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 879-
20(1):
OUT-OF-COUNTRY MEDICAL COVERAGE
POLICY

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 29, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Health and Social Services provides coverage of a range of insured health services accessed from anywhere in Canada. Insured health services are generally considered medically necessary. There are some services such as plastic or some elective surgeries that are not covered if accessed in another province or territory or outside a public hospital. If unsure, residents may check with the Department of Health and Social Services to confirm if health services are covered.

Provinces and territories have an agreement of which health services can be reciprocally billed. This is in accordance with the *Canada Health Act* portability principle which speaks to Canadians being able to access insured health services across the country. There is no such reciprocal agreement for places outside of Canada.

Residents travelling outside Canada are encouraged to investigate out-of-country coverage through their employer benefits program or to purchase third party insurance for the duration of their time out of the country.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 880-
20(1):
LATE PAYMENTS FOR STUDENT
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on October 29, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Last fall, due to a record volume of Student Financial Assistance applications and unprecedented staffing challenges, the Department of Education, Culture and

Employment experienced some delays in releasing Student Financial Assistance payments. As a result, some students incurred additional late fees from their school.

I can confirm that the Department will reimburse late fees for students who submitted complete applications on time and did not receive payment within the established service standards. Students can submit supporting documentation of late fees to receive reimbursement. This reimbursement applies only to the Fall 2025 semester.

The Department has already begun planning for 2026-2027, with measures to strengthen capacity, streamline processes, and ensure timely payments for students.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 881-
20(1):
ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on October 29, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

An Electronic Health Record is a comprehensive, interoperable system designed to consolidate health information from multiple healthcare settings and providers. It supports a longitudinal health record, enabling the tracking of a patient's health over time and across locations. Electronic Health Records facilitate data sharing between organizations and jurisdictions, thereby improving continuity of care and supporting national and regional health initiatives. Beyond the functionality of an Electronic Medical Record, which essentially provides a digital chart for one provider within a health system, an Electronic Health Record is more comprehensive and provides shareable health records across the continuum of care, including acute, community, and primary as well as population health management and enhanced interoperability.

The Northwest Territories is currently the last Canadian jurisdiction to implement a complete and comprehensive Electronic Health Record. This initiative represents the most complex healthcare information system the Government of the Northwest Territories has undertaken to date. It serves as the foundational technical component for the modernization of healthcare delivery in the Northwest Territories and is a precursor to improved interoperability, the sharing of health records, with other jurisdictions across Canada.

It is important to view the Electronic Health Record as an ongoing journey rather than a

fixed destination. Given its complexity, the system will continue to evolve as additional components are implemented over time. The implementation process will be challenging, and will require collaboration across multiple healthcare system capabilities while maintaining uninterrupted delivery of care.

The Department of Health and Social Services and the health and social services authorities have been preparing for this acquisition and implementation for over three years, including the development of a Request for Proposals.

The Department of Health and Social Services is currently evaluating the funding requirements needed to support the Electronic Health Record implementation. This analysis will inform the procurement process, as confirmed funding must be in place before a Request for Proposals can be issued.

Regarding cross jurisdictional information sharing, the Department of Health and Social Services has been collaborating with Alberta for the past eighteen months to establish a Data Disclosure Agreement and develop mechanisms for transferring health information into the HealthNet Viewer, which is hosted by Alberta for the Northwest Territories. This initiative will enable clinicians in territory to gain better insight into the care provided to Northwest Territories patients in Alberta. Work on the HealthNet Viewer is anticipated to commence later in 2026.

The Northwest Territories participates in Canada Health Infoway's multi-year national efforts to support the seamless and secure exchange of health information across jurisdictions, systems, and care settings. While this work is not directly tied to the NWT-Alberta connection, the lessons and best practices emerging from Infoway's interoperability initiatives will help guide efforts to enhance health information sharing between the Northwest Territories and Alberta.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 883-
20(1):
LATE PAYMENTS FOR STUDENT
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 29, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Last fall, due to a record volume of Student Financial Assistance applications and unprecedented staffing challenges, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment experienced some delays in releasing Student Financial Assistance

payments. As a result, some students incurred additional late fees from their school.

