



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 89

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Pages 3647 - 3714

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, March 5, 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, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer or Reflection

---Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):

Please be seated. I'd like to thank Ms. Elias for the prayer. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 197-20(1):
REPAIRS TO SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, Members of this Legislative Assembly have spoken about the importance of repairing our existing social housing units. I want to assure Members and all Northerners that real, measurable progress is happening. Today I will highlight the work Housing NWT and local housing organizations have done over the past year in repairing and improving social housing units across the NWT.

Since the start of this fiscal year, 278 social housing units across the territory have received much-needed repairs through collaboration between Housing NWT, local housing organizations, and contractors. These repairs were supported with the GNWT's three-year \$150 million funding commitment to replace and upgrade social housing units across the North. Units received repairs to structures, electrical systems, heating systems, plumbing and drainage systems and freeze protection systems. Regular repair work, including repairs to freeze protection systems, help protect buildings from severe weather and ensures residents have safe and reliable homes all through the winter. This protection is crucial in the NWT, where extreme cold, high winds and long winters place immense pressure on buildings. Not only does repair work and proper maintenance help extend the lifespan of our units, it also contributes to our tenants' overall safety and well-being.

A maintained home offers more than shelter; it provides a sense of security and peace of mind.

Over the years, I have seen firsthand how access to a safe and healthy living space can transform lives. Individuals and families can focus on work and school, and elders can remain comfortably in their communities. A reliable, well-maintained home provides the stability people need to focus on their health and responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker,

- A total of 94 units were repaired in the Beaufort Delta this year, including upgrades to Kiglavik House for seniors in Tuktoyaktuk.
- Eight units were repaired in the Nahendeh, where our teams completed a full renovation following long-term occupancy of a social housing unit in Fort Simpson.
- In the North Slave, 25 units were repaired, including siding replacements at Bigelow Crescent in Yellowknife and exterior renovations at a four-plex in Whati.
- 49 units were repaired in the Sahtu, including complete renovation of four units in Norman Wells.
- 102 units were repaired in the South Slave, including boiler replacements at Whispering Willows and Riverview Lodge in Hay River.

In addition to these repair projects, Housing NWT also allocated \$14.7 million this past fiscal year to support LHOs' maintenance activities across the NWT. To help accelerate repairs, in 2026 Housing NWT will pilot a trades team initiative, with regional trade professionals hired into the Beaufort Delta, Sahtu and the Nahendeh districts to support local housing organizations in repairs and maintenance and improve the quality of our housing assets for residents.

The GNWT's investments reduced the number of social housing units sitting empty due to repair needs, helping more families and individuals access safe housing sooner. This work also created steady employment opportunities and gained experience for

apprentices, tradespeople, and local businesses.

With the support of over 40 journey-certified staff working with our local housing organizations, our apprenticeship program continues to provide up to 15 apprenticeship learning opportunities each year. I strongly encourage residents interested in trades to explore this program. It offers a path to becoming a skilled housing maintainer, plumber, carpenter or oil heat systems technician, right in your home community, while helping create safer and more sustainable homes for Northerners.

Housing NWT has been taking steps to better ensure maintenance activities are documented, reported, and acted on consistently and effectively. A capacity gap assessment for maintenance activities performed by LHOs was recently completed and a modernized maintenance management system has been implemented, with new training and online reporting tools available. Housing NWT is also partnering with the Department of Infrastructure to pilot a new condition assessment approach to rate and track conditions of our units in three different communities. Lastly, we are finalizing the evaluation framework for the social housing maintenance programs.

At Housing NWT, we remain committed to making full and effective use of the resources available to us and ensuring that as many units as possible are repaired and restored for families and individuals in need.

I want to thank the local housing organizations, contractors and trades teams who make this work possible. Their efforts create safe homes for the people who live in them. I look forward to seeing many more homes repaired by the end of this Legislative Assembly. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Minister of NTPC.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 198-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER
CORPORATION'S NEW HYBRID BOARD
AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide Members an update on the board governance structure and future opportunities for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, or NTPC. The vision of NTPC is to enrich the lives of Northerners by providing power that supports living, working, and investing in the Northwest Territories.

Strong, independent governance is an important part of delivering on that vision.

Mr. Speaker, this year marks an important step forward with the transition to a hybrid board of directors that includes seven independent Members from across the Northwest Territories, alongside two senior representatives of the Government of the Northwest Territories. This governance model balances local representation, diversity and expertise, with a whole of government perspective and is consistent with the priorities of this Assembly.

The Board is chaired by Judy Goucher of Hay River who brings with her, to the role, more than 15 years of experience as a senior utility executive in the NWT and ten years of experience in GNWT financial management, providing a balanced foundation for the governance responsibilities of a public utility. The independent members of the board come from communities across the territory and bring a broad mix of Indigenous, governance, public-sector, regulatory, and technical experience, informed by first-hand knowledge of northern energy systems, infrastructure, and the impacts of climate change in the North. Together, these perspectives strengthen oversight and support informed, long-term decision-making.

In 2025, the GNWT issued a direction letter to the new public board of directors for NTPC and NT Hydro. This letter provides clear policy direction from the GNWT as the sole shareholder, outlining priorities and expectations to ensure strategic oversight and effective governance.

Mr. Speaker, the board has completed an extensive onboarding process and is actively working with NTPC management preparing a response to the letter of direction issued by this government. This work reflects a clear focus on accountability, planning, and the responsibilities that come with governing a public utility on behalf of Northerners.

Energy is fundamental to daily life in the Northwest Territories and a key priority for this government. With aging infrastructure and the growing impacts of climate change, this area faces considerable challenges but also promising opportunities. Those opportunities lie in modernizing how we plan, invest, and make decisions about energy infrastructure in the North, in ways that reflect northern realities and support long-term affordability, reliability, and resilience. Working together will be critical to achieving these goals.

I met with the new board members when they were in Yellowknife for their onboarding. The Members expressed their appreciation for the appointments, acknowledged that NTPC has a critical role in the North's future economic growth, and conveyed their commitment to work with management to be responsive to our letter of direction. This governance structure provides a solid foundation as NTPC plans for the future and the new hybrid board is well positioned to provide effective oversight as NTPC continues its work to deliver reliable, affordable, and sustainable power for communities across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for NTPC. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 973-02(1): COLLEGE NORDIQUE

MR. TESTART: Merci, Monsieur le President. [Translation] The only post-secondary French institution was opened in Canada, north of the 66th parallel, ever since its founded inception. In 2011, the college has continued to develop its programs and placed Northwest Territories as an educational pole in terms of Francophone education. The success of this initiative is such that their partnerships go beyond our borders, with Yukon and Nunavut. As such, the College Nordique Francophone is positioned to begin to serve Francophone communities throughout the North, and therefore creating a unique educational opportunity so that we can consolidate as a leader in post-secondary education. Even though the College Nordique has been prosperous, it cannot overcome the next step if there is no financing available, because in the current budget there is no funding available. Even after that, the federal government made \$2 million cuts. And to be able to respond to the French education in the three territories in Canada has become even more difficult for the College Nordique. Without having a multi-annual and continuous funding, the College Nordique is facing uncertainty; therefore, it has to set aside long-term planning, innovation, and stability of programs so that they may concentrate on the staffing, administrative tasks, and to reinforce their organizational capacity. In light of the rigid structure, they would not be able to take part in the programs, and it does not allow for the collaboration and accessibility for learners in the North. Together, these challenges and the chronic shortage of student housing hinders the College Nordique to reach and fulfill its full

potential. Mr. Chair, there is no reason to not support the College Nordique Francophone. Thank you. There is no justification to not support the College Nordique Francophone. When the college responds to the French language education, that means the French language rights is not just an obligation, but it's in order to ensure that we have -- that the entire territory can thrive. I will have questions for the [Translation Ends].

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 974-20(1): BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO HAYLEY RODGERS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish my eldest child and only daughter a happy 33rd birthday. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am that old. Hayley Rodgers, my daughter Hayley Rodgers, when we first moved to Inuvik, I think she was one years old when we went up there. Obviously grew up in Inuvik, went off to U of A, got her teaching degree, taught in Inuvik for six years, Mr. Speaker, and actually was a page in this House. I can't remember the Assembly when Mr. Roland was -- when Premier Roland. She now resides in Anchorage, Alaska. She resides there with her husband, Staff Sergeant Anthony Ross of the U.S. Air Force, and she has now just about completed her psychology degree which I am sure will come in handy once I retire. So I want to wish her the happiest of birthdays. A very proud father, obviously, and can't wait to see her this summer. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 975-20(1): COLVILLE LAKE SCHOOL

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [No translation provided]. Mr. Speaker. On June the 8th, I had the privilege of joining Premier R.J. Simpson, Minister Cleveland, and Minister McKay on a visit to the community of Colville Lake where we met with Chief Shawn and the Council of Behdzi Ahda' First Nation. This visit marked an important milestone for the community. Together we signed a work plan that sets out clear timelines and steps towards building a new junior kindergarten to grade 12 school in the community.

This work plan represents more than just a document, Mr. Speaker. It represents accountability, partnership, and a shared commitment between the Behdzi Ahda' First

Nation and the Government of Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, our time in the community was focused on listening to priorities, strengthening relationships. The new school will be more than just a learning centre. It will serve as a community hub, supporting culture, language revitalization, and student well-being for generations to come.

On the interim, Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to report that the Colville Lake School three modulars complex arrived in the community this morning. The journey took 650 kilometers under very challenging seasonal winter road conditions for dimensional loads; a big mahsi to the Department of Infrastructure and the transportation crew. This proves a united approach proves successful and contributes to achieving education under successful modern interior conditions. Mr. Speaker, this defines collaboration when governments work together with First Nations. When departments coordinate effectively, we achieve meaningful results. Later I will have questions to the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 976-20(1):
INDIGENOUS-LED MINING ECONOMY

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, as a former chief of the Yellowwives Dene First Nation going back to the 1990s, I had the privilege of working with chief and council, a working committee that was made up of negotiators, lawyers, community members, and former leaders.

Alongside my colleagues, we worked to establish a resource development agreement with BHP Bilton Diavik Diamond Mines, De Beers, Gahcho Kue, and out of those agreements we got skilled miners, skilled tradesmen, and heavy equipment operators. Through these efforts, I have learned how challenging cultivating Indigenous-led mining economy can be, but also essential that work is to creating jobs, developing the skilled workforce, attracting investment, and opening business opportunities for our community members and developing corporations.

This week, I just learned that Winter Bailey, a member of Deninu Kue First Nation, has been honoured with the Indigenous Trailblazing Award for women in mining by Women in Mining Canada, celebrating the Prospector and Development Association of Canada Convention. I want to extend my

congratulations to her for this award, and I have long admired the important work she has done.

Winter began her career on site in the mining industry and advanced into a leadership position with Diavik Diamond Mines, eventually becoming one of the first Indigenous women on Diavik management team. In her role, she has shared her expertise across Canada and the United States, South America, and Australia, building relationships with fostering collaboration with Indigenous communities and industry partners.

Trailblazer is a fitting word to describe her. She has forged a new path by building strong partnerships with Indigenous communities, negotiating and implementing long-term impact benefit agreements, ensuring high standards for training and establishing scholarships, apprenticeship programs that support northern residents entering mining and STEM careers. Her leadership sets a powerful precedence for future generations. Winter's work exemplifies what responsibilities community-focused mining can look like. She has advanced Indigenous participation, equity, and leadership while weaving traditional knowledge into the fabric of our northern economy. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Our territory has a long and proud history of mining. As we navigate a low point in the economic cycle, we rely on incredible homegrown talent like Winter and the many individuals she's inspiring. Thanks to her vision and leadership and our communities are building on her examples, creating a strong foundation of Indigenous expertise. We must harness that talent to develop a thriving Indigenous-led mining economy for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 977-20(1):
HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE PLAN

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I often stand up with lots of concerns about health care, but today I can say I am finally hopeful we are headed in the right direction, at least for primary care. We know that at least a quarter of Yellowknife's residents are not yet assigned to a primary care team, and so I've been asking for a clear pathway with resources to get everyone attached to a team. It's not as simple as just making the list of patients longer for each team. That could actually make things worse and take away appointment slots by

piling more paperwork on the limited pool of existing practitioners. Now, we've finally got a commitment that a primary care workforce plan will be completed within the year so we can set out how many and what kinds of practitioners are needed on these teams. Now, I've been yammering on about a health care workforce plan for two years now so it's good to see it finally being done.

We have a commitment to make renewed efforts to fill all existing vacancies of nurse practitioners and community health nurses on primary care teams, including those on temporary leave, such as parental leave. And I know it can be difficult to backfill these, but it's crucial to maintain patient access.

We have a commitment to bring forward money in the May sitting to add more nurse practitioner and community health nurse positions to primary care teams where there's been chronic physician vacancies, and work will be prioritized to ensure that practitioners on the teams know exactly how they're supposed to work together with clear roles and workflows. Expanding the lab at Stanton to a 24/7 model will be a significant improvement for all NWT patients who need lab work done quickly in order to move forward with appropriate treatment. I am also hopeful that putting in place nurse case managers will be a big step in improving the medical travel experience and lowering stress and hassle, as well as saving the system money.

Ensuring that community health worker positions and home care positions are filled and properly supported, those individuals have the training they need and access to virtual supports and team supports I believe will be significant. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So in closing, together, these commitments are significant, and I finally feel confident telling my constituents, both practitioners and residents, that in the coming year, they will begin to see real improvements on the ground in health care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 978-20(1):
LEGISLATION DEVELOPMENT

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, I spoke to this government's difficulties advantaging bills in a timely manner which fall under our Intergovernmental Council protocol. I want to

emphasize this is not the only area we struggle on legislative timelines or responsiveness, and I have a few theories as to why this is. One is what we are repeatedly being told by Cabinet which is that our government has limited capacity to draft or move legislation forward. I think we need to look further into that aspect of this issue and consider the significance of it to my next point, which is our government's apparent difficulty responding to emerging or specific issues. In this area, it's a bit of a mixed bag.

With Bill 15, our Assembly demonstrated an ability to act so quickly on an emerging issue that we passed a bill through all its stages in a matter of weeks. But on other issues raised by the public or MLAs, they have not been met with openness or responsiveness. In the follow-up to delivering our report on Bill 29, I spoke with firefighters who mentioned that they had been liaising with the WSCC and advocating for changes to bring the NWT in line with other jurisdictions on presumptive coverage for seven years prior to a Private Member's bill finally coming forward, not a government bill.

During review of Bill 26, another Private Member's bill, nurses presenting to committees cited decades of advocacy on the issue of establishing a labour relations board, which has only this year, in response to the pressure created by Bill 26, been proposed by the government to finally be resolved through legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there is a place for Private Member's bills when addressing very specific amendments or minor changes, but Private Member's bills are limited in their ability to address complex legislative change, issues which require a lot of input and expertise, or coordination with other jurisdictions. Furthermore, what does it say about the effectiveness of government if we have to increasingly rely on Private Member's bills to advance issues of public interest?

We have a unique form of government, and I think one of the arguable drawbacks of consensus is the government doesn't have as strong of an incentive structure to respond to public pressure. For that reason, I think we need to think more about how GNWT can improve its responsiveness as part of our ongoing cultural shift towards service orientation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 979-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ALCOHOL
STRATEGY

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Across the Northwest Territories, our families and our communities continue to feel the heavy impacts of alcohol misuse. We see it in the hurt that families carry, in the strain on our frontline workers, and in the weight our communities shoulder as they work to keep people safe.

Alcohol misuse affects every region of this territory, and it touches people from all walks of life. These harms are not numbers on a page; they are lived experience, shared stories, and generations of trying to heal. Communities have been asking for support and for change for a long time. That is why in March 2023, the Government of the Northwest Territories released its first alcohol strategy. It was built from conversations with leaders, service providers, and people with lived experience, and it laid out 15 actions meant to reduce harms through better prevention, safer communities, stronger supports, and coordinated actions.

The goal was clear, to have all actions completed by March 31st, 2028. But, Mr. Speaker, nearly three years later, I have not seen any updates on how this work is progressing. I know there is internal reporting, but that information has not been shared with the people who are directly affected, and while researchers have written about how the strategy was developed, there is nothing that tells us how things are changing today in our homes and in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, with just two years left before the 2028 target, people want to know what has been done, what is working and where more help is needed. Our residents deserve transparency in this important work. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services on the progress of alcohol strategy so communities can see the path forward and be part of it. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 980-20(1):
NO FAULT INSURANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to talk about no fault insurance and the impacts it can have to improve lives of Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, it's a simple idea. It's an idea that can impact every Northerner who gets behind the wheel, whether it's a truck on the highway

or a snow machine on the tundra. The idea is simply based on common sense. Right now, across the country we are seeing a shift. Jurisdictions are moving towards a no fault system, and they aren't doing it for the sake of bureaucracy; they're doing it for the sake of the people and the impact it has on them.

In the old system, when an accident happens the first question we ask is who can we blame. In a no fault system, we ask a better question, how can we help. Instead of waiting for a court date, getting your doctor, instead of getting lawyer's bills, you get income replacement. We're choosing rehabilitation over legalization and litigation, Mr. Speaker. Why aren't we thinking about ways of healing people over the necessity of useless paperwork?

Mr. Speaker, we can fix the system. This is about predictability. It's about knowing that your neighbours, whether downtown Lutselk'e or in Yellowknife, are treated with the same fairness you are. No guessing games, no fine print, Mr. Speaker, just transparency, consistency that treats every family with the dignity they deserve. And let's be clear about the bottom line.

When we cut out the endless back and forth of courtrooms and other types of processes, we save money but, more importantly, we also make sure that the premium dollars go to where they mostly belong. It's directly to the injured, Mr. Speaker, not the administrative loops that legal hoops cause and create legal fees. Mr. Speaker, we're looking for a process that helps to avoid conflict and ahead accepts or acknowledges compassion.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the rest of Canada is modernizing this way ahead of the Northwest Territories. We cannot afford to stand by while the people that deserve the systems needs to step up built around efficiencies. They deserve the fairness and a system that takes care of them, because at the time of crisis the last thing you need to be doing is looking for a lawyer. We should be asking someone for help, and they should be there to help you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 981-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ASSOCIATION
OF COMMUNITIES ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING AWARDS

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, this past weekend I had the opportunity to attend parts of the 60th Annual General Meeting of the NWT Association of Communities, including the

awards banquet. I had the pleasure of witnessing an exciting milestone for the Northwest Territories, the first ever presentation of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' Community Excellence Award. This new award honours NWT communities that demonstrate excellence in areas aligned with MACA's mandate to support capable, accountable, and self-directed community governments that foster safe, sustainable, and healthy environments for residents.

Colleagues, the inaugural recipient of this prestigious award was the Nahanni Butte Dene Band. This designated authority delivers essential municipal services and programs while working tirelessly to ensure their community remains a strong, healthy, and vibrant home.

Since 2021, the Nahanni Butte Dene Band has undergone a remarkable organizational transformation, strengthening governance, building capacity, and implementing clear, transparent policies, and long-term planning processes. These efforts have resulted in 29 major infrastructure and planning projects, improving housing and community services, enhancing food security, cultural programming, and environmental stewardship. The Nahanni Butte Dene Band's achievements stand as a testament to the power of good leadership and community-driven vision.

Later that evening, I had the honour of watching Minister Semmler present the Healthy Communities Award. This award recognizes community-led initiatives that promote physical, mental, cultural, and social wellness across the Northwest Territories. It celebrates communities that make healthy living more accessible and sustainable for residents. Every one of the NWT's 33 communities plays a vital role in shaping wellness and is eligible for this recognition.

The Village of Fort Simpson nominated the Dehcho First Nations health and wellness division for their exceptional contributions. The division works closely with residents from nine communities across the Dehcho region to deliver programs grounded in local priorities and lived experience. Their initiatives include on-the-land healing, an Indigenous cooking program for diabetes, and the development of a traditional midwifery program. Staff also connect residents with traditional healers, food security supports, and foot care services, helping people access care close to home.

I would like to congratulate the Dehcho First Nations health and wellness division for their excellent work in supporting the health and

well-being of Dehcho residents and the Nahanni Butte Band on receiving the first MACA Community Excellence Award. Thank you.

Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 982-20(1):
CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR KEVIN
NITSIZA JR.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to share the story of a little boy from the Tlicho region who brought a lot of love and light to the people around him. His name was Kevin Nitsiza Jr.

Kevin was brave and a true fighter. From the very beginning of his life, he lived with a rare and severe genetic condition known as MECP2 duplication syndrome. Doctors believed he would only have a short time to live, but Kevin kept fighting and proved them wrong, showing a strength and determination that inspired everyone around him.

To raise a child with that kind of fighting spirit takes strong and resilient parents. Mr. Speaker, Kevin Jr.'s parents, Ashley and Kevin Sr., showed that strength every day. They stood beside their son through every challenge, carrying responsibilities, and making sacrifices that very few of us can fully understand. For nine years, they poured their love, time, and care into Kevin's life, always fighting to give him the best they could.

On March 2nd, Kevin's brave fight came to an end, leaving a deep loss for his family and community. Mr. Speaker, I want to use this time to celebrate Kevin's story but also to give this Assembly an opportunity to reflect.

Kevin's story is truly inspiring, but it also reminds us of the difficult and often heartbreaking realities families face when caring for a child with complex needs. Kevin's family experienced that reality firsthand. They had to leave their home in Whati so Kevin could receive the medical care he needed. They had to leave behind the love and support of aunts, uncles, cousins, and extended family. They were denied access to low-income support, disability programs, and social housing, even though it was clear they needed help. Again and again, obstacles were placed in front of a family already carrying so much.

Mr. Speaker, these are failings of our systems and of our government. We must do more to protect our people, especially those who are vulnerable and who need it most. Families like Kevin shouldn't have to fight so desperately just to access the support their children need.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, it was also important to Kevin's family that the support of their community be recognized. They shared that the phrase, it takes a community to raise a child, felt especially true in Kevin's life. They want to acknowledge the family that stood beside them, a family that extends throughout the Tlicho region and includes so many people who cared for Kevin along the way. They also want to recognize the support of the Tlicho government and the schools he attended here in Yellowknife. He was enrolled in Wiilideh school.

When he was in school, 32 classmates were given an opportunity to play with Kevin ten minutes throughout the day. Kevin was a popular child in school. He will be missed and remembered by the teachers and students alike. When Kevin was able to attend school, those were some of his happiest moments. His family shared that those days brought out his biggest smile.

Kevin was never able to walk or run or do many things, many of the things most children do growing up but when he passed, his mother shared with me a beautiful vision. She said she saw Kevin run through the gates of heaven, free and full of joy. As he passed through those gates, he turned back with the biggest smile and thanked his parents and his community for the love and care that have filled his life.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Ashley and Kevin Jr., their family, and the community that loved Kevin so deeply. Mr. Speaker, today Kevin is being laid to rest but his spirit remains here with his family and loved ones. May he now run freely among the angels in heaven in joy and in peace. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Our condolences go out to the family. And I had the pleasure of talking to the Member this morning about this, and she did a beautiful celebration of his life.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to recognize Modina Spears, the mother, and daughter, Aurora, who had left the Northwest Territories 21 years ago after being with Aurora's father, Angus Shea, a resident, a wonderful man and a kind man from Fort Good Hope. And in addition to the recognition, Mr. Speaker, Aurora is accompanied by her newly fiancée Kane Simpson who just shared their engagement vows in our great ice castle down in the old part of the community. So they traveled, Modina

traveled from Alberta, and Aurora and Kane traveled from Abbotsford. Welcome home. Enjoy your stay in the North. Mahsi cho.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize and welcome my constituent Kaiyer Brennan to the Assembly. He is here as a page this week. I know that all of the Members appreciate all of the pages, and I appreciate his time and efforts, and I hope he's learning about consensus government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Mahsi, [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Patrick Arsenault, Executive Director of College Nordique, and his team, Yakshini Bodo, Marylou Pilotes, Christina Negrini, and also students, Sophie Brodeur, Michel Lemieux, Sarah Maud Lemelin, and Nathan Cabot. Thank you for being here today.

