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**HANSARD**

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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Nahendeh)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Friday, March 6, 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 10:03 a.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

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

Please be seated. I'd like to thank Jonas Lafferty for the opening prayer.

Colleagues, before we start, I am going to do my ruling today. It's been a very challenging thing to look at this ruling and I had to do a lot of work across Canada to come up with this decision.

Colleagues, I am prepared to deliver my ruling on the point of order raised by the Member for Thebacha on February 27th. I want to start by stating that this is a lengthy ruling. Following my ruling, I will be sending the question of Private Member's bills to the committee on procedures and privileges for further study.

First off, I will address public statements some Members made after I reserved my decision. When a matter is reserved and before me for a decision, it is inappropriate for Members to debate the issue publicly. It can be seen as an attempt to influence my decision.

I further need to remind all Members that allowing debate on a topic is the prerogative of the Speaker. If a Member is rising on a point of order, they should be prepared to speak to it in full and be prepared for a situation where no debate is allowed.

Again, raising a point of order is leaving a decision with the Speaker. It is not a time to seek public support for political gain as the procedures of this House should not be weaponized in this manner.

Members, I must express that I expect a higher standard from all of you. It is my sincere hope that we continue to work collaboratively within our consensus system to make decisions that truly enhance the lives of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I want to first recognize the work of the Member from Range Lake. I know that this is an important topic for the Member. I also wish to

recognize that the government House leader and any Member can and should seek procedural clarity on the variety of matters that are reviewed by this House and its committees; however, I must also convey my disappointment that we find ourselves in this position today.

I have listened carefully to both sides, each acknowledging that this bill holds great importance and that much of its content is commendable. Yet, rather than uniting in cooperation, we have arrived at this point of division. I hope you take these words to heart and reflect on how we move forward in the final 18 months of our time as Members of the 20th Legislative Assembly. There is so much work left to do, and we need to do it working together.

Moving on, I have reviewed the debate that occurred on February 27th. I have also done extensive research on the purpose of Bill 29, as well as the parliamentary processes and expectations of Private Members' bills both in the Northwest Territories and in other jurisdictions throughout Canada and the Commonwealth. In my review, it has become evident this is an area of parliamentary procedure that is extremely nuanced and does not provide for simple rulings.

The staff of the Office of the Clerk were able to gather data from jurisdictions across the country and the Commonwealth alongside a review of the history of our own Private Members' bills to provide me with detailed information for consideration of this matter. I want to make it clear that this is a very challenging ruling. I reflect again on the additional challenges to my office in ruling on this when Members issue public statements before I have ruled.

A different Speaker may have come to a different conclusion than myself and have been justified to do so. In my ruling, I tried to capture both the conventions of our Assembly alongside my own interpretation of our rules. I wish to first highlight that a point of order differs from a point of privilege, Rule 1.7(3), noting that a Member may always raise a point of privilege at the earliest opportunity. Ideally, a point of order is raised at the earliest possible opportunity however, this is not required. A

point of order can be raised as additional information comes to light or during debate.

A Private Member's bill does not obtain the level of review and scrutiny that a government bill has during drafting, and government cannot rise on a point of order during a committee's review of a Private Member's bill. Although second reading is an appropriate time to rise on a point of order for a bill, it is not the only time available to do so.

Rule 1.2(i) defines a Private Member's bill as a bill introduced by a Member who is not a Minister "which do not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of any tax."

Rule 8.5(1) further provides that the Assembly may not adopt or pass any bill for the appropriation of public revenue except for a purpose recommended to the Assembly by the Commissioner in the session in which the bill is proposed.

The Member for Thebacha's point of order is related specifically to the definition of "Private Member's Bills" in Rule 1.2(i). The question before me is not whether Bill 29 contains an expressed appropriation clause. It does not. The question is whether Bill 29 nevertheless involves the appropriation of public funds in a manner that renders it inadmissible as a Private Member's bill, according to the definition in our rules.

In assessing that question, I have considered our rules, the Northwest Territories Act, and persuasive authorities from other Canadian jurisdictions, including the House of Commons.

Bill 29 amends the Workers' Compensation Act to expand presumptive coverage for certain classes of workers. It:

Extends presumptive PTSD coverage to a class of workers not previously defined in the Act;

- For firefighters, it aims to broaden cancer coverage;
- Reduce latency periods; and
- Expand presumptive coverage for heart disease and heart injury.

The evidence before the Assembly establishes that the coming into force of Bill 29 would result in:

- An immediate insurance liability estimated at approximately \$4.3 million; and
- Ongoing increased annual costs through higher assessment rates

applied to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

However, Bill 29 does not:

- Contain an appropriation clause;
- Authorize the withdrawal of funds from the consolidated revenue fund;
- Fix a specific sum payable from public revenue; or,
- Direct that money be paid out of the consolidated revenue fund.

Members have argued that the test is not whether a bill has financial implications. Many Private Member's bills have financial implications. It has been argued that the test is whether the bill itself provides the authority to withdraw money from the consolidated revenue fund. By this limited scope, one might view the bill as in order because there is no direct line item that appropriates funds. Nevertheless, there is full agreement that the implementation of Bill 29 will have financial consequences.

The Workers' Protection Fund is financed primarily through employer assessments and operates separate from the consolidated revenue fund. There are interpretations from the Speaker's rulings in other jurisdictions that a bill affecting an appropriation of public funds does so immediately upon enactment. Accordingly, because the legislation in question does not direct a transfer of money from the consolidated revenue fund into the Workers' Protection Fund and would require additional action from the government to authorize that transfer, one could conclude that Bill 29 does not constitute an appropriation of public funds. However, I reiterate that the definition of a Private Member's bill in Rule 1.2(i) is not limited to whether Bill 29 is an appropriation bill but whether it involves the appropriation of public funds.

Further, if it is argued that Bill 29 does not provide the authority to compel appropriations then future Private Members' bills could compel government spending on a variety of matters all because they are presenting something that is not in itself an appropriation bill.

It should also be argued that the insurance liability and increased assessment costs incurred by the Government of the Northwest Territories arise from a policy decision rather than Bill 29 itself. The Workers' Compensation Act authorizes the governance council to establish the rate or basis for calculating the assessments to be paid by the employer. The governance council has adopted a policy model establishing that the full liability associated with

presumptive coverage for firefighters be borne by the Government of the Northwest Territories. On this basis, it can be argued that the resulting financial obligations fall on the government because of that policy choice, not because of the bill before us. Again, I present these arguments to reflect on how this bill itself does not appropriate.

However, in my view it cannot be overlooked that the bill involves the appropriation of public funds. The government would necessarily be required to spend public money from the consolidated revenue fund as a result of assuming liability for presumptive coverage and such expenditures would be essential for the presumptive coverage created by the bill to be effective. It cannot and should not be ignored that Bill 29 significantly expands presumptive coverage under the Workers' Compensation Act.

These are not incidental or administrative adjustments. They alter the scope, objects, and conditions of entitlement under the Act. They extend benefits to a broader class of persons and ease the qualifications required to receive compensation. This has been established in the House of Commons as sufficient to be considered a "new and distinct" expense.

Again, the evidence before the Assembly establishes that the coming into force of Bill 29 would result in:

- An immediate insurance liability estimated at approximately \$4.3 million; and
- Ongoing increased annual costs through higher assessment rates applied to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

These amounts are separate from and in addition to any current appropriations. This is not a case of incidental implementation costs that may be absorbed within existing departmental budgets. It is a substantive expansion of statutory entitlements that creates a new financial obligation.

In referencing Bill 8 during the debate on this point of order, which was a Private Member's bill passed by this Assembly, it was stated that an appropriation was required to fulfill the obligations of that bill. This is incorrect. Bill 8 did not compel a supplementary appropriation. However, an additional piece of legislation which increased the revolving fund for the student financial assistance program was brought forward. No appropriation bill was required.

In reviewing other Private Member's bills adopted throughout our Assembly's history, there is little evidence that they required an additional or separate appropriation in order to be enacted. Some of these Private Members' bills contemplated charges on private industry rather than government. Some were policy changes, or authorized government departments to develop new regulations for industries or professions. However, no additional appropriations were necessary to carry out this work.

If the effect of these bills was to increase the workload of a department, the incidental costs incurred could be addressed through the usual budget process.

I wish to also discuss the Commissioner's recommendation.

The Member for Range Lake noted that a bill similar to Bill 29 might require a Royal recommendation in other jurisdictions. The Member was referring to the practice in the House of Commons of including a message from the Governor General recommending that Parliament appropriate the funds necessary to defray the expenses listed in an appropriation bill or for the purposes set out in a bill that authorizes new charges against the consolidated revenue fund.

In the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, a similar "Commissioner's recommendation" is included as a preamble to appropriations bills. This recommendation is not included in other bills, including other public bills such as the Workers' Compensation Act, and this practice in the Northwest Territories differs from the practice of the House of Commons in that respect.

Despite this difference, the criteria applied in the House of Commons to determine whether a bill touches on the financial initiative of the Crown is still critical in determining whether a bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly appropriates public funds and therefore whether it would be inadmissible as a Private Member's bill. The absence of a Commissioner's recommendation does not, in itself, render a Private Member's bill procedurally in order.

In summary, I find that Bill 29 creates a new and distinct financial obligation resulting in a real and unavoidable expenditure of public funds; compels the government to spend money in order to meet statutory entitlements; imposes a fixed coming into force date that binds the executive to incur those expenditures, and therefore involves the appropriation of public funds within the meaning of Rule 1.2(l).

Accordingly, Bill 29 does not meet the definition of a Private Member's bill.

There is a valid point of order. Bill 29 is not in order and will not proceed. The bill will be removed from the orders of the day.

Members, this ruling should not stop us as Members from working together. Members on both sides of this House need to advance our shared priorities. We need to stop being adversarial and focus on working together. That is what the residents of the Northwest Territories expect of us. Thank you, colleagues.

Ministers' statements. Minister of the Status of Women.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 199-20(1): INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge International Women's Day, held on March 8th, to celebrate women's social, cultural, and political achievements throughout history and across nations. International Women's Day also provides the opportunity to showcase commitments towards gender equality, raise awareness of the gaps that persist, and highlight initiatives that promote gender equity. The 2026 theme for International Women's Day is Give to Gain, encouraging generosity and collaboration to advance gender equality.

This theme emphasizes the power of mutual support, and supporting women through resources, time, and mentorship. Give to Gain emphasizes the importance of giving attention and effort to gender equity to gain long-term equality. Contributing to women's advancement helps create a more supportive and interconnected world. When women thrive, we all rise.

Mr. Speaker, gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in our society despite decades of effort. Progress has been hard won in areas like economic participation, political representation, and combating gender-based violence. We need collective action to protect these gains and to prevent backsliding on women rights, access to equitable services, advancement in the workplace, in educational spaces and in society.