I can confirm that the Department will reimburse late fees for students who submitted complete applications on time and did not receive payment within the established service standards. Students can submit supporting documentation of late fees to receive reimbursement. This reimbursement applies only to the Fall 2025 semester.

The Department has already begun planning for 2026-2027, with measures to strengthen capacity, streamline processes, and ensure timely payments for students.

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

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 887-
20(1):
LATE PAYMENTS FOR STUDENT
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh on October 29, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Last fall, due to a record volume of Student Financial Assistance applications and unprecedented staffing challenges, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment experienced some delays in releasing Student Financial Assistance payments. As a result, some students incurred additional late fees from their school.

I can confirm that the Department will reimburse late fees for students who submitted complete applications on time and did not receive payment within the established service standards. Students can submit supporting documentation of late fees to receive reimbursement. This reimbursement applies only to the Fall 2025 semester.

The Department has already begun planning for 2026-2027, with measures to strengthen capacity, streamline processes, and ensure timely payments for students.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 893-
20(1):
DEVOLUTION INITIATIVES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Sahtu on October 30, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

During the Oral Question exchange, the Member asked whether the review identified in the Devolution Agreement has been completed. The Government of the Northwest

Territories (GNWT) is only one party to the Devolution Agreement and works collaboratively with Indigenous governments through the Intergovernmental Council on land and resource management matters.

The Devolution Agreement commits the parties, under provision 3.18, to conduct a review of the transitional provisions related to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. Planning for this transitional review has taken place through the Intergovernmental Council. This review has not yet been completed and will proceed through a Transitional Review Working Group with the participation of the Government of Canada and Indigenous government partners.

In addition, the Intergovernmental Council is advancing the seven-year review required under the Northwest Territories Intergovernmental Agreement on Lands and Resources Management. In May 2024, the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat approved guidelines equivalent to terms of reference to guide this review, and work is underway to develop a request for proposals to engage a contractor. This review was previously deferred to focus on other priorities.

The GNWT remains ready to advance both review processes in collaboration with Indigenous governments and Canada as part of ongoing efforts towards full devolution.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 899-
20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CANCER
STATISTICS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on October 30, 2025, the following additional information is provided. I will also table a document later today that includes Northwest Territories Cancer Statistics which outlines much of this data.

Cancer in the Tlicho Region On average over the 2011 to 2022 period, the Tlicho region had 10 cases of cancer per year. The crude rate of cancer in 2022 for the Tlicho region was 340 cases per 100,000 people. In females, breast and colorectal cancer combined accounted for 60% of all cancer cases in the Tlicho Region from 2013-2022. The top two types of cancer in males were colorectal at 36% and prostate at 15% making up 51% of cancer cases over the same ten-year period.

Tlicho, NWT, and Canada Cancer Rates Overall, Tlicho region showed more fluctuation in rate estimates compared to NWT and Canada, reflecting the smaller population size and sensitivity to changes in case counts. The

uncertainty in Tlicho estimates are displayed by the wide confidence intervals as seen in Figures, 2, 3, and 4 of the document to be tabled relating to this question. In contrast, NWT and Canada showed more stable trends in the same period. Although there were minor differences in age-standardized cancer rates between the three regions throughout the 2011 to 2022 period, the only statistically significant difference by region alone was in 2016. In 2016, the age-standardized cancer rate for the Tlicho region was estimated between 1.2 to 2.3 times higher than NWT and between 1.6 to 2.6 times higher than Canada.

Tlicho cancer rates were also significantly higher than Canadian cancer rates in females in the 2015-2017 period and in males in the 2016-2018 period.