[Translation Ends]

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to recognize three pages from the community of Tsiigehtchic, Ms. Sydney VanLoon, Ms. Rose Blake, and Ms. Arianna Cardinal. I'd like to welcome you to the Assembly, and we appreciate the work that you've done this past week and thank you for your work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. Hope you enjoy the proceedings. It's always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Motions

MOTION 72-20(1):
PROTECTION OF TRANSBOUNDARY
WATERS AND RIGHTS OF NORTHERNERS,
CARRIED

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the motion I have here today is protection of transboundary water and the rights of Northerners.

WHEREAS water is essential to ecosystems and communities of the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS water flows through interconnected watersheds that cross provincial and territorial borders, with Northwest Territories waters strongly affected by the conditions in neighbouring Alberta and British Columbia;

AND WHEREAS since 2023, hydrology updates confirm that many Northwest Territories rivers and lakes have experienced record low or wellbelow average water levels, reflecting severe and ongoing drought conditions;

AND WHEREAS upstream industrial development in Alberta's oil sands region relies on large volumes of water and uses extensive tailings pond systems;

AND WHEREAS in 2022-2023, tailings affected wastewater seeped at the Kearl oil sands mine in Alberta beyond the lease boundary and public notification was delayed for approximately nine months, prompting concerns among downstream users including communities in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS Alberta's Water Amendment Act 2025 merges the Peace-Slave and Athabasca basins and introduces new low risk inter-basin transfer pathways, changes that environmental and Indigenous organizations have warned may reduce oversight and heighten ecological and downstream risks;.

AND WHEREAS Alberta's Water Amendment Act 2025 proposes to allow the treatment and release of oil sands tailings despite the methods for treatment not being fully established and insufficient scientific evidence demonstrating that such actions can be conducted safely, potentially impacting downstream waters and watersheds in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada and several provinces have adopted a "one project, one review" approach to streamline environmental and impact assessments, including formal cooperation agreements with New Brunswick and Ontario, which aims to reduce duplication but also shift greater reliance onto provincial assessment processes;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous leaders in the Northwest Territories have publicly raised concerns about inadequate consultation regarding Alberta's Water Amendment Act 2025 and the potential severe impacts on watersheds and downstream users;

AND WHEREAS section 35 of the Canadian Constitution 1982 recognizes and affirms existing Indigenous and treaty rights, including those under Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, which guarantee Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories the right to continue their traditional livelihoods, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering, which rely on the waters and ecosystems of the territory;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, second by the Member for Dehcho, that this Legislative Assembly calls on the Government of the Northwest Territories to formally oppose Alberta's Bill 7, Water Amendment Act 2025, and any upstream policies that could enable inter-basin transfers or basin mergers without robust science-based safeguards and full consideration of downstream impacts on the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories urge the Government of Canada to ensure that "one project, one review" agreements preserve strong, enforceable protections for water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and cumulative effects oversight, including in shared watersheds that affect the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure its transboundary water agreements allow for transparent, timely, and proactive notification and information sharing from Alberta and federal regulators regarding any incidents or releases with potential transboundary effects consistent with best practices learned from the Kearl tailings seepage events;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure that its transboundary water agreements allow for transparent, timely, and proactive notification and information sharing from Alberta and federal regulators regarding any proposed or actual treatment, discharge, or release of oil sands tailings with potential transboundary impacts;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories reaffirms that First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples must be meaningfully consulted and involved consistent with their rights on decisions affecting shared waters and watershed governance;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories strengthen and publicly communicate its ongoing hydrologic monitoring and drought reporting for the Northwest Territories, including clear summaries of conditions, drivers, and implications for communities and ecosystems;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion in 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member from Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Water is life. This is something our elders have taught us for generations. It is something we know not just in our minds but in our hearts. Many of us grew up drinking directly from the Mackenzie River or any river in the North from the lakes, from the river and from the clear streams that nourished our families and sustained our communities. Some of our people still do today. That deep connection to the land and water is not a memory; it is a living part of who we are. It reminds us that we have a responsibility, a duty to protect our waters so the future generations can enjoy the same gifts we were given.

Mr. Speaker, every decision made in the upper Mackenzie River basin, whether in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan or the Yukon, flows down to us. The GNWT has clearly acknowledged this reality. The NWT is the ultimate downstream jurisdiction directly impacted by upstream water management decisions. When large-scale industrial activities such as oil and gas development, pulp and paper operations, and hydroelectric projects occur upstream, it is our waters, our ecosystems, and our people that bear the consequences.

Because of this, Mr. Speaker, we can't rely on hope alone to protect the safety and purity of our water. We must take action. Over the many years, the Government of the Northwest Territories has done just that through the negotiations of transboundary water agreements with upstream jurisdictions.

These agreements are rooted in the 1997 Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement between Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. This master agreement commits all parties to work cooperatively to protect the ecological integrity of the entire basin and to make decisions in a way that sustains the water resources for present and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, these agreements are not just technical documents. They are powerful tools, tools that affirm our right to clean water that recognize the importance of aquatic ecosystem health and that ensure upstream governments cannot unreasonably harm downstream

jurisdictions like ours. Bilateral agreements with Alberta, British Columbia, and updated agreements with the Yukon set clear expectations for water quality.

Groundwater protection and ecosystem health, they require cooperation, information sharing, and joint stewardship. They give us a seat at the table so that decisions affecting our waters are not made without our knowledge or our voice. These agreements also recognize something fundamental, the central role of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge in protecting the land and water. The Mackenzie River Basin process and its bilateral agreements emphasize the importance of Indigenous participation, ensuring that traditional knowledge and community experience shape decisions that affect our shared waters. This is not only good practice; it is an expression of respect for the people who have cared for these lands since time immemorial.

Mr. Speaker, protecting our water is not just environmental policy. It is about the health of our families, the safety of our food source, the well-being of our communities, and the future of our culture. Water holds our stories, our history, and our responsibilities. It connects all of us, upstream and downstream alike. As legislators, we must continue strengthening our protections, holding upstream partners accountable, and ensuring that the commitments made in these important agreements are upheld. We must continue speaking for the water because the water cannot speak for itself, and we must always remember that the decisions we make today will shape the world our children and grandchildren inherit. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this motion and its goal of protecting the waters and the rights of the people of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the heart of this motion is the health of our people. My communities face alarming high rates of cancer, chronic illness, illnesses that are forced our people to face serious challenges at an even younger age and take our elders from us too soon.

In the past year alone, as the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh I have contributed to over 20 funerals. And that is only a fraction of the loss our communities have endured. Countless others are battling cancer and serious illnesses, and my office works tirelessly to advocate for them and ensure their treaty rights to health are

honoured. This is an experience I know I share with my colleagues who represents Indigenous communities because our people are far more likely to be affected by cancer and other serious illnesses.

These disparities in health and well-being of our people are stark examples of ongoing inequity of our community faces with Indigenous people experiencing these health risks at much higher rates than non-Indigenous populations. Our people spend much time on the land, sustaining ourselves directly from hunting, fishing, trapping, and we rely on these waters, on our ecosystems, which rely on these waters as well. When the land and water are sick, we are sick.

Here in Yellowknife, we live in the shadows of Giant Mine. The mine is a legacy of -- or, and painful reminder of how our authority, stewardship over land were taken from us, of how the government of the day gave industry a blank cheque to carelessly unleash harmful chemicals from arsenic to uranium, dumping them on our land and onto our waters and exposing our people to them for decades.

It is in our communities. We have lived on this land since time immemorial who bear the consequences. Undoing these policies, repairing the harm, and restoring the stewardship of the land is one of the greatest efforts of the reconciliation era.

I am proud to say that through our resilience, our advocacy, and our fight back, we are turning the tide. But there is still a long way to go. Through the advocacy of First Nations and Inuit, we are working to force government to uphold treaty rights and those treaties are promised, no interference in the mode of way of life.

Right now, there are transboundary agreements with Alberta to -- they monitor the water and uphold the interests of downstream communities. But, unfortunately, this agreement is without any co-management of our First Nation so instead our communities must rely on our government to protect us because we have no voice at this table. Unfortunately, this transboundary agreement is breaking down.

Most recently, an incident in Imperial Oil Kearl mine of north of Fort McMurray leaked contaminants, tailings, into surrounding watersheds and groundwater, at least 5.3 million litres of industrial wastewater that flowed into the forests, wetlands, and rivers, which feed directly into the Athabasca River. Despite this contamination being known by the company and Alberta energy regulators for months before it became public, neither the

Government of the Northwest Territories nor affected Indigenous governments were formally notified as required.

Our government stated that they learned of the Kearl incident second hand from Indigenous governments or the media. Rather than our official Alberta notification, they described this as a serious failure to share information, a violation of the transboundary agreement communication provision which called for prompt and transparent exchange whenever shared waters could be affected. At the time, they also noted that the lack of transboundary around Kearl was not an isolated incident, pointing to a border -- ongoing pattern of information sharing issues with Alberta.

So what is our government doing about this given that the transboundary agreement has no teeth? So far, not enough.

The lack of consultation and the clear shortcoming in this agreement, no enforcement measurements to consequences is even more evident now that Alberta has introduced Bill 7 to amend the Water Act. This bill does two dangerous things.

First, it sets an objective to treat and release contaminated tailings ponds, ponds that in total are twice the size of the city of Vancouver. The science does not support the idea that these tailings can be treated safely. Once released, they will have immeasurable impacts on downstream communities, and Alberta has provided no clear explanation of how or why this will happen, only that panels will be appointed to get it done.

Second, the plan to merge water basins is in direct violation of our transboundary agreement. This will fundamentally alter the flow of balance of watersheds, affecting lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. It will degrade water quality and disrupt ecosystems that rely on seasonal flows, spawning cycles, temperature ranges, sediments levels, and oxygen levels.

All of this is being done without consultation with the Northwest Territories, without respecting our transboundary agreement, and with complete disregard for our treaty rights on health and our way of life.

When I speak of Alberta here, I am not talking about the people and certainly not the First Nation, many of whom are now taking the Alberta government to court. This decision are being made by the UCP government which has a long history of ignoring nation-to-nation relationships and giving industry unchecked power.

If we rewind the clock 20 years, when this transboundary agreement was being formed, the old PC government faced pressure from sectors of the oil industry that rejected the notion of consensus, accountability, environmental oversight, or Indigenous co-management. This led to the creation of the Wild Rose Party which spent a decade dismantling the PC regulations and calling for a radical degradation of the oil industry. Their leaders at the time, Daniel Smith, now Premier of Alberta, continues to prioritize her long-time donor, appointing them to oversight regulatory boards across the government. Now those donors want tailings ponds dumped immediately in violation of the agreement with water basins merge, and they are ignoring Alberta's bilateral commitments to our territory.

This is why, in this motion, I hope this Assembly speaks with one voice, sending a strong message that the government must uphold treaty rights, protect people and the ecosystem, defend the small, critical advances we made on environmental oversight, lead the way to national Indigenous co-management access across provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

At the federal level, big changes are happening. MOUs are being signed with Alberta. Regulatory processes are being streamlined and strategic industries expanded. Water, strategic resources, our rights are sacred. We need our government to speak up. Our government must protect our rights of our health and our waterways and ensure that we sit at the federal table as equal partners making our voices heard loud and clear. We must show leadership, uphold our treaty rights, and defend our people and our land. Alberta may have the rights to do what they want for their territory, but there's downstream communities. We have rights, and we need to make that clear. I hope my colleagues join me in sending this powerful message to Alberta and give our government the momentum they need to work harder. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. I certainly can't find the words as eloquently as my colleagues have already illustrated, so I'm happy to stand here and support them and support the words that they've already shared. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will also be brief. And I want to thank the mover and seconder of this motion. I spoke in depth to my feelings on this matter on February 26th, and I will let those comments stand, and I will support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. To the motion. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief too. You know, this fight has been going on for a long time. My Uncle Charlie Snowshoe, who has passed earlier, he is a great advocate of this protection of the water from Alberta and B.C. coming in downstream and would adversely affect our region way up in the northern part of Canada. So I too will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a very detailed, well thought out and passionate motion, Mr. Speaker. I can't imagine not supporting this. The fact is, in brief, could you imagine if you didn't have water to drink, what would you drink? We all know it's the essence of life. It sustains all our biodiversity, our ecosystems. It's simply down to the survival. It's hard to believe; it's that simple, the survival of who we are. The water has many meanings in many cultures, and I certainly think it has no less importance here in the Northwest Territories as it does anywhere else. But if you don't have water, you have nothing. So I'll be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in support of my colleague's motion. You know, I'm -- when I worked at the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, you know, I walked into the Chief Drygeese Centre and saw the motto every day As Long as the Sun Shines, the River Flows and the Grass Grows, so will the Treaty and the land and the people be sustained. And water is life, land is life, and doing what we can to protect it and ensure that the rights -- the treaty rights of Indigenous people are intact, especially in government to government relationships, in this case with the government of Alberta, are very important and part of reconciliation, and I thank the Member for bringing this forward. This is an important issue. I've heard about it, certainly,

from Indigenous leadership, and the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh is certainly someone I respect as a leader for these concerns in the Northwest Territories. And, again, I thank him for bringing it forward, and I will support it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will stand in support to this motion. As our elders have always said, and as previous speakers mentioned, water is life and water brings stability and health and goodwill to our communities. And I can't say any more than what was already said, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this is important for NWT and the people. And like my colleague from Dehcho said, water is life, and we have heard many times from our elders, they said water is our father and it is important for our survival. So I will support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as this motion makes a recommendation to government, Cabinet will be abstaining from the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is called. Does the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh wish to close debate.

MR. EDJERICON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank my colleagues on this very important issue. And, Mr. Speaker, I ask for a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Dehcho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great

Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Colleagues, all those in favour, 11. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, seven. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Motions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MOTION 70-20(1):

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two motions to read into the record. I'll obviously do one at a time. The first one is with respect to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. So, Mr. Speaker,

WHEREAS Tabled Document 483-20(1), 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission Final Report, has been tabled in this House;

AND WHEREAS the 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission Final Report requires detailed consideration;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Tabled Document 483-20(1), 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission Final Report, be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Member from the Yellowknife Centre.

MOTION 71-20(1):
 REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 445-20(1): 2025 REVIEW OF MEMBERS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS REPORT
 CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second motion is regarding the Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report.

WHEREAS Tabled Document 445-20(1), 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report, has been tabled in this House;

AND WHEREAS the 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report requires detailed consideration;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Tabled Document 445-20(1), 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report, be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried. Motions. Member for Monfwi.

MOTION 75-20(1):
 WAIVING OF RENT FOR ELDERS IN PUBLIC HOUSING,
 CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I have two motions, Mr. Speaker, waiving of rent for elders in public housing unit, Mr. Speaker,

WHEREAS elders aged 65 and over living in public housing in the Northwest Territories often face financial hardship due to fixed incomes and rising costs of living;

AND WHEREAS the limited affordable housing options in the Northwest Territories disproportionately affect elders in smaller and remote communities;

AND WHEREAS elders contribute significantly to the cultural, social, and community fabric of the Northwest Territories and deserve dignity and security in their housing;

AND WHEREAS elders play a vital role in preserving Indigenous languages, culture, and traditions, and ensuring their well-being strengthens communities;

AND WHEREAS housing insecurity among elders can lead to negative health outcomes and increased reliance on health and social services;

AND WHEREAS waiving rent for elders in public housing would reduce poverty, improve health outcomes, and support aging in place;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Dehcho, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to implement a policy to waive rent for all elders aged 65 and over residing in public housing units as soon as administratively feasible;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion in 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from the Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, I want to voice my strong support for this motion calling on the government to implement a policy to waive rent for all elders aged 65 and over residing in public housing. This is not simply a matter of financial relief. It is a matter of dignity, equity, and respect for those who have built and continue to sustain our communities.

Across the Northwest Territories, elders living on fixed incomes face increasing financial pressures. The rising cost of food, fuel, utilities, essential goods, place an ever-growing burden on those least able to absorb it. For many elders, every dollar is already stretched to its limit. When rent becomes one of the most significant monthly expenses, the result is hardship; hardship that no elder in our territory should experience especially after a lifetime of contributing to the well-being of their families, communities, and cultures.

This issue is even more pronounced in our smaller and remote communities where affordable housing options are extremely limited. Elders in these regions often face higher costs of living and fewer economic opportunities, intensifying the strain. Housing should not be a source of insecurity for the knowledge-keepers, language-holders, and cultural leaders who play such vital roles in the life of Northwest Territories.

Elders are central to preserving Indigenous language, cultural practices, and community identity. When elders thrive, communities thrive. Ensuring stable and secure housing for elders supports healthy aging in place, allows them to remain in their home communities, and strengthens intergenerational ties that are fundamental to cultural continuity.

There are also clear social and health benefits. Housing insecurity is linked to poor health outcomes and greater reliance on health and social services. By waiving rent for elders in public housing, the government would reduce poverty, reduce stress, and promote better physical and mental health measures that would likely reduce pressure on government systems in the long run.

Rent waivers are not merely a financial policy. They are an investment in community strength and cultural resilience. They honour the contributions of elders that elders have made throughout their lives and acknowledge the responsibility we carry to ensure they are cared for with the respect they deserve.

For these reasons, I urge the members to support this motion. Let us act decisively to ensure that elders aged 65 and over living in public housing can live with dignity, security, and peace of mind. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I want to say thank you to my colleague from Dehcho.

Mr. Speaker, across the Northwest Territories, many elders who reside in public housing are facing increasing financial hardship. With fixed incomes and continuously rising cost of living, even modest increases in expenses can push elders into difficult choices between essentials like food, heat, medication, and housing.

Mr. Speaker, these challenges are felt most acutely in our smaller and remote communities where affordable housing options are limited and the cost of living is even higher. For many elders, public housing is not just a place to live; it is the only viable option available to them.

We must remember that elders are the heart of our communities. They are the keepers of our languages, our knowledge, and our traditions. Their contributions -- cultural, social and emotional -- enrich the Northwest Territories in ways that cannot be measured in dollars. Ensuring their well-being is not only an obligation, it strengthens families, communities and the continuity of culture for future generations.

Housing insecurity among elders is not just a housing issue. It has direct impact on health, increasing pressures on our health care and social systems. By waiving rent for elders in public housing, we can reduce poverty, improve health outcomes, and support elders to age in place with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, through this motion we are expressing a clear expectation that elders should no longer face financial strain simply to maintain a safe and stable home. It urges the government to take meaningful action to eliminate rental costs for elders in public housing, ensuring they can age in their communities with dignity, security, and the respect they deserve. I urge all Members to support this motion and reaffirm our commitment to honouring and protecting our elders. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be voting in favour of this motion. I like the spirit and intent of it. If anything, I have based my career on -- a lot of it was supporting seniors and elders, and any way to make their life better is certainly an issue, you know, I will take on, a fight I'll take on anytime. I have not forgotten the journey of those who have come before us, and to me it's an important story of their life that we must make sure that the winter of their life is not as burdened as much as possible.

As this is a public housing issue, I'm also worried -- and it gives us a chance to do some evaluation with respect to it, cost it out. And often I've thought about the issue whereas in it's just a shell game, you know. For example, housing or maybe health is paying the rent -- sorry, my apologies, income support is paying the rent of housing, which is just a government shell game, taking one money from one pocket and moving it into the next. And I don't see any true efficiency of that. It's like once people are assessed, you know, maybe that's when you say okay, they've been fully assessed at this time. So we need to stop doing this process. All we're doing is making work and making paperwork, and that's certainly not efficient. This process could actually help define and save government money in the long run.

So in short, Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting this motion. I would like to know some details further along the lines when the government does its evaluation for implementation because I'm confident they'll see the wisdom of this motion.

And, lastly, I want to thank the Member for Monfwi. She continues to be an ardent champion on supporting elders as well, and I must acknowledge her strong will and the voice of her peoples. So I cannot imagine not helping carry some of that voice and passion with her. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well to give support to this motion. I just want to just reflect back to the 19th Assembly when we had a social development committee that travelled to Behchoko and to talk about housing in that community. And I recall we had an elder that came to that meeting, and it was very touching because that elder lived in public housing but his senior income from his pension was about 80 percent garnished and he got \$20 a month, and that's very disturbing, all because the NWT Financial Act talks about that. So that Act needs to be updated in line with UNDRIP.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we get claims done and self-government agreements done, similar to what's going on in Behchoko, you know, our elders are the ones that are, I guess, teaching us right from as we're growing up. And I was raised by an elder too, like, my grandparents. And it's very important that -- you know, that these homes that they're talking about that -- that I really support this motion because it brings a lot of memories to them in these homes. But I've got to think back to as well that in 2038, Housing NWT is also going to be -- their agreements with CMHC are going to come to an end. And what becomes after 2038? What becomes of all the housing assets, the liabilities? All that needs to get sorted out. So it makes only good sense that we start looking at this and look at ways to liquidate these assets, even if they're old. I'm sure that we could figure that out at the community level. So, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will support this motion. I've had tea and bannock with a number of elders throughout the communities that I represent and talked to the elders in some other communities, and I don't think we should be treating our elders in their golden years of their journey but be there to ease the tension as we all know the cost of living is so high in all our communities, they're really extremely battling the hardships of stretching their dollar values and still being

there for their children, their grandchildren, who is always requesting some money assistance for their toys or whatever the children want or request at the time. So that's just part and part of a parcel of my efforts to show support for our elderly community. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this motion makes a recommendation to government, Cabinet will be abstaining from the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So first I want to say I really appreciate the intent of this motion. My colleagues have spoken to the financial hardship that many elders experience, and I agree that it seems that even though we have housing subsidies and we have income support that those things don't necessarily have appropriate thresholds and that we may be still demanding too much rent, for example, from people who are in demonstrated financial need so it is a significant hardship on them.

My colleagues also mentioned that it may be the case that elders who may not be in such financial hardship or need may not have other options in a community except to live in public housing and that also speaks to the need for us to create more housing options in communities that are appropriate for people both in varying levels of financial need but also in need of various kinds of supports, and we need that fuller spectrum or range of housing options.

And I think my colleagues also spoke to the fact that there's a different motivation besides solely financial hardship driving a request like this that even if a person -- if an elder is not necessarily in need that we want to have a way to show our appreciation for them and what they've contributed throughout their entire lives, to their families to their communities, and I think we often -- or the government often forgets about that side of things. I think we focus solely on, you know, demonstrate your financial need and and that's that's the only or main factor in our financial support programs. And I think if if we take that desire seriously, that part of these support programs is to show our appreciation and support for people and what they've done, it would create a different angle and an approach both to income support and public housing but I think we need to contemplate more fully, it's not cut and dry, but I think

something we need to think about more seriously.

I would certainly be interested to hear back from the government in terms of what would be the financial implications of a policy change like this, but I think it's worth having this conversation, it's worth getting a response back from government, getting more information so we can explore this, so I will be supporting the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker I'm going to be brief and do my level best to not repeat what's already been said. So appreciate the comments by the Member for Yellowknife North and want to echo some of those. Mr. Speaker, I think that, you know, I've spoken a bit during this session -- this sitting, sorry, about turnaround thresholds and how they affect our ability to effectively provide social supports, and I think that's a relevant part of this conversation. And you know, the availability of housing is another big one. You know, we just received the housing needs assessment and as the Member for Yellowknife North just pointed out, you know, the need is great. It also pointed out that the need amongst Indigenous people in particular is higher than that in our remote communities; we have a lot of housing need. And so that lack of availability is a significant contributor to this issue, and so I think -- I'm happy to support the motion. I think it's worth noting that, you know, where we can incorporate income testing into our programs to ensure that we are helping the people with most need is really important and so I am interested in hearing the government's response to this, hearing how the government is changing the way it is approaching this issue and listening to the voices of our Indigenous Members that speak so well to the issues that they see in their communities and how we are, you know, constantly on the journey of decolonizing our government. And so I am very curious to hear the response to this and how the government wants to approach it. I know that it is very difficult for us to help everyone as much as we want to but that doesn't negate the need for thinking how we can do things better, how we can do things more efficiently, and how we can deliver programming in an effective way and thinking more about how our government can be service-oriented as opposed to mired in process as it often feels like we are. So anything that we can do to address those issues I hope can be seen in the response to this motion.

