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**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

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Pages XX - XX

**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Nahendeh)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PRAYER OR REFLECTION .....</b>	<b>3749</b>
<b>MINISTERS' STATEMENTS .....</b>	<b>3750</b>
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 201-20(1): SESSIONAL STATEMENT .....	3750
<b>MEMBERS' STATEMENTS .....</b>	<b>3752</b>
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 997-20(1): REGULATORY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS .....	3752
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 998-20(1): TERRITORIAL ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY .....	3753
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 999-20(1): LAYOFFS OF EDUCATORS IN INUVIK .....	3754
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1000-20(1): MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY PERMITTING .....	3754
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1001-20(1): MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS .....	3755
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1002-20(1): SOCIAL SERVICES SPENDING .....	3755
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1003-20(1): ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN MACKENZIE DELTA .....	3756
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1004-20(1): LEAD IN SCHOOLS .....	3756
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1005-20(1): MAJOR PROJECTS OFFICE .....	3757
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1006-20(1): FUEL PRICES .....	3757
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1007-20(1): NAHENDEH YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN RAPHAELLE JOSEPH .....	3758
<b>RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTION .....</b>	<b>3759</b>
RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1071-20(1): COST OF LIVING .....	3759
RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1189-20(1): CEMETERY LEGISLATION .....	3759
<b>RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY .....</b>	<b>3760</b>
<b>ORAL QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>3760</b>
QUESTION 1199-20(1): FUEL TAX HOLIDAYS FOR TERRITORIAL RESIDENTS .....	3760
QUESTION 1200-20(1): BURGUNDY FISCAL SITUATION .....	3761
QUESTION 1201-20(1): COUNSELLING OPTIONS AND SUPPORTS DISCUSSED WITH THE COUNCIL OF LEADERS .....	3762
QUESTION 1202-20(1): UPDATE ON THE MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY PERMITTING .....	3763
QUESTION 1203-20(1): UPDATE ON TEACHER LAY-OFFS IN INUVIK .....	3764
QUESTION 1204-20(1): ILLICIT DRUG TRADE AND USAGE IN PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS .....	3765
QUESTION 1205-20(1): UPDATE ON THE AURORA COLLEGE POLYTECHNIC TRANSITION .....	3766
QUESTION 1206-20(1): MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS IN THE DEHCHO REGIONS .....	3767
QUESTION 1207-20(1): IMPROVING ACCUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AUDIT .....	3768
QUESTION 1208-20(1): IMPACT OF LEAD IN LEVELS IN TERRITORIAL SCHOOLS .....	3769
QUESTION 1209-20(1): UPDATED LEGISLATION FOR FUEL TAX IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES .....	3770
QUESTION 1210-20(1): LOANS TO BUSINESSES IMPACTED BY MINING CLOSURES .....	3771
QUESTION 1211-20(1): FRANCOPHONE FUNDING SUPPORTS FOR INUVIK SCHOOLS .....	3772
QUESTION 1212-20(1): ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEPUTY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT .....	3773
<b>FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>3774</b>
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1115-20(1): HOUSING IN THE DEHCHO REGION .....	3774
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1166-20(1): HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES APPROACH TO WORKING WITH NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS .....	3774
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1015-20(1): BIOMASS ENERGY .....	3774
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1116-20(1): APPRENTICESHIP POSITIONS IN INFRASTRUCTURE .....	3776
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1109-20(1): MIDWIFERY SERVICES .....	3776
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1119-20(1): HEALTHCARE INFORMATICS .....	3776
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1158-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES DIRECT APPOINTMENTS .....	3777
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1003-20(1): INTERNATIONAL HIRING FOR HEALTHCARE .....	3777
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1168-20(1): DIRECT APPOINTMENTS REPORTING .....	3778
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1165-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES REMOTE WORK POLICIES .....	3778
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1093-20(1): HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN TLICHO COMMUNITIES .....	3779
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1012-20(1): ACCESS TO MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING SERVICES .....	3779
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1192-20(1): CAPACITY LEVELS OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN YELLOWKNIFE .....	3779
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 929-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACTIONS AGAINST MISINFORMATION AND DENIALISM REGARDING RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS .....	3780
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 969-20(1): FAMILY VIOLENCE SHELTERS .....	3781
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 972-20(1): EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE .....	3781