The young women and girls of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. We need to support them so they can reach their full potential. Providing better access for women to education, suitable housing, health care, employment, and child

care not only supports women but it benefits society by helping to build a sustainable economy and strengthened support networks. When we address the gaps along the social service continuum, we do our part to ensure all women and girls can achieve their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that women face ingrained societal hurdles, systemic barriers and gender-based discrimination. These obstacles perpetuate a cycle of gender inequality.

We must work together to develop and implement strategies to prevent violence against women and girls. We must dismantle systems that disadvantage women, and we must keep updating our policies and programs so they truly support to promote the advancement of women in leadership positions. We must ensure that services are equitable and that we remain committed to keeping women and girls safe in the Northwest Territories. This work is ongoing, but I believe we can continue to make meaningful progress.

Give to Gain is a global call to action. It is an invitation to contribute what you can, whether that is your support, your time, or your knowledge. It highlights how personal commitment, paired with coordinated efforts, can meaningfully elevate and amplify the focus on gender equality.

I thank all women across the Northwest Territories for their invaluable contributions to our communities, our families, and our workplaces today and every day. Women have always given to gain, and they continue to do so in a million unseen ways. This translates into strong families, connected communities, and healthy environments. I encourage everyone to give strategically on this International Women's Day and make targeted contributions to women's events, causes, services, and gender equity advocacy.

When women thrive, again we all rise. I invite each Member of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing International Women's Day 2026. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 200-20(1): ROAD SAFETY AND THE DRIVE SAFE CAMPAIGN

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2024 our government launched the Drive Safe campaign to strengthen road safety awareness across the Northwest Territories.

Today, I am pleased to provide an update on the work and how it continues to support safe communities and travel for Northerners.

There are nearly 27,000 licensed drivers in the Northwest Territories. Our roads connect communities, support essential services, and enable the movement of goods, fuel, and supplies. Many of these roads include long isolated stretches, limited services, and sometimes challenging conditions that demand careful planning and responsible driving.

Mr. Speaker, since its launch, the Drive Safe campaign has evolved into a year-round program that reflects how people travel in the North. Seasonal mini-campaigns focusing on winter driving, winter road resupply, back-to-school safety, new driver and youth safety, impaired and distracted driving, wildlife on the highway, ATV and snowmobile safety, and the importance of getting home safe.

This approach recognizes a simple reality. Road safety in the NWT looks different than it does elsewhere, and the conditions can change quickly at any time of year. Wind, snow, ice, fog, wildfire smoke, winter roads made of packed snow, ice, and gravel roads all affect how safely people can travel. These risks exist year-round and require drivers to plan ahead, slow down, stay alert, and adjust to the conditions in front of them.

Mr. Speaker, road safety is not something the government can deliver on its own.

While our government is responsible for maintaining infrastructure, providing timely information and supporting enforcement and education, every driver has a responsibility to be prepared before they travel. That means checking road and weather conditions before heading out, planning fuel and rest stops, carrying emergency supplies, and driving with caution.

As part of this work, we continue to promote DriveNWT.ca as the trusted source for road and highway information. DriveNWT.ca provides up-to-date details on road conditions, winter roads and ice crossings, construction zones, weight restrictions, closures, and weather impacts. This tool helps support safer decision-making for anyone travelling on our highways.

Mr. Speaker, public education remains a critical part of keeping people safe on our roads and highways. The Drive Safe campaigns bring together GNWT departments, enforcement partners, and community organizations to deliver one consistent message throughout the year. This coordination ensures that road safety messaging is clear, recognizable, and relevant,

whether it is aimed at experienced drivers, commercial operators, youth, or new drivers.

One way we are supporting safer driving is by reaching youth and new drivers early, recognizing that habits form early on in life. One example is a keychain provided to new drivers that uses humour to deliver a serious message about making safe choices behind the wheel. These kinds of tools are designed to stay top of mind and spark conversations about responsibility and risk.

In the North, the consequences of unsafe driving can be especially severe due to distance, isolation, and limited access to emergency services. That is why our messaging continues to focus on everyday choices: planning ahead, staying focused, driving sober, slowing down, watching for pedestrians and cyclists, and wearing a seatbelt every time.

Mr. Speaker, road safety is a shared responsibility. By preparing before we travel and driving with care, we reduce collisions, protect our communities, and ensure our roads continue to serve as safe and reliable lifelines across the Northwest Territories. Because at the end of the day, there is a lot on the line, and we all want the same thing: to get home safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

## Members' Statements

### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 983-20(1): INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I wish to rise and recognize that this Sunday, March 8th, is International Women's Day. I am proud to represent the Northwest Territories as its Commonwealth woman parliamentarian and mark this day annually.

Last year, I asked all of us to recommit what positive and lasting action looks like for northern women, girls, and gender diverse folks across our territory. We do continue to make progress, but I do not think we have collectively met the high bar I want us to set yet when it comes to sustainable support for eliminating gender-based violence for instance. We have not begun to address trauma in a meaningful way. Trauma often manifests as people acting out in unhealthy ways, including violent acts. That violence disproportionately affects women, girls, and gender diverse folks. I see caregivers, who are overwhelmingly women,

burnt out, whether they work in daycare, nursing, or administrative support. Across Canada, gender diverse folks are on edge as legislation is proposed and enacted that erodes their rights. But I also want to focus on the positive, Mr. Speaker.

On February 9th, I tabled a letter from YWCA-NWT to the Premier and several Ministers seeking funds to keep two safe homes operating for women and families fleeing violence. With the Members for Nahendeh, Sahtu, Yellowknife North, and Frame Lake, we wrote to Cabinet to urge them to support this critical service for Fort Good Hope and Fort Simpson. I am happy to say that Cabinet found the funds for 2026-2027 to support these two safe homes and that EIA will work with YWCA-NWT to try to find sustainable funding for safe homes and other crucial programs.

I see the work of this government to make programs and services more welcoming for gender diverse folks. I know the Minister responsible for the Status of Women conducts her work in a heartfelt, compassionate way, and doesn't shy away from the hard work ahead that she does on behalf of all northern women and girls. I am proud to stand in this House with seven furiously passionate women who work hard for women, families, girls, and gender diverse folks 365 days a year:

- The Member for Monfwi,
- The Member for Dehcho,
- The Member for Nunakput,
- The Member for Yellowknife North,
- The Member for Yellowknife South,
- The Member for Kam Lake.

Thank you all. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Once again, I won't ever let an International Women's Day pass without calling for supporting action, not just words, and with sustainable funding and capacity for organizations on the front lines. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 984-20(1):  
GRATITUDE FOR SUPPORT SYSTEM AND  
SPRING GOOD WISHES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, as this long legislative session comes to close, I want to thank everyone who supports us in this chamber: my colleagues, our dedicated staff, my constituents, and especially my family who supports me, makes everything I do possible.

I want to start by thanking my wife, my family, our puppies Leo, Rocky, and Sophie, as well as my extended family and relatives.

I want to thank all my colleagues, our Speaker, and the clerk's office. I want to thank all my constituents, local leaders, for bringing forward their issues and concerns from Dettah, N'dilo, Lutselk'e, and Fort Resolution.

I want to thank my constituent assistant Taylor Pagotto and Warren Delorme. I want to thank all those Legislative Assembly staffs from the library research team to Members services and public affairs for making work run smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a big mahsi cho to all the translators here today. I want to say mahsi cho for being here for us and supporting us, especially Jonas Lafferty and Mary Rose Sundberg.

Also, the Legislative Assembly technician for their hard work bridging our proceedings to the people in our Indigenous languages.

I want to wish all the NWT Arctic Winter Games athletes good luck as they head to Whitehorse, Yukon, and especially those from Dettah, N'dilo, Lutselk'e, and Fort Resolution. Safe travels, have fun, and stay safe.

It's getting close to the springtime so enjoy the spring weather and all the spring carnivals and festivals happening throughout the NWT. The Yellowknives Dene First Nation Spring Carnival is from March 20th to 22nd, 2026, and the Fort Resolution Spring Carnival is from March 16th to March 22nd, 2026. Come out and enjoy yourself, bring the family and kids.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to say keep safe, watch out for one another, offer support to each another and have a safe trip home. And I want to God bless all my colleagues. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 985-20(1):  
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the practice that many residents across the Northwest Territories revisit and question each year, the ongoing use of daylight savings time. Twice each year residents across the territory adjust their clocks forward in the spring and back again in the fall. While this may appear to be a minor change, it can disrupt daily routines, affect sleep patterns, and create challenges for many people. Families, workers, and elders often feel the effects as they adapt to shift in time. For shift workers, parents with young children, and those already managing busy schedules, even a one-hour change can be difficult and may influence overall well-being, safety, and productivity.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories differs greatly from the southern regions where daylight savings time was first introduced to better align daylight with daily activities. In the North, we already experience significant seasonal shifts in daylight. During the winter months, daylight hours are very limited, while in the summer the sun remains visible late into the evening. Adjusting clocks does little to change these natural patterns.

Daylight savings time was originally introduced to conserve energy and make better use of daylight during working hours; however, in today's world, with modern technology, changing work habits, and new energy practices, many experts agree that these benefits are now minimal and no longer relevant. What remains is a system that disrupts routines twice a year while offering very little practical advantage.

Across North America, many jurisdictions are taking note of these concerns. Several are reviewing the practice of it or considering this elimination in favour of consistent, year-round time. Residents are seeking stability and predictability in their daily routines.

Mr. Speaker, while residents of the Northwest Territories -- Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while residents of the Northwest Territories are resilient and adaptable, that does not justify continuing a practice that offers little benefit in our northern context. It is time to seriously consider ending the twice-yearly clock changes and adopting permanent consistent time that better reflects the needs of our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

gallery -- Sorry, Members' statements. Oh my goodness. Member for Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 986-20(1):  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this weekend people around the world will gather to celebrate International Women's Day. Today, I recognize and honour the women across the Northwest Territories and special acknowledgment to the Tlicho women and girls in my region.

Women are at the heart of our communities as mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, aunties, and cousins. They help shape the lives of those around them and carry forward the knowledge and traditions that connect our people.

Mr. Speaker, mothers in particular, carry a tremendous responsibility. They care for their families, often placing the needs of others before their own. Through their everyday actions, they show their children how to care for themselves and for others so that one day they can grow into great mothers and fathers. When their families and communities need the most, a mother's strength never wavers.

Mr. Speaker, one example of that strength is Ashley Wedzin. Yesterday, this House heard about the life of her son Kevin Netsiza's journey and that challenges their family face. Through it all, Ashley never gave up on her son or her family.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the women who sit here in this House: the MLAs, the administrative staff, and interpreters. I have tremendous respect for them. They work hard to be here and continue to work tirelessly for the people of the Northwest Territories. I am proud to sit beside them and work with them.