Age-Standardized Rate Comparisons
Explanation: Older populations tend to have higher rates of cancer. To accurately compare populations based on their ages, one must calculate age-standardized cancer rates. Even with age standardization, there is still a level of uncertainty when comparing annual rates because small increases and decreases in the number of cancer cases are expected. Rates also vary more in smaller populations as one cancer case represents a larger proportion of the population. To help figure out if two age-standardized rates are different, a range of values where the most likely rate for each population are calculated. If the range of values for each population overlap, then we cannot be certain the difference in cancer rates between the two populations are because of natural variation or some other influence. If the ranges overlap, it is said the difference between the two cancer rates are not statistically significant.

Data Notes: Data on the number of cancer cases in Canada and the Northwest Territories come from the Canada Cancer Registry accessed through Statistics Canada or the NWT Cancer Registry file. Validated cancer diagnosis data is currently available up to the 2022 diagnostic year. Population counts for the NWT are based on the NWT health insurance registry. Region was assigned based on community of residence at time of diagnosis. Rates were standardized to the 2011 Canadian population.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 901-
20(1):
ESTABLISHMENT OF YELLOWKNIFE
AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on October 30, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

Governance options for the Yellowknife Airport, including an airport authority model, have been examined in past years and continue to form part of longer-term planning considerations. Current engagement is focused on airport development planning, including coordination with the Department of National Defence, and ongoing public engagement on future airport growth and land-use needs. As this work progresses, the Department will continue to assess governance needs and determine whether an authority model is the appropriate mechanism moving forward.

I trust this information is helpful, and I remain committed to providing further updates as this work advances.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 902-
20(1):
HEALTH INFORMATION PRIVACY
BREACHES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on October 30, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The delay in notification of the privacy breach is multifaceted. Under the Health Information Act, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is required to investigate and contain privacy breaches, and to take steps to ensure the breach does not happen again.

Notification letters were drafted in June 2025 and were sent out in batches. The dates were not changed in subsequent batches. Some batches were held due to a Canada Post strike resulting in some recipients not receiving their notification, dated June 2025, until October 2025. It is acknowledged that the dates of the letters in held batches should have been updated to reflect the date of the mail out.

The Health Information Act governs the collection, use, disclosure, access and security of personal health information. Health information custodians have specific duties and responsibilities under the Health Information Act to implement processes and procedures that provide effective prevention and response to a privacy breach.

The Department of Health and Social Services developed operational privacy standards, policies, and procedures to guide health information custodians in complying with the

Health Information Act. Privacy Breach Policy sets out a consistent approach in handling both potential and confirmed privacy breaches across the health and social services system and supports custodians' commitment to

protect patient and client privacy and minimize the risk of recurrence. The Policy provides guidance on managing privacy breaches and includes the following steps.

Step one is initial reporting which includes reporting all detected potential privacy breaches to an employee who has been authorized in the organization to handle privacy breaches.

Next is the investigation stage in which the authorized employee must review all potential breaches and complete a fulsome investigation of all confirmed privacy breaches.

Notification is the next step. Upon confirmation of a privacy breach, the health information custodian must comply with the notification requirements. These requirements ensure that specific parties are notified, including those individuals impacted by the privacy breach, the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Department of Health and Social Services. Depending on the circumstances, notifications may also be provided to law enforcement officials, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Risk Management and Insurance, the Comptroller General, the Union, and/or other professional and regulatory bodies.

There is no set time frame within which to complete the notification stage of this process. Notification to impacted individuals can be made prior to the completion of a full investigation, must be made as soon as reasonably possible, must be via formal communication in a letter, unless this type of notification is not appropriate or possible.