And, you know, I just want to say again I was very very impressed with what was in the housing needs assessment and very impressed with some of the innovative work that I see our housing department doing and hope that addressing this motion can become a part of that as well, so. I am supportive of the motion and appreciate the Member from Monfwi bringing it forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also too want to thank the Member for Monfwi for bringing this forward. Not too long ago, she and I spoke after a long day and talked a lot about elders and folks with disability, and so I do also want to tie this back to my statement earlier this week that certain issues that no longer have Ministers responsible for that portfolio, one being seniors and elders and the other being disability, are issues we still need to really drill down into, Mr. Speaker, and I really appreciate the Member for Monfwi for being that tireless advocate.

I do believe that the mover and the Minister responsible for Housing NWT have been doing some really good work together, have been having really good positive conversations. We've seen that now with some of the programs that have been announced this past week, and I think there's more good work to be done ahead, and so I look forward to the government response to explore and understand and cost out and to develop a good way forward on the intent of this motion. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion, not only do I, you know, have parents who are elders themselves but elders are the foundation of our communities and the cultural fabric that holds the North together. And, Mr. Speaker, if there's anything we could do to make the North more affordable for everyday people, then it's an issue that I am going to support, and this motion is calling exactly for that. It's addressing a policy that can be changed in order to make things just a little bit easier for people who have given so much to our communities and it's a no-brainer, in my mind. The only thing I'd say is the government response here is going to be important because the motion does say as soon as administratively feasible. And I would hate for the government to come back and say well, until -- once we have the money we'll do it and

we'll never have the money because there's too many priorities. So I really will encourage in the response that does come that there is an actual effort put into finding a way to do this in a realistic way that can benefit the lives of seniors and elders living in the Northwest Territories. So I look forward to that response as to my colleagues -- as colleagues have mentioned, and I thank the mover for her tireless advocacy for seniors and elders in the Northwest Territories. And I will be supporting it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Member from Monfwi, do you wish to conclude debate?

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I want to say thank you to, like to all the colleagues here, to Dehcho for seconding the motions and to all my colleagues here, the Regular MLAs for speaking in favour of the motion. You know, this motion is really important for many of our elder senior citizens living on fixed incomes. The struggles are real especially in small remote communities, so I know in many of the small communities where elders are paying rent from \$75 to \$400. That's in my region. But what about the communities further up North? Maybe they're paying more than that but I'm not sure. But so this will really help and alleviate some of the financial stress that the elders are going through. And, you know, speaking about that, seniors, because of their grown children, they were not on the lease and they were employed, they are still stuck with that arrears. Just like my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh mentioned, that elders, one of my elders are getting garnisheed, his pension is getting garnished. So this will really help a lot of our elders to enjoy their golden years. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, I ask for a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Monfwi has asked for a recorded vote. All those, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Dehcho. The

Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. All in favour, 11. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, seven. Motion has carried.

---Carried

Colleagues, being cognitive of the time and realizing that the next motion is going to take more than 19 minutes, I am going to give us a break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

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

MOTION 73-20(1):
STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES' MEDICAL
TRAVEL POLICY,
CARRIED

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms existing Indigenous and treaty rights, and the Government of the Northwest Territories, as an agent of the Crown, has a fiduciary obligation to respect these rights, including ensuring timely and equitable access to health services and treatment as recognized under constitutionally entrenched treaties, including Treaty 8 and 11;

AND WHEREAS many residents of the Northwest Territories, including treaty beneficiaries, experience limited access to timely appointments, diagnostics, and surgical services for services available in the territory, leading some to seek necessary care outside the territory;

AND WHEREAS residents, including treaty beneficiaries, who travel outside the territory to receive necessary care on time do so without support from medical travel, creating financial barriers that may constitute discrimination in publicly-funded health services, contrary to the treaties that affirm the right of Indigenous peoples to access care irrespective of territorial or provincial borders;

AND WHEREAS current medical travel policies, which administer non-insured health benefits (NIHB) to Status First Nations people, do not provide escorts for residents requiring medical evacuation outside the territory;

AND WHEREAS residents, including treaty beneficiaries, are therefore required, in medical ambulance situations, to pay out-of-pocket to serve as escorts for patients being medically evacuated from the territory to receive care, incurring significant costs despite treaty rights that extend irrespective of territorial boundaries;

AND WHEREAS Status First Nations who rely on non-insured health benefits for transportation benefits apply through medical travel, which must obtain federal approval before travel can be authorized, yet appeals of denials are not processed through medical travel;

AND WHEREAS the requirement for medical travel to obtain federal approval, combined with the fact that appeals of denials are not handled by medical travel, creates additional administrative barriers and slower response times for Status First Nations compared to other residents;

AND WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action 18–24 call upon governments to close gaps in health outcomes for Indigenous peoples and recognize their distinct health rights, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice identify equitable, barrier-free access to health services as essential to the safety, dignity, and human rights of Indigenous women and girls;

AND WHEREAS the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and requires governments to take effective measures to ensure access to health services without discrimination;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act requires territorial laws and policies, including health policies, to be developed in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and in a manner consistent with section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly adopted Motion 49-20(1) on March 6, 2025, calling on the Government of the Northwest Territories to establish compassionate support for patients transported via emergency ground or air ambulance;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Monfwi, that the Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to strengthen the medical travel policy by establishing a rapid-response emergency support mechanism, including a contingency fund, to provide interim approval and funding for medical travel escorts in extraordinary circumstances while awaiting federal NIHB decisions, where delays risk undermining patient safety, continuity of care, or the exercise of Indigenous peoples' rights to access health services beyond territorial borders as per recognized treaty obligations;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories build greater flexibility into medical travel determinations of whether in-territory care is "reasonably available," explicitly considering significant diagnostic, surgical, and treatment wait times;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories implement a compassionate medical evacuation policy with all reasonable speed so that medivac supports complement and integrate with the medical travel policy, including guarantees for patient escorts where needed;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure that all amendments to the medical travel policy are made in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, and in a manner that respects and upholds Indigenous and treaty rights recognized and affirmed under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. You know, when we're traveling -- this is what our elders always say. When we are traveling, when we travel or go south or wherever we're going, you know, they always say, pray to have a good, safe travel, you know, that we're all going to come home safely. And that's the advice that elders, they always give us and they give it to the young people. And, you know, when we're traveling, nobody wants to get sick. So this is where medical travel denies people who are already on the road trip.

And it's beyond our control. So that even when people are traveling, you know, they're already traveling already but they are limited with cash already. And because it's not going through -- they're there already so they're not going to be eligible for medical travel. So that's why we're asking that the system, to strengthen the systems, to allow people who are already traveling too. Because, you know, medical travel, many families are traumatized by the medical travel funding, especially for escorts. People are having a hard time finding medical escorts in many of the small communities because they are always saying, I don't have any money. We don't have enough money. And it comes down to that. There is funds in place but it's not enough.

You know, finding a medical travel should not be an issue, but it's becoming an issue for many of the smaller communities. But when people are already traveling and they're down south or wherever they're at, you know, and I know I heard the Minister say something about travel insurance. Well, in some cases, you know, on the emergency base, how are some of -- you know, people travel at the last minute. They don't have time to get travel insurance. And where do they go? How do they get the travel insurance?

So all of these things, due to technology, due to lack of services, we don't have access to lots of programming services, especially in small communities, so. Because for all the reasons, I do support the medical travel motion presented by my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from monfwi. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I speak directly to my motion, I want to start by reminding this House and our government that our treaty rights are symbolic. They are recognized and affirmed in the Canadian Constitution of Canada. And section 35, again, the Constitution Act states that the aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal people of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

And further affirms the aboriginal people include First Nation, Inuit, and Metis peoples of Canada. And that treaty rights include those that exist through historic treaties and modern agreements. These rights are not optional. They are not imaginary. They are a constitutional obligation.

We must also remember that what the Crown itself promised when treaty was signed in 1900,

the Crown stated that supplies of medicine would be placed in charge of a person selected by government at a different point and distributed for free to those Indians who might require them.

The Crown acknowledged that it would be difficult to provide physicians across such vast territory, but it will promise that the government will always take opportunities to provide medical services to those in need. Those promises did not appear over time.

They did not end with the passing of a generation.

Through the Indian Act and the creation of the Government of Northwest Territories, responsibilities for delivering services were delegated. But the Crown obligation to treaty people remained.

That means that the GNWT is part of the Crown governance in this territory and has a foundational obligation to uphold Treaty 11 rights, including the rights to access care and medicine.

And we all swore an oath in this Assembly to honour and respect the treaty signed with Indigenous people and to serve the people of the Northwest Territories faithfully. Our own Assembly priorities recognize the responsibility that commit us to improving access to health care, addressing trauma, and working in true collaboration with Indigenous governments.

And the Premier's mandate letters are clear. Ministers are directed to advance reconciliation and good governance by implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, advancing Indigenous rights agreements, implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Actions, and working in partnership with Indigenous governments while maintaining openness, transparency, and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, those commitments must mean something in practice, because the reality facing our communities today is a growing health care crisis. I will be brief to you on the provision of this motion, because I have spoken at great lengths through this session about upholding our treaty rights to health. And my perspective and the perspective of my communities is already clear. But I brought this motion forward because our people are getting sicker and the government is not reacting. Preventative care is failing.

People cannot access service in time. Conditions worsen until emergencies occur. Then our people are flown south for treatment. And when that happens, their treaty rights to

health, regardless of jurisdiction boundaries, is not being honoured by this government. This is not the fault of our frontline workers. Our doctors and nurses and health professionals, from our hospitals to our communities' healthcare centres, are doing extraordinary work under very difficult circumstances but the resources that are given are inadequate. The policies that govern access to health care are broken.

The Minister may want to frame this issue in affecting all residents, and she is right to do so.

Because this crisis is not limited to Indigenous people. It's affecting every community across the North. Today, there was a story on CBC about seniors whose family had to pay thousands of dollars out-of-pocket just to be by her side while she was incapacitated and close to death.

Mr. Speaker, this is heartbreaking. Where were her rights under the Canada Health Act blocked behind broken policies, just like my people's sacred treaty rights? This is what my constituents face all the time. Having to beg for escort with their flown to Edmonton or Calgary while incapacitated and facing serious surgeries is undignified. Our people need their loved ones by their side to understand treatment plans, to advocate for them, and someone to make end-of-life decisions. In our Indigenous culture, when someone is sick we stand beside them. We do not leave them alone in hospital rooms to be checked on once an hour. That might keep someone alive but does not respect our people's honour of our treaty rights. If we invest properly in primary care and prevention, maybe we would not be spending so much on emergency medical travel to begin with. Instead, more and more people are leaving the territory, even for services that technically exist here because wait times are unacceptable.

Treaty beneficiaries have rights everywhere. Those rights do not stop at the Alberta border. But this government is placing bureaucratic barriers between people and their rights simply to preserve jurisdictional authority, and it is causing real harm.

People are paying out of pocket for care without support from their own government. There must be flexibility in recognizing that our system is not meeting the people's needs.

And this motion addresses another problem, non-insured health benefit, NIHB. Too often, my constituents are flown out on a Friday by medical air ambulance but NIHB cannot process escort approvals until Monday or Tuesday. That means families either wait

helplessly or pay thousands of dollars out of pocket with no guarantee of being reimbursed fully. This is unacceptable.

The solution is straightforward. The GNWT establish an emergency contingency with a medical travel budget to approve weekend escort travel for Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 beneficiaries when NIHB approvals were delayed. The government could then seek full reimbursement from NIHB afterwards. This would allow people to access care immediately without forcing families to financial hardship. Mr. Speaker, there is a consensus in this Assembly that solutions like this are needed. Look to our previous motion: We keep calling for action and action has yet to be taken and that consensus is not a design of us Members. This consensus comes directly from the needs of our communities. So I believe this motion gives the government another opportunity. The Minister can introduce greater flexibility for out-of-territory care. The government can't temporarily cover escort travel costs while NIHB approvals are pending.

And we can begin to honour both public health care obligations and treaty rights to health care.

So I ask my colleagues to stand in support of this motion and help make the Assembly work for our people, uphold our rights, and create healthy communities and government policies which are there for people when they need it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the mover and seconder for bringing this motion forward. Medical travel is a huge issue in the Northwest Territories, and as our primary care system continues to face challenges, medical travel becomes all the more common and not just for small communities but for Yellowknife as well.

In my previous term as an MLA, I dealt with, I'd say, a handful of medical travel issues over the course of four years. Now I deal with them, if not weekly, you know, multiple times a week. It is an incredible volume of concern coming forward, and often it is the gaps that we're talking about that the policies don't address.

Now in this case in particular, this motion is very important because it speaks to something that the mover has spoken very passionately about, which is treaty rights. And, Mr. Speaker, we are all treaty people, and in this House we are sworn to uphold those treaties. And when there is a question that those treaties are not being given the fullness of attention that they deserve

to be carried out in more than spirit but in reality, then we must confront that directly and ensure that they are. And this motion gives clear advice to government on how to do that.

It is the second time a compassionate medical travel policy has been called for in this House. I hope this motion passes as well. I don't know how many motions it will take, how many budget discussions, how many questions on the floor, until we get one. But the longer we don't have policies like this, the longer we don't have special contingency funds to support treaty people, the more people are going to suffer when their loved ones are in desperate situations. And that's who we're here to help. We're here to help working people, treaty people, people who are our most vulnerable when they're at their lowest point. And that is why I support this motion and that is why these motions are so important.

And I hope this government is listening, because they haven't been so far.

And it takes media stories, motions on the floor, it takes everything, and yet nothing moves. So I sure hope this is the one that kicks in and we start seeing some progress. Because I am getting tired of saying the same thing when the answer is so clearly in front of our eyes: Help the people who need it the most. When loved ones are in hospital, fly their loved ones down there to be there to support them. It's what doctors advise. And it is what the Member is calling for as a treaty right as well. And I am going to defer to his judgment on that. He's a treaty expert, Mr. Speaker. So I hope this motion does carry. I hope it results in real change. Because if we are continuing on this path, then every sitting there will be a new compassionate medical travel motion. Every time money is spent, it will come up.

Every time there's an opportunity to ask questions, it will come up again. And it won't stop until it changes. So change it. Very simple, do what the motion says. Help people who need it the most. Help working people. Help treaty people. Now is the time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion. I dealt with personal issues in regards to medical travel. At one time my granddaughter was on life support, and her mother couldn't fly down on the same plane with her, so she had to go down a day later. But what if my granddaughter didn't make

it at the time? It's because of policies that we have to go through.

And there was another instance where my niece was in a coma for about a month, and the whole family was fortunate that they had the financial resources to go down. But the majority of the Northwest Territories residents don't have that opportunity or advantage of having financial resources available to be with their loved ones and have to see them go down on their own. So it is important that for the well-being of our residents, the mental well-being, it's stressful when you have to see your loved one going on a plane and you can't be with them, or if they're down in southern Canada already. So it is important that we uphold these treaty rights and obligate them and make life easier for the residents of the Northwest Territories. So I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie-Delta. To the motion. Member from the Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting the motion. Thinking of all the things all the Members talked about and also having to deal with constituents that travel out of territory and got hurt and eventually passed away in another jurisdiction and not being able to get the support that the family needed so they could be with their loved ones is just not right. So for that, and many of the reasons that my colleagues spoke about, I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I can certainly support this motion and would just note that my understanding is that the work that is being demanded here really aligns with what I've heard is already underway from the Department of Health and Social Services. And so I look forward to the government's response in that regard.

I don't see anything in the clauses here that actually addresses the concerns I am hearing from my colleagues around people who are already traveling out of the territory and then get into trouble and need help. So I won't address that now, but I am not sure that we're going to get a government response on that through this motion given that it's not in the operative clauses. Just wanted to note that, but it could be a topic of future conversation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will make it short.

I will be supporting this motion for all the reasons. The non-treaty and treaty areas of the Northwest Territories, you can say okay, it's in half the area, it's a modern treaty and the other half is still under negotiations. But if you look back at the principles of the claim itself, there's wording to justify the expense of providing health care. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yeah, as previously noted, this is something that I know the health department is putting a lot of energy into working on, updating medical travel policy, the entire framework around it, and seeking to resolve some of the issues that are being raised here.

Insofar as I am interested to -- I will admit that the nuances of how NIHB and medical travel coincide and work together is a complex topic, and so I am interested in learning more about how that all works through the government's response to this motion. So insofar as we'll get a government response to this, I am interested to hear what the government has to say. So I can support it for those reasons. Thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will also keep it brief. A few things I would like to say about this motion is I absolutely agree with the mover that there is the need to uphold the treaty rights on health care across the territory. That is undisputable.

I think the thing that frustrates me most about this, Mr. Speaker, is that medical travel is so urgent when you need it and so misunderstood when you need it and when you don't need it. I think there is more work we can do to explain how NIHB works and how it doesn't work, how Metis health benefits work and don't work adequately for our residents, and I do look forward to the work that the GNWT is already doing on medical travel policies and clarifying that for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I don't have a lot more to say about it at this point except that clearly what we have is not

working, Mr. Speaker, so I will leave it at that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, member from Great Slave. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Mr. Speaker, something slightly different. If the government is getting tired of motion sickness, this is your blueprint, your roadmap to where to go.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected in 2003, there were many subjects that were priority and many subjects that were, they found, you just can't quite get it. Believe it or not, medical travel has been talked about repeatedly as we're constantly redeveloping and reorging and fixing medical travel policy. And to be clear, this is not about the administrators or the people to take your call during those darkest, frustrating hours. This is about the policy that, for some reason here it is, 23 years later, we're still talking about trying to create meaningful action and urgency on the medical travel file. My goodness, Mr. Speaker, it just seems like one hot potato moved to one Assembly and keeps moving forward. I wonder one day, maybe the instructions of a motion should be you have a blank piece of paper, why don't we just start over? I can't imagine that there has ever been a policy been spoken to, about, rewritten, or dealt with more often than medical travel. Mr. Speaker, I implore this government to finally write the last page of this ongoing saga.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as this motion makes a recommendation to government, Cabinet will be abstaining from the vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, do you wish to conclude the debate?

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very sensitive issue. So I know that my colleagues, I hear what you're saying and I really appreciate your feedback on this as well. All we can do is build on it and move forward and look for solutions collectively. So I just want to thank all my colleagues on this very important motion. And we hear it; everybody hears it from our small communities on medical

travel issues in our communities, especially here today and especially what I heard on the radio this morning. And it hits home. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank everybody in the House here today for listening to my motion. I am going to ask for a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Dehcho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, results of the recorded vote, 11 in favour. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, seven. Motion has carried.

---Carried

Colleagues, by authority given to me by the Speaker, as the Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House.

Motions. Member from Monfwi.

MOTION 74-20(1):

TRANSFER OF HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MARKET RENTAL UNITS TO TENANTS

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, transfer Housing Northwest Territories market rental units to tenants.

WHEREAS Housing Northwest Territories operates a portfolio of market rental units across the territory;

AND WHEREAS many of these units are currently occupied by tenants who have

demonstrated stable residency, consistent payment history, and strong community ties;

AND WHEREAS enabling current tenants to assume ownership of the units they occupy can support housing stability, increase homeownership rates, and reduce long-term operational and maintenance costs for Housing Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS transitioning units to tenant ownership, where appropriate, aligns with broader goals of promoting self-sufficiency, community empowerment, and sustainable housing models;

AND WHEREAS a structured and transparent transfer framework, including fair market valuation, optional financing support, and eligibility criteria, would help ensure an equitable and orderly transition process;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Mackenzie Delta, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to conduct a detailed assessment of its market rental inventory to determine which units are suitable for transfer, taking into account building condition, community needs, and long-term housing strategy impacts;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop and implement a program allowing for the transfer or sale of selected market rental units to the current tenants occupying them, subject to clear eligibility criteria including, but not limited to, tenancy duration, payment history, and demonstrated capacity for property ownership;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories be encouraged to support this initiative by reviewing any legislative, regulatory, or policy adjustments necessary to facilitate the orderly transfer of market rental units to current tenants.

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion in 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member from Monfwi for asking me to second this motion. It's very important that we give back some transfer back to the community to be more self-sufficient. The Indigenous governments, the local governments, are -- I feel are ready to take on this responsibility, most of the territories under

modern treaties, so we can take more of these roles on. And it's starting the process with this government to start a detailed assessment within each of the communities on what units -- market housing units are -- could and should be moved into the possession of their occupants. Starting a relationship, a continuous relationship, between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Indigenous governments to be more self-sufficient, give them more responsibility in services that they can deliver to their communities. It's an area where we can work together to combat the crisis of housing that exists throughout Canada. You know, it's giving back to -- we have to give back to the communities. I can recall prior to when government came to our communities, we were self-sufficient, we were strong. I always mentioned that. And it's time to give this strength and independence back to our communities. And starting the process of the assessment process is one area we can work on. And for that reason, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly we often speak about promoting self-sufficiency, strengthening our communities, and expanding opportunities for homeownership across the Northwest Territories. This motion presents a practical way to advance those goals. Across our territory, Housing NWT manages a portfolio of market rental units. Many of these homes are occupied by tenants who have demonstrated long-term stability and responsibility. They have built their lives in these units and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Where tenants have demonstrated that stability and the capacity to assume ownership, we should create a pathway for them to take that next step. Homeownership builds equity, strengthens long-term housing security, and encourages people to invest in their homes and in the communities where they live.

Mr. Speaker, this motion calls on the government to undertake a strategic assessment of its market rental portfolio to determine which units may be suitable for transfer to current tenants. It further directs the development and implementation of a structured program that would allow selected units to be transferred or sold to the tenants who occupy them. This work should include a careful review of the portfolio supported by clear eligibility criteria, fair market valuation, and consideration of long-term housing strategy impacts. The goal is to establish a

transparent framework to guide how such transfer could take place.

Mr. Speaker, transitioning appropriate units to tenant ownership could also help reduce ongoing operational and maintenance pressure on Housing NWT, allowing public resources to be focused where they are most needed. Ultimately, this motion is about creating opportunity. It is about recognizing responsible tenants and supporting them in building lasting security for themselves and their families. I urge all Members to support this motion. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this motion as well. Earlier, I had mentioned that Housing NWT has an agreement with CMHC that ends in 2038, and -- and they got to look at new ways to -- how they're going to liquidate assets they have, and that includes market rental units. My only concern is that when they sell these units back to the people that want to buy it, it needs to be assessed fairly, not based on the market rates here in Yellowknife because in small communities, the market rates are totally different. So it needs to be assessed fairly. And so because of that, I agree with this motion, and I support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as this motion makes a recommendation to government, Cabinet will be abstaining from the vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think these kind of motions around housing are very important. We just are -- we've seen an auditor general report about the conditions of housing programs, especially homeownership programs, and the issue of transferring units -- or community transfers of homeownership is a problem. And it's one that the housing corporation -- sorry, NWT Housing is working on, which is good and, you know, they've made commitments to time-bound measurable things. But in the meantime, we need to do things differently, and this motion specifically speaks to that issue of transfer. And I think building a regime where you have, you know, people living in a market

rental or public housing and reaching the point where, you know, the asset has reached its value, a person's been living in there, they're a good tenant, let them become a homeowner, empower them to build a home for themselves and their families, and to grow in a community, especially communities that are not market communities where this could go a long way to providing equity, because that's the reason you want to buy a home is -- for many people, it's not just to have a roof over your head, but it's the equity to use to build your future. It's a seed that plants and grows. And that's important that we provide that opportunity, even in communities that don't have the kind of economies that I think people in my community of Yellowknife often take for granted and certainly people in Toronto definitely take for granted.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate, again, that this motion's come forward. You know, this is the last of our motion marathon today, and as you have previously allowed speakers to opine on the utility of motions, I just want to say I really appreciated the debate today that seemed to find, you know, unanimous -- a unanimous consent that these motions are good, that the responses we're going to get from government are going to be meaningful, and that the ideas of establishing contingency funds are sound. That was not the case yesterday, but apparently a good night's sleep can change your position on motions. So I really appreciate that everyone's come together on this and we are a united front speaking to the issues that matter most to working people and small communities in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Oh, I am just getting up as well. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion here. And having experienced my second term, this department is a very under -- in a lot of cases, underprivileged by the monetary funds to meet the demand, so I can see the challenges. The cost per square footage is going up extremely, and global interruptions, inflationary prices, lack of labour, put that in all one basket, and you've got a basket for disaster; however, we still must move on with the redesigning of our current resources we have and try our best to convince our federal counterparts that we need more, these are all combined efforts, and I think if we all stand -- this government stands behind this motion and we also stand behind access to Canada homes program. So in short, I will support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will support the motion. I am not suggesting by any ways that this should be a liquidation sale. But, I mean, some of these assets, to be frank, Mr. Speaker -- and you know this because you have communities that have challenges as well, you know, whether it's all the way up to Tsiigehtchic or Lutselk'e, the fact that some of these public housing units are troublesome and problematic and people want them, and if we need to get rid of them and they still want them, we should get them off the books. But I would also say, to be truthful, is be careful what you wish for too and -- because for those folks -- now this sounds counterintuitive to the motion. But keep this in mind, that if you now take control of the House, you're taking control of the House. And like my colleague from Range Lake, I think he was spot on, people want equity, they want confidence that they can make changes in their own houses, you know. I mean, in theory, public housing, you can't change the colour without permission, you know. Like, you can't change the siding and all of that. Like, there's a process. But when you have ownership -- and that's something I've seen quite a bit, is that when you have ownership of something like this -- so whether you're in Fort Providence or you're certainly in McPherson, you have different types of pride when you start taking care of your House or worry about your House. And I think it speaks to the health of the community that when you feel that it is your House, that you own your House, I think it'll inspire a lot of people to do some really good. So at the end of the day, if we've got to get this housing Minister on an auction block out there auctioning off the houses, you know, if that's what it takes, that's what it takes. And I think that anybody who wants to own their house, we must find a path for them to do that. And if it costs a little money, well, you know what? Let's give them a chance and an opportunity that in most cases they can't. I mean, I think, again, as my colleague from Range Lake pointed out the differences between a Yellowknife solution and a Toronto solution, I mean, you can't go to a typical bank and just go to say, I want a mortgage in Wrigley, or I want a mortgage in Lutselk'e or -- you know, it's such a challenging endeavour. So how do you get a house there? How do you get your House there? You have to have deep pockets. And even that comes with a risk.