Mr. Speaker, as we honour women today, we must also remember the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls whose absence continues to be deeply felt by their families and loved ones. Mr. Speaker, in their memories and in honour of all women, we recognize the strength and leadership women bring to our families and communities. Happy International Women's Day. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 987-20(1):  
CELEBRATIONS IN MARCH

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, the month of March holds a number of opportunities to celebrate. As we've heard, this Sunday we will celebrate International Women's Day.

Now women and girls come in all sorts of forms and sizes, come from different backgrounds with different cultures and languages and values even, but our power comes from finding the things we have in common and fighting for each other's rights and dignity. At the end of March, we will observe National Indigenous Languages Day, and it's also the International Month of La Francophonie, French-speaking people around the world.

Almost 11 percent of NWT residents and 17 percent of Yellowknifers speak French fluently. For about 4 percent of our population, French is their first language. [Translation] This afternoon, the federation of the -- for the Francophone community will raise the Francophone at the Chateau de Neige that be taking place is to celebrate the vitality of the Francophone community, the diversity and the pride of Francophone such as me, because this is a community that enriches our community as a whole. These contributions that are important include musical productions and artistic productions, for example, the incredible -- for the original production that was presented last night at Top Knight titled *Histoires d'entre nos lèvres*, so *Stories Between Our Lips*. I would like to congratulate Marjalaine Jarvais and Aida Servi for their creative work. It pays tribute to women's lives and their experiences. [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, Happy International Women's Day. Let's take time this month to appreciate the Indigenous language speakers and the French language speakers amongst us. And I wish everyone safe travels as folks head home or to the Arctic Winter Games or to their other holidays. Thank you. Merci.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 988-20(1):  
BEAUFORT DELTA SPRING JAMBOREE  
SEASON

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as many have said in this House, spring is just around the corner and for the folks in my region, that means that it is Jamboree season. Everything kicks off, Mr. Speaker, on April 2nd with the Mad Trapper Jamboree in Aklavik; then the Muskrat Jamboree in Inuvik from April 10th to the 13th; Peel River Jamboree in Fort McPherson April 17th to the 19th; Tsiigehtchic, the Mackenzie Jamboree

from April 24th to the 26th; and finally, the Beluga Jamboree on April 24th to the 27th in Tuktoyaktuk.

I just want to give a big shout out to all the organizers for these events. It's an opportunity to celebrate culture, games, and of course my favourite, the food. And I encourage if you are visiting any of these regions or up in the Beaufort Delta or Mackenzie Delta to please come out, enjoy, meet some great people, and participate in some fun games and enjoy the sunshine and the weather.

Also, safe travels. It's been a bit of a grind for us these past few weeks obviously, as many have said, so safe travels to my colleagues as you go back to your home communities and see your loved ones and get a little rest before we get back at it again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 989-20(1):  
SPRING CARNIVAL SEASON

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] My name is Sheryl Yakeleya from the Deh Cho. All of us that we are here, we're all working for the people of Deh Cho. Although it's very cold outside, we're given a very beautiful day today.

[Translation ends].

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my family and constituents and everyone here for all the support we've been given during the time here. As the days grow longer and the warmth of the spring begins to return, communities across the Northwest Territories are again preparing for one of our most cherished traditions, spring carnival season. This time of year brings Northerners together to celebrate culture, community, and the enduring spirit that defines life across our territory.

In the coming weeks, residents will have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of festivities. Among those is the Bison Jamboree in Fort Providence from March 21st to the 29th, a long-standing community celebration featuring events such as sports, poker rallies, snowmobile races, sliding parties, bingos, talent shows, and traditional competitions like tea boiling, snowshoe races, and log sawing contests.

Farther north, the Inuvik Muskrat Jamboree will take place, one of the Arctic's longest-standing spring carnival celebrations, complete with traditional games, skidoo races, dog mushing, and cultural contests judged by local elders.

Across the territory, additional events from the Beaver Tail Jamboree to the Mad Trapper Rendezvous to Wood Buffalo Frolics, all around there is a vibrant and diverse carnival season that brings people together in the spirit of fun, tradition, and northern resilience. These festivals are spaces where culture is celebrated, where our communities gather, and where the past and present meet.

I encourage all Northerners to participate in these celebrations, whether by attending events, supporting local vendors, volunteering, or simply gathering with friends and family to enjoy the return of spring. Our carnivals are more than festivities. They are a reflection of who we are as Northerners: strong, connected, and proud of our heritage.

As we welcome the new season, let us come together to honour our traditions, support our communities, and celebrate the arrival of spring carnivals across the Northwest Territories. And I want to wish safe travels to all my colleagues here that have to travel home. Until we meet again. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 990-20(1):  
ECONOMIC READINESS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me proud feelings of wearing my traditional jacket given to me by my late uncle, Chief Charlie Barnaby, who was a leader for 16 years in our home community and has emphasized the need of working together.

Mr. Speaker, as we close this sitting, I want to speak about significant economic opportunities on the horizon for the Northwest Territories and the critical importance of being ready to seize those opportunities.

We are at a pivotal point. Major federal investments could transform our economy, strengthen our communities, but opportunity without preparation is just potential left unrealized. Mr. Speaker, we must develop a comprehensive economic readiness plan that ensures Northerners benefit from these investments. I highlight bullet point number one:

1. Arctic infrastructure fund;
2. Dual airport expansion;
3. Military homes;

4. YZF improvements;
5. Three advanced mineral industry developments;
6. The Tlego'hli self-government;
7. The Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Arctic Energy Security Corridor has been confirmed as one of Canada's most abundant regions for mineral exploration with potential for lithium, cobalt, copper, zinc, gold, and diamonds. The 2025 mineral potential study identified 1,721 mineral showings containing 19 different critical minerals across our territory.

Mr. Speaker, these aren't just federal announcements happening to us. They're opportunities we must actively prepare for. We need an economic readiness plan that addresses our infrastructure deficit, workforce development needs. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, before I close I want to wish all of our athletes competing at the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse the very best of luck and enjoyment.

Finally, as this is our last day of our sitting, I wish to wish all my colleagues safe travels home to their communities and families. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 991-20(1):  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the late 1800s, society and politics were significantly different from how they are today. It would be decades until women won the right to vote and serve in politics, and the first feminist thinkers and writers were planting the seeds of thought which would grow into a transformative global movement.

In 1893, Matilda Joslyn Gage shared a bold and prophetic vision. She wrote that during the ages no rebellion has been of like importance with that of women against the tyranny of church and state. None has had as far-reaching effects. We note its beginning. Its progress will overthrow every existing form of these institutions. Its end will be a regenerated world.

While I acknowledge we are still in the process of building it some 130 years later, to mark

International Women's Day this weekend I would like to reflect briefly upon my own experiences as a beneficiary of the regenerated world that Gage imagined.

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working with and being mentored by women who I have looked up to. The majority of my supervisors and co-workers over the years have been women, and this trend continued when I enrolled in a conflict management program led by two incredible women who greatly influenced my thinking and continue to guide my work to this day. During my first leadership experience on city council, I worked with several women who showed me what effective leadership looked like in practice and continue to do so in the respective roles they have grown into now. And, of course, I now have the privilege of working in the 20th Legislative Assembly with another group of strong women colleagues whose leadership and influence is integral to our successes as a group. When I think of who I look to for advice and mentorship, who is most effective and influential, or, to be frank, who is stepping up and doing the lion's share of heavy lifting, it is more often than not the women of this Assembly who come to mind.

So I think it is appropriate today to acknowledge and celebrate their contributions to our territory and celebrate what the gender equality movement has built for all of us who benefit from its legacy. Thank you to the incredible group of women advisers and staff who support us, our many women interpreters, and our women MLAs. Without you, our work would be severely diminished and I am so grateful to be a politician in a time when we can stand and work together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 992-20(1):  
WORKING TOGETHER IN CONSENSUS  
GOVERNMENT

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to give a different statement but given your ruling, which I support 100 percent, I just wanted to comment on some of the processes we use in our Assembly to move issues forward that are important to our constituencies.

I have moved two Private Member's bills forward in my time in this Assembly, and in both cases I shared the principles of those bills with Members of the government. I shared it with my colleagues as well, and I tried to work as collaboratively as possible. For the most recent decision -- or the most recent legislative

initiative, both debates around the issue were not adversarial. They were supportive of the issue at hand, and they looked to find common ground.

Over the course of nine months, there were many conversations between the sponsor and the Minister responsible, the committee chairs, and all Members on the process of the bill. There were no gotcha moments. This was put on the table. So although I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to speak to your comments on finding ways to work together; I thought we were doing that. So if there is a way that we can work better together, I am all game. But we have to keep working together and it can't just be -- it can't just be dictated by who holds the purse strings. We have to find ways to support our residents. We have to find better ways to support our residents, and we can't take so long to do it. And, repeatedly, we see that that is a hold-up. And I wish I could be celebratory of a budget passed and bills passed. Those things are still happening. But when I see the dire need that's out there, when I hear the stories from constituents, telling them everything's fine, we're making progress on stuff, just hurry up and wait, it's falling on deaf ears. And if we have to wait another 9 months, 12 months, 10 months, to see process, to see results in delivery, people aren't going to wait for us. They're going to leave.

So although I hear your message of working together, this Member's trying. This Member's trying to do everything in his ability to do it, and it might not meet the needs of people I am trying to work with, but we are trying. And I hope we can get this done, this issue done, and other issues done that are important because it's so important that we take care of people who put their lives on the line for us every day to keep our communities safe. And I will continue to advocate for them, and I will do so later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 993-20(1):  
PREFERENTIAL BALLOTING

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and most importantly, Northerners today, Mr. Speaker, as always of course, our system of consensus government at times can be a source of pride and on occasion we look to the parliamentary traditions and Indigenous values to guide us as we get to our outcome. While the Assembly operates with sometimes good consensus and sometimes less good consensus, we do our best to get there without

an adversarial way but, unfortunately, winner takes all sometimes is the end result.

Right now, we use first-past-the-post system to elect MLAs to this chamber, despite the fact that the majority may not even be voting for those particular folks. In our territory we do appreciate, unlike other areas, the collective values of our voices, the voices of our people. We spend a lot of time trying to do that. I wouldn't imply other jurisdictions don't but I would say we spend an important amount of time to do this. And, Mr. Speaker, even the CEO of elections, with respect to voting, has consistently advocated for better ways to vote so we get people involved, modernize our system. That's why I am advocating again to adopt the preferential ballot system. It's time we make some technical changes. But we wouldn't be making changes to the House. We would just be making changes to how you get to the House, Mr. Speaker.

The fundamental values of democracy are decided by this 19 people, these folks. But it's time to bring into the conversation the people at the dinner tables, the coffee shops, you know, on the streets, wherever we go, even the hockey pits where people or parents are sitting there watching their kids play hockey.