A notification of a privacy breach should explain where and when the breach occurred and identify the type of breach, whether it was an unauthorized disclosure, theft, or loss of information. It should describe the nature of the information involved and outline the kinds of documents that were affected, such as patient charts, laboratory results, or case notes. The notification should also provide an overview of the immediate actions taken to manage or mitigate the incident, along with a commitment to future steps that will help prevent similar breaches. It must include guidance on what the affected individual can do to reduce the risk of harm, as well as the contact information for an employee who is a health information custodian and can respond to questions. Finally, it should provide contact information for the Information Privacy Commissioner and state that individuals have the right to request a review by the Commissioner.

After individuals have been notified, the process moves into the response stage, where the custodian must identify and put in place both short-term and long-term measures to address the confirmed privacy breach and prevent similar incidents in the future.

The final step is the reporting stage, in which the custodian must prepare and disseminate a final privacy breach report for all confirmed breaches.

The Health Information Act does not define privacy breach risk levels, nor does it establish a standardized framework for assessing risk. Instead, risk assessments are conducted internally by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. Each assessment considers the type of personal information involved and the potential impacts of the breach.

In this incident, the information involved included clients' first and last names and dates of birth. Based on these factors, the breach was assessed as presenting a medium level of risk.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 903-
20(1):
ORIENTATION AND TRAINING FOR
LOCUMS DIRECTING MEDICAL TRAVEL

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on October 30, 2025, the following additional information is provided:

The depth and extent of locum training is dependent on the site and service they provide and their duration with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. In general, and if relevant, there is a staff member that reviews general orientation items with the locum, such as site-specific information, including exits, muster points, staff rooms, and paging system.

Locums also receive orientation on the electronic medical record, an overview of standard operating procedures, guidelines, and information on MedResponse, if appropriate. If time permits, in small communities, the Regional Chief Operating Officer also facilitates introductions with the town council. In Yellowknife, locums also receive orientation with their assigned care team and receive clinic workflow orientation with nursing staff.

Locums for family practice are provided with the link to the "Clinical Practice Hub" on the internal Our Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority website, which keeps an up to date and detailed registry of services, information about where to refer patients, and other helpful information. The website guides

them on what services can be provided here in the Northwest Territories. Specific to Yellowknife Primary Care, there is a referral audit process in place to confirm that referrals are sent, triaged by specialists, and scheduled appropriately.

As part of the effort to modernize medical travel, improved communications are in progress, including resources to guide staff in understanding the various medical travel processes.

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

Oral Questions

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I said I had a brief conversation with the Minister over lunch hour regarding medical travel, and it got me to thinking during that time a couple hours ago which is, is there a way the department can set up some type of form or way to receive information on challenges individuals have been receiving through -- or going through medical travel in a way that we can help repair or fill some gaps on the system sort of like a -- I don't know how you do it, a flow system in but it's not meant to be a

dialogue. Anyway, the point being is then we need to hear direct stories from people about ways of their -- challenges they're facing and ways maybe we can help deal with some of those challenges. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ever so briefly, I was on the City of Yellowknife website about snow removal, and they had a bunch of Q and A simple questions as why you don't do -- or why this isn't being done and you click it, and it explained why this wasn't being done. Mr. Speaker, there could be a great chance for medical travel to help communicate some of the things. As I'm highlighting, I'm only going to briefly highlight one example, plane alignments with schedules. So in other words, that question could be is why aren't they aligned or better, you could have we're working on this, this is the progress, those type of things. That way people feel their government's listening. So, Mr. Speaker, is something like that feasible, or could you recognize the opportunity there within? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now online we do have the where we are with the medical travel. There's a portal online -- I can share it with the Members again -- on the progress that we're working on. But what I can do is also highlight that there is going to be a new manual, whether it's -- and if we can break some things down to our most common FAQs, that, you know, that could or -- and a general email box that people could probably send in some things. I can bring those back to my department to see how that can be done. I do believe that some of the work that will be coming out -- and I shared this with the Member -- is, you know, is we've all heard is the service standards. And so that has been a directive that I have given to the department to have a response and an implementation plan on how they're going to do service standards within, making sure patients have their travel at

a certain time before so that they can actually -- if they don't have an escort or something like that, they have a period of time that they can -- they actually have time when they're not getting on the plane to figure out why they don't have an escort. So there are different things but I'll take those back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fine option/community justice programs are

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice, and it's with respect to the community -- one of your communities, the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a very good suggestion. I believe that we want to have a very thorough evaluation. This is certainly going to be a guiding document that will help us to inform our conversations with the federal government. We don't fit right now currently within the program to access additional funding.