So, Mr. Speaker, in short, I am supporting this motion. I appreciate the intent it's offered. And I often say that, you know, hey, if we can make people's lives easier, this is definitely one, and

if we can inspire ownership, I think that's a good thing too. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting the motion. I spoke to the Member that brought the motion forward and talked about homeownership and how important it is and how when you own your own home, like my colleague said, that you have a sense of pride, a sense of pride of taking care of your own home. You feel independent. You're independent from a system that keeps you stuck in a system. So you become a homeowner, you become -- you have pride. You can do what you need to do. And you can fix up your House and do whatever you want to do.

And just to know that you have a home for your family, a roof over your head that you can call home, this is very -- it's very near and dear to me and a lot of people that I know that are living in market rental units that want to own the homes. So I was thinking, you know, get those houses off the books to make room for new stock.

So for that reason, I am going to -- that reason and all the reasons that my colleagues are talking about, I am going to be supporting the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Member from Monfwi, do you wish to conclude debate?

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to everybody here, those who spoke and those who did not, you know, speak in favour of the motion but still I know deep down in their heart that they do feel the same way as we do. You know, at the moment, public housing units -- Housing NWT are transferring public housing units to tenants who have lived in those units for many years, where they raised their family and for over 20 years. But it's not the same for market rental unit, so that's why I am pushing for the market rental units to be treated the same as a public housing unit. I have some tenants in my region where family of, you know, over six living in a market rental, they have no choice. There's no market. There's no places where they can go to buy and sell a house. So market rental unit is the only place that they can go that they are eligible for.

And some of these people, they've lived in it for over five years, and they paid over \$100,000. Even now the market rental unit rates have increased to \$1,950, so that's \$23,300 for one year. And I have another family in my region, in Behchoko, that lived in the unit for over 20 years, and they paid over \$200,000. So they're asking for these units to be transferred to them. It's not just them. It's in other communities as well, you know. And some of these units are old, and yet they are still -- they're market rental. I even have an elder that is living in a market rental unit in Behchoko. It's a run-down trailer, and she's paying over \$1,500 a month. I mean -- because there's no housing. There's no place for her to go, and -- or there's no social housing for her to accommodate her. So she is paying -- living on, you know, an income, and paying over \$1,500 is unacceptable. So that's why I am urging and hoping that -- I want the Minister of -- Housing NWT Minister to look into this policy, maybe change the policy, and make it -- like, treat it the same as a public housing unit transfer as a homeowner. Thank you. And I would ask for recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member from Monfwi has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member from Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The Member for Dehcho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Book Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. The recorded vote, 11 in favour, zero opposed, seven abstaining. The motion is passed.

---Carried

Motions. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1169-20(1): NO FAULT INSURANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, which feels so long ago, I was talking about no fault insurance and, of course, the impacts and opportunities we have here. So I am going to ask the Minister to confirm whether or not her department has any formal analysis on this potential policy review and benefits or even drawbacks of implementing auto insurance in the Northwest Territories, like many other jurisdictions, in a no fault sense. And in case you're curious, that goes to the Minister of Finance.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Insurance Act does live in the Department of Finance. Mr. Speaker, I'd have to look back and see if -- in the course of time prior to my being here, if there had been some analysis done on this. I can say that at the present time this is not under consideration. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. At the present time, not. But the question is, can the department go back and look at what's been done in the past. Have they done any analysis whatsoever? And if so, can the Minister provide this House that information. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I say, I will certainly see what's been done. And let's start with that question first. Obviously, at some point, things become stale and out of date so if something was done 20 years ago, I am not sure how useful that would be but we'll see what there is. And in general, providing documents to colleagues on AOC is done under confidentiality and not a matter of concern. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister herself, as Minister, familiar with no fault insurance and the benefits it avails Northerners, including the difficult challenges in a system that doesn't have it? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am familiar with the concept of no fault insurance and with the time afforded me by some motions here, I was able to Google this and get a bit more information. It does seem that, in fact, there's been some studies

done of British Columbia and New Jersey and other states and provinces that have no fault insurance regimes. It is not uniformly considered to necessarily be particularly positive. There are some situations where it actually winds up resulting in higher premiums, as so the studies would say. And where there are concerns that it doesn't actually provide the kind of payouts people want, it places a ceiling on the amount of money that you're able to receive in the event of a serious injury. So it certainly is an option that's out there, but it is certainly not without its own controversy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1170-20(1): NO FAULT INSURANCE

MR. TESTART: Merci, Monsieur le President. So earlier today, which again feels like ages, but good debates, I spoke about College Nordique Francophone which occupies a really unique space in the Northwest Territories. It is an accredited post-secondary institution, and it is the only French language one. And as we know, Canada is a bilingual country, and the federal government has millions, if not billions of dollars, through Heritage Canada to support French language learning and French language speakers.

So my question to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, how is -- or will the Minister provide core funding to stabilize operations at College Nordique Francophone and other post-secondary institutions so we can have a stable training environment for our workforce needs going forward? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le President. [Translation] To say that the Nordique College plays an important role when it comes to post-secondary education here in the Northwest Territories.

[Translation Ends]. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that I underline the essential role that College Nordique plays in access to quality post-secondary education here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, in previous conversations in this House, I committed to ensuring that College Nordique does have a line item in our budget. Over the last large number of years, education,

culture and employment has contributed \$200,000 to College Nordique as core funding, and the commitment was made to ensure that that was captured in our budget as a line item so that College Nordique can ensure that they can essentially take that to the bank, being the federal government, and ensure that they can show our commitment to their institution within our budget. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that is appreciated, and that is exactly what the institution is asking for. The opportunity to work with multiple departments exists as well to ensure that funding structures meet with long-term policy objectives of the GNWT. We do have our French language -- French secretariat as well. So can the Minister work with CNF to bring them into the attention of other departments that may need the services in -- French language training services to support the work of the public service? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I am understanding the Member's question correctly, what I heard him ask is will I introduce College Nordique to other departments in the event that they require French language services? I want to clarify that that was the question. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister For Education, Culture and Employment. I will turn to Range Lake to clarify.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And apologies to the Minister for not being clear. Yes, that's more or less it. There's a very valuable service here. They're looking to grow and continue to support the government in French language education and lifelong learning in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to, I guess, bring College Nordique into a meeting with our French language secretariat, although I do know that the director of our French language secretariat is well acquainted with the executive director of College Nordique as well. So always happy, though, to be in a meeting with both of them. They're both fabulous people. So that would be a good day. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister For Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And, finally, and here's the literal million-dollar question. They've lost about -- the institution has lost about \$2

million from the federal government. It's unsure where that's going to go. Investing in stable Francophone institutions is part of the NWT's commitment to official languages in the Northwest Territories, and in Canada indeed. So will the Minister increase funding to College Nordique to strengthen the institution, provide more training capacity for Northerners, and bring more Francophones into the Northwest Territories through schooling, post-secondary, and immigration. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I spoke already about the \$200,000 in core funding in addition to -- that exists within the budget that, of course, we approve in this House every year.

In addition to that, in September, there was a three-year agreement with the federal government that the GNWT signed onto that has in it \$2.9 million for College Nordique. And in the supplemental appropriation that is before this House, there is just under \$1 million for College Nordique in that budget as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1171-20(1):
NEW COLVILLE LAKE SCHOOL

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now for some good news. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in previous statements throughout the number of months here, we can now throw out the ownership in the current school of Colville Lake. My question to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, can the Minister explain when ownership will be transferred to the Department of the newly delivered Colville Lake school? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I first got this job, the Member asked me to help him make sure that we could get rid of the in the school in Colville Lake. Then in January of this year, myself, the infrastructure Minister, and the Premier traveled to Colville Lake to see the units ourselves and walk through it. And I am happy to say that there is now -- the modular units arrived in Colville Lake. So the units need to be placed on site. They need to go through the proper and necessary connections. That work will be done by an installation contractor through the Department of Infrastructure, and this work is to be completed by the end of

August of 2026. That is the timeline that they are working on.

Once that work is completed and any deficiencies noted and dealt with, the modulars will then be put into service and at that time then transferred to education, culture and employment and become an ECE asset. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that information on transfer.

My next question is, can the Minister explain when this new complex will see furniture and equipment mobilized to the community? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the intention is to see furniture delivered over the course of the summer so that it can be installed in time for the 2026-2027 school year. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thanks to the Minister for that reply. Since the delivery this morning here, I've got numerous positive feedback, including videos of the children welcoming the modulars into the community.

My last question here to the Minister, can the Minister provide some dates for the official opening. Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that would have been a pretty amazing thing to see in the community this morning, kids getting to see their new school space, new classroom space for the first time. I am very excited for the day when they get to walk through the doors of their new classroom and get to see their new desks.

So the intention is for the modulars to be ready for the start of the 2026-2027 school year. But I also think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge that these facilities really act as a bridge for the new school for Coville Lake. We had the opportunity, along with the Member, to travel to Coville Lake for the purpose of not only meeting with leadership but ensuring that we had space and time to go over a work plan for the Coville Lake new school. And so really, that's the work that now needs to unfold, and I really look forward to continuing to work on that work plan with the Member and leadership in his community. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1172-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ALCOHOL
STRATEGY

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

Follow-up to my Member's statement, can the Minister provide an update on the current status of the NWT alcohol strategy, including which actions have begun, which are underway, and whether any delays have emerged since the strategy was released in 2023. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Dehcho. Minister of Health and Social Services, I think you got an hour of questions there, but we'll -- you've got a --

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, work on the actions identified in the strategy is underway and is being overseen by the interdepartmental committee on problematic substance use, and a monitoring and evaluation plan has been developed, and progress is being tracked. So the interdepartmental committee is basically a whole of government so there's many moving pieces within all of our areas.

Key accomplishments under the strategy include secure bilateral funding through shared health priority agreement, that's the federal agreement, and established a territorial substance use medicine team, including implementation of medical detox services in the territory, policy development and training within health and social services system for all health professionals on facility-based addictions treatment, development of an interdepartmental communication plan to collaborate on alcohol-related messaging, and Inclusion NWT was supported to fund Yellowknife bars and restaurants to offer free mocktails during Dry February. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Given that residents and stakeholders have not seen any public progress report since the strategy was launched, will the Minister commit to releasing a public update on implementation, including key milestones, challenges, and early outcomes, and does the department recognize alcoholism as a disability? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a formal monitoring and evaluation plan does exist and is

being -- progress is being tracked by the mental wellness and addiction recovery division in health and social services. The problematic substance use committee will be reconvening this month to take a fresh look at the strategy and its actions and identify priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, and at that point, I can brief the committee on what comes of that meeting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With just two years remaining before March 31st, 2028 completion target, what concrete steps is the department taking to ensure that the remaining work is achievable, adequately resourced, and aligned with what communities say they need most to address alcohol misuse? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the interdepartmental committee on problematic substance use continues to coordinate efforts across multiple departments to ensure a whole of government is aligned on this work and that a monitoring and evaluation plan is already in place to guide the progress and ensure accountability between now and 2028. And as I mentioned, the things that health and social services is doing -- as I mentioned, this is across government so I can't really speak to what education is doing with, you know -- and I know, like, there's some stuff within finance with alcohol -- like, with the sale of liquor and -- you know, and those types of things. But every part of the government that sits on this polysubstance committee has a role to play in this alcohol strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1173-20(1):
CAPACITY TO MOVE LEGISLATION

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to continue on the thread that I started with my Member's statement and ask questions. I believe these fall to the Premier as the leader of our government.

Mr. Speaker, has the Premier reviewed our ability to draft and move legislation forward and considered any systemic changes to improve our ability to respond to emerging issues more effectively? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The drafting of legislation is really done within the Department of Justice, but I can speak to the general process.

There are a number of issues that might hold up drafting, and as Minister of Justice, I did become familiar with those. I would often have other Ministers come to me and say, why is the department so slow. Well, it turns out there's more than just the drafting. There's also the drafting instructions, and sometimes when you're drafting legislation, a policy question comes up and you need to go back to the department and figure out that policy question.

And so we've taken -- made efforts to work with departments to let them know that upfront there's going to be questions that the department -- that the drafters might have and that the department needs to be prepared to answer those. And better yet, having a very comprehensive set of drafting instructions at the very beginning would be important. And so we've moved to make those types of changes, and I think that we've seen some improvements. We've also prioritized different types of legislation to ensure that we have a better handle on what's actually being drafted and where those resources are being used. So as a Cabinet, we recognize this issue and we have taken steps to rectify it to the extent that we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly appreciate that reply, and I think as we -- as we often acknowledge in this House, there's certainly a need for continuous improvement in government. We have a big, complex machine here, and there's certainly always better and more efficient ways we can do things.

Mr. Speaker, could the Premier comment on what would help us address the capacity constraints which are so often cited when MLAs are advocating for legislative changes or development? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So there are capacity challenges in that, especially in the French language drafters. Drafting legislation is a very specialized skill. Not any lawyer can do it. You really have to have that background and that type of education. And as a territory, we do have a number of official languages, and because we are a creation of the federal government, we are legally required to present all legislation in both English and French. And across Canada, there are very few French language drafters, and it can often be difficult to procure those services. When we can, we go out and we contract services. That being said, it can be

hard to parachute somebody into a legislative project and just have them pick up at a midpoint, or, you know, it's hard to tack people onto a project that's already ongoing.

And so those are some of the systemic issues that we're facing as well. The drafters in the Department of Justice draft all of the Regular Member legislation that's brought forward, and as Cabinet, we don't have eyes on that. There's a real wall between that legislation and Cabinet. And so when I was Minister, I was not aware of any sort of work that the drafters were doing for the private Members' bills. And so that's another issue that we're looking at, but -- or not looking at, but that's another issue that just exists. I am not going to try and figure out what's going on over there. Members can do what they need to do with their own drafting. If the Assembly wanted to procure some drafters, then that would probably help the government with its drafting capacity. So, you know, these are just kind of ideas off the cuff here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly appreciate the off-the-cuff ideas. I am trying to generate a conversation here that goes beyond issue by issue trying to address this and think more about the systemic issues which affect many of the issues which we see raised here. So, Mr. Speaker, what has this government been doing to improve our efficiency and ability to respond to issues with legislative gaps raised by MLAs?

And I know the Premier started to answer that question already. But a different take I am going to put on it here is, do we track how often issues are raised by MLAs and use that data to inform legislative priorities? For example, the child and youth advocate position that we talked about the other day, which has been raised many hundreds of times by MLAs, are we tracking that kind of data and using it to inform our legislative drafting priorities? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I doubt there is a database of all the issues MLAs have brought up. We would need a department to do that kind of work. It's quite extensive. Just today we've had hours and hours of debate where we've heard probably thousands of different ideas. So no, I don't think there is a comprehensive database. That said, the way the consensus government is supposed to work is that Members raise issues in the House, Members raise issues in standing committees, governments hear those issues, governments bring forward proposals, they get feedback on that, and that all of this informs the

direction the Cabinet takes, whether it is drafting or whether it is policies and programs. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1174-20(1):
EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been some time, I believe since September 2024, that the health department has changed the extended health benefits program, even though it was intended to roll in around May of that year of 2024. The pharmacists have pointed out, even as of recently, that the program still has problems and people are not accepting their full rights of say. In other words, they're not getting their prescriptions fully filled or they're considering other options because of this co-pay system.

Mr. Speaker, my question really is for the Minister of health, asking what type of review did they intend to do to see the impacts of this extended health benefits change to northern residents? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure if the Member is asking the review that we're currently doing or the review that was done extensively prior to the release of the changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife Centre to clarify.

MR. HAWKINS: The review after the changes were made. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that review is currently in its final stages as the one year was as of September, and we committed to doing the review for the first year, and I said that it would probably take about six months to analyze all the data. And I have not received the analysis as of yet, so that should be coming shortly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister could explain to the House why it takes six months to review this particular data. Like, what's the threshold or issue? I know this has been top of mind for many Northerners because the one-year anniversary was September of 2025, and now we're talking six months since then. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are many areas within the extended health benefits, and there are many bans within the extended health benefits, so we are reviewing that right now. And as it is six months, we have been in session, so I haven't been doing a lot of briefings. 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. What's the type of -- the mandate that this particular review? I've seen pharmacists say this doesn't work, constituents say this doesn't work, and no one seems to be happier. So I am not sure who this change of extended benefits has changed more for. And what's the mandate of the review process? Is it to consider other options, or is it just a double down? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this change was raised to ensure that we could continue having a sustainable program in the Northwest Territories. So what we did know prior to going into this is that there were many people in the Northwest Territories that did not get access to any benefits because they didn't have a specific disease earmarked in the specified disease category so that when we did the changes, the senior benefits remained the same, so they get all full benefits, and anybody under that category, excluding non-insured, so First Nation and Inuit and Metis -- those that have Metis benefits in Northwest Territories are excluded as they get all those benefits through those programs. So right now, part of the analysis is those that have been previously, we're analyzing that -- we're previously, and the new -- how many new people have come into the system. And you know what, as part of the review, it is working with pharmacists and ensuring that we're here getting those feedbacks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1175-20(1):

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY SPENDING

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So a few days ago, the health Minister gave an update in her statement in the House on the progress made on the public administrator's work plan, and it was mentioned in that statement that progress has, in fact, been made on financial sustainability in particular, and so I wanted to ask for more details on some of the

statements made at that time. So with regard to progress made on deficits, can the Minister tell us -- and this is the Minister of Health and Social Services in case it was not clear. Can the Minister tell us in which areas of health authority spending savings were found in order to reduce the operations-related deficit by \$8 million between 2025-2026 and 2026-2027? So that was mentioned in the statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So within the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, so the reductions include voluntary holding non-essential positions vacant, reductions in non-clinical travel, and non-clinical training, and other O&M expenses, reduction of non-essential overtime, any standby and callback for non-essential, and redirecting any unused funding to other priorities within NTHSSA. Within 2025-2026, NTHSSA worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Services to ensure one-time funding received for chronically underfunded programs, which included underfunding costs related to laboratory and diagnostic imaging, underfunding costs to medical travel program, underfunding costs to COVID-19 vaccine and chemotherapy drugs, underfunding costs for foster care. And the NTHSSA continues to look at the financial sustainability of medical travel and adult out of territory services as well as other programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was also a statement made that previous to that -- can the Minister tell us what areas of health authority spending were cut, or where were the savings found to reduce the operations-related deficit by even more, by \$34 million in 2024-2025 compared to what had been budgeted? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within 2024-2025, one of the biggest pieces was that we were able to -- we were able to secure additional federal funding. I think that was the first year that we got the two-year special allotment ever in the Northwest Territories for the medical travel piece to offset our costs. So that helped. Additional one-time GNWT funding, lower than budgeted costs across the NTHSSA programs, and some fiscal restraint measures implemented in our fourth quarter also contribute to that decreased deficit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, finally, can the Minister help explain to us any specific actions that the public administrator is in charge of that will lead to further savings and deficit reductions in the year to come? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, thank you. So the continuation of the fiscal -- I think the piece with the PA, he's been working closely at making sure that organizationally -- and just most recently the conversations that we've been having is looking at operationally within each area, within each region, you know, working with staff to kind of say what -- you know, with COOs and their budgets, if they know that there's areas where, you know, there's changes that need to happen. So we're actually -- that's one of the pieces that he's leading.

The other piece is the continuation of working with the department and with the deputy minister of the Department of Health and Social Services. Where they're looking at right now is that overlap where the executive of the NTHSSA and the department they're finding that -- well, it's not a secret. We've all said that there's some overlap there. So we're trying to ensure that with them two working together, with the ADMs and, you know, with their territorial managers, like, where does the department end in policy and -- you know, then where does operation start? If there's duplications, then that's the work that they're currently doing right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1176-20(1):
DENTAL REVIEW OFFICER

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. February 12th I followed up with the Minister regarding the dental review officer, and I am still waiting for some answers, so maybe I can get a couple of them at least to keep the discussion moving forward. I have constituents that are concerned that it's going very slow, so we'll just get a couple of questions out to see if we get some answers and they feel that the government's responding to their concerns in a timely way.

Mr. Speaker, my questions -- I will put one together -- two questions into one, which is simply who is the current dental review officer,

when did their appointments start, and does it come with a scope that the Minister can enlighten the House with? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. That was three questions instead of two, but, Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I believe I had sent that information to the Member, but I don't have it at -- through a BF. But I don't have that at my fingertips. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I don't seem to have it in my inbox, so we'll again try to probe for information for the public good, Mr. Speaker. The dental review officer currently, my understanding, is from Edmonton. They took a contract. Is there a reason why the department of health doesn't go to the college of dentistry, recognizing the expertise to be a member of that college rather than a regular dentist to review our local dentists? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the exact details, but I do believe the legislation says that it has to be a dentist, so 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. Who approves the expenses of the dental review officer when they come to the Northwest Territories to review our local practitioners of dentistry? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the Department of Health and Social Services is obliged by the legislation that when there is a complaint or any investigation that's brought forward -- or a complaint brought forward, an investigation has to be, you know, followed through, and this is the process that we use. However, we do not get a lot of complaints, so we don't contract somebody on a permanent basis. However, when there is one that comes up -- but I don't have the exact details. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1177-20(1):
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REVIEW

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The inclusive schooling review seems to be a very important piece of policy for this government. When will Members on this side of the House be able to review that document? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take time in the Members' upcoming committee week, which would be in April, to sit and be able to go through that with them. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, so that's good. Because I was surprised to hear yesterday in the closing remarks for the main estimates that because of the advocacy of Members \$30 million is going to be spent to meet the needs identified through the inclusive schooling review. How were Regular Members able to advocate to meet the needs when we haven't even read the review? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the negotiations for budgets happen between AOC and the finance Minister, so how that number was received at, I -- you know, I can speak to what I would like to see that go to, but there isn't anything -- and I don't even -- I am going to be honest, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what I can talk about right now as far as budget negotiations, so I am going to stop talking. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Watch the line, people. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will note that this is a promised supplementary appropriation that is yet to appear. It is not before the House. Mr. Speaker, was the department intending or planning to bring forward \$30 million to meet the needs of the inclusive education review before the budget negotiations began? That's something that is in the Minister's purview. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the way that budgeting works in the House is that normally I have to first be able to substantiate an ask. I believe that the inclusive schooling ask is going to be greater than what is currently being referenced by the finance Minister in her speech and the number referenced by the Member. Those are numbers that I would bring forward to the financial management board and bring them forward with substantiation where the financial management board would then be able to vote on that proposal, and then that would come forward either through the regular business planning and budgeting process. So that is something that would then fall before

Cabinet normally in the summertime. It would then end up in the main estimates for next year.