Mr. Speaker, holding a public plebiscite, we could hold a non-binding plebiscite. We could have the courage to ask the people what do they really think. Imagine that, getting out there, getting direct democracy. Yukon held a plebiscite. 56 percent of the people voted for change. The party in power said thanks, but no thanks. But at least, I have to admire, they risked asking the question. And to us, I'd say be bold. Don't fear the fact that we might get their opinion. Be excited that they share it with us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Member for Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 994-20(1):  
APPRECIATION AND THEBACHA SPRING  
EVENTS

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, as we come to the close of what has truly been a marathon sitting of this Assembly, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude.

First and foremost, I want to thank my wife and my family. Like the families of every Member in this House, they make the real sacrifice so that we can be here doing the work for the people of the Northwest Territories. Time away from home is never easy and their patience, understanding, and encouragement make it

possible for me to serve the residents of Thebacha and all Northerners. I know every Member here shares the same appreciation for the support of their loved ones.

I also need to thank the constituents of Thebacha and my constituency assistant Sarah Morris who is back in Fort Smith holding down the fort.

I would also like to recognize and thank all Members of the Legislative Assembly. While we may not always agree on every issue, we all come here with the same purpose: to do our best for the people we represent. The long hours, the debates, the committee work, the difficult decisions are all part of that responsibility, and I respect the dedication that each Member brings to this chamber.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to the public service and to the staff of the Legislative Assembly. Much of the work that keeps this institution functioning happens behind the scenes. Your professionalism, participation, and commitment ensures that Members are able to do our jobs effectively.

I would also like to take this time to make a special thank you to our interpreters. Your work is essential to this Assembly. You help ensure that our proceedings are accessible and respectful of the many languages of the Northwest Territories, and your dedication during these long days and late evenings has not gone unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, sessions like this remind us that governing is truly a team effort, from Members to staff to interpreters to the families who support us at home. It takes all of us working together.

Before I conclude, I would like to highlight an exciting weekend happening back home in Fort Smith. The community is gathering for the annual winter carnival, the Wood Buffalo Frolics. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is always a wonderful event that brings residents together to celebrate the season, enjoy outdoor activities, and strengthen the strong sense of community that Fort Smith is known for. At the same time, the Joel Tetso Memorial Hockey Tournament will also be taking place. This tournament not only brings great hockey to the community but also honours the memory of Joel Tetso and continues to bring people together through sport, friendship, and community spirit. To every participating volunteer who organized these events, I wish

you a safe and successful weekend. Mr. Speaker, with that, again, I'd like to thank everyone in this House. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Thebacha. I am being a little sentimental today. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 995-20(1):  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, International Women's Day, we honour the strength, courage, and spirit of women everywhere. As an Indigenous woman, and as many Indigenous women, we grew up learning that we are the strongest when we help each other. Our elders teach us when we give our time, our support, and our kindness, we gain something important in return.

This year's theme, Give to Gain, is a reminder of that lesson. To the young women and the girls across the Northwest Territories, you matter. You carry the strength of your families, your ancestors. You carry languages, stories, traditions, that are powerful and important. Your dreams and goals are worth following. When you give encouragement to a young woman, you help build her confidence. When you share what you know, you help your community grow. When you take care of yourself, you show others that they can take care of themselves too. These are always ways of giving and each one helps us gain pride, courage, and stronger connection to who you are.

Today, we honour women who came before us: our mothers, our grandmothers, our aunties, knowledge-keepers, and community leaders. They faced many challenges, but they kept going. Their strength lives inside of all of us.

I'd also like to thank my own grandmother Esther Semmler, my great-grandmothers Agnes Semmler and Winnie Cockney, and many other strong women in my community that were able to give me the support that I needed, teach me the lessons that I needed to learn, and help me mold into the person that I am today.

As you move forward, remember this: You are capable, you are worthy, and you have a place in this world. Keep learning, keep trying, keep supporting one another. When you rise, our whole North rises with you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 996-20(1):  
ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, today, I want to celebrate the incredible journey of athletes from the Nahendeh riding as they prepare to represent our community, region and territories at the Arctic Winter Games. This event is more than an international competition - it is a celebration of who we are as Northerners: strong, resilient, and proud of where we come from.

For athletes from outside the big centres, the games offer not only the thrill of sport but the opportunity to represent our community, region, and territory on a truly global stage.

Each athlete standing before us carries a story of dedication and heart. Their path began at home on the frozen syne, in the gyms, and in the community rinks where dreams first took shape. Their hours of practice, their sacrifices, and their determination reflects the spirit that binds us all together. I look at how they carry with them the spirit of where they came from - the after-supper practices, the teamwork built in gyms, and the support of neighbours who cheer from the stands. Their dedication reminds us that every great accomplishment begins at home with communities that believe in our youth and invest in their dreams.

As they step onto the international stage, they do not stand alone. They carry with them the support, hope, and pride of every single one of us.

The Arctic Winter Games are about more than medals and athletic excellence. They are about connection and fostering friendships - a rare chance for young people from across the circumpolar world to meet, learn, and share their cultures. The friendships built there reminds us that we are part of something much larger - a northern family defined by unity, respect, and perseverance.

To Mia Hardisty, Gombee Joses, Ember Sibbeston, Payton Bennett, Blake Speed and Taagacho Jose, believe in yourselves. Trust in your training, your teammates, and the people who helped you get here. Compete with courage, lift others up, and embrace every moment of this incredible experience. You remind us that everything is possible when we come together as a community that believes in our youth.

On behalf of everybody here, congratulations on reaching this milestone. Your efforts remind us that when one of us succeeds, our whole community shines a little brighter.

I would be remiss if I do not recognize two Team NWT coaches from Fort Simpson: Shannon Cazon, one of the Dene games coaches, and Val Gendron, one of the speed skating coaches. Thank you for helping our youth.

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

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the smallest Yellowknife North constituent in the gallery today, but I suspect could be the mightiest, Emmy Maximovich\*, and her parents who are with us today. Thank you for coming and listening to us. We're happy to have you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a page from Range Lake, Isaac Strader, who was with us for the marathon day yesterday. He's also great with a fidget spinner. Thank you so much for all the work you do, helping support your democracy and being a young leader in your community.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I forgot to include the Chipewyan translator, Dennis Drygeese. I'd just like to recognize him. And I'd like to recognize all the visitors here today. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Recognition of visitors in Gallery. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. Oh no, I didn't see people -- sorry, Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge and recognize all the interpreters here, Jonas and Maro Rose Sundberg as well, for their hard work in keeping our language alive. Thank you.

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

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize all the interpreters who did a great job throughout the session period and, especially yesterday, went above and

beyond their duties. I'd like to specifically point out Eleanor and her sister Karen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to join my colleagues in a chorus of thank-yous in support and recognition of our interpreters and the wonderful work that they do. I particularly appreciate the prayers that they share with us every morning. It really helps ground me, and it helps me set up for what are often very difficult days. So I want to thank them. And also, you know, the various support staff in the building that we always need to acknowledge at the end of this long session. They truly are the engine that keeps this thing running, and I deeply appreciate their work. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise and want to acknowledge and recognize our interpreters, MaryJane Cazon and Sarah Gargan from Providence, and for keeping our language alive. Mahsi. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will join my colleagues in recognizing the hard work our staff does behind the scenes here, the interpreters behind the glass and the clerks, the staff on the first floor, second floor. Thank you, everybody, and enjoy the spring, coming months.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join in gratitude for the interpreters and the wonderful work they do to keep our languages alive and shared with the people of the Northwest Territories. I also want to thank the broadcast team who also puts in long hours to make sure we're heard. And I want to thank all of the table staff, the clerk staff, the speaker's office staff, and the Ministers' staff who, indeed, keeps this building running smoothly and makes it all look very magical indeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. My

favourite person from Inuvik Boot Lake. Giving you some love.

**MR. RODGERS:** Never forgotten, Mr. Speaker, I know, thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Emmy's mom Chelsea \*Maximovich who's a member of our staff, our clerk's staff at AOC, Mr. Speaker, the hardest working Member, I think, in this building. And her husband Sasha is here with them as well. And I'd just like to thank them for being in the gallery and welcome them.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank the interpreters for being here with us into the wee hours of the night every single day and getting our message out to the people of the Northwest Territories. And I also wanted to remind everyone in the gallery to slow down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Good message, Mr. Premier. I know the interpreters would love that message.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone today, welcome to your chambers. Thank you for allowing us 19 people to represent the people of the Northwest Territories. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 1183-20(1): SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know spring break's on the doorsteps with some excitement, and people and parents with children with disabilities share the same excitement except they have different types of responsibilities and additional challenges. My questions will be to the Minister of ECE, and they're really built around the concept of accessibility, affordability, mental health, and fairness.

Mr. Speaker, my question specifically now is with many families facing financial pressures, what initiatives can she or her department ensure that our young people who do have disabilities and challenges, you know, often refer to some folks that attend inclusive school programming can have accessibility to low-income opportunities so they can share in

the joy and excitement of things like March break? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, certainly if a parent -- a low-income parent is on income assistance, there is an amount that is also considered for children, for dependents of that individual, that they receive to make sure that their basic needs for their family are met. In addition, Mr. Speaker, in the city of Yellowknife, they have the Access for All Pass so that if there are low-income families that are looking to access, for example, the swimming pool, public skates, public transportation, that they can apply for the Access for All Pass to make it easier to gain access to some of these public facilities as well. So that's another institution that also supports low-income families in that sense.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, as far as mental health is concerned, the Member did bring that up, and these services are available through the school. They are not charged for through the school, and so both from a preventative nature but then also through relationships with health and social services to access a clinician. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am certainly glad to hear what she said. Of course, I welcome that type of positive answer, but I would also now lean into the area of we have many people in the working poor bracket that don't meet the low-income threshold, Mr. Speaker. Is there any reason why the Minister can't take an income test off this particular initiative to ensure all children have the right to play and enjoy and grow with the best of their abilities that they can. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, what I've just heard from the Member is to remove income testing from income assistance, and so I am wondering if the Member can clarify. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** No, I didn't refer to income assistance. I am talking about any threshold that's tied to income -- sorry, any program that's tied to income thresholds so all children equally could apply, not just those below the test she provided in her previous answer. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, in my

previous answer the only program that I referred to that had income testing associated with it was the income assistance program which is a program that ensures that residents can meet their month-to-month costs of living for their basic needs, and so that program certainly is income tested. And it is the parent that applies for that. The child does not apply for that program. And also, like I said, the mental health programs are available through the school, and there's no income testing on that. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was even able to bring a delegation to the Minister some time ago about making changes to support parents who have to constantly take time off of work, and one parent, in particular, takes one out of five days a week; so in other words, they're losing 20 percent of their income.

Mr. Speaker, what programs can the Minister expand to ensure that parents aren't taking real income out of their family's bottom line and work with the schools to ensure that they have fair and equal coverage for their children to get supports through the schools? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity to sit down with the Member and a number of parents who were quite candid in taking me through their experiences as parents of youth with disabilities, and it was incredibly helpful to be able to hear from them. I think it also would have been helpful to have had the Minister of health there as well considering that some of their questions did pertain to the health portfolio.