We want to ensure that we can show the success of this program from all aspects within the community and use that as our guiding document to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Returns to Written Questions

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

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

The Member asked the Minister to provide the number of children and youth, broken down by community or region, who have been accessing child and youth counselling services over each of the past two years.

Child and youth counsellors reported 4,677 client encounters in 2023-2024 and 2,485 encounters in 2024-2025. Regional client encounters for 2023-2024 were recorded as follows: Beaufort Delta had 1,198; Dehcho had 322; Fort Smith had 322; Hay River had 222; Sahtu had 170; Tlicho had 731; and Yellowknife had 1,712. Regional client encounters for 2024-2025 were recorded as follows: Beaufort Delta had 462; Dehcho had 0; Fort Smith had 112; Hay River had 34; Sahtu had 72; Tlicho had 573; and Yellowknife had 1,232.

A significant decrease of approximately 46.87%, in Child and Youth Counsellor contacts with children and youth was observed beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. There are several factors contributing to the reduction of contacts with children and youth.

In 2024, Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment redesigned mental health services for children, youth, and families redistributing funding across both the education and health systems to ensure a full range of supports were available, from prevention and early intervention to clinical support.

As part of this redesign clinical support continues to be provided by the Health and Social Services system through the Community Counselling Program, while prevention and early intervention activities are provided through a school based mental health and

wellness program. As a result of these changes the number of child and youth counsellors in the health and social services system has been reduced and child and youth counsellors are no longer placed in schools but rather into community settings.

Younger children are unable to leave school without parental support, to attend a counselling session in a Child and Youth Counsellors office; older or mature minor students are still responsible to abide by school attendance policies. The opportunity for confidential, on-site clinical connections has been significantly reduced. The Child and Youth Counsellor program shifted to a primarily referral-based model, thereby reducing informal accessibility and ease of access for children/youth to simply "drop in" to the office and engage more spontaneously.

The numbers in this response reflect only services provided through the health and social services system. Child and Youth Counsellor staff have had to re-build relationships with schools and communities, from the previous model of being in schools, to now serving schools part-time, and/or doing outreach to community settings. The Member asked if the Minister could provide the number of children and youth, broken down by community or region, who previously accessed child and youth counselling services over each of the prior two years before the changes were made in October 2023.

Child and youth counsellors reported 4,486 client encounters in 2021-2022. Regional client encounters were recorded as follows: Beaufort Delta had 819; Dehcho had 267; Fort Smith had 121; Hay River had 0; Sahtu had 258; Tlicho had 474; and Yellowknife had 2,547. Data for Hay River was not available as the program was in a stage of early implementation in 2021-2022.

Child and youth counsellors reported 4,917 client encounters in 2022-2023. Regional client encounters were recorded as follows: Beaufort Delta had 1,018; Dehcho had 271; Fort Smith had 143; Hay River had 258; Sahtu had 255; Tlicho had 750; and Yellowknife had 2,222. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I can confirm that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has not undertaken any formal policy or legislative work related to the Dog Act in the past five years. However, it is important to note previous reforms that have already been made to strengthen animal welfare protections in the NWT. The Dog Act has evolved from a basic control law in the 1950s into a comprehensive animal welfare statute.