So am I happy to see this dollar figure in negotiations? Absolutely. I think that it allows us to react more swiftly and to be able to ensure that we are approaching the needs of students in a phased approach, which is something that I look forward to being able to discuss more at length with Members when I come back during their committee week. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1178-20(1):
DENTAL REVIEW OFFICER CONTRACT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To help the Minister, the current dental review officer has a contract with the Northwest Territories. Can the Minister speak to their specific contract process? And if not, can she promise to get back to me in a timely way because I've waited since February 12th for this answer. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have to go back to the department. If this is a contract, I am not sure what I am able to share. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I won't educate the House what double jeopardy is, but it's also used as a lay term being tried twice. Mr. Speaker, the current dental review officer has processed -- we'll call it concerns on an individual constituent. The issue is so much so is that who -- brings to the question is if -- who reviews the work and mandate of the dental review officer to ensure they administer a fair and reasonable process? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I will have to get more detailed information on this line of questioning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the current dental review officer is out of Edmonton. They have no contact with the NWT dental association except when they fly into the community to administer dental justice.

So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister review the individual's contract to ensure someone from Northwest Territories who is more familiar with the community's and the territory's issues, including the dental association people that they're practicing this justice on, will be considered a Northerner, at the very least, and possibly even go back to the college of dentistry to have someone competent enough to fairly administer this program? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I -- you know, I am -- I don't know if anyone here on the floor is able to decide competency on dentists. I believe that that's left for the college of dentistry. What I do know is that because the NWT has a very small pool of dentists, if any complaint comes in of a dentist, an out of territory is used to avoid any conflict of interest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1179-20(1):
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REVIEW

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Going back to the inclusive schooling review, what is the total funding need that's been identified by that review? The Minister referenced that it may, in fact, be greater than \$30 million. As we're broaching that subject now, if she could inform the House of what that total gap looks like. Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's information that I do not currently have at my fingertips on the floor of the House. It's also information that has not yet been shared with education partners or with Members of the committee on accountability and oversight. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the -- Jordan's Principle funding shortfalls -- like, if the federal government's programs don't work for the North, because we're not sure that they will yet, will this new \$30 million that's been committed -- will some of that be able to support the gap left behind by the Jordan's Principle shortfall? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the inclusive schooling review did cover things, for example, like access to therapeutic services, which some

Jordan's Principle funding did cover. It also did speak to needs of students, which some of the needs of students are access to supports within classrooms, and also spoke to the simple nature of the -- and I say simple, but very complex nature of the change of the needs of students across this territory. So certainly there would be an overlap of some of it, but because of the fact that the Jordan's Principle funding applications went directly from education bodies to the federal government, it would not be -- it wasn't something that we participated in, that we vetted, and so it's not something that I would be able to say it is an exact one-to-one and certainly there were things that were involved in that that would not be covered off under an inclusive schooling policy because, for example, some things had to do more with school food funding, some things had to do with the purchase of cultural infrastructure, so certainly there will be some differences. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and granted that these will be different programs. So just to clarify, this -- will there be -- what are the strings attached to this new funding so education bodies can understand? Is it the same policies that covered inclusive education -- or inclusive schooling funding before, or are we expanding the criteria to ensure the dollars reach farther and address some of those things that Jordan's Principle was filling? Because that's partially why we're so dependent on Jordan's Principle, the money wasn't going far enough, and it wasn't being -- it couldn't be used everywhere that it could be, and Jordan's Principle could be used at the time these applications were made, anywhere, for anything.

So can the Minister just clarify that these dollars are going to go to solve those problems and help keep our kids educated and -- yeah, let's leave it there. Thanks.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the dollars committed really are directly for the inclusive schooling review. They're committed to our JK to 12 education system, to the students who need them. And very much look forward to being able to sit down with committee, go through that review, go through the management response, go through the projected costs that will be associated with it, and ensure that our education bodies also have access to this information prior to that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1180-20(1):
PROMOTING POPULATION GROWTH

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my particular area of interest right now is an area I've talked about before, and I am trying to find out about population growth. As we all know, our grant from Canada is tied to that, amongst many other things, but, of course, key is population growth. And given the fact that we suffer a significant deficit in human resource, opportunities, and specialized skills, trades, etcetera, including doctors and nurses, and yada, yada, yada -- Mr. Speaker, we would be putting a full frontage on that. So my question for the Premier is, what type of mandate has he given his departmental colleagues -- ministerial colleagues, sorry -- to help stimulate the growth of the Northwest Territories through some function of population growth? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the question is how are we going to stimulate population growth? Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of reasons that, you know, someone -- many people want to move to the Northwest Territories. It's a great place to live. And if you like outdoors, if you like this kind of lifestyle, then this is a great place to be. You know, I am from Hay River, so I might not be able to go home after saying this, but Yellowknife is actually a great city. There's a lot to do here. And that being said, there are challenges. We need to make more land available for housing so that we can build more houses and bring down the cost of housing, and so we have committed to that. And I didn't need to give direction on that one. The Minister of ECC has made that a priority of his to ensure that that happens. So we're doing that. We are looking at massive investments from the Department of National Defence. I am expecting additional investments from the federal government in our major infrastructure projects. These are the types of things that will create an economy, generate jobs, open up lands for exploration and development.

And so there's a lot going on. The future over the next five to ten years in the Northwest Territories is going to look much different than the past, and there's going to be a lot of economic opportunities that I expect will draw people to the North. We need to make land available so that they have somewhere to live. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: I almost had a tear in my eye, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier talked about how great Yellowknife is. It was very emotional, and I want to thank the Premier for bringing me to a side I didn't realize. Mr. Speaker, the Premier spoke to massive investments through DND. Please enlighten the House as to what massive investments and development are we intending to see through that description he provided. Can he be specific? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think people in this House are aware that the Department of National Defence had a pre-procurement announcement to allow businesses to get ready, that there could be up to \$10 billion invested in forward operating locations in the Northwest Territories. I don't have further details on that right now, but we are trying to reach out and work with the Department of National Defence to get an understanding of what those might be. But the possibilities are endless. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, you know, a lot of that is all theoretical, of course. We know nothing's actually been committed to. So back to the population growth origins of the question, which is ultimately, is there any mandate to try to grow population in the Northwest Territories directed to the Ministers as part of their initiative or mandate letters? Because growth is key in population, and that will help sustain or lower costs here in the Northwest Territories, which at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, is one of the fundamental issues I am trying to raise by finding better ways to cost of living. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member snuck one by there, switching topics for the second question. But we're back on track now. The mandate letters are public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member from the Yellowknife Centre, your time is up for those questions. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 1181-20(1):
LAND TENURE APPLICATIONS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was quite taken with the Premier's comments about land access, amongst other things. Yellowknife is the best place to live on earth. And speaking to that, we need to grow Yellowknife. So I'd like to know from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change -- we often talk about this,

memorandum of agreement with the City of Yellowknife on land tenure issues. So I'd like to ask the Minister today, because we've never delved into it, how does the MO -- how much shorter will timelines be because of this MOA? How does the MOA shorten timelines for land tenure applications? Thank you.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the key -- one of the key positives of the MOU is the ability to communicate with the City of Yellowknife. We've had very good communications at our officials level. The city is bringing forward their asks and what they'd like to see. Our officials are looking for solutions that will improve the timeline through this process. We also have identified some potential positions in the -- when the budget is passed that will support the land transfer. And this is all part and parcel of ensuring that we are improving our timelines and responding more quickly to these requests. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So how -- again, the Minister just committed that timelines would be shortened with new staffing with the success of this new communication. How much shorter? Because time is of the essence. Again, we are expecting transformational, generational change, massive investment from the military. We need to be ready. So is the Minister -- can the Minister tell me how much shorter that timeline's going to be?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, what we've done here is, as we look at the current challenges and, really, the pressures that we're facing, at last count that I recall it was 560-some-odd applications for land related to housing across the territory. As a result of that, we've identified more resources to assist in this, and we're focusing those resources primarily on the consultation phase, and we're looking at about a 15 percent increase in our operations as a result of that investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make sure we're not talking about different issues. Freeing up land for housing is different than freeing up land in the city for development. So how much shorter is that timeline going to be, especially in areas that

have been identified for investment from the military? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's conversations that are going on right now with the city, with DND, you know, that relate to the theoretical possible investment in Yellowknife, according to the earlier comments. So, you know, we have really focused on this and working together with the city. I think this is a priority that we've -- the city has identified, we've identified. We've gone back, we've looked at what's currently available, what the interests of the parties are, what other areas will be required to support that investment. So we are certainly engaged in that conversation. We have been for quite a while, and we continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1182-20(1):
NAMING OF THE 50TH STREET 50-PLEX

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to bring up one of my absolute favourite subjects, and I was driving downtown in the riding of Yellowknife Centre on 50th Street, and as I was admiring the posters on the future Tony Whitford building, and I'm looking forward to hearing from the Minister as to when that will officially be designated the Tony Whitford building. So obviously this is questions to the Minister of housing.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT and this government received a number of applications for naming of buildings, of the two buildings, so these applications have gone before the honours advisory committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When can we have a formal answer, or when -- maybe I should back up. When is the honours committee going to meet on this particular subject so we can formally name the Tony Whitford building on 50th Street for people here in Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories recognizing his commitment?

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the honours advisory committee has been given the applications and the naming of these two buildings here in downtown Yellowknife, so it's really the

administration with the honours advisory committee to set up the meetings themselves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, a lot of people are waiting for that banner to be raised about the Tony Whitford building. Is there any reason why the department of housing did not set a deadline when to respond to -- with their particular recommendation, again, naming that new building the Tony Whitford building? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the deadline was set. It was set for February 8th, from what I understand, and there was a number of applications, and those are now with the honours advisory committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 488-20(1):
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 45:
CIVIL FORFEITURE ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 489-20(1):
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL
45: CIVIL FORFEITURE ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 490-20(1):
TRESPASS LEGISLATION WHAT WE
HEARD REPORT

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Plain Language Summary of Bill 45, Civil Forfeiture Act; Statement of Consistency for Bill 45, Civil Forfeiture Act; and Trespass Legislation What We Heard Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Tabling of Documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

TABLED DOCUMENT 491-20(1):
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE EDUCATION
BODIES OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES FOR THE 2024-2025
SCHOOL YEAR

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Annual Report for the Education Bodies of the Northwest Territories for the 2024-2025 School Year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Tabling of Documents. Minister of Finance.

TABLED DOCUMENT 492-20(1):
INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING
\$250,000 (APRIL 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2025)

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Interactivity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 April 1st to December 31st, 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of Documents. Member from Range Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 493-20(1):
CBC NEWS ARTICLE TITLED
"YELLOWKNIFE FAMILY CALLS FOR
CHANGES TO MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY
AFTER TROUBLING EXPERIENCE"

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a CBC News item posted March 5th, 2026, titled Yellowknife Family Calls for Changes to Medical Travel Policy After Troubling Experience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. First reading of bills. We'll just take a five-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: First reading of bills. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 46:
PREVENTION OF PROCEEDINGS THAT
HAMPER EXPRESSIONS OF MATTERS OF
PUBLIC INTEREST ACT,
DEEMED READ

MR. NERYSOO: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present Bill 46, Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expressions of Matters of Public Interest Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 46 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 47:
 APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS
 EXPENDITURES) 2026-2027,
 DEEMED READ

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 47, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) 2026-2027, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 47 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading. First reading of bills. Second Reading of Bills. Minister of Justice.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 45:
 CIVIL FORFEITURE ACT,
 CARRIED

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member of Hay River North, that Bill 45, Civil Forfeiture Act, be read for the second time.

The proposed Civil Forfeiture Act will provide the GNWT with a way to disrupt the flow of money from criminal activity that is distinct from criminal prosecutions. The proposed bill will authorize the GNWT to pursue civil forfeiture of property obtained by or used in unlawful activity. This ensures that people engaged in unlawful activity do not profit from crime and reduces the likelihood they will engage in further criminal behaviour.

The proposed bill lays out the procedural and evidentiary rules that will apply to civil forfeitures. The proposed bill also sets out rules for managing seized property and for how forfeited funds can be used. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Bill 45 has been read a second time and is referred to the standing committee of the Assembly for further consideration.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 47:
 APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS
 EXPENDITURES) 2026- 2027,
 CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 47, Appropriations Act, Operations Expenditures 2026-2027, be read for the second time.

This bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make appropriations for operations expenditures for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. It also sets out limits on amounts that may be borrowed by the Commissioner on behalf of the government, including information in respect of all existing borrowing and all projected borrowing for the fiscal year. It authorizes the making of disbursements to pay the principal of amounts borrowed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Bill 47 has been read a second time and is referred to a standing committee -- no. Just read for a second time.

---Carried

Second Reading of Bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with the Member from Dehcho in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the Committee? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Committee wishes to consider Bill 34-20(1), the Trespass to Property Act, as well as Committee Report 37-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Does the Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): We will take a short break. Thank you, Committee.

---SHORT RECESS.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Okay. Committee, we will now call the meeting back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act. I will ask the Minister of Justice to introduce the bill.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm here today to discuss Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act.

The purpose of the proposed Act is to create a legislative framework that governs trespass to private property, to schools, and to certain types of private interests on public lands such as leases.

The legislation will create a trespass offence, as well as set out certain exemptions and defenses to trespass, forms of giving notice, arrest provisions, and sentences for violations. The Act will outline the rights of property owners and lawful occupiers and the consequences for those found in violation.

The proposed Bill includes significant safeguards for Indigenous rights, including explicit recognition of Indigenous and Treaty rights; ensuring Indigenous and Treaty rights take precedence in the event of conflict; and requiring that the Act be carried out in accordance with any applicable agreements.

The proposed Act is part of the GNWT's commitment to address public safety concerns by deterring potentially criminal behaviour and damage that trespassers may cause. Public engagement has indicated significant support for the legislation.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Development for the work undertaken to advance motions to improve the bill.

This concludes my remarks, and I would be pleased to answer any questions that Members may have regarding Bill 34. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today with me I have, on my left, Megan Birch, Director of Policy and Planning Division, Department of Justice, and on my right, Clayton Lowther, Legislative Counsel Legislative Division, Department of Justice. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development, the committee that reviewed the bill for any opening comments on Bill 34.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 31st, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

In January 2026, committee held public hearings on the bill in Yellowknife and Hay River and met with the Hay River Healthy Community Committee. Committee also received four written submissions. I would like to thank all the stakeholders and members of the public who participated in committee's review and provided us with valuable feedback on Bill 34.

On February 25th, 2026, committee held its clause-by-clause review of the bill where nine amendments were made to Bill 34 with the Minister's concurrence.

I thank the committee for their efforts in reviewing this legislation.

Individual members may have additional comments or questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 34. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the -- our committee chair for her work steering the ship on this important piece of legislation. As noted, the bill was amended substantially with nine pretty crucial amendments. One of those was to allow -- or expand the enforcement power to peace officers that could be defined in regulations. Now that that change has been made, I'd like to ask the Minister what the process will be to develop those regulations, as a number of stakeholders wrote in to the committee

requesting that those responsible for enforcing the act could be broadened from the RCMP. So now that the bill is amended, that can be possible, but it's still not in there until the regulations are drafted.

So can the Minister just walk the public through how that process works and what the intentions of the department are. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this area, as it being a change that happened during the review of committee, is certainly an area that I think will require a little bit more work. And, you know, a look across the territory, there's a significant, I think, difference in sort of what the city -- things might look like in the city and how it may look in a smaller community. So certainly I think there's some work to do on this, and I think we need to also ensure that we're consulting appropriately with the potential affected residents that, you know, need to have input as we move forward in drafting the regulations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go back to Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. So it's important to note that this is an enabling power. It's not a prescriptive power. So creating the ability for other peace officers to enforce the act doesn't mean they must, but obviously if a community asked for that, that would be what the regulations would be drafted for.

So where we're at now, I guess, what I'm trying to get at, is if the City of Yellowknife feels prepared -- and the committee received written correspondence to that end -- is prepared to use their municipal enforcement officers or wants to use them under the act, how long will it take to get them into regulation so that's made possible? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass to the director for a little more detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Director Birch.

MS. MEGAN BIRCH: Thank you, Madam Chair. So in regards to your question, I think for the bylaw officers, the intent is not for this legislation to apply to municipal lands. So that's one thing we have to take into consideration.

And then beyond that, I think, in general, if we are looking at other enforcement bodies, we're going to have to engage with them to determine their capabilities under this legislation. We know that the RCMP are capable of enforcing this. We'll have to do some further work and analysis to determine what other enforcement bodies will also be capable of that before we prescribe them in the regulations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. So the key concern here is that the way the bill was drafted initially, it only applied to the RCMP, which the RCMP welcomed as an additional tool in the toolkit. But when the committee put questions to the RCMP around, will this increase your workload, do you anticipate seeing more issues, they said, no, because we already get a ton of complaints related to trespass, and this just allows us to deal with those when we want to proceed them. But the flip side to that is, so what good -- there's not going to be a huge rush of operational need and we're going to be short RCMP members, but the flip to that is people want to see more results down the streets, they want to see more results in their businesses, and they want to see this act actually used effectively. So if we're not seeing more volume, that's why more peace officers would be helpful to this end. And that's also something that was shared by the RCMP.

So I guess where I'm at is that that's why we made this change. There are communities that are signaling that they're interested in this. Is there a kind of near-term possibility for this?

Like, I know we have to look at it. I'm not saying that we won't. But what is the anticipated -- now that the minister's concurred with the amendment, has had time to -- the department's looked at it, had time to wrap their heads around it, what is the anticipated time required to develop such a regulation to expand into other peace officers? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would suggest we're probably looking at a four- to six-month window to have the opportunity to go through, address that, and be able to come back and see what that can look like. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. That's exactly what I was looking for. So I'm sure there's going to

be many people out there who -- or municipalities and communities who are looking for that enabling power or at least a chat about it. So now they know in four- to six-months, the department will be ready for a phone call. So thank you very much to the Minister for clarifying that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Would you like to comment, Minister of Justice?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the input from the Member. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I will now go to the Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't actually have questions for the Minister, but I wanted to comment, or take this opportunity to comment, you know, following up on a similar theme, actually, as my colleague. So I just wanted to note that through amendments suggested by the committee we've opened up the possibility down the road for enforcement powers to be extended to other kinds of peace officers through regulations, but there has not yet been a clear public dialogue about what it would mean to expand which kinds of officers can enforce the trespass act, and there's -- you know, even the idea has been thrown around of expanding enforcement powers to, for example, private security guards.

So when the government establishes these regulations, I just want to urge the government to make sure that there is extensive public consultation in that process because I do think it needs to be carefully thought through and understood by all stakeholders and the general public. There was certainly a general feeling in the feedback we got that people want to be able to take some of the pressure off of busy RCMP officers who could be instead out dealing with more serious incidents. And so the idea is, well, just let bylaw officers or sheriffs or maybe private security guards deal with trespassers, except that the way the act is written is that enforcement includes arrest, and people, I think, expect that it must include arrest for the act to be taken seriously. You can't just keep giving people tickets over and over again if they're not paying them or if they're continuously ignoring the warnings and the tickets.

So I understand that we already may have private security guards, for example, handcuffing people or detaining people, and I assume this is under the authority of citizen's arrest, which is supposed to be used to protect people or property if someone is posing an

active threat. I do have strong concerns about how that authority is currently being used and potentially misused by the unregulated profession of private security. And I spoke about that the other day. But even setting that aside, with the trespass act, we're contemplating something different. We're contemplating arresting people for the simple act of being somewhere they're not supposed to be, even if they're not engaging in mischief per se or in violence or harassment or any other crime that is actively threatening someone.

Remember that under the trespass act, the lawful owner or occupier of a property can order someone off their property for any reason. Even if they're not causing any specific trouble, you know, the lawful occupier or owner can just say, I want you to leave. And if someone doesn't leave, then they're trespassing. So I think we need to ask ourselves and ask people in the public, do we want bylaw officers or sheriffs or security guards even handcuffing or restraining people simply for being somewhere they're not supposed to be.

What would happen then also? What would be the protocols for handing that person over to the RCMP? And if at that point the RCMP needed to be involved anyway, how does that relieve the burden on the RCMP that was the whole point of expanding enforcement powers?

And another question that pops up in my head is if we leave this question open to municipalities to choose whether or not they want their peace officers enforcing this act, is it good enough for the GNWT to say that, well, that's up to municipalities. They can choose. That's not for us to decide. It's not for us to limit if that's the choice of municipalities. Can we safely assume that people's rights and freedoms will be protected because we're confident that municipalities, if they don't feel they have the right resources or training for their bylaw officers to safely restrain or arrest people, then they won't choose to take that on? Can we safely assume that?

What happens if a municipality feels the pressure of public expectation and decides to go ahead anyways with allowing its bylaw officers to arrest people, for example, even without the proper training? And then what happens if people's rights are violated?

So to be clear, I am in support of this act, but I just want to flag that we have kicked the can down the road on these important questions that are to be discussed and decided through regulations, and I want to make sure that that happens publicly and that people put careful thought into consideration there.

So that's all my comments at this point. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Justice, would you like to respond?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you for the comments. I think I'll start with your first comment. And I think it's critical that we consult and that we get feedback from the public and the organizations or communities that are interested in being involved here. I think there's two key points here. Our territory is vast, and we're very diverse. The City of Yellowknife as opposed to a community like the size of Tsiigehtchic, there's significant differences in there, and I think that part of that consultation and feedback needs to look at those differences. I think we need to ensure that we're talking with municipalities, with Indigenous governments, and getting all of the feedback that we need as we develop these regulations to ensure that we're approaching it in a very pragmatic way.

So, you know, I think that, you know, as we start out, we have some fairly solid parameters around the RCMP and their abilities and duties within the act, and I think that that is a good starting point, but certainly there are -- there is some work to do on the regulation side. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I will now go to Frame Lake. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a number of -- a few questions for the Minister. I guess what I'm going to do here is save us some time and just ask, first of all, are there any recommendations in committee's report that the Minister does not fully concur with? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. My apologies, I don't have the report open in front of me. Pardon me, Madam Chair. I apologize for that.

So there's the recommendation around the security guard. We'll definitely need some -- we'll need to analyze that and look at what that could possibly look like. Yeah, Madam Chair, I think that was the primary one that we had concern with. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Okay. Thank you. I think I'm actually just going to go through the

recommendations, then, based on that response. Recommendation 1 is that the Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories issue clear guidance and instructions to schools across the Northwest Territories on how to use and apply the Trespass to Property Act. Does the Minister concur with that recommendation and commit to carrying that out?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, we -- I would say that we will certainly look into that, but I would say we would be leaning toward being supportive of that direction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, just to continue with the committee report, the other recommendation that I note in there that is particularly of interest to me is the Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create regulations under the Summary Convictions Procedures Act to include ticketable offences for trespassing prior to Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, coming into force. This is something of concern to me, and I think it was raised during the review and it was one that stood out to me, so I am curious to know how the Minister feels about that recommendation.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Member for Frame Lake, you're addressing the recommendations and not the report of the bill. So do you have questions for the Minister on the report -- of the bill?