In regards to education, culture and employment, Mr. Speaker, this is where some of that work on the inclusive schooling review comes in. A number of the families that the Member is referring to -- well, some of the families the Member is referring to, did also participate in the inclusive schooling review directly and were able to sit down for quite an extended period of time with the people that were doing the review and the interviews in order to really make sure that it was able to be a back-and-forth conversation, not just an information providing so that everyone in the conversation could really dig into the details. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1184-20(1):  
EXPANDING WORKERS' SAFETY AND  
COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR FIRST  
RESPONDERS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission has said many times that he supported Bill 29 and what Bill 29 proposed to do, not just the principle of it but the actual clauses which would have expanded coverage for first responders. Can the Minister confirm that he will bring forward a bill that includes the same coverage for first responders that were included in Bill 29? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister responsible for WSCC.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, you know, very early in the session is more than happy to work with the Member on trying to get some -- you know, get this coverage figured out and get Members with the fire service in the Northwest Territories covered. And, you know, like I said earlier, you know, the jurisdictional scans that we can do to get -- make sure that the legislation is covered under WSCC on presumptive coverage. And, again, more than happy to sit down with the Member and work on a path forward with this. And I agree, we need to get something forward for the Members of the fire service in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question was, the Minister has publicly said he supports the bill. Will he bring forward the same coverage that was in that bill? That's what support means. That's what firefighters and first responders are respecting -- or are expecting. So will the Minister make that commitment today? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have stated earlier, we had some discussions around it. Obviously, we never got right into it, so we don't know the full impacts. And there's a governing body for WSCC and, you know, they had already started working on some stuff. So again, I am more than happy to work with the Member to find a solution that is the same or similar to the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for WSCC. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Nine months of exhaustive review, study, conversations, meetings, so a lot of work has been done on this already. When will the Minister bring

forward the same or better coverage for first responders? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I stated earlier, within this Assembly this will be done and completed, and I've actually instructed WSCC to speed up the timelines. And, again, I am more than happy to work with the Member and find a path forward on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for WSCC. Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 1185-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT READINESS FOR  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement, my question today is to the Premier. These are exciting times there, Mr. Speaker, for the Northwest Territories, which includes multiple departments and for multiple projects.

Can the Premier explain in summary our government's readiness platform or plan of engagements in preparation for these projects? Mahsi.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's a big question because the Member's right, there's a lot going on and there's a lot that we should expect here in the territory. In terms of investments from the federal government, there's of course the DND side of things, and we've been advancing the Mackenzie Valley Highway, Arctic Economic Security Corridor, and Taltson, and lobbying hard for many years now for those. But we're at the point where we feel like we need to be shifting from lobbying to preparing and mobilizing to actually ensure that these projects get done, get done in a timely fashion, and that the people of the Northwest Territories reap the benefits of construction and the ongoing operation of these projects. And so we are working to ensure that we have all of our ducks in a row. We're looking at ensuring that we have a workforce plan going forward. Of course, there's the shutdown in Norman Wells. There's the closure of Diavik. And so there will be a workforce looking for work. So we're working on figuring out what do we need, what sort of positions do we need for these projects, what communities need the training for those types of positions, what type of training do we already have. And I am looking forward to updating this House in the next sitting with a plan on how we're going to move forward and

ensure that those benefits stay in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Premier for that reply. What really struck me was lobbying is done now. Now we've got to prepare. So I extend an invitation to the Premier that I am available. Mahsi.

QUESTION 1186-20(1):  
FRANCOPHONE EMPLOYEES OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Finance on services and policies related to Francophone employees which I would like to ask in French. [Translation] Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Finance, for French-speaking employees. First of all, does the government make efforts to recruit in the civil service Francophones or people who speak French fluently?

[Translation Ends].

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, our people who work in recruiting in the civil service are doing specific things for Francophone employees. For example, we have job fairs which are hosted by the college of the north, and in our civil service recruiting system, we have three bilingual positions, and other positions where bilingualism is an asset. And these are for people -- these are in order to recruit people who are bilingual into the NWT civil service.

[Translation Ends]

**MS. MORGAN:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, does the government provide financial incentives, such as bonuses, to employees who speak French and English fluently?

[Translation Ends]

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we do offer bonuses to employees who speak not only French and English but also for those employees who are bilingual in an Indigenous language. In March of last year, we had 177 employees who received the French bilingualism bonus and 151 who received the same bonus for bilingualism in an indigenous language. Thank you, Speaker.

[Translation Ends].

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from the Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you very much for the reply. Which services offered by human resources are available to employees in French? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation Ends].

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a number of services are offered. We have translation services provided by the secretariat for Francophone affairs. This is part of the department of education. And, as I said, we have recruitment services specifically for Francophones. And, Mr. Speaker, we also have services for courses that we provide to our employees in order to assist them in improving their language skills.

[Translation Ends].

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

QUESTION 1187-20(1):  
EXPANDING WORKERS' SAFETY AND  
COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR FIRST  
RESPONDERS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to return to the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. He just mentioned that he has asked the WSCC to speed up legislative development to bring forward the coverage, increased coverage for first responders. So what does that mean? Speed up from what? We need some timelines here. Saying in the fullness of time or saying by the end of the term, that's not reliable. I am looking for clear commitments. We need them now, especially because we've just lost nine months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister responsible for WSCC.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess we can go back and forth on this forever, but, you know, I am just going to state that -- I am just going to state that I've asked the WSCC to work on this and speed it up, and I am hoping to hear back from the department on how quickly this can be done. And that's all I am going to say for now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister -- can the Minister commit to have

a legislative proposal in place by the May-June session for the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight to review? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the timelines that I shared with the Member over nine months ago, I think would have had this done already, but at the end of the day, you know, I've asked the WSCC to find a path forward to speed this up, and I can't commit to having it done by that timeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for WSCC. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this would have been done today if things had gone differently. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we need a commitment. If he can't do May-June, can he do the fall sitting? Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not committing to a timeline. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for WSCC. Oral questions. Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 1188-20(1):  
SERVICES TO FRANCOPHONE  
RESIDENTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So now I have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on services to northern Francophones, which I will ask in French again because that was so much fun. [Translation] Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on the subject of services for Francophone individuals in the Northwest Territories. Service standards have been updated with respect to services provided in French, and it's happened in August 2024. What government institutions provide services in French? Thank you.

[Translation Ends].

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Communication standards and government services apply to communications and services provided by the government's departments. It also includes the office of the Legislative Assembly, as well as all agencies, offices, commissions, or designated organizations as set out in the regulation on

government services as well as as set out in the Official Languages Act which contains criteria. This also involves central offices.

[Translation Ends].

**MS. MORGAN:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the response. Are these services actively provided, or does a request need to be made? How can residents know whether these services are currently available in French? Is it always clearly indicated?

[Translation Ends].

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** [Translation] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The services that are provided are subject to a (audio). There is a process that informs the public that they can communicate in English or French when they access government services in the NWT. The goal is to make sure that individuals feel free to express themselves in the language of their choice. But, Mr. Speaker, the person could also ask for services in French if there is any kind of uncertainty.

[Translation Ends]

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

**MS. MORGAN:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If a government employee is bilingual, can this employee be asked to respond to a request for French services, and can a request be made to translate documents into French? Thank you, Speaker.

[Translation Ends].

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The response that I'll give, which will be short -- I don't usually give short responses. But the answer is no. This government document to be provided to the public must be translated by the French service -- translation service. By going through this service, we ensure that the terminology used is accurate and consistent, and the draft versions are corrected before publication. Those who hold a position where bilingualism is mandatory and who receive the bilingualism bonus are encouraged to serve the public and correspond with the public in the language of their choice.

[Translation Ends].

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

#### QUESTION 1189-20(1): CEMETERY LEGISLATION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During our Bring Alma Home challenge there last year, which eventually was successful -- I am grateful for all those involved -- it rose a particular question that the Northwest Territories does not have a Cemeteries Act. And I've talked to the Member for Tu Nedhe that this is something we should work on, including some other people in the community. And just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, the primary function of a cemetery act, not an extensive list, of course, but is to protect the standards, operational responsibilities, financial accountability, and protection of burial grounds, etcetera. And I am sure there are many more nuances to it than that.

Mr. Speaker, my question is particular to the -- in particular, I will be directing to the Minister who's charged with being the House leader. So is there a reason why the government does not have a Cemeteries Act? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information at hand with me today, so I will take that as notice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, government leader. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

#### QUESTION 1190-20(1): AURORA COLLEGE MANDATE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the Minister of ECE on this last day, I am curious to know where things are at with Aurora College. It's always something I want to find out about during sessions. So I am curious to know where we're at with the implementation of the mandate agreement. Is that agreement being reported on anywhere publicly? How is the public to know where Aurora College is at in their progress? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, currently, Aurora College continues to work through its implementation plan, and I can say that in the last meeting that I was able to have with the deputy Minister of Education, Culture and

Employment, the president of Aurora College, and the chair of the Aurora College board of governors, that the implementation plan is on track and in progress right now. So, Mr. Speaker, in that most recent meeting, I also did pass along much of the same comments that we're getting from the Member right now, which is that a progress tracker that is updated or updates to that implementation plan that's found in the back of the mandate agreement would be helpful to the public and being able to really tell the success story of the good work that they've been doing over the last bit. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I am happy to provide a bit of public pressure behind that initiative that the Minister just suggested so I would just, yeah, put my support behind that and would like to see that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the college was -- or the Minister's office was advertising board appointments. How is that process going, and when can we expect to see a fully appointed and -- well, full appointments to the board? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is right. Just recently the deadline passed for the closure of the call for applications to the board of governors. And that process is underway, and those announcements will be made imminently. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate hearing that, and I am glad to hear that it is imminent.

Mr. Speaker, are there any other milestones that the college has coming up in the near future that the public should keep their eye out for? And, certainly, I will keep my eye out for it.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that the college continues to work on that is found in the implementation plan on page 6 of the mandate agreement. The most exciting piece of that, Mr. Speaker, is that in December, the CAQC from Alberta -- so that's the accreditation body -- did travel up to the campuses here in the Northwest Territories as part of their process, and they are currently working on that process with Aurora College. And my understanding is that it was quite a successful trip and that this spring Aurora College intends to come out with very detailed information about what that process has looked like to this point and what it means for the

remainder of 2026 for the college itself. So I very much look forward to being able to share that information once the college puts it out publicly. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 1191-20(1): WATERS ACT AMENDMENTS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as with most sittings, I'd like to ask the Minister of ECC about the ongoing efforts to make targeted amendments to the Waters Act and would like to do the same this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister give us an update as to where we are at in that process to make targeted amendments to the Waters Act.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we've worked through, we've committed to a three-phase process on the Waters Act itself. We're currently working through phase one. A tremendous amount of work has been completed in phase one, and we are very -- unfortunately, I cannot give a specific date, but we are very, very close to moving through the first part of our process in phase one and hope to have those available very shortly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to pester the Minister for a specific date, because he certainly just said he can't provide one, but I hope very soon -- I am going to interpret that a certain way. So I am excited to hear that.