In 2011, the act underwent significant reform to bring it in line with modern welfare standards. This included prohibiting causing distress to dogs and requiring owners to provide adequate food, water, shelter, medical care, and protection from harsh weather. Enforcement powers were expanded, enabling Animal Protection Officers to seize distressed dogs and act urgently without warrants, while municipal bylaw officers gained authority within their jurisdictions. Traditional practices, including hunting and dog sledding, remain permitted provided they meet humane standards. Penalties increased dramatically from a \$25 fine to up to \$2,500 or three months' imprisonment for first offences, and up to \$10,000 or six months imprisonment for repeat offences.

Technical amendments in 2012 and 2013 clarified enforcement and jurisdiction. Overall, these changes strengthened animal protection, improved compliance, and balanced welfare standards with cultural traditions. Mr. Speaker, the Member also asked about expenditures related to enforcement of the Act. It is important to emphasize that requiring community governments to provide five years of detailed cost estimates would not be practical and would place an undue burden on community governments that are already managing significant fiscal and operational pressures.

Enforcement roles in community governments are multi-purpose positions with no separate accounting for time or resources spent specifically on Dog Act enforcement. The Act establishes a territorial framework for dog welfare and public safety, but it is ultimately up to each community government to determine how, and to what extent, they choose to enforce the Act within their local community.

The Act is designed to provide flexibility so communities can address dog control and welfare issues in a manner that reflects their specific needs, circumstances and priorities. This includes the authority for communities to adopt tailored local bylaws, establish enforcement practices that work for them, and determine the resources they can reasonably dedicate to this area. The Government of the Northwest Territories does not prescribe a one-

size-fits-all model; rather, the Act empowers communities to shape their own approaches within the broader territorial framework.

MACA supports community governments through legislative authority, guidance, training and technical support. The Act grants municipalities clear authority to establish and enforce local dog control bylaws. MACA provides guidance documents and drafting support to ensure bylaws address key areas such as licensing, control of dogs running at large, and standards of care consistent with the Act.

Through its Community Governance Division, MACA delivers training across six core areas of municipal operations, including Governance and Public Safety. The Public Safety training includes Bylaw Enforcement Officer courses, which cover the Dog Act and other relevant legislation. Training opportunities are available online in both self-directed and instructor-led formats. Community government employees can access these programs on the Local Government Administrators of the NWT website under the NWT Community Government Learning Portal. Additionally, MACA offers a webinar focused on bylaw development to assist community administrators in creating clear and enforceable bylaws.

Mr. Speaker, through the act and the support available to community governments, we continue to uphold strong territorial standards for animal welfare while ensuring communities have flexibility and authority to address their unique local concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

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

The Member asked how many physicians who previously held full-time or part-time positions in the Northwest Territories have returned to work as locums in the past three years. In total 14 physicians have left the Government of the Northwest Territories between April 1, 2023, and December 15, 2025, and have returned as locums: Nine Family Practice Physicians have left the Government of the Northwest Territories, seven of whom have returned as locums at least once since their departure. Five Specialist Physicians have left the Government of the Northwest Territories, three of whom have returned as locums at least once since their departure.

During this time, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has hired three specialist physicians, one of whom was a locum who chose to become a staff physician and four family physicians, two of which were locums who chose to become staff physicians. The Member asked how many nurses who previously held full-time or part-time positions in the Northwest Territories have returned to work as locums in the past three years. The term 'locum' is not technically a term of employment under the Government of the Northwest Territories and Union of Northern Workers Collective Agreement; however, it is commonly used to describe 'casual' nurses.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority does not track this data. A fulsome analysis would require a retrospective analysis by the Department of Finance, Human Resources, with regional validation. The Member asked what is the average cost difference to the Government of the Northwest Territories between employing a full-time or part-time physician versus hiring the same individual as a locum. While the goal of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is to fill physician vacancies with full-time or part-time positions rather than locums, the health care human resource crisis following COVID has created a remarkably different landscape for hiring health care workers.