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I fail to understand how the report about the bill differs significantly from the bill itself. I mean, the report raises recommendations related to the bill's passage. So forgive me for not understanding procedure here, but I thought these were relevant questions and relevant issues raised by the committee about the bill. Am I missing something?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The committee report will be discussed after the bill. If the recommendations are passed as motions, the government will have 120 days to respond to them. Do you have further questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe what I'll do instead of asking questions is just say that I appreciate the committee's

review of this bill and that the recommendations of the committee are strongly related to my ability to support the bill. And so I'll leave my comments at that for now.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Next, I'm going to Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm a little scared to ask my question now. I'll be fairly brief. Madam Chair, as the new act will be a law of general application, are there any specific clauses within the Inuvialuit final agreement or the Gwich'in final agreement that specifies that the new act would apply to both their respective lands? I know there are areas of -- specific areas outlined in the claim, but no blanket inclusion. I'm just wondering if the Minister can speak to that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's a level of detail I don't have with me today, but certainly happy to get that information and get back to the Member. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair. And the majority of my questions are around how it affects the land claimant groups in my region, so what I'll do, Madam Chair, is I will email those questions to the Minister and get the responses that way rather than taking up our time today and getting the same response, so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Minister of Justice, do you want to respond?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, happy to take those questions from the Member. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Okay. Thank you. Is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments? I'll go back to the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, just all this procedural stuff, I just want to make sure I get a question on the record and get the Minister's response to it. So during review of the bill, there were concerns raised by the RCMP -- I was present at that meeting -- about the lack of ability to create ticketable offences under the act. I'm just curious to hear the Minister's response to that and why that was left out of the bill and whether they will be considering doing that under regulations as (audio).

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we are looking at what the path forward is to doing that under the summary conviction regulations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Okay. Thank you. I felt that that was a pretty significant point that was made by the RCMP and a pretty significant lacking in the bill, so, you know, obviously I'd be curious to see that proceed through regulations, but I don't know if the Minister is going to be able to commit to it on the floor. But I think that it's just a key thing. Like, we don't want to be putting people in jail as a first step or sending them to court as a first step. So I just want to make sure that we -- the Minister is committed to ensuring that the ticketable offences aspect of this is included when it's brought into force -- before it's brought into force. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Justice.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I recall the conversation around this approach. And I agree. I think that, you know, having a staged approach to this, and, you know, the ability to have a ticketed offence I think is a direction that I will say I broadly support, and I'm happy to, I believe, respond to the recommendation in that regard at the appropriate time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake, anything further?

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really appreciate that reassurance from the Minister. I have no further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. Is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 3 of the bill.

Clause 1, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 2, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 3, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 4, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 5, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 6, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 7, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 8, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 9, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 10, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 11, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 12, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 13, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Clause 14, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, we missed a clause. Clause 7.1, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): To the bill as a whole, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Does committee agree that Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, Minister, and thanks to your witnesses. Sergeant-At-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber. We will now take a recess break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Committee, welcome back. We have agreed to consider Report 37-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development for any opening comments. Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, was read into the record on March 3rd, 2026.

The committee has made six recommendations to ensure that Trespass to Property Act can be applied clearly across the Northwest Territories with a multitude of stakeholders and to make sure the legislation can be enforced more efficiently.

The committee looks forward to the government's response to these recommendations. The committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the review and gave thoughtful feedback to this committee to consider.

BI would like to thank the committee for their work on this review. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 37-20(1). Seeing no further comments, MLA for Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 159-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 37-20(1): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 34: TRESPASS TO
PROPERTY ACT – APPLICATION OF
TRESPASS TO PROPERTY ACT IN
SCHOOLS,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories issue clear guidance and instructions to schools across the Northwest Territories on how to use and apply the Trespass to Property Act to their settings, including providing additional funds for producing prohibitions of entry signage as needed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The motion is in order to the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

MLA for Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 160-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 37-20(1): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 34: TRESPASS TO
PROPERTY ACT – TICKETABLE OFFENCES
FOR TRESPASSING,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create regulations under the Summary Convictions Procedures Act to include ticketable offenses for trespassing prior to Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, coming into force. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order to the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

MLA for Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 161-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 37-20(1): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 34: TRESPASS TO
PROPERTY ACT – STATISTICS ON
PROSECUTION FOR TRESPASSING
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure that statistics on prosecution for trespassing are routinely included as part of general reporting on offenses and convictions in the Northwest Territories once the Trespass to Property Act has come into force to provide insight on the effectiveness of the legislation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order to the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

MLA for Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 162-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 37-20(1): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 34: TRESPASS TO
PROPERTY ACT – LEGISLATION TO
REGULATE PRIVATE SECURITY
COMPANIES,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories urgently create legislation that will regulate private security companies in the Northwest Territories and include a requirement for northern and Indigenous cultural awareness training.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to note, I guess for the record, that this motion, should it carry, joins many calls for regulation of private security companies in the Northwest Territories from several Members of this Assembly. And I think it's important that the government recognize that now a standing committee is joining that as well. It's not, you know, concerns of individual Members raised but it is the concerns shared by one of the committees of this Assembly. So I encourage the committee to vote in favour of this motion. As a result, it's very important that we regulate this. And I know some of the commentary is it's not a recognized priority but of the priorities of the Legislative Assembly, of the 20th Assembly, public safety is one of those priorities. And if regulating private security companies isn't related to public safety, I don't know what is. That's directly within line. I don't think it's in the government's mandate, but that's a different story from the priorities of this Assembly. If it's in the priorities, it's something that is increasingly becoming more and more important to regulate. Maybe it's not the top priority, and probably we can all name more pressing priorities, but it's certainly something that needs to be looked at and started. So I, yeah, again, urge the committee to support this and for the government to take it seriously, because there are real concerns out there. We had a town hall meeting, and this is one of the things that came up. And it is coming from largely Indigenous people who are concerned about how private security companies are functioning in the Northwest Territories. And I think we need to be very sensitive to those concerns and take them very seriously. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion is carried.

---Carried

MLA for Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 163-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 37-20(1): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 34: TRESPASS TO
PROPERTY ACT – POLICY GUIDANCE ON
USE OF TRESPASS TO PROPERTY ACT,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories create and publicize clear policy guidance for the general public, private security companies, and Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories on how the Trespass to Property Act can be used. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

MLA for Monfwi.

COMMITTEE MOTION 164-20(1):
COMMITTEE REPORT 37-20(1): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 34: TRESPASS TO
PROPERTY ACT – GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE,
CARRIED

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within the 120 days.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 37-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 37-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act.

What is the wish of the committee? I will go to the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, Committee Report 37-20(1), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, and would like to report progress with six motions passed, and that Committee Report 37-20(1) is concluded and that Bill 34 is ready for third reading. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Dehcho. Could I have a seconder? Inuvik Twin Lakes. You're just jumping up and down there so we'll get you there this time. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried.

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 47:
 APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS
 EXPENDITURES) 2026-2027,
 CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 47, Appropriations Act (Operations Expenditures), 2026-2027, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. Or no, Inuvik Boot Lake. Let's try that one. I was going to let the Minister of Finance or Minister of Health and Social Services talk but we'll go with you there, Minister -- or Member. I just promoted you.

MR. RODGERS: I've got a new lake; I am now a Minister. This is great.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER: Man, this budget negotiation has really gone off the rails.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's definitely been a long day, certainly a long couple of weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill 47, the Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) 2026-2027 today. As I rise, I want to take a moment to reflect on the work this Assembly has put into this year's budget and the process that got us there.

Our goal throughout this has been straightforward - to push for improvements that matter to Northerners, to ensure Cabinet hears the concerns of Regular Members, and to make sure this budget meets the moment our territory is facing.

Consensus government is collaborative. It is also demanding. It requires honesty, patience, and hard conversations. But when Members put in the work and ask the hard questions and push for better answers and when the government responds, Northerners see the benefit.

In her remarks, the Minister of Finance acknowledged that the work of Members shaped the budget before us and that through this process, the government added roughly \$40 million in new investments directly responding to the priorities of the Assembly and for our constituents. Mr. Speaker, that is consensus government doing its job. I want to take a moment to speak to what we achieved together.

Throughout the review of the main estimates, Members pushed hard on the issues Northerners tell us matter most. One of the most significant areas we focused on was primary care reform. We pushed for real timelines, real staffing commitments, and real changes to how people access care. Cabinet agreed to release the integrated primary and community health care framework and roadmap this spring, establish consistent care teams, fill key vacancies, and expand nurse practitioner and community health nurse roles where communities face chronic gaps.

Mr. Speaker, one place where Northerners expect to see real progress is medical travel. Members have been clear. People need a system that is more predictable, coordinated, and easier to navigate. This budget does strengthen that work. The medical travel case management initiative will improve scheduling and reduce repeat trips, and the government plans to move it toward permanency in Budget 2027. Investments in telehealth, diagnostic capacity, and frontline training will also reduce unnecessary travel and support better care in communities. These are practical steps that Northerners will feel directly, and the kind of improvements this budget must continue to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that inclusive schooling and supports for children are important to Northerners.

We pushed government to strengthen supports in classrooms for students with diverse needs. The Minister committed to major enhancements in clinical services, early literacy screening and supports and transition pathways.

I note that early learning stability remains a huge concern. Members emphasized the need to protect early learning and child care programs despite uncertainty around federal funding. The Minister responded by confirming that continuity for families will be maintained.

Also, adult education and workforce preparation are central to meeting current labour needs and positioning people for emerging opportunities. Strengthening these pathways gives adults the skills, supports, and credentials required to move into work quickly and stay there.

Mr. Speaker, Members were clear that Northerners need real pathways into jobs that we have today. The Cabinet has committed to modernizing adult learning, strengthening early skills, and aligning post-secondary programs with workforce needs. We also heard confirmation that new teaching and social work programs will move ahead and that former CLC spaces, community learning centres, Mr. Speaker, will be available for Indigenous and community governments to deliver training with GNWT support. These are practical steps. Now they need to turn into results.

Major projects rely on the system being ready. Aligning processes, supports, and capacity keeps timelines tight and makes it easier to move from opportunity to action. Members pushed for clarity and timelines on the Mackenzie Highway, the Taltson Line, and the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor.

The Minister committed to clearer timelines, stronger coordination, and meaningful consultation with Indigenous partners and governments.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak directly about LNG. LNG is a real opportunity for the Beaufort Delta.

The government confirmed it will work with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to advance the Mackenzie Delta LNG fault toward full feasibility. LNG is not a side conversation. It is central to economic growth, energy security, and the North's role in a changing world. To fully maximize these opportunities, we need the right people in the right places with the authority to make decisions when they're needed. Capacity isn't just about staffing. It's also having the right systems, funding, and supports aligned so work can move without delay.

Housing and land availability are core foundations for growth. Communities and regional centres need stable housing options, accessible land, and the internal capacity to plan, approve, and deliver projects. We pushed hard on expediting land transfers, improving community capacity, and housing availability. The Minister outlined steps to accelerate land transfers and support Indigenous-led housing. We are pleased to hear that this will include improving housing options for seniors in Enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, for the Tlicho region, work is underway towards a more administrative structure and better on-the-ground access to territorial services in the region.

Community safety remains a priority. Members raised throughout the review of these estimates. The message was consistent. Residents need a more reliable safety presence in smaller communities and better access to justice services. Members pressed for improved RCMP presence in communities without detachments. The Minister committed to overnight accommodations in Gameti and Tsiigehtchic and improved access to justice services.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said here before, you cannot build a strong economy on weak health care, education, housing, or without Indigenous partnership. A strong economy requires strong services and strong relationships. If families can't get care, they won't stay. If workers can't find housing, they won't come.

If training doesn't match real jobs, employers remain short staffed. If governments aren't working together, decisions stall and opportunities are lost.

This budget can move us in that right direction but the real test is delivery.

The eyes of the country are on the Arctic. Significant defence spending is coming to the Beaufort Delta and across the NWT. NORAD modernization, Arctic readiness, operational hubs, these developments mean jobs, infrastructure, and long-term presence.

But opportunity does not wait and as I said in my reply to the budget address, if we're slow investment will go elsewhere. The budget work is done, Mr. Speaker, but the delivery work is not.

Mr. Speaker, Members will expect to see primary care improvements this year, supplementary appropriations that match commitments, real timelines for major projects, land moves so housing can be built, training aligned to real jobs and progress reports, not just intentions.

Members will monitor delivery against major project timelines, progress on land transfers, implementation of health care reforms, follow through on inclusive schooling, and action on community safety commitments. We are looking for steady, visible progress, not perfection but movement, and we will continue to work to hold the government to account.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear, this budget is just a first step. Now the government must show whether it can meet the moment. The pressures facing Northerners are real, and this budget has to translate into results that people can see and feel.

With this in mind, I want to thank the Minister, her officials, all the Members for the work done through this budget process. It was rigorous, sometimes difficult, but productive. Northerners expect us to make things better, not all at once, but year by year, decision by decision, budget by budget. This budget positions the NWT to move forward. Now government has to get the job done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a good summary from my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake. However, the other we had a Member stand up and say they might have to be the unpopular one to bring some truths, and I guess it's my turn that day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we set out to -- when I cautioned this Assembly at the beginning of this budget process, it was to settle for low

expectations and continue a culture of low expectations.

Unfortunately, we are there again. We need big, ambitious ideas to carry us into an uncertain future and, unfortunately, we are settling for what I would characterize as the bare minimum in many cases, at least when it comes to the concerns raised by Members.

Mr. Speaker, looking through the finance Minister's list of commitments that were given to Regular Members, starting with the -- which is the bulk of it. We have had a lot of words on the overall budget, but I think this is the area that Regular Members really seized on, first to health care. All this work that is being promised is an elaboration and further detail of work that was already underway, work that was underway by the people strategy, by the public administrator's work plan, by the system as it is currently being administered. We are just getting ahead of that by asking more questions, which are important questions to ask, but the results are what Northerners are looking for, and the results are still unclear to me.

I appreciate that there are commitments to staff every position that has been asked for. There are commitments to improve and enhance community wellness, especially in small communities, in health cabin communities which are the most removed from services. It is great that those commitments are there. Why wouldn't you say that if the positions are on the books, we are going to fund them? Of course you do, but we don't see new funding to support these things apart from what was already in the budget. There was new funding in that budget that I have already spoken to and supported. I support seeing more health care dollars. We just need more, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, looking to CLCs, which is another live issue, the commitment is to provide, quote, the financial coverage of the associated O&M. It does not include programming dollars. So whilst the government over a two-year period will pay for the power, the fuel, keep the lights on, the actual programming has to come from somewhere else, and that means it's going to come from Indigenous partners who may or may not have access to those dollars. So the CLCs are by no means a done deal and not coming back to life anytime soon without additional investment and support. This is something Members have raised repeatedly. Stabilize the program until we have figured it out, until Indigenous governments and communities are in the position to take them over and operate them so they are effective, effective at providing the education and skills development that we need to support our workforce.

As to the economic pieces, the concerns around the regulatory system are still very live, including around mineral tenure, the Mineral Resources Act, which is still not in force. I've been calling for it to be expedited. The committee called for it to be expedited. We have no real change to that. We're still sticking to the same timelines, which is basically the end of this term. Now, the only commitment made was to bring the MARS system, the online map staking system, into the regulations, which I was under the impression, after asking about this repeatedly since getting elected, that it was going to get done. That was my assumption, and that was the assumption of many Members I've talked to, that it was going to get done. That was the commitment, and now it's just being reinforced. It's not a new commitment. It's a restatement of an old commitment.

And as for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, well the line here is important. Quote, while financial resources remain contingent on external funding. So we still don't have the dollars but we're going to put forward a plan.

And the last time this happened, we had a notional plan for housing and that caused such a frustration on this side of the House that we pushed and pushed and pushed until it got funded. So maybe that will happen again. But notional plans are not firm spending commitments, and they're not moving the economy forward.

It's more planning. It's more aspirations. And we need to set ambitious timelines for these projects, especially around the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor and the Taltson transmission line.

Government can do that. We have to work with Indigenous partners, absolutely. But telling our partners -- we need to move firmly. Our government has made this commitment to these deadlines; how do we work together to get there? That's the kind of leadership I am looking for. That's the kind of leadership many Northerners are looking for as well.

It's not disrespectful or colonial to say we have to meet the moment, and we're going to support every party going there, but this is what we're looking for. And we still don't know what those timelines are. I think perhaps -- oh, and to land tenure for economic development, there's commitments to free up land for housing, and I think that's an important commitment.

But the thing that Yellowknife MLAs have been pushing for years and years and years is access to municipal lands for the city and for all communities, not just Yellowknife, but it's a particularly acute problem in Yellowknife and

it's something that we hear about all the time. We don't have commitments to speed up that process. We have commitments to make the processing applications, which is largely a backlog, 15 percent faster. Processing files could mean a no at the end of the day. We don't know whether it's going to speed things up or whether it's going to give certainty that the land will, in fact, be available for development, and that's the number one piece that addresses these defence commitments that we're being promised. The \$10 billion of investment, we need land for that investment and it's not all available yet, despite the fact that successive Assemblies have passed motions and called loudly for municipal land transfers to happen across the board so all communities can develop at their own pace and choose how to grow their communities.

And again, this Member, at least, is tired of calling for the same thing and being told we're doing it and yet nothing happens, nothing changes.

Mr. Speaker, the \$30 million, because that's the bulk of what's being promised here, the \$30 million for the inclusive schooling review. Now, I am a big proponent of inclusive schooling and properly funding it. It's something school education bodies, at least in Yellowknife, have been calling for a very long time and there's been a gap, so I welcome the review. I think it's important. But I haven't read that review. In fact, no one on this side of the House has read that review. So I find it a little confusing that we're being told we push for this. In fact, the quote, the \$30 million commitment to inclusive schooling stands as one of the clearest examples of how Member concerns translate directly into approved services for Northerners. But we didn't ask for \$30 million.

\$30 million was offered when we said please make sure you strengthen inclusive education based on the review you're doing. So why didn't we get the \$1 million for the RCMP crisis intervention team? Why didn't we get the \$700,000, the Dene Nation to move forward on housing? Other things Members have raised on the floor.

Those are much smaller asks, but we get \$30 million, something we didn't ask for that we welcome, but I would suspect these were already plans, planned expenditures that happened to align with an ask, which is a great win for Members if they want to take it. But there's a number of things that weren't addressed. There's a number of things that continue to frustrate my constituents and frustrate Members.

A compassionate medical travel policy. I have publicly said I won't support spending until we see this put in place. There are going to be costs associated with it, but they're costs I am willing to pay and costs the public wants this government to pay. And the fact that we, again, continue to pass motions calling for it. We continue to make statements. There's news coverage on it. There are more stories out there than I've even heard, but I know that they're out there. I know I work closely with my colleagues who have raised this as well, affecting everyone from, you know, people in Yellowknife to people in the smallest remote communities. And now there are questions around treaty rights being raised as well.

So this is -- we desperately need to do this. And having a case management team is important. That's a first step. But the policy piece, which we've clearly articulated, is not being addressed. It continues to be ignored. And the problems continue piling up.

A child and youth advocate. I mean, I was really taken, I thank the House for passing that motion and my colleagues who spoke to it. You know, there was one line that really stuck with me and stuck with me since we had that debate. No is not an option. And I agree wholeheartedly. No is not an option. We need this service. We're the only one who doesn't have it. At a fractional cost of the value it provides, of the value for money it provides to taxpayers and, more importantly, the tremendous value it provides to children and youth in the jurisdictions where it's present. There's many ways we could do this. And again, it is not a \$30 million ask. Do we get that? No. Despite it being one of the top asks of the committee.

I will also speak to one other thing that I feel strongly about.

The House also passed a motion calling for a dedicated emergency management agency. This is something that has been recommended by at least two independent reviews of the emergency management system. I know the government's response on this. But again, if I am going to support a budget I want to see the government following the advice of the experts it pays for and the advice that is being given by the House.

And yes, a non-binding motion, but a very clearly articulated motion of what the priorities of this Assembly ought to be with respect to public safety based on the words we're speaking. And that's not being produced in this budget. It is not being produced in any budget and won't be.

So how can we support these motions? How can we read the reviews and support the reviews and see all the work that's important and not expect to see it in budgets coming forward? Why are we paying for these reviews and plans and goals and, you know, timelines that are aspirational if we're not willing to put the money into realizing them? And yes, we don't have infinite dollars. I know that. There needs to be trade-offs. Willing to make them. Willing to make them to meet the priorities. Tell me how you're going to pay for child and youth advocate and I will tell you I am comfortable with it. But that's part of this back and forth. But instead we're getting policy answers to a budget process. It's pretty easy to satisfy policy answers. It's a lot harder to provide the resources that are being requested to make a difference in our communities.

So I've staked out turf here saying I appreciate the work that goes into these back and forths, but there are things that I need to see and my constituents expect me to see because I am tired of saying the same things back to them. I know you're frustrated.

We brought your concerns forward. I bring them in emails. I bring them in text messages.

I bring them to the floor. I bring them to committees. But nothing's getting done. And eventually you have to draw the line and say I am going to stop supporting things until these things are changed. Because these are the most important things in my writing. That's why I am bringing them up constantly again and again and again. So until budgets reflect those values, I don't have confidence that this government's moving in the right direction for Range Lake. This is not an indictment of any person here. It is how the process of parliamentary governance works. And in this case there are clear asks that are coming from my riding, being driven by my constituents, that are continuously ignored.

And I am not alone in this. But some Members are willing to settle for what they can get, and I respect that. Everyone has to pursue this differently. I am just not willing to settle for low expectations anymore and continue that culture that permeates throughout our institutions. It's time to be ambitious. It's time to be bold. And it's time to be honest about what we're getting, which is a lot less than what's being spoken about in speeches from Members about how much we got because we didn't get all that much. And we still have so far to go. Our economy is crumbling.

Our healthcare system is on life support.

There are so many issues that we're struggling to keep pace with. And we're here to help, believe it or not. We're here to help. But we need to be asked, and we need to be listened to. And if we're not listened to, yes, we become a voice of accountability and criticism, because that's what our constituents expect of us.

And that's why I am not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. And until these things are done, until these affordable, important things which will change the lives of my constituents and support their needs and aspirations are addressed, I won't be supporting budgets. And I hope that changes, Mr. Speaker, because that's what I am elected to do, and that's what people tell me to do. And until that changes, I can't support this or future budgets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. To the motion. Member from traditional use Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 19th Assembly, when I was elected I brought forward my issues in regards to priorities for my riding.

And what I was told is that put it in the suitcase and try to throw it on the train. I came in through midterm by-election. But, Mr. Speaker, in the 20th Assembly, after we got sworn in I wrote a letter to the Premier on February 13, 2024, outlining the priorities for my riding. And two weeks later, I had received a reply back from the Premier saying that he's going to encourage the Minister to work with me to look at how we could work together on my priorities. And to this day, Mr. Speaker, no Minister has reached out to me to talk about the priorities for traditional use Nedhe-Wiilideh riding. And now we're going to our third year of our mandate. And it's really frustrating because when I look through the budget right now, there's really nothing there, again, for small communities. And I am really, really concerned about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is the finance Minister's seventh consecutive budget since she assumed her role at the start of this last Assembly. In this budget, like the rest of her budgets, I haven't seen any real investment in my riding or traditional use Nedhe-Wiilideh.

What I notice, however, is a lot of debt. This Minister has increased our borrowing limit several times. Our debt limit is now projected to reach \$2.21 billion. Our budget has ballooned to \$2.7 billion now. And what do we get for it? Nothing in my riding.

A lot of public servants, over 1,100 employees added, since her first budget. About a 25 percent increase. Those aren't all doctors and

nurses and social workers and teachers. What we have instead are a lot more bureaucrats to ensure that we can make studies, write reports, and develop strategies and business plans. But there are still not enough people to teach our children or keep our health centres open. We debate this every day in this chamber during our legislative session. And yet, for someone who is essentially the Minister of everything, the Minister of Finance rarely addresses the challenges our community faces. Leaving it to her to challenge her colleagues while responsible for their own departments must work with what the Minister of Finance provides. We know we're in a housing crisis.

We know our healthcare services are struggling. With Jordan principal's funding cuts, it's clear education will struggle to provide culturally programs to meet the needs of Indigenous students. And yet, we can't even come together to secure a small amount of funding for offices like Dene Nation to coordinate a community housing proposal to Build Canada Homes.

Since I was elected to the 19th Assembly, I've been keeping detailed lists of my community needs. I compile these lists with community leaders, stakeholders, my constituency, and send them to the Minister every year, only to have them denied. Then, here at budget time, I stand and go through that list, voicing my disappointment while the Minister and her colleagues sit across the chambers busy typing away on their laptops.

This has been a very effective way for me to speak to my constituents by pointing to the practical changes this Assembly can make in the communities I represent. But since that approach hasn't really worked when I speak to this government today, I would like to take a different track. This time, I want to take a step back and make a point in terms of bigger picture and hope that this time my point is carried through in this chamber a little further.