Mr. Speaker, what will be the next steps for this process once it comes out of what he describes as phase one? And I am confused because I know there's a couple of different processes going on with the Waters Act, and one of the phases is a much wider set of amendments to the Waters Act. But I think he's talking about the specific phases within the process of making the targeted amendments. And I could be wrong there, but just curious what the next step is for the targeted amendments, to be clear. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so as the target amendments have gone through the working group process, there were a couple of items that were still unresolved that the working group was attempting to complete and as soon as

those are complete, that process will be complete as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you. I am glad to be drilling down to specifics, Mr. Speaker. So once that process is complete, what's the next step; what happens? What can the Assembly expect to see? Are the amendments going to come forward for the Assembly to approve? That's what I am looking to understand. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the specific process of the next step, I don't have that information currently with me today, but I will be happy to relay that to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1192-20(1):  
CAPACITY LEVELS OF GENERAL  
PRACTITIONERS IN YELLOWKNIFE

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 3rd, I had questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services, and she didn't answer the question, but she didn't also offer, at the very least, a chance to follow up in writing.

Mr. Speaker, specifically, I was asking about doctors, GP doctors, and the referrals, as well as a bunch of other things. But, ultimately, I am asking about capacity levels. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services speak to the capacity levels of the general practitioner doctors here in the Yellowknife area over the past 12 months? In other words, what's the vacancy and how many locums are we using. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I don't have that type of information in the House here. So I know that I responded in writing to a written question with the most recent updates. I'd have to go back to the department and find out what those current numbers are. As I mentioned in responding to this question the other day is that those rates fluctuate weekly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the fact that the

Minister may not have them on her fingertips but you would think that this is such a high priority we'd have the numbers in real time regularly at her fingertips. That said, can the Minister -- would the Minister be willing to provide me them directly? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services and the NTHSSA and the TCSA and the Hay River health and social services, there's probably 2,000 employees, and if I ask my department to give me the stats every single day, every single sitting, you know -- so what we do is I have monthly stats. And I did provide those monthly stats in written statements. What I can do is I can go back to the department, and I can send an email to the Member with what the current or what was in the written questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1193-20(1):  
PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF  
REGULATIONS UNDER THE MINERAL  
RESOURCES ACT

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ITI.

Mr. Speaker, I read in the news earlier today that Alternatives North has been raising concerns with review of the MRA regs and how that process is going, feeling that certain organizations are getting preferential treatment. I am just curious, can the Minister help us better understand how the engagement process has been rolling out for the MRA regs, why the department's meeting with certain organizations perhaps more than others, and just help us understand the process better and the concerns that were raised. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of ITI.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, we have a technical working group within the Intergovernmental Council that is working on the regulations for the Mineral Resources Act regulations. At this table, the GNWT is one party, and as you can imagine the Mineral Resources Act regulations are quite extensive. My understanding is they are currently over 250 pages. And we, in the Northwest Territories, have traditionally had diamond mines, Mr. Speaker, and so as we transition into the next chapter and next generation of mines in the Northwest Territories, it's really important to

understand how that changes the needs of the regulations and how they interact with industry. And so, Mr. Speaker, what has happened is that through the Chamber of Mines, there has been some conversations between a couple of members of the technical working group who have had the opportunity to ask questions of industry and industry to ask -- or to provide answers so that the intersection of policy and how it really interacts with industry on the ground can be better understood while still preserving the intent and rights of Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly think that there's merit in engaging specific stakeholders when developing regulations like this, particularly complex ones; however, I think what Alternatives North is pointing out is -- just questioning whether there's a level playing field for all stakeholders who are being engaged. So I'd like the Minister to comment on that. Will Alternatives North be given similar opportunities to engage with the technical working group to share their thoughts and concerns on the MRA rights?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the policy intentions documents were distributed at the end of last year, and so everybody had an equal playing field as far as being able to provide feedback within the policy intentions documents. The conversations, really, that have happened one on one are about well, what about this part, and what about that part, and how does that work for industry and, you know, what does this mean at the end of the day, how does this impact investments or attracting investments, or how -- you know, based on timing, how much interaction there's going to have to be between Indigenous governments and industry in order to kind of reset agreements and stuff like that. And so making sure, for example, that everyone -- that one another understands each other's mode of doing business has been really important to the process. This is no different, Mr. Speaker, than the conversations that I have, for example, with the daycare sector in regards to the daycare regulations. That's a one-on-one conversation. I am not talking with, you know, families in the same way I talk to daycares or, for example, education bodies in regards to the Education Act regulations as well. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, finally, I know Alternatives North sent several letters to the Minister's office on this

engagement process, raising several questions, raising concerns. Will the Minister be responding to either or both of those letters? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I respond to all the letters that come my way. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 1194-20(1):  
STATUS UPDATE ON MISSING AND  
MURDERED WOMEN AND GIRLS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, keeping in line with my Member's statement today and many Members' statements today on International Women's Day, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I guess a status update, on there is a proposed MMIWG advisory committee in the work that the GNWT is doing in responding to the calls to justice. I would like to know what's going on with that committee and if it has been formed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories, we created -- in partnership with NGOs and Indigenous governments, we created a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls advisory committee in direct response to the Calls for Justice to ensure Indigenous governments, women's organizations, and 2SLGBQ2IA+ organizations have an ongoing and formal role advising government on implementation. Members are appointed directly by Indigenous governments, ensuring legitimacy and community-driven leadership in shaping our collective response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I am glad the committee has been established. The updates -- the last public updates we saw, it wasn't clear. So I am curious, is the Minister able to share terms of reference for that said committee? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course I am able to share the roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee, including providing advice and guidance to the implementation of the action plan to support the work towards addressing the effects of

colonization, as well as racial and gender discrimination at all levels of government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, no, thank you to the Minister for that. And I am hoping if there are formal terms of reference that she could share those with the committee.

Mr. Speaker, also, is it possible for the Minister to share what the committee has accomplished thus far in terms of their review of the GNWT's response to the MMIWG Calls to Justice? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course I am able to share that with the Member. And I think it's really important that this advisory committee get up and running with its terms of reference. And finalizing the terms of reference was really important. The first step was really crucial and critical to this committee to get formalized. And they've had four meetings to date as an advisory committee, and I can share those results with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 1195-20(1):  
PROGRESS ON BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS  
IN THE SAHTU

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the opportunity for allowing me to ask a couple of additional questions here to get the message out. As you can understand there, Mr. Speaker, the departure of Imperial has drastically impacted our community well-being and economy.

My question is to the strategic infrastructure Minister. Can the Minister share some of the progress that is underway for the bridge replacements, specifically to the Oscar Creek Bridge relocation and the Smith Creek. Mahsi.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, happy to speak to these. Folks may have seen there is now a live RFP out, a procurement event out for Smith Creek. It's specifically for the design element of that bridge, not necessarily for construction. I would anticipate this may well find itself going through a different path in terms of the

procurement for construction. But the RFP is out to get this bridge designed, get that moving. It is long known to be the gateway to the MVH and needs to be replaced; we know that, Let's get that done. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, on Oscar Creek Bridge, happy to say as well that there's, again procurement processes already in progress, and looking forward hopefully to a decision on that fairly soon so that those two projects, which are just outside of the current EIA, are able to advance as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that update. Certainly, that's welcoming news there to the unemployed, or to be unemployed.

My last question there, Mr. Speaker, is on the Mackenzie Valley Highway progress and procurement. Can the Minister of strategic infrastructure share some of the timelines on that project. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the timelines continue to change, but they continue to change because we continue to find ways to shave some time off and to condense some of these timelines. We're feeling that pressure, not only from the residents throughout the Northwest Territories, but, really, some expectation on the part of what we're expected to be delivering from a national projects type of event. So we are with that, Mr. Speaker, aiming to be out in a procurement event next year. So that will require us now to be making some decisions about what kind of procurement this will be. We have that information now. We've just recently done an evaluation of what it might look like to procure a major project like this. We have that in hand. We can make those decisions. And as I say, this -- our target now is to have this in a procurement state ready for next calendar year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that fourth opportunity. I will take the advantage of saying it's three.

My question to the strategic infrastructure Minister is, is there scheduling for this anticipation coming that we can expect and share with our chamber members and business community in the Sahtu? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. The team was with the Member for the Sahtu in the region only a couple of weeks ago, but it has certainly been my experience that talking about this more and getting more information out is important. It's been talked about a long time, and so to be putting more concrete timelines on it is something new that people will, frankly, not be familiar with. So I am more than happy to make sure that -- to circulate this to all Members. We really do need all of the Indigenous governments on whose lands this is going to traverse, the community governments, hopefully to all be pulling in the same direction so that when the time comes, in my mind when we get referred in and find ourselves as a major project, that we can all stand up and say that we're ready. So I will circulate this to all Members, Mr. Speaker, put it out on social media so that there's clarity on all timelines that were coming. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1196-20(1):  
DENTAL REVIEW OFFICER

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday -- I believe it was yesterday; every day feels like a Monday around here some days.

Mr. Speaker, yeah, I believe yesterday I was asking questions about the dental review officer and the fact that I even stumbled across a point in one of the information that we have an annual contract in the range of \$25,000 with him. So there is a direct relationship with the GNWT. I'd submitted a bunch of questions on, I believe, February 11th, and I am still waiting for those answers. Can the Minister update the House, and particularly obviously me -- because we have a lot of people hinging on these answers in the background in the dental industry wanting some true transparency -- can the Minister tell me when she'll be responding to my questions? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the department staff get back to me, then I will be able to respond. I know that my office did let the Member know that they're going to -- we responded to the initial questions and then came back with a whole another list of questions, so those went back. And so as soon

as my office receives them, then we will send them on to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, there is some truism to the statement just made. What I will say is I sent the email on the 11th. She -- there was a follow-up on the 12th saying -- I am reasonable -- yeah, you need a little more time. Mr. Speaker, all of these questions are simple questions. This isn't my question but they're simply asking about their appointment start dates, their mandate letter, etcetera. Most of this is very easy information.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister -- this is the question: Can the Minister articulate before the House the reasoning of this delay; are they waiting for session to end or is there some type of blockage that we need to clarify? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance said yesterday, very, very wonderfully in her statement, about we only have so many people doing so many jobs and so we have a lot of things going on in the department right now, and a lot of that work was to do with budget negotiations and the ongoing work and as well as these -- all of the questions that come in from all of the Members, as soon as my office receives those answers, I will be forwarding them on. When my office receives answers from the department or from NTHSSA or from TCSA or from Hay River, they are vetted through my office as soon as we get them. I do not hang onto them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, these are very simple, uncomplicated questions. They're not tied up with hypotheticals or trickiness. They are honest and genuine questions.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister suggesting that the department is incapable of responding in a timely way to Members?