Since COVID we have seen a trend of physicians taking a work-life balance approach and taking partial Full Time Employee roles, with some local physicians opting to take locum contracts rather than full time positions. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority recognizes that using locums comes at a financial premium compared to hiring staff physicians, however the majority of the additional costs are related to travel and accommodations. Locums are a necessary and critical part of ensuring service continuity in our health care system. Locum rates for physicians and permanent staff are difficult to compare on an apple-to-apples basis. At first glance, locum compensation may appear to be significantly higher than permanent staff as locum rates account for the lack of benefits, pension contributions, paid vacation and other leave and paid statutory holidays. Analysis shows that when accounting for all benefits and incremental costs such as professional dues and licensing, permanent staff are being compensated better than locums. Locum physicians fill high-need, often hard-to-staff roles. Thus, their compensation must account for the realities of temporary placement, geographic mobility, and the lack of long-term security. This is not comparable to

the compensation structures used for permanent staff. The Member asked what is the average cost difference to the Government of the Northwest Territories between employing a full-time or part-time nurse versus hiring the same individual as a locum.

The term locum is not technically a term of employment under the Government of the Northwest Territories and Union of Northern Workers Collective Agreement; however, it is commonly used to describe casual nurses. Casual nurses are paid at the same rate as a Union of Northern Workers nurse; however, casual employee benefits and entitlements are limited. These entitlements are spelled out in Appendix A5 of the Union of Northern Workers Agreement. Full time or part time Nurse entitlements are found in the body of the Collective Agreement, along with the provisions under Appendix A10.

Agency nurses, when used, are not Government of the Northwest Territories employees, rather they are engaged through third-party contracts, making comparisons with permanent or casual Government of the Northwest Territories nurses difficult to compare directly. Agency rates are higher than Government of the Northwest Territories rates to compensate for the lack employer-provided benefits and pension contributions. The use of agency nurses also requires the contracting health authority to incur travel, accommodation, and other contract-related costs.

The use of agency staff is a short-term measure to fill temporary vacancies in specialized nursing positions and are used only as a last resort when, without this option, units would be closed, or health services severely reduced. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority use of agency nurses has reduced steadily and significantly in the last few years.

In 2025-2026 on average only one agency nurse is being used to staff the obstetric service at the Inuvik Regional Hospital. Between May 2025 and December 2025, agency nurses were used to support Stanton Territorial Hospital's Operating Room, Emergency Department, and Intensive Care Unit. No agency nurse use is anticipated at Stanton in 2026. Given the limited use of agency nurses within the Northwest Territories, a detailed comparative cost analysis has not been undertaken at this time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Yellowknife

Centre on October 31st, 2025, regarding Northwest Territories medical students rejected from residencies.

The Member asked how many Northwest Territories resident medical students have applied to complete their medical residencies in the Northwest Territories in the past five years? Between 2020 and 2025, there were six applicants from the Northwest Territories who applied to the NWT Family Medicine Residency Program also commonly referred to as the NWT residency program. The Member asked how many were accepted/accommodated, and how many were rejected?

Of the six applicants, one was successfully matched with the NWT residency program through the Canadian Resident Matching Service process, which is the official application and matching service for medical training in Canada.

Each year the NWT residency program selection committee interviews an average of 120 applicants for the two available positions. Of the five NWT applicants who were not matched with the NWT residency program through the Canadian Resident Matching Service process, four were accepted into Family Medicine Residency Programs at other sites outside the NWT, and one was accepted into a specialty residency, which is not family medicine, outside of the NWT. The NWT does not offer specialty residencies.

The Member asked what are the medical fields/areas of practice or specialties able to be undertaken as a residency in the Northwest Territories? The Northwest Territories has partnered with the University of Alberta's Department of Family Medicine to serve as the Yellowknife training site for its Rural Family Medicine Residency stream. This is the only medical field or area of practice available for residency in the NWT.

The Member asked what steps the Department is taking to ensure that Northwest Territories resident medical students are supported in completing their medical training, including residency placements within the territory? More than sixty medical electives are completed in the Northwest Territories each year, providing medical students and residents throughout Canada with the opportunity to come to the NWT for an elective.