A long time ago, it was this government belief that they should invest in small communities that were struggling to help get people on their feet and their local economies moving, especially during tough times. Well, this isn't that kind of budget. Because my communities are getting nothing, and these hard times aren't due to some uncontrollable economic cycles.

Our communities have been on constant decline because of this government's long-standing inaction. More recently, governments have focused on cutting debts and creating an attractive environment for businesses. This isn't that type of budget either.

We're still waiting for modern regulations. Our debt keeps growing, and the government is still under our treaty. Sorry, our territory is our largest employer.

While other jurisdictions cut royalty rates to foster development, we scare businesses away and end up collecting a grand total of nothing in royalties. So what is this government doing?

It's sinking small communities while giving privileged classes in Yellowknife the biggest slice of shrinking pie. The city isn't an island. My people will keep coming here for services their own communities are losing. The tax base this government relies on will disappear because my people can't get jobs.

Health and social services will keep paying more to treat sicker people, and I fear that all public safety tools we are reaching for will be undermined by growing are not physically sustainable. By the territory this budget is building and the previous budget the finance Minister has tabled, it isn't sustainable either. Not physically sustainable, not economically sustainable, not socially sustainable. It is not sustainable to ignore our rights. It's not sustainable to keep our families in overcrowded homes. It's not sustainable to let our graduation rates drop off a cliff. And it's not sustainable to let our mines close. Taking impact benefit agreements funds with them, with new economic development on the horizon -- with no new economic development on the horizon. They aren't someone else's problem.

The Government of the Northwest Territories may not be a party to the treaties, but they are still having the duty to uphold them. The federal government didn't transfer administration of these services to this government so they could turn around and ask Ottawa to pay for everything.

Back in the day there were some pretty heated debates over establishing a public government for the Northwest Territories, but if anything is harming that idea today is budgets like this. Budgets that march our territory back under the mercy of the federal government.

When our communities aren't self-sufficient, our territory isn't self-sufficient, and it is not our communities who plan to sit around cap in hand waiting for handouts. They're ready for development. Their skills, they're ready for meaningful employment.

They want to own their own homes. It's this government that denies them that opportunity to succeed and then tell them to go to Ottawa for services it is supposed to provide and rights it's supposed to uphold.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is no plan in this budget.

There's no vision. There's no jobs, no education, no improvements to health care, no Indigenous-led housing. This government takes care of itself, consults itself, accommodates itself.

Plain and simple, my communities don't consent to this poor leadership. They want to make their own decisions. They want to create their own destiny. This is what the treaty promises.

I was elected to represent my constituents. I took an oath to uphold our treaties, and I will do so for as long as I have the privilege to sit in this chamber, and that means voting tonight on another bad budget from the Minister. So, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this budget today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from traditional use Nedhe-Willideh. To the motion. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I look back at the last 24 months, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly started off as an approach to restoring balance. Restoring balance gives you the privileges of taking a percentage in your position with the fiscal responsibility policy to design and implement the capital allowance. When I look back at the Sahtu, to a large degree it wasn't the Sahtu that I remember in previous years.

We started off with a colleague from the Mackenzie Delta providing me assistance to look at a chart showing the Sahtu seen 448 medivacs out of the region in three years. It doesn't defy the purpose of the expense of that particular trip, but a large amount is directed to recovery of the addictions that are placing our people in impoverished conditions.

The workforce is not available. Actually, it's being a burden to this government. And look at the delayed projects. However, it wasn't the end of the story. Just last year, this government awoke a capital project to build the Tulita health centre. And showing that recapitalization and energy to finish what we started was flying in 90 DC3 loads of materials so we can get going with the project.

And I highlight the other differences, the other negative impacts that lowering our ability as a region to become a standalone region. Just recently, as we all know, the departure of our Imperial Oil, a legacy oil field that was established by Tommy the Ox. Now when I look back at that legacy oil field, which produced a lot of wealth to the stakeholders, and when I

look back at the all government approach to accessing capital for the purpose of economic resilience, we still have in our toolbox those abilities to strengthen what was there. And the floods, the fire conditions, adding costs to our territorial government. And the regulatory reform, it's underway. You have these tools in your toolbox and it's called devolution. Why can't we use devolution to strengthen our regulatory process and maybe even entertain the idea or the concept of approaching it for total control over that resource development management. You have the systems here. You've got the regional agencies, which is a co-management structure to give approvals so projects could efficiently go ahead and start producing royalties.

Government operates on taxes and royalties. In my recent trip to the prospectors' conference in Toronto, I was very surprised. We are not that bad considering the fact that non-renewable resource in the diamond sector is declining. We have three candidates that are on the threshold of moving forward. One of the three companies that we had met, and we met several, but one of the three stands out to me that is near shovel ready. They have secured the financing to move ahead. And as we all know, the benefits coming from a project to ensure that you're going to get benefits is securing financing. And financing has definitely been secured. So the project's going to go ahead.

I have every thought and talks that the coming years, we should be focused on the coming years and preparing ourselves for what's coming. There's an economic tsunami coming. We've already seen that in the procurement phases for the \$10 billion that is coming. Commitments from the military spending is going to contribute and escalate beyond expectations of what we've seen already.

So in reality, Mr. Speaker, it's really not as bad as what it is. We need to get our tools identified in the toolbox and get ready to prepare for that wave of opportunity that's coming in all our areas.

And again, Mr. Speaker, when I look back at the Sahtu, which I'll be going home to visit in the coming days, it's not that bad. We as leaders make decisions on this institution that covers 33 communities. Yes, a large portion of our budget comes from our federal counterparts, but we still have the ability to recognize the resource potential you have here. Now let us design a recovery plan to recognize that potential. How can we expedite these projects through the regulatory redesign and at the same time look at devolution?

So I will be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. I feel my people that I represent want to move on. They want to know what are the tsunami economic conditions coming so we can prepare for them. And yes, it was a shock to the Northwest Territories as at the same time to the residents and business communities of Norman Wells that the Imperial Oil production is going to shut down, but as some would say, one dying industry supports a merging one. During the PDAC discussions, a mining company is coming to our community of Norman Wells and coming to our community of Tulita to talk about critical mineral potential in the Sahtu. With this government, we supported access for clients in the industry community to access critical mineral infrastructure fund. So by combining and uniting our offices, we can see results. And we just seen that this morning there, Mr. Speaker, by the mobilization of three modular units into the smallest -- one of the smallest communities in the Northwest Territories. The children were overwhelmed with excitement greeting the big trucks that brought in their school. So we have to design our toolbox to implement the tsunami that's coming and prepare the workforce.

Awareness on what's coming is critical and specific to encourage our residents to remain here because we have a bright future ahead of us. You only could imagine what may come and think to yourself, the Banff of the Northwest Territories is in the Sahtu. So much potential. I believe any accountant would love to be analyzing the revenue potential and looking at how much our government could make. Right now we have a budget here that we can design and still balance the budget that supports your fiscal responsibility policy for next fiscal year's preparation for capital planning.

Now, let's look at what we have. In seven years, Mr. Speaker, we talked about restoring balance through increased revenues, reductions by reducing expenditures, layoffs. Meanwhile, in seven years, this government has made approximately close to \$50 million from tax revenues and separating the YZF airport. Now, if you look at that, you look at the heritage fund, and you look what's coming in the next seven years, your cash flow predictions are already there. Now you got a huge client coming in, DND with a large footprint and tax revenues and more landing fees. So at times we have to look back and see what we accomplished and look ahead. In the private sector, they do five-year, ten-year plans with anticipation that revenues are going to be there to support that five-year plan.

So in summary, in closing, Mr. Speaker, our chair led off the statement to the budget. I totally

agree with that. In ending, thank you, and I will support this budget. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am voting in support of this budget since I feel that the budget and the associated commitments that we have negotiated represent significant investments that will benefit people across the territory and changes that people will actually notice, things that will actually improve their lives. I think any of us, including each of the Cabinet Members, could stand up at any time and list a hundred things that we don't have in the territory, A hundred things that we want, and a hundred things -- a hundred more things that we want done better. But we don't have the resources to do a hundred new things and another hundred things better each year, and if that was the bottom line for being able to pass a budget, we'd probably never be able to pass one and we'd never be able to fund any government work, let alone new initiatives. We have to pick a handful of priorities, and that doesn't mean picking around the edges and only doing tiny, meaningless things. It means tackling the biggest issues, the biggest problems, and being strategic about investments that lay the foundations for big improvements.

Now, I spoke at length in my Member's statement today about positive developments and investments on the health care front that we've all worked hard to secure, so I won't repeat those comments here. I will say, however, that they're not all fluffy policy commitments. Maybe some Members have failed to notice, but we have been promised real money to come forward in a supplementary appropriation in the May-June sitting to fund real, new frontline positions, new practitioners who will join our integrated care teams.

I also wanted to be sure to highlight that the commitments on education are also significant. We see \$30 million in new funding for inclusive schooling that will allow us to quickly respond to the anticipated recommendations in the forthcoming inclusive schooling review. So that's key, because we know that our struggles in education are urgent. That money will be able to support needs that are more than apparent already, even without being able to see the final inclusive schooling review report. We know that we need more of the specialized supports, such as speech-language pathologists and other clinical services that this money will fund.

I also appreciate the education Minister's receptiveness to the ongoing advocacy by

several Members in this House, including myself, for better literacy supports. The commitment to pursue consistent, early literacy screening in junior and senior code of conduct I think is a really good start. In terms of post-secondary education and workforce development, which many of us have kept emphasizing over and over again, financial support is now being provided to Aurora College to ensure that there will be a Fall 2027 cohort for bachelor of social work and bachelor of education degree programs.

So, Mr. Speaker, I won't run through all the various aspects of this budget. I know it's late, and we're all tired, but I am not hesitantly or reluctantly supporting this budget. I am happily supporting this budget as I believe it represents significant steps forward that we can all be proud of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from the Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I came into this role, I did not expect to come into the Legislative Assembly with knowing that the community learning centres were going to be shut down. The residents of my riding put faith in me that their lives would become somewhat better, but halfway through or a quarter of the way through our mandate, we're getting a notice that the learning centres were going to shut down. That was a big hit to myself and to the residents of the Northwest Territories as a whole. But sometimes money is put on the back burner because safety and the well-being of our community residents is put in the forefront, and that's what I've been fighting for, for the residents of Tsiigehtchic. They wanted a police presence, a full-time police presence, nurse. But in this budget, they stated that they would work with the community, work with the RCMP, and see what -- how much presence they can provide the residents of Tsiigehtchic. Because at this time, they're fearing for their life with the influx of hard drugs coming into their community while there's no support, police support, and it's overwhelming them.

So there's a lot of other factors. I've always stated that, you know, if the Dempster Highway didn't go through our region, we'd have absolutely nothing in this budget. It's heartbreaking to go back to my community this coming weekend and answer questions about what's good in this budget for us. We need overwhelming factors to be considered for us to live a healthy life. There's prices going up all over. We can't go -- we shouldn't be going any further backwards. We can only build on what we got. And I have to accept that. I have to

accept that, you know, we got police presence in the community of Tsiigehtchic for their safety. And hopefully we can get a nurse there a couple of times a week or something in that fashion. But sometimes money is -- safety overrides the dollar. So I am somewhat happy. I am not exactly happy for the whole budget. I think with the limited amount of money that's passing through our communities, I think this government should think seriously about negotiating with our local companies on contracts so that money can stay in the Northwest Territories and help our communities. If they're not going to pour money directly into our communities, then start negotiating these contracts. It'll be a good start. It'll make our communities happier. There's companies within our three communities that provide a lot of employment once they get contracts with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Like I said, I hope we're not going to go any further backwards. We can only build on what we got. Maybe in the next budget we'll have a police officer in Tsiigehtchic. But that's -- that fight's been going on for over 40 years. It's just me continuing it. And like I -- we've got until next year, and I will continue to fight this battle for the community of Tsiigehtchic and other projects that Fort McPherson, Aklavik, and Tsiigehtchic may want. They ask me a lot to fight on their behalf for negotiated contracts, and I hope the government is listening because we have nothing. We need more. We asked for gravel. Maybe it could have been done in phases, but it was put back on the local government's table for them to consider, and they said they'll have personnel resources to help them. So it's reluctantly, but I will be supporting this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. To the motion. Gentlemen and ladies, please, somebody put their hand up so we can go. Member from the Dehcho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too -- I looked at my budget address and tried to figure out how I was going to deal with this. And it's been quite a time learning here. I have to say that. And learn about how everything works and how -- you know, I wanted some stuff. I put some stuff on the list. And I am thankful for what I got. I mean, like my -- some of my colleagues said here, you can't get blood from a stone, you know, and we're -- we're in a deficit. And, you know, for me, I am very thankful that I asked for, like, phase 3 power. I wanted that, and -- but it has to be worked in a way that I know that it can happen. When? Maybe next time we do a budget like my colleague from McPherson said. I know, and I

am glad that slowly -- and, like, it's going to take time. I know that things take time. I want something. It's not like we get everything we want right away. Things take time. So I understand that. And I will continue to work with the departments to support my people back home. I will continue to ask for them. You know, we don't have a land claim settlement in the Dehcho riding, and so it makes it a little bit more difficult for us. But I will continue to ask. I will continue to work for the people, continue to, you know, bring Ministers into the region so people can talk and ask questions about what they need. There's lots that -- yeah, we need a lot. But I know things take time.

And I am glad we have the teacher education program put back in. I am like all for education. I want people to get -- the more education people have, the more knowledge people have, the better they're able to make good choices in their life. It's not always about money, but we make it always about money. What about spending time with children? Spending time out on the land? We have -- there's money for on-the-land programs. I am thankful for that. We're dealing with a lot of addictions in our community. That is not about money. That's about a -- that's a people issue. We need to spend time together, do things together, talk together. I am passionate about this kind of stuff because that's the type of work I was doing before I came into this House. So I am grateful for that. Like I said, there's a lot that we don't have, but we'll get there. Things take time.

With that, I want to say thank you, and I will be supporting the budget. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's getting late, and I am going to keep my comments to a minimum because I am sure the last thing anybody in this House wants right now is a 20 minute speech from the Member for Frame Lake. Let's be real here. Let's be real, Mr. Speaker. Come on. Okay. I can go. I can go. Okay. Mr. Speaker, I just want to note that I think -- you know, I want to echo a lot of what the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake spoke to. And, you know, there's been some different perspectives shared here, and I am not going to get too deep into it. But I will say that for me, you know, I am proud of the work that we've done over the past month and a half. It's been maybe even a bit more time than that. I mean, the budget for all of us really starts mid-January, if not a little bit earlier. And it's a grind. We all know that. People have spoken to it in the past. And so a lot of work has been done here. I am proud of that work, and I feel that we achieved a lot over the past few

months. And, interestingly, I actually feel this is one of the more successful negotiations we've seen in terms of thinking about the list that AOC put together, the things that we agreed upon fighting for, and what we were able to get from the government in concessions through the negotiations that our chair and deputy chair worked so hard on. I actually think that we achieved a lot, and I am happy with a lot of what we achieved.

And the Member for Yellowknife North mentioned a few of the things, and I think just for sake of time, I am going to spare speaking to all the different things I am happy about. I can talk about those things in my newsletter with specific constituents. Certainly, there's a few who I am going to be reaching out to who I know are going to find meaning in some of the things we achieved because they were the people that I had in mind when I was bringing this forward. So I will be emailing them directly and saying, hey, here's what we got for you.

I just want to speak a little bit to the hard work and what goes into getting us to where we are, Mr. Speaker. I think that sometimes, certainly when I was -- before I ever took seat in this Assembly, you know, I didn't know much about Committee of the Whole and what goes on there. It was something I never thought about at all. But it's somewhere that I now spend significant amounts of my time preparing for and working in, and it stands out to me, Mr. Speaker, that in Committee of the Whole, effective lines of questioning, working with our colleagues across the floor, and all of the time that people don't see, the time that I spend in Ministers' offices talking to them about specific issues, talking about things that matter to me, asking them for advice. How can I be most effective on this issue that matters to me, and how can I help you be effective on it too? That's where the work really, the rubber really hits the road. That's the hard work. That's the work that people don't necessarily see. It's not something I was particularly familiar with before I got in here but what I have been working hard, exhausting myself doing over the past number of months. And those months are well long before this budget process started. This work is ongoing. And so I am proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this budget process, in my reply to the budget address, I spoke to us being stronger together. I do believe that. And that's what I mean when I am talking about that work, that when we are working together, that's how we can be effective. And speaking of being effective, I thought that we and I received a very good piece of advice in these budget negotiations, and that was that we are most effective as a

group, as AOC, when we find common ground on issues, when we do the hard work of negotiating our way through that and figuring out what are the issues that we can all stand together on, what are the things that we can all really support that are important to this territory as a whole, not this or that riding, where we do support one another from time to time, but what are the issues of territorial importance that we can all agree upon. Yes, this is what we need to hammer down on. That's where we're most effective. I really appreciate that advice. I listen to it. And it's what stands out to me when I look at the things we have been able to achieve as a group. And I am very proud of some of the things that AOC has achieved. The key one is the \$150 million of housing money. That is something that AOC worked very hard on. It took us a couple of years of hard work and hard negotiations, but we got there. And that is more money than any AOC has ever gotten out of any government for housing in the history of this Assembly. That is a big deal, Mr. Speaker. And it shows me that when we work together, when we come together on common issues, we can be effective. So that's what stands out to me.

I want to thank all the different Cabinet Members I just mentioned whose offices I spend time in and who I talk to and pester and probably sometimes annoy greatly, constantly pressuring them on different things and asking different questions and submitting BFs and all the different things that we do, for taking the time to work with us, to give us that advice, to help us be effective. I think we are all ultimately pulling in the same direction. All of us are here because of how much we care about this territory and how much we care about the people that we represent. I don't think anybody in this room can disagree about that. We may have different perspectives on how to get there, and I've talked to Members who I disagree with about that, but what motivates us to be here and the outcomes that we are looking to achieve are very similar at the end of the day. And I think that's something to reflect on and to think about. And I am going to end on that point right there, Mr. Speaker. I am in support of the budget. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I know that -- we know we are not going to get everything that we want or we negotiated, knowing we are in deficit, but -- but working together, we can still get stuff that we asked for. I know that I am not going to get the water truck, sewer truck, for essential services in Tlicho region, but especially for the small communities, the small

fly-in communities. But, you know, at this time, it's not the end, just like my colleagues said. It's an ongoing thing that we have to keep working on. I would like to see that because they provide -- you know, community government provide a lot of essential services. And we can't live without water. We know that. And, you know, I asked for RCMP in Gameti and Wekweeti, but I am quite pleased with the accommodation to improve the justice systems, especially in overnight accommodation in Gameti. That's okay. You know, at least we're getting somewhere.

And I asked for three DMV positions. I got none. But that's not the end. I know where to go if -- to get -- you know. I will still try to get some, you know. That's not the end. But I am, you know -- like, with a two-year term possession, I hope it doesn't stop there, you know, for -- with the ECC. I hope it's going to result into indeterminate positions. And the North Slave office, two times a week, every two weeks, that's not enough, but hopefully it will turn into a full-time, you know, with a strong advocate. You know, I am not going to stop just because, you know, like, they have it there. I am going to continue fighting for more jobs because we know that NWT -- in NWT, with the mine closing, we're going to need more jobs. We need to create more jobs or transfer more jobs to small communities because the small communities have to live and survive too as well. So it doesn't mean that it's going to end here, you know. You know, I am okay with it because I know what to do in the future. I know that, you know, if I am -- I just have to go and talk to them or make it part of our budget negotiations.

Another one too is that, you know, I asked for -- to create Tlicho region. At least now it's been addressed yesterday too that an effort will be made by GNWT to work with Tlicho government for establishment of a standalone Tlicho administrative region, you know. That's okay. I mean, it's in there, you know. So I am quite pleased about that. But I know that the elders have said to me many times when I first campaigned, they said, you know, like, if you work alone, you're not going to get anything done, but if you work together collectively, you can get a lot of things done. And I do appreciate, and I thank my colleagues here for helping and working with me to -- even my Yellowknife colleague advocated for Tlicho region as well. All of them, I really do thank them. Like, you know, Mr. Hawkins, you know, Keiron, Mr. Testart, Julian, I mean, Mr. Morse, Kate, Ms. Reid, and Ms. Morgan. I really -- you know, they really did advocated for the Tlicho administrative region, so I really do appreciate that. So that's working together. And that's what

the elders have said, is that you can't do it alone. You got to do it together. If you guys work well together, we can go, you know, long ways. We know that the GNWT is in deficit. So we just -- I am quite pleased, you know. I mean, I would like to get more, but I am okay with what we have right now because there's still room for improvements and there's still time that, you know, we can't get more things for our region. So with that in mind, you know, at this time, I will support that budget. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to correct one piece of information from the Member of Monfwi. I felt like we were working for her, not necessarily working with her, so -- but in the spirit of collaboration -- because, I mean, many of us recognize her particular desire of wish of that the Monfwi riding being peeled out as a specific area or economic region in the budget. And, you know, in a lot of ways, it makes sense just by itself, saying, hey, can we target? So, I mean, when she needed support for that, I can't see why anyone would oppose that. I am not saying they're getting it. It's aspirational in the statement yesterday. So we have to see if it actually does anything. And as I told the Member from Monfwi yesterday, my humble opinion is it has nothing to do with the Tlicho government. It has everything to do with the Minister of Finance saying it needs to be done. I mean, it's not the Tlicho government's budget. It's the GNWT's budget. Now, we differing on that -- we differ on that perspective. It's the old splitting hairs. But the fact is I think that that really matters. It's our budget, not anyone else's.

So, Mr. Speaker, well, let's jump into a couple things. We didn't ask for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of things. You know, we asked for a couple dozen things. And some things cost money, some didn't. Some were rewording even, you know, administratively. So I would say, Mr. Speaker, the challenge of that is I just felt like we were negotiating against ourselves. I don't even know why we call it negotiating some days. I think that the budget should have started off by talking about the unstoppable sleeping economy that's about to take over. Should have been the theme of this, how we're going to turn this around. It should have been the theme of what we're going to do. I don't feel that the budget itself addresses the economic cliff, if I may stress, that we're facing with such ferocity. I mean, I was thinking yesterday, do we have any more mines to announce a closure? Do we have any left? I mean, if we're lucky to get somebody saying we

want to open one, that could be 10, 12 years. We all know the process doesn't happen overnight. We'll be lucky to get a couple of the lithium product -- maybe get a lithium project before the end of this current decade off the ground. But a lot of that has to do with the fact that the market on one of the products, you know, worth -- not worth a lot of money. And there's such competition, one project virtually kills the next one because there's not a need for that product on the market. It doesn't cost a lot of money, it doesn't make a lot of money, and if your project's more accessible, it's going to make it tough. I've spoken to the folks here. They're -- you know, they are worried. Yes, they're planning, and they're proceeding as if the project's a go, but I always worry, and they're worried too.

Mr. Speaker, I think the budget's an opportunity to be a catalyst of success, not a demonstration of status quo. And I've been part of many budgets over the years, and I just find that the resilience of the 11 Members -- as much as we try hard to draw a line, but when you show up at the last two weeks just before a session saying, here's your budget, Tulita-da, you know, and then what do you think even though it's in print, and what do you think, this is the one we're going to table, and what do you think, send us over your ideas, and then it boils down to is what we really think is more of a -- as they say, an Epimetheus, which is basically an afterthought, it feels like. I feel like it's constantly. If the government was being proactive to engage the 11 Members, which is hard enough being on itself, because we're 11 individual Members -- it would be a lot simpler if we were one party. We're not a party. We're a consensus government. I am not trying to get people wound up here. But we are individual islands, little shoals, you know, a cappella goes. It only -- once in a while, we come together as one force. And we can't even hold the line. Why? Because at the 11th hour of the budget cycle that we're just about to finish, people are tired, they're cranky. They just want to go home. They want to go on their holidays. They want to give up. Can we do any more? I don't care. Give me something, and I will go away, and I will vote for yes. Just make it in.