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, there are many things. They also ask for a three-year full cost breakdown. That would have to go back to our finance people that are working currently on a lot of other things for this sitting. And so as those things -- they are -- you know, we prioritize them as they come in. And so all of the pieces of the questions might not be to the same person. So as we get the answers to my office, I will respond to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1197-20(1):  
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement, my questions are directed to the Premier.

With several jurisdictions across North America reviewing or moving towards permanent standard time, should the Northwest Territories also examine whether maintaining daily savings time remains in the best interests of the residents of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. In 2022, the Government of the Northwest Territories put out a survey about ending time change. I think it's probably the most popular survey we've ever put out. There was about 3,000 responses in two days. 87 percent of the people who responded are in favour of ending seasonal time change. The reason that we haven't done it yet is because we are so closely tied to Alberta that we want to ensure that we can maintain the same time as them because we have lots of medical appointments, we do lots of business with Alberta, there's flights, all of those things. And we don't want to cause any problems. It's also a big issue -- it's also a lot of work to end time change. You have to contact Google and Microsoft and Apple, and you're on the phone talking to these companies trying to get it done. And we've learned from our friends in the Yukon that it is quite an ordeal to do it alone. And so I was very encouraged when British Columbia ended, and I was very encouraged when Premier Smith noted that they're doing some consultation to look at ending time change, and I let her know that as soon as Alberta ends time change we'll be right there with them, and we're ready to go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the research linking time changes to disruption in sleep, workplace safety, and overall well-being, why should residents continue to experience these impacts if the benefits are uncertain? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel certain there's no benefits to changing our clocks twice a year. It's a strange ritual that we've all gotten into, and I am anxious to get out of it. And, you know, it's a valid point, why are we still doing it. And it is because it's an ordeal to end time change. I believe the Yukon spent a significant amount of money and spent

a significant amount of time working through those efforts. And so there's that reason, and then the reason because we are so closely tied to Alberta. But if Alberta moves, we are ready to go. We have legislation in place where the Minister of Justice just needs to basically snap his fingers and changes will be made, and legally we will have ended time change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** thank you, Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Considering the extreme seasonal daylight variations in the Northwest Territories, what practical benefits does adjusting clocks actually provide for northern communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only practical benefit I can see is being in alignment with Alberta as a jurisdiction where we have lots of medical travel and we do lots of trade with. Other than that, I don't see any benefit. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1198-20(1):  
RESPONSE TO 10-YEAR REPORT ON  
HEALTH INFORMATION ACT

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was interested to note the release of the 10-year report on the Health Information Act, and I am a bit concerned about some of the recommendations that have come out of it and I am curious if the health Minister has an overarching response. We haven't really seen a response from the government yet to this report, so I am wondering if the Minister has any reflections to share at this time about the report. Thank you. Health Minister.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as that report has just publicly been released, I had a high-level look at it and, yes, into the recommendations. And what I can say at this point is that a lot of the recommendations, this government -- this was a new -- when it was introduced, it was the first time, and then there was a 10-year review. What we've learned over the years has been highlighted in this report. You know, as we tried to work as one government, there are many -- when we look at integrated case management, there becomes areas of that area

when we're trying to do statistics. You know, our legislation has been, let's say, you know, is there to protect the information of health but many users of the system now, as government and even residents, are finding that it sometimes is a little too strict so that it's not allowing for us to do certain things. So there are pieces in that and we'll continue to analyze that. And as this report goes -- as we delve into this report, then we can respond to those recommendations. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one recommendation in the report or issue raised is that of snooping, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken with constituents about this. It is an extremely violating experience for people when something like that happens.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister committed to investigating -- strengthening our Health Information Act to establish a snooping law, as noted in the Cabin Radio article on this subject today? Mr. Speaker, are we looking into addressing the serious issue of snooping more seriously in the Health Information Act? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since I've become the Minister, and somebody who's worked in the health system for many, many years, yes, when people access health care and the confidentiality of their health records is probably one of the most important documents that we need to ensure that we can show public trust, that this kind of a document within our hands is protected. That means protected to be utilized for the purposes that it's intended to. And when people in our system breach that trust, that creates -- and, you know, it creates a distrust in our whole system, and it could impact patient care. And so, yes, I do believe that there are pieces in our legislation that could, you know, fine and do those types of things to -- within the snooping. But what I can say at this point is that we will take that back as a government. We will make those decisions once we have those recommendations put forward. But I do agree that we need to make sure that people know that this is not okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We didn't quite get to a commitment there. But I will just say, Mr. Speaker, that I strongly encourage the Minister to establish and strengthen snooping -- I am at a loss for the words but punishments in the Act, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, several other issues were raised in the report. The fact that we do not currently have a patient portal and are unable to support one --

**MR. SPEAKER:** (Audio).

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister speak to the lack of a patient portal and the fact that our Health Information Act can't keep up with the territory's service integration push and how the Minister is going to address those issues. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reason why we do not have a patient portal -- and it speaks to this in the report -- is that our electronic health record is -- as we've said many times, as I've said many times in this House, that it's not -- it's old. It can't do any new things, new shiny things. And so we need a new shiny thing so that we can get a patient portal. And that is what we're working towards, and we're hoping to be able to have this RFP released soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Colleagues, being in recognition of the time, we're going to take a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** (audio).

### Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 37-20(1):  
MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBER OPTIC LINE

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with pleasure. I have 23 written questions today -- I'm kidding; I have three. It's nice to see people are paying attention.

So, Mr. Speaker, my first written question today is regarding the Mackenzie Valley Fiber Optic Line.

Mr. Speaker, there are concerns that the Mackenzie Valley Fiber Link (MVFL) is not building capacity and growing the economy as required. My questions are for the Minister responsible for Strategic Energy, Infrastructure and Supply Chains:

There are concerns that the Mackenzie Valley fiber link (MVFL) is not building capacity and growing the economy as required. My questions are for the Minister responsible for Strategic Energy, Infrastructure and Supply Chains:

1. How much is Northern Lights Consortium and Northwester being paid by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to manage the MVFL through "partnership" arrangements broken down by project phases and the lifespan of the assets, and, furthermore, please provide a copy of the management agreement between all parties and the GNWT.
2. To confirm the status of the MVFL and a non-revenue generating asset, how many business and personal customers are currently accessing the MVFL, along with a breakdown of the financial costs of that access?
3. The MVFL was installed with Inuvik as the anchor tenant and the communities along the route to be hooked up to the fiber line. When will the communities be connected to fiber optic line, providing the planned schedule of implementation by community, including all associated costs?
4. The MVFL is one of the most important economic assets in the Northwest Territories. What is the total amount of revenue leakage of the MVFL to other provinces and territories to date, and projected for the remaining term of the "partnership" arrangement; and finally,
5. What is the costed analysis of the economic impact of similar major digital infrastructure in other provinces and territories to their economies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's the first question.

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

WRITTEN QUESTION 35-20(1):  
COST OF LIVING

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second written question is with respect to cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, Northerners across the territory continue to face growing and persistent pressures from the high cost of fuel, food, housing, and other essential goods and services, challenges that are especially acute in remote and small communities where supply chains are limited and affordability options are few. My questions are for the Premier:

1. Can a list of programs and services be provided that support lowering the cost of living across departments?
2. What immediate, short-term affordability measures are the government prepared to implement now to help Northerners facing high fuel, food, and housing costs?
3. How is the Government measuring progress on its cost-of-living strategy across departments, and what specific performance indicators, targets, and timelines are being used to demonstrate measurable reductions in fuel, food, and housing costs for residents?
4. What mechanisms are in place to co-develop affordability measures with Indigenous governments, community governments, and local non-governmental organizations, and how will community input concretely shape program design, eligibility, and delivery in small and remote communities?
5. What steps is the Government taking to harmonize eligibility rules, application processes, and payment schedules across affordability programs such as energy rebates, housing supports, and income assistance, to reduce administrative burden on residents and prevent benefit overlaps?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WRITTEN QUESTION 36-20(1):  
SENIOR ENVOY

**MR. HAWKINS:** And, finally, Mr. Speaker, one of my most favourite subjects I would like to raise here, the senior envoy.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has appointed a senior envoy to the Government of Canada to strengthen intergovernmental relations and advance territorial priorities, they say. My questions are for the Premier:

1. Can the Premier provide a month-by-month breakdown of all individuals and organizations the Senior Envoy has met with in the calendar year 2025, identifying the names and positions of those met,

along with the dates, locations, and purposes of each meeting or engagement?

2. Can the Premier provide a detailed monthly breakdown of all expenses incurred by the Senior Envoy in the past year, including per diems, travel expenses, hospitality costs, and all other reimbursed or claimed expenditures?
3. Can the Premier identify, on a month-by-month basis for the past year, the results or outcomes that can be directly attributed to the Senior Envoy's advocacy on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, including any federal decisions, funding, commitments, or policy changes achieved during that period.

And final question, Mr. Speaker.

4. Can the Premier provide the Senior Envoy's annual work plan for the past year which includes a summary of the Senior Envoy's work initiatives, including the objectives, assigned tasks, timelines, and any progress or performance assessments completed during each month?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Written Questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Mr. Premier.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 494-20(1):  
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE  
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
ACTION PLAN REPORT MARCH 2026

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following documents: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples Action Plan committee report -- Action Plan Report March 2026. Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 495-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES SUMMARY OF  
COMMITMENTS TO ENHANCE THE 2026-  
2027 MAIN ESTIMATES

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Government of the Northwest Territories Summary of Commitments to Enhance the 2026-2027 Main Estimates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

TABLED DOCUMENT 496-20(1):  
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL  
NO. 46-20(1): PREVENTION OF  
PROCEEDINGS THAT HAMPER  
EXPRESSION ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC  
INTEREST ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 497-20(1):  
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL  
46-20(1): PREVENTION OF PROCEEDINGS  
THAT HAMPER EXPRESSION ON  
MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST ACT

**MR. NERYSOO:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the Plain Language Summary for Bill 46, Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expression on Matters of Public Interest Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the Statement of Consistency for Bill 46, Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expression on Matters of Public Interest Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** No, Mr. Speaker. I was raising --

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Yellowknife North.

TABLED DOCUMENT 498-20(1):  
UPDATED GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND  
PROCESS CONVENTIONS OF  
CONSENSUS GOVERNMENT

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the Updated Guiding Principles and Process Conventions of consensus Government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 499-20(1):  
SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' ABSENCES FOR  
THE PERIOD OCTOBER 15, 2025, TO  
FEBRUARY 3, 2026

I wish to table the Summary of Members' Absences for the Period of October 15th, 2025, through February 3rd, 2026.

Tabling of documents. Member from the Sahtu.