Many NWT resident medical students and medical residents take advantage of these opportunities, and some return for multiple electives during their training. Priority is given to NWT residents seeking an elective. For residency training, all medical residency

programs and applying medical students, regardless of specialty, participate in the national Canadian Resident Matching Service process each year. Canadian Resident Matching Service uses an algorithm to match applicants to residency programs. Programs interview candidates and submit a list of preferred applicants to Canadian Resident Matching Service, while applicants submit their own list of preferred programs.

Canadian Resident Matching Service then applies its algorithm to match applicants with programs. When creating our program's list, we place a high value on applicants with ties to the NWT, with Indigenous backgrounds, and with demonstrated commitment to culturally safe practices for Indigenous peoples. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 25-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY

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

The position of Senior Envoy to the Government of Canada was established in the Premier's Office to create a dedicated, proactive, and strategic political link between the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), the federal government, and interested Indigenous governments. The role is ultimately intended to ensure that territorial priorities are represented early and effectively in federal discussions, and that the GNWT maintains consistent and senior-level engagement in Ottawa.

This is in addition to providing strategic and senior level support to the Premier and Ministers within the GNWT. Mr. Speaker, the Senior Envoy is an important role that provides year-round advocacy to keep our government's priorities moving forward between ministerial visits and major meetings. The position has represented the GNWT at key political and intergovernmental meetings and events in Ottawa, in bilateral meetings between the GNWT and Indigenous governments, and during high-profile visits in Northwest Territories, such as the Prime Minister's visit to Fort Smith.

Discussions have spanned a wide range of topics, including opportunities for public policy to be informed by Northern or Indigenous knowledge, reinforcing priorities for housing and strategic infrastructure investment in the NWT, and promoting opportunities to strengthen Arctic sovereignty and security. Since creating the position, the role has

delivered sustained and focused federal engagement on the GNWT's priorities, including supporting key files like the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor, and the Taltson Expansion Project, while also advancing Budget 2025 advocacy and targeted outreach to federal ministerial offices.

Mr. Speaker, when priorities align, the Senior Envoy has also helped amplify Indigenous governments' voices in Ottawa and continues to support ongoing coordinated advocacy with federal partners on shared northern goals. As of October 31, 2025, the Senior Envoy had held discussions with representatives from seventeen regional and community-level NWT Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations. While priorities have varied, common themes have included sharing respective priorities, offering support to strengthen connections with the federal government in Ottawa, and advancing housing and strategic infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker, success is measured by progress on federal priorities and tangible outcomes for Northerners, not by activity alone. Not all engagements of the Senior Envoy are formal meetings; many occur through informal conversations that nonetheless support relationship-building and strategic information sharing. Collectively, these engagements demonstrate the value of maintaining a consistent NWT presence in Ottawa and ensuring the territory's interests remain visible to federal decision-makers.

Decisions that affect the North are made every day in Ottawa, and the Senior Envoy ensures that the NWT has a consistent and senior presence. This role is ultimately focused on delivering tangible results, turning access in Ottawa into funding, investments and decisions that directly benefit the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, later today at the appropriate time, I will table a document that provides greater detail on some of the meetings and advocacy work that the Senior Envoy has been engaged with during the position's tenure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabling of Documents

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

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

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

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

Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

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

1. Prayer or Reflection

2. Budget Address
3. Ministers' Statements
4. Members' Statements
5. Motions
6. Returns to Oral Questions
7. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
8. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 1 of 7)
9. Acknowledgements
10. Oral Questions
11. Written Questions
12. Returns to Written Questions
13. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
14. Petitions
15. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
16. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
17. Tabling of Documents
18. Notices of Motion
19. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
20. First Reading of Bills
21. Second Reading of Bills
22. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
23. Report of Committee of the Whole
24. Third Reading of Bills
25. Orders of the Day

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

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