I think our job is to continue to hold the government's feet to the fire, and I am not sure the fortitude is being demonstrated this time around. As a matter of fact, I actually feel like the government got away very cheap this time around. I will come back to that because I really think on paper -- yet to be determined actually in dollars. But, you know, I think in paper, it really is only a \$10 million success story. And I am not even sure on that because if you ask the question of, why am I not sure, it just seems like

back to what my colleague from Range Lake had said. They were doing much of this already. They just re-profile it. I mean, it feels like a government announcement, the federal government, where they announce, and then they're, well, we're going to do this project. Six months, a year later, they re-announce the same project, an arena. I felt like it was a restatement of the government's goals and objectives. Very little seemed to crack the interest in the sense of it was new for us. Based on our asks, that is, Mr. Speaker.

You know, for me, seeing something, you know, immeasurable, our suggestions, in that sense, you know, it would be so important to see them in there in a manner that we know that they would stay. Sorry. I said immeasurable. I meant immutable, whereas when they're locked in. And so that -- for those who are curious, wondering what that is, that means basically you can't change it.

You know, there is, you know -- I mean, I just was -- suggested a minute ago, saying are we better off today than we were when we took office. I am not sure you can tell the difference. How we tell the difference is our hopes are higher, our economy is lower, and our dreams that the federal government will save us are really picking up momentum. Because if it isn't for the federal government coming here, saying we're going to put \$5 million in the Yellowknife region -- or sorry. My apologies -- \$5 billion in the Yellowknife region, \$5 billion in the Inuvik region, that they might move to Yellowknife better. No. I am kidding. But in truth, without that, I don't know what we'd see. I really don't know. I mean, if it wasn't for that type of conversation, I mean, my goodness, back to the mines. Is there any mines left to close, to announce their closing?

So let's pair out here a little bit of what the Minister had said yesterday. So she talks about a meaningful role of shaping the government. Again, I've already talked about that, so I am not going to revisit that. But even if you took the influence of 11 Members, it's worth 0.015 percent of the budget. And that's assuming based on we had the influence of the \$40 million, so in other words, the 10 plus the \$30 million dollars for the enhancement to child care. So I hate to think, you know, it's a rounding error for our efforts here. And our efforts are restatements of programs that some are not even real. They're notional. And some are theoretic. Because some of this isn't even coming in in this budget. It's planning. We'll never see it. Well, don't worry. We agree to the plan, and the plan will come later, and we assure you. And I will get to that too.

I am reminded of one of the things that used to drive me crazy about one of the former finance Ministers. He always used to say the fullness of time. That's what this response feels like. One day, someday. That's my saying. And it feels like, well, just hold your breath. One day, someday, the notional part. Members, to my understanding, want movement on the inclusive schooling file. Absolutely. Members -- I think all Members, to their credit, not one over the other, not one higher than the other, not one less than the other, Mr. Speaker, I think it affects everyone, including Cabinet. And I think seeing movement on the inclusive schooling file gives me a real sense of juxtaposition. I am not happy with what they're presenting because they don't have a plan. And even we heard from the Minister of ECE it's still coming. So we're not sure what we're agreeing to. And that's always been a factor of me, which is I want to know what I am agreeing to. I am willing to agree to something I don't like. I am willing to agree to something I don't support. But I want to know what I am agreeing to. We're agreeing to a notional plan saying \$30 million is coming forward, but we don't quite know yet what it is.

Again, federal -- it's the federal decisions that are going to make life better. As far as the primary care file, I mean, you know, one day people are railing against the public administrator, and then the next day they're saying he's the greatest. I am not sure. I am confused because, you know, we want things in this particular file, and I think, in essence, all of us want things. But, I mean, it just -- it's confusing that we're actually getting what we want. I don't feel like going through the finance Minister's full statement. But I do feel it's demonstrably disappointing because I don't feel like we actually made an actual impact. I feel like what we've been told is, you guys did a great job. That's a good AOC. Yeah, you did really good. Oh, you held us -- oh, don't worry. Don't worry. 0.015 percent of the -- oh, yeah, you really held us over a barrel. Oh, yeah.

Mr. Speaker, when I see things like the CLC, they're going to basically keep the lights on for two more years, well, they were going to do it anyway. It's the GNWT's buildings. We don't have any clear-cut plan on this, but they're restating it as a whirlwind success. And I think it's been raised by many people we still have our MRA problems. You know, I would have liked to have seen on the side, not to consume attention, some real hard studying and commitment to why our resource industry is tanking. Now, they'll say they're doing some work behind the scenes, and it'll come someday, one day. Remember that phrase? And it's frustrating because our mining

industry -- we are a mining territory. And as I said the other day, you can't tourist your way into a new GDP out of this problem. You can't. I mean, I like arts. I buy art too. We had friends here recently. We said, go on an Aurora tour, spend some money. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, you know this, almost cost me money taking a visitor to the diamond centre. Like, I don't know how he survived that visit. The point being is in we can only tourist our way so much out of this problem, and it's not going to have an effect over the greater GDP. So hoping the feds will save us seems to be the theme of this budget.

I am worried when we get to talking about the Mackenzie Valley, Members wanted committed routes, some details, whether it's the Taltson, to move it forward. And I am so worried about that because, you know, deep down inside, I wonder if that's ever going to happen. I mean, I like the concept of the project. I really do. I think it's a great plan. But we don't spend enough time talking about, really, will the water be there in five years? Ten years? Will the water be there for the capacity and the amount of money we're going to spend? Will the customers be there to do that? Well, we'll worry about that in a couple of years. But we've been spending 20 -- more than 20 years on this particular problem, and we still don't have a route.

I am glad -- again, the juxtaposition about how I feel about this budget, but yet I am pleased about it, is I am glad to hear they're going to ring the bell of opportunity in the social work program, the education program. But I've also suggested, you know, even not that long ago in the fall session, about trying to open the door to other trades and opportunities where we could work together through Aurora College. You know, I've highlighted some, but there seems to be little uptick. Trying to say how do we create this when I am providing opportunities, suggestions that the department, the Minister, or in the college could run with.

Mr. Speaker, I think, you know, listening to the words about how different people felt about the child and youth advocate, how it bothered people, we couldn't -- you know, we couldn't get a simple yes on this. As a matter of fact, I thought if there was one issue -- remember that little -- little islands and we all come together once in a while when the tide goes out and we all form one sort of fixed piece? I thought the child and youth advocate was the one. I really thought people would dig in and just say, no, no, no, until you do that. It could have been a simple yes, yes, yes, and we will commit money now to bring it online, and we'll commit money in the future to bring it live. They could have said, we're going to hire two people to design the office and bring it online. And, again, this is

no different than what I said, you know, the previous week. How come ten provinces and two territories understand how important this is and we can't see that? Like I said, I thought that that was one that would really have made a difference.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that would have made a difference and I've, you know, certainly not been quiet about this, and I appreciate those who were willing to support the initiative, and some days it really felt like it was pulling teeth was the fact that, you know, trying to advocate on behalf of the RCMP for health crisis intervention team as a pilot. This is something the RCMP would welcome. This is not breaking new ground, Mr. Speaker. It's breaking ground on how we currently do business. And sometimes I think that that's the fear of this current design of the budget system, the budget process, the budget negotiations, if you call them, is that this is the only way it works. There are many ways for it to work. You know, being the dean of the House, you know, an old dog in the sense of legislative years, maybe not, you know, oldest, you know -- because we know we've got a few more gray-haired silver foxes around this room. But the truth is, in the old days, you know, the old governments used to spend time coming to the Members in the fall and showing them and saying, how do we work some stuff into your budget -- or sorry -- our budget. Well, it's everyone's budget to be truthful. You know, there was that give and take early. You know, maybe they would have gone to the committee, AOC, and said, you know, MLA for the Dehcho, what's important to you, and they would have said, oh, well, maybe three-phase power mattered to me. It really matters, and it'll make the difference in this community. Like, the -- it would change the community. And then go back and think about it and evaluate it, and come back and say, you know, okay, well, we can't quite get there yet, but maybe what we'll do is we'll work with you to create a plan to get there. Maybe not this budget, but we'll show you we're working hard. So you have something to go home with and show them we're moving the file beyond a no. And nothing's worse than we know better. Not just no. We know better.

In those days, it was quite collaborative. Yes, the government got most of what they want, but at the same token, they said, Members need wins. How many members -- you guys must be sick and tired of me saying this, but it matters. Members need wins. And it frustrates me that if somebody gets a win, we can't find ways to stick together for other Members to get wins. I mean, I am not picking on my colleague from Monfwi, but I just want to make a sense that,

you know, I was very supportive of the Tlicho one. I will go around. I am very happy for Mackenzie Delta getting their things. But, I mean, all of us need wins, not just one or two of us. Like, the government has all the resources to do all the decisions, and then they come to us in a format of saying this is how it's going to go, convinces us otherwise. But it's almost impossible to convince otherwise because we're 11 individual groups. And that's important, and that can't be lost. 11 individual groups. There's nothing that binds us or holds us together. Perhaps hopes. Perhaps dreams. But there's nothing that holds us together.

Mr. Speaker, I feel like this government is going to miss an opportunity and, you know, in the sense of, for example, the land administration, that comment was in the in the Minister's response yesterday. I mean, I cannot stress enough I don't know how we -- I am so worried we're going to mess this up. And I am terribly worried. I mean, we hear Yellowknife city council. We hear Inuvik council. We hear Hay River council. They all want land. And it continues to be a clear-cut illustration of lead feet moving forward.

You know, when I was a young person in the 80s, not completely young, but they talked about the land lease policy will solve things. They even brought it up the other day about Justice Berger saying, oh, don't worry, we'll solve land claims, and we'll get through this in about ten years. Oh, my goodness. Justice Berger, well, he undershot that guess. But land matters. Now, I am happy to hear that they want to put a couple people in the system. Thank goodness. I just hope it changes the problem. Because you know what? The federal government can't wait for us. As a matter of fact, it's sad to say we almost require the international crisis for us to move forward on success. And I feel horrible as a person thinking about we need bad news for us to have good news here. I don't want to be that person. I don't think anyone does. But if we can't get our stuff together and aligned quickly, what do you expect the federal government to do? I mean, do you want them to issue a parliament order that they're seizing property and they're going to do this and they're going to do that? I mean, I said at the opening of the budget during the start, which is we should have been rolling out the carpet, the red carpet, the big carpet, and saying, thank God you're coming. Because hopes don't feed bellies, fill bellies. They're great stories.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really feel like if you assess what the Members asked for -- and even not that because they're restated priorities, most of them, within the government of what they are doing. But even if you just said they were ours,

we're down to \$10 million, and that's .003 of the budget. That doesn't feel like a win. That feels like the crumbs that fell off the floor -- or fell off the table and onto the floor. Just enough to tease us to come back next budget. So as everybody says, you can't get what you want -- always want, I just wish we felt like we got it once in a while. I wish I could be standing here saying I am voting for this budget because I am so excited that half the Members' asks were satisfied. Not even a quarter of the Members' asks were satisfied. Very few, Mr. Speaker. And, hence, it's a very disappointing process until there's a willingness to open their ears and give Members wins once in a while. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I have the dubious responsibility of being the last person to speak to this, I will be short. Mr. Speaker, today is March 5th, 2026. I first met with the finance Minister on January 5th. Mr. Speaker, I went with my main estimates and my questions, and I peppered her for, oh, a good hour and a half, two hours, saying, what does this mean? What does that mean? Why is this happening? I don't like this. Explain this. And she answered as much as she could with aplomb and said, you know what, let's take this to round 2. And so two days later, I did the same thing again all over again on January 7th -- 7th. I can do math this late in the evening, Mr. Speaker.

So after that, I then spent two weeks in confidential briefings with all of my colleagues with the Minister in January as well as all of the Ministers across the side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And then I've spent five weeks here in this House choosing to be the water that wears down Ministers and the Premier, Mr. Speaker, on the things that are important to me. And drip, drip, drip, drip, we finally got there, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the chair of AOC and the deputy chair of AOC, and I want to thank the Member for Sahtu who taught me to be like water wearing down the rock. So thank you.

And I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I apologize deeply if I have made the Minister of Finance's January of 2027 very, very busy. But that is how you get things done. You wear people down, and you get what you want. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. To the motion. Somebody say question. Thank you. Oh, you want to go again? Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Okay. I will try to be brief, Mr. Speaker. I am reading your room, but I am not good at it. Mr. Speaker, look, I appreciate comments from all the colleagues. I mean, and it is an opportunity to respond to some of it. I can't respond to every single Members' concerns or criticisms of the budget or the process itself, but I do want to hit a few of the highlights.

We don't have endless money, Mr. Speaker. We don't have endless public service. And what I will say is I have now, over the last few years, come to dread the day that I am getting the letter with the first round of asks. This year's letter was over seven pages long, if I recall correct, or the better part of seven pages long. And I often brace for what I am going to see in it. It is detailed. It often involves things like plans, costed plans, targeted plans, detailed plans, frameworks, resources, workforces, so on and so forth. And, Mr. Speaker, we're getting that, obviously, in the course of having a month or six weeks to go in the middle of session, and this is what we're all collectively being tasked in our departments to go and fix.

What is different in that process, as I have come to find out, is that what I've been told is that in the past, in the past assemblies, the asks were focused on more money here or more money there. And so these detailed asks seeking clarification, extensions, additions to the way the government works is a very different approach to changing the budget. The budget isn't just the new money. The budget is the totality of how the government spends public resources to deliver things for the public. And so what I am asked with these detailed asks, on behalf of my colleagues, is to fundamentally alter the work that is happening with the \$2.7 billion.

And the process is one that begins and really -- begins just about when we leave here tomorrow. Departments almost immediately have to start going in and saying, okay, where have we landed? What are our target adjustments? What did we hear over the course of session? Where do we know those pinch points are going to be in the next year? What were the major themes, topics, highlights, things that we didn't address in this budget but we know have become major issues? The business planning process for departments and for Ministers happens over the fall so that by December all of our colleagues here in the House are getting a copy of the draft main estimates. The main estimates do get printed, but we know that they will change. And that process of change, Mr. Speaker, begins, as I think was just detailed, with the January reviews, then the beginning of the discussions in February through now. That formal part of the

process is a quarter of the year. A quarter of the year we spend formally reviewing the budget, going through it, and negotiating it and discussing it. Of every single calendar year, we go through that process, Mr. Speaker.

And at the end of this one, Mr. Speaker, we do have quite a number of, I think, fairly interesting changes that are coming in terms of how government is functioning. And so I did go through them yesterday. I do want to note, Mr. Speaker, it would be my intention to table them as a list tomorrow so that they are more readily available as a Tabled Document for anyone that wants to have a look at the highlights. But there are a few that are worth mentioning again, and, Mr. Speaker, I am going to start with the education items, and the inclusive schooling item got some attention here today. There was a review underway, and there is a review and a management response being prepared. It was not ready in time to be part of the business planning process. Typically, something like that would go through a business planning process. So we wouldn't even see the benefits of this review until the next budget in 2027. It was obviously abundantly clear that that was not an acceptable timeline to our colleagues here. It was abundantly clear that they were expecting this to move much faster. So no, I don't know the specific details. We are taking an estimate of what the costing will be. We've estimated just roughly through the Department of Finance that this is likely to be a \$30 million need. It, frankly, may well be more, Mr. Speaker. But the other thing is we're prepared to say we're not just going to wait until the next budgeting cycle. We're going to get some of that moving out immediately. That is not a small ask just to go and take a huge review and figure out what to do. But, again, that response is coming as a result of the priority set through these last couple of months to identify that we can't wait for next year, that we need to figure out some dollars faster, and even if that's not perfect, we need to do it, and we need to do it quickly. So that is -- that's how it's coming.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, with respect to early literacy and screening and intervention and, frankly, the absence of federal funding that may be coming for early learning and child care, I don't know where that's going to land, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of education doesn't yet know where that's going to land. We can sit back, and we can wait. We can say, yeah, we'll probably figure it out, or we can be put on the spot now here to say we're going to make this commitment, we're not going to let this program slide, we are going to make a commitment now, and we're going to figure out the funding.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I think that gives some people in the Department of Finance

some queasiness. They would much prefer if we could take this process slowly, come up with a careful plan developed over time, carefully costed, vetted through the processes, not here where we say, you know what, our colleagues have said they can't wait, they won't wait, and they won't pass this budget unless we make that commitment in advance.

This actually, Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, was the first year knowing the size and scale of the expectations put upon us by our colleagues of the kinds of things they wanted to see advanced this year, not next year. This was the first time that we're actually making commitments for next year, saying we will figure this out this year, we will use this year's budget to get this work done, and we're making commitments for Budget 2027 now on behalf of the government. It's the first time we've done that. And the reason I think it matters, Mr. Speaker, is it speaks to again the totality of the way that our system functions, where we can recognize that there are priorities that we may be working on as a government. The criticism of when is it going to come, when are we going to see it, when are we ever going to do it, well, we've now said, okay, I don't have the number for you today, but I am going to commit that it will come, it will be in the next budget. And I don't think I've ever actually been in a position or been put into the position to have to do that. But those are the demands put on us, that we're not going to let this government be done, we're not going to let the 20th Assembly be done, unless you tell us that these things are going to happen. So go get the work done, figure it out, and bring it back. And so that's what we're doing on a number of fronts now, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that colleagues are not just expecting an answer by the May session. Some of these big items, you know -- early learning and child care is a good one, and some of the inclusive schooling money and some of the health care commitments, they will take longer to get done right. But, again, it is a very different process than what you might see elsewhere, but it's one that I think really does, again, speak to the totality of how do we spend public dollars and how do we decide where to put them. And this is one that that truly does respond to that.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to -- actually, as I am flipping through my own little list on the table tomorrow, I do want to stop for a moment on the Tlicho government item. I know this has also come up this evening and the administrative region. I do sincerely appreciate the Member from Monfwi's -- everyone's -- I've heard from a number of people on this issue and a lot of questions of what that will look like. I appreciate a bit of grace on this because I do acknowledge that there's a strong expectation that this will

get done this Assembly, not some future day. But I do feel strongly that we want to make sure we're doing this work with the Tlicho government. I know myself and the Premier have had outreach from the grand chief on this now in the last couple of days owing to the discussion here and to the commitments made. And so I do just want to reaffirm I've certainly heard the request that this happened for all of the reasons put forward in the Assembly. So that was in the budget acknowledgments, but, again, I want to maybe just double down a little bit. But I've heard that. I understand it. And we are -- we're going to find this one -- we're going to find a path forward on this, Mr. Speaker. We're going to find a path forward that really meets the needs of the Tlicho government and the Tlicho people.

Mr. Speaker, I am trying to be mindful of time. I want to spend a couple minutes on the health and social services items. There this one -- there was a lot of attention and a lot of time spent in unpacking these challenges. There's a lot of work happening in primary care reform. There's a lot of work happening on medical travel review. But, again, us in the government side saying there's work happening when it's not translating, when it's not answering what Members from AOC, who are charged with accountability over the government, are saying, this is not good enough what you're giving us, the timelines you're giving, the explanations you're giving, the details you're giving are not good enough, and we want to see more, we want to have more clarity, we want to have more commitments for times, we want to have more commitments for what we're going to see and when and for more commitments on how you're going to do these things, that is fundamentally altering the work and the function of the public servants who are working within the budget that we are seeking to have approved. So to modify what they're doing, how they're doing it -- but, again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite a testament to the accountability that's been brought to this House where I sit down with the Minister of health, her deputy, my deputy, and we all sit and we say, okay, what can we do and how do we do it. So, Mr. Speaker, this was one that had a lot of attention from our departments in order to make sure that we are making promises here reflective of the issues that have come forward and that will push, truly push, the government in the direction that we are hearing clearly that Members in this House want to go.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to maybe, before I conclude, land on the items under Justice because they actually happen to be items that matter a lot to me. It's the role that we have over here is in the departments that we have. We

don't necessarily get a chance to dig into every issue. But when the asks come forward for improvements to small community access to justice on issues that I know have been around since way back in the day when I was still doing circuit courts and they have long sought for solutions -- I have long heard Tsiigehtchic and Gameti say, why can't we have RCMP patrols, why -- you know, the court doesn't come here. This isn't -- these are not new asks. But, Mr. Speaker, this was the first time that the Minister in receiving these asks said we are going to solve this, we're going to figure something out. It's not perfect. I can't force the RCMP to open a detachment, and it's not a simple request. But we found some solutions that I believe will make a significant difference. This ask from the Members is what drove this. I appreciate that they brought it forward, and I appreciate that they're willing to let us see if we can make some creative solutions that I hope will truly make a difference for the people in Gameti and Tsiigehtchic to have better access to justice and more safety and better sense of safety with the RCMP.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to conclude. I do want to commend the Members. Again, the questions that are in question period are only part of the story. The questions that we hear in the Committee of the Whole, the media doesn't always pay attention to us here in Committee of the Whole, and maybe doesn't seem to make as good television. But those are -- that is the review of the budget. That is a public review of the budget document. Ministers and senior officials sit as witnesses. I'd commend anyone who has an interest in an issue or an interest in a department to review the Hansard from Committee of the Whole and to see the way that people truly dig into the line by line or the function by function of government because that's where that happens.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the chair and the deputy chair. As I said, it was an overwhelming list. They're having to manage that list too. I appreciate the work that they do. I appreciate the good humour they bring to it. I appreciate the, you know, twisting that they put on me to make sure that we truly are finding every last way to deliver within this government and within the way that we do things. They are lengthy negotiations. There's lots of back and forth. There's both exchanges of paper and reviews, one against -- one to the other. But one thing I will say, Mr. Speaker, is it's not what I have found was -- it was many, many years ago where you bake a few asks in and you'd see your asks in the negotiations were effectively done or set aside a few million here and there, and it was done. When we go through this process, Mr. Speaker, we alter the way that

we spend the dollars. We're not just adding new money. You're fundamentally going to change the things that we deliver upon as a government, and that is thank you to the asks firstly that Members make, to the follow-through on which of those asks and how we want to see them achieved and what kind of creative solutions we can come up with. It alters the function of government. It makes the function of government better.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, my last word is this: I am going to start -- or end where I started which is that this territory is at a very challenging crossroads right now. It's been a very difficult several years of successive emergencies, successive crisis. Now -- and now, really, we're sitting in the middle of a geopolitical crisis with eyes on the Arctic and not always positive or welcoming ones. But the eyes of our nation were on the Arctic, and it's our opportunity to stand as elected leaders, to stand and say that we can work together, identify priorities, identify creative solutions, work towards them collaboratively, and that we are ready to do that to deliver upon projects that will build this country because a strong north will be a strong Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Before I call motion -- to the motion one last time, I'd like to thank our interpreters very much for staying this late night. I thank you very much for the work you're doing, and I know you guys were supposed to leave at 8, but you guys are still working. I thank you very much for that. So for the last time, to the motion. Question has been called. And the Minister of Finance has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand. Thank you very much. Colleagues, recorded vote: 15 in favour, three opposed, zero abstentions. The motion has carried.

---Carried

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 Friday, March 6th, 2026, at 10 a.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question, 1071-20(1), Cost of Living
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
 - Written Question 35-20(1), Cost of Living
 - Written Question 36-20(1), Senior Envoy
 - Written Question 37-20(1),
9. Returns to Written Questions
 - Written Question 32-20(1), Medical Travel Costs, Budget Pressures, and Travel Volumes
 - Written Question 33-20(1), Medical Travel Delays, Coordination, Communication and Repeat Travel
 - Written Question 34-20(1), Medical Travel Escort Policies Eligibility and Appeals
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents

15. Notices of Motion
 16. Motions
 - Motion 76-20(1), Improving Transparency for Late-Term Direct Appointments
 - Motion 77-20(1), Establishment of a Comprehensive Territorial Crime Reduction Strategy
 - Motion 78-20(1), Extended Adjournment of the House to May 27, 2026
 17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
 18. First Reading of Bills
 19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 46-20(1), Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expression on Matters of Public Interest Act
 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 3-20(1), Carbon Tax Repeal Act
 - Committee Report 39(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, No. 3
 - Tabled Document 445-20(1), 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report
 - Tabled Document 483-20(1), 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission Final Report
 21. Report of Committee of the Whole
 22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 34-20(1), Trespass to Property Act
 23. Orders of the Day
- MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Friday, March 6th, 2026, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:45 p.m.