### **Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)**

**MR. McNEELY:** Mr. Speaker, can we go back to the recognition of visitors in the gallery, please.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from the Sahtu is asking unanimous consent for recognition of visitors in the gallery. Seeing no nays, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been honoured to be joined by a delegation today from the Tlego'hli Got'ine government. I am not quite sure all who's in the building but I will recognize the list I have here. I see President Sherry Hodgson; vice-president Heidi Hodgson; treasurer secretary Jackie MacDonald; director Laurel MacDonald; director Lisa MacDonald; chief negotiator, a former MP Ethel Blondin-Andrew; elder and community advisor Margaret MacDonald; legal counsel David Rolf; and, advisor Paul Tan. I am excited to welcome them to the Assembly for a celebration on their self-government agreement Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Premier for that announcement. I too would like to share my pleasure in recognizing the delegation from the Tlego'hli Got'ine government, starting with Sherry Hodgson, the President of the organization; Heidi Hodgson, the vice-president; Jackie MacDonald, Treasurer Secretary; Laurel MacDonald, director; Lisa MacDonald, director; Ethel Blondin-Andrew, chief negotiator; Margaret MacDonald, elder and community advisor; and legal counsel David Rolf; and, advisor Paul Tan. Welcome to the Assembly and welcome to the celebration on the self-government status.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize the Tlego'hli Got'ine government that are here, and also former MP Ethel Blondin. It's good to see her here. Welcome. And also I would like to recognize

Bertha Kavik, one of the translators here as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member in the -- Premier recognized this exciting moment, and we're looking forward. We'll try to get everything done by 2 o'clock so we can have your celebration so something that you well deserve. So welcome to our Assembly.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Oh sorry, A little bit too quick there. Trying to get done by two. Member from Yellowknife North.

### **Motions**

MOTION 78-20(1):  
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE  
HOUSE TO MAY 27, 2026,  
CARRIED

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suspect we'll all welcome this motion.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that notwithstanding Rule 2.1, when the House adjourns on Friday, March 6, 2026, it shall be adjourned until Wednesday, May 27, 2026;

AND FURTHER, that any time prior to May 27, 2026, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the executive council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier or later time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice;

AND THEREUPON, the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Motions. Oh sorry, Motion's in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Now I can go Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second Reading of bills. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

## Second Reading of Bills

BILL 46:  
PREVENTION OF PROCEEDINGS THAT  
HAMPER EXPRESSION ON MATTERS OF  
PUBLIC INTEREST ACT,  
CARRIED

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

I move, seconded by the honourable Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, that Bill 46, Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expression on Matters of Public Interest Act, be read for a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the second reading of Bill 46, Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expression on Matters of Public Interest Act. This is a bill to encourage people to express themselves on matters of public interest and to promote free and open debate on those matters. Another word for this type of legislation is anti-SLAPP legislation. A SLAPP is a strategic lawsuit against public participation. SLAPPs are lawsuits used to delay or silence individuals who speak out on matters of public interest.

The bill offers protection to people being sued in court for expressing themselves on matters of public interest. The purpose is to protect innocent people from being bullied or gagged by lawsuits just for speaking their mind. This type of legislation exists in many jurisdictions across Canada. This House adopted a motion to develop this type of legislation back in the 18th Assembly.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to move this important and long overdue bill through the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Committee, 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. Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Committee Report 39-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, No. 3. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Committee, will proceed with the first item. Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 39-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, No. 3. I will now go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges for any opening comments. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in November and December of 2025, the committee received correspondence from Speaker Thompson requesting a review of certain rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. Specifically, the committee was asked to consider time allowed for closing debate, length of time for oral questions, the role of the Speaker when a Member proposes an emergency debate, and if the rules should be changed to clarify process regarding reporting bills that have been referred to a standing committee for consideration. The committee continues to examine the process regarding reporting bills but has considered the remaining matters and has delivered its report to the House on March 4th, 2026. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. I will now go to the floor to general comments on Committee Report 39-20(1). Seeing no further comments. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that Rule 3.5(1) of the Consolidated Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly be amended to replace, quote, "subject to the following conditions", end quote, with quote, "if the Speaker is satisfied that the following

conditions have been met", end quote. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**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 39-20(1), Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, No. 3?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, committee. We will now conclude consideration of Committee Report 39-20(1) Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, No. 3.

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 that the Chair rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. The motion is in order. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and is 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 from the Dehcho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 39-20(1) and would like to report progress with one motion carried and that Committee Report 39-20(1) is concluded. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

**MR. SPEAKER:** (audio) seconder? Member from Nanukput. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion -- oh, reports of committee of the whole. Third reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

### Third Reading of Bills

BILL 34:  
TRESPASS TO PROPERTY ACT,  
CARRIED

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The Minister of Justice has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

### RECORDED VOTE

**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. 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.

Thank you. Colleagues, the result of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstention. Third Reading -- the motion is passed.

---Carried

Mr. Clerk, can you please determine whether the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Gerald Kisoun, is prepared to enter the Chambers and assent to the bills.

### Assent to Bills

**THE COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Gerald W. Kisoun):** Good to see everybody this afternoon. Please be seated. [No translation provided].

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, Premier Simpson, Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly, staff, and visitors in the public

gallery. Thank you all for your continued dedication to the people of the Northwest Territories through both your work in the Legislative Assembly and in everything you do each day to support residents across the territory.

When the sitting began, the days were only just starting to stretch a little longer. Now as session concludes, we're enjoying nearly 11 hours of daylight here in Yellowknife. And while the temperatures might tell a different story, spring is on the way. Soon, communities across the NWT will be gathering for spring carnivals and celebrations. I am looking forward to participating in the Muskrat Jamboree and other carnivals taking place in the Beaufort Delta in the coming months.

This is the time of year in the territory that naturally brings a renewed sense of energy and hope with the return of longer days. It's a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with friends and family, take part in community events, and spend meaningful time out on the land. As we look ahead, I simply hope everyone can enjoy everything spring has to offer. Enjoy the brighter days, the gatherings, and the small moments that remind us of the strength and warmth of our communities.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all the athletes that are on their way to Whitehorse for the Arctic Winter Games and thank all the volunteers that have helped the athletes and made these games happen. We are all cheering you on.

Now, as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following bills:

- Bill 33, Technical Safety Statutes Amendment Act;
- Bill 34, Trespass to Property Act;
- Bill 35, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026;
- Bill 42, Tlego'hli Got'ine Self-Government Agreement Act;
- Bill 43, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026;
- Bill 47, Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) 2026-2027.

Quyananni. Hiya. Mahsi cho. Before we conclude that,

- Bill 44, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures and

Borrowing Authorization), No. 3, 2025-2026.

Quyananni. Hiya. Mahsi cho. Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Please be seated. I would like to thank the Commissioner, the Honourable Gerald Kisoun, for being here today to assent to our legislation. It is always an honour to have him join us in this chamber. Thank you, Commissioner.

Colleagues, I will be brief because I know we all have things to do and people to see. But I want to take this opportunity to say a few words before we adjourn.

Colleagues, the 2026 Arctic Winter Games will be starting on Sunday, March 8th in Whitehorse, Yukon. I couldn't be more excited. I look forward to attending and showing my support for all our athletes, coaches, and volunteers. This is such a wonderful opportunity for our youth, our athletes. I want to let them all know we are rooting for them. Please join me in wishing Team NWT the best of luck at the games. Let's go, Team NWT.

I would also like to ask you to join me in thanking everybody that made it possible to do our job here. Our staff, contractors, do an incredible job keeping the Assembly running as smoothly as possible, and we couldn't do our job without them.

I want to say a special thanks to our interpreters. February was Indigenous Language Month, and it was wonderful to see our interpreters hear our Indigenous languages each day. Please join me in thanking our interpreters for their hard work and dedication to preserve and strengthen our languages.

Colleagues, I want to extend a special thank you to our pages. I am very proud of our page program which enables us to bring youth from across the territory to join us in this House. The youth are our future, and I believe our page program invests in that future by teaching our youth about our form of consensus government. I am confident that we will see some of them return in the future as staff or perhaps Members of the Legislative Assembly. Please join me in thanking our pages for being here with us and supporting us during this sitting.

Colleagues, while our sitting is ending, I want to remind you of a very exciting upcoming sitting that will take place in our chambers. From April 27th to May 1st, we will be hosting our 2026 Youth Parliament with their model sitting taking place on May 1st. We will host 19 grade 9 and 10 students from across the territory. They will

have the opportunity to learn about our style of consensus government and we will take our desks in this chamber to deliver statements and debate motions that matter to them, their peers, and their communities.

Colleagues, I plan on not just attending our Youth Parliament model session, but I will again serve as their Speaker. It is an honour for me to share the chamber with our youth and to have the opportunity to work with them and learn from them.

I would like to take a moment to encourage you to participate as well. If possible, take the time to meet with your youth representatives and please consider giving a few hours of your time to serve our youth parliamentarians. It is a great experience for both Members and youth. They are our future, and we are lucky to have this opportunity to work with them, learn from them, and get to know them.

Colleagues, as you know, the 2025-2026 Electoral Boundary Commission's Final Report has been tabled in this House and has been moved into the Committee of the Whole for future considerations. I know we are all busy with our roles but during the intercession, please, I strongly encourage each of you to take some time to read this important report in preparation for upcoming review in the Committee of the Whole. Not only will I encourage you to read the report carefully, but I also encourage you to take the opportunity to talk to your constituents and leadership. Listen to what they think. The decisions we make in this Assembly impacts all the people of the Northwest Territories, and our consideration of this report is no different. Our review of the electoral boundary report will have a great influence on this institution and all the residents for years to come.

Colleagues, this House is not scheduled to sit until May, but I know we all will be busy with the ongoing work of government and committees. Although we are busy, I want to remind each of you to take some time for yourself and, perhaps even more importantly, spend some time with the people who make it possible for us to be here doing the work we do. Our family and closest friends provide us with so much support, love, and guidance. Please let them know how much you appreciate them as well as the support and encouragement they provide. Let them know how much they are appreciated.

Finally, colleagues, before I adjourn, I want to extend my sincere appreciation -- I know he hates this part -- our acting clerk, as well as all our staff, who have done an amazing job to keep this session going. The past months have not been easy, but they have risen to the

occasion and provided us with tremendous support. Please join me in thanking them for all that they do to keep this place running as smoothly as possible. Thank you.

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 Wednesday, May 27th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question, 1071-20(1), Cost of Living
  - Oral Question 1189-20(1), Cemetery Legislation
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
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
  - Written Question 35-20(1), Cost of Living
  - Written Question 36-20(1), Senior Envoy
  - Written Question 37-20(1), Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link
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
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 3-20(1), Carbon Tax Repeal Act
  - Tabled Document 445-20(1), 2025 Review of Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Compensation and Benefits Report
  - Tabled Document 483-20(1), 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission Final Report
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 27th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