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1110-20(1): NURSE RETENTION.....	3781
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1138-20(1): STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM SECURITY .....	3782
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1150-20(1): REVIEW OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON LANDS AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.....	3783
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 971-20(1): APPROVAL STATUS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF DINAGA WEKEHODI PROTECTED AREA .....	3783
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1155-20(1): SUPPORTS FOR RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES .....	3783
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 924-20(1): STATUS OF LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY GUARDS AND OTHER SECURITY OCCUPATIONS .....	3786
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 935-20(1): FINE OPTION COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE COMMITTEES .....	3786
FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1020-20(1): ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE SPECIAL CONSTABLES.....	3786
<b>RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>3787</b>
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 32-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL COSTS, BUDGET PRESSURES, AND TRAVEL VOLUMES .....	3787
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 33-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL DELAYS AND COORDINATION .....	3788
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 34-20(1): MEDICAL ESCORT POLICIES ELIGIBILITY AND APPEALS .....	3789
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 35-20(1): COST OF LIVING .....	3790
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 36-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY .....	3792
RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 37-20(1): MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBER OPTIC LINE .....	3794
<b>REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES .....</b>	<b>3795</b>
COMMITTEE REPORT 41-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS: REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2024-25 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, No. 2: COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS.....	3795
<b>TABLING OF DOCUMENTS .....</b>	<b>3800</b>
TABLED DOCUMENT 500-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1071-20(1), COST OF LIVING.....	3800
TABLED DOCUMENT 501-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1150-20(1), REVIEW OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON LAND AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT 7-YEAR REVIEW .....	3800
TABLED DOCUMENT 502-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR ORAL QUESTION 1116-20(1), INFRASTRUCTURE APPRENTICESHIP POSITIONS .....	3800
TABLED DOCUMENT 503-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN QUESTION 32-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL COSTS BUDGET PRESSURES AND TRAVEL VOLUMES .....	3800
TABLED DOCUMENT 504-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN QUESTION 33-20(1), MEDICAL TRAVEL DELAYS AND COORDINATION .....	3800
TABLED DOCUMENT 505-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN QUESTION 34-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL ESCORT POLICIES ELIGIBILITY AND APPEALS .....	3800
TABLED DOCUMENT 506-20(1): ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR ORAL QUESTION 1012-20(1): ACCESS TO MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING SERVICES.....	3800
<b>MOTIONS.....</b>	<b>3800</b>
MOTION 77-20(1): ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE TERRITORIAL CRIME REDUCTION STRATEGY, CARRIED.....	3800
RECORDED VOTE .....	3810
<b>NOTICES OF MOTION FOR THE FIRST READING OF BILLS .....</b>	<b>3810</b>
BILL 48: AN ACT TO AMEND THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT, No. 2. ....	3810
<b>CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS .....</b>	<b>3810</b>
<b>REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE .....</b>	<b>3811</b>
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY .....</b>	<b>3811</b>

**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, May 27, 2026****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. It is great to be here.

I'd like to thank Jonas Lafferty for opening today's sitting with a blessing. Thank you.

Colleagues, please join me in welcoming all our interpreters back to the House. It is an honour to have them here using our language in this House, both when we speak and when we have our proceedings interpreted. It shows our respect for the languages and cultures of our people, and we could not do it without our interpreters. We are grateful for your hard work and dedication.

Colleagues, please remember to speak slowly and clearly so our interpreters can do their job. Now we can clap.

Colleagues, I'd also like to take a moment to briefly talk about our new Interpreter Career Pathway program. We launched this program since this House last sat, and I would like to share a few details with you today before we begin.

The Interpreter Career Pathway program, which we are running as a joint initiative with the Government of the Northwest Territories, will train fluent Indigenous language speakers to become interpreters specializing in legislative proceedings at the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. It has been developed to strengthen interpreter capacity, directly addressing the growing demand for new interpreters as some of our current interpreters approach retirement.

Program participants will receive paid training that combines on-the-job experience as well as in-person and online learning throughout the year. Trainees will shadow experienced interpreters in booth during at least two Legislative Assembly sessional proceedings

and participate in simulated interpretation sessions.

The program focuses on advancing language development specifically to our political content, including focused legislative terminology learning and skill development related to simultaneous interpretation in legislative settings.

Throughout the program, participants will develop the skills and confidence to deliver simultaneous interpretation services in a legislative setting. They will develop the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to support a career pathway interpreting our proceedings, ensuring residents have continued access to proceedings in Indigenous languages.

I am pleased to welcome our first round of Interpreter Career Pathway program participants to the chamber today. Please join me in welcoming -- and I apologize to the people if I say your name wrong --

- Cecile Bonnetrouge-Deneyoua
- Brenda Michel
- Agnes Mitchell
- Bessie Inuktalik
- Susanna Qitsualik
- Susan Pepper
- Jennie Vandermeer; and,
- John James Gon.

Colleagues, the Interpreter Career Pathway program isn't our only -- first of all, we should recognize them and say thank you very much.

Colleagues, the Interpreter Career Pathway program isn't our only exciting program. I would like to take a moment to celebrate our 22nd Youth Parliament, which took place from April 27th to the 30th. It was a great time. I was impressed by all of our participants.

Our Youth Parliament program brings together young people from across our territory to learn about consensus government and to speak

about the issues that are important to them, their peers, and their communities. Please join me in thanking this year's participants and congratulating them on a job well done.

A program like this requires a lot of work and planning, so I also would like to thank our staff who delivered this program for our youth.

Finally, I want to thank the Members of this Legislative Assembly who were able to participate. Thank you for making our Youth Parliament program a success. Many of you volunteered as pages for the model session and met with your youth representatives during the program.

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

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, the passage of Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2026-2027; Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2026-2027 during the May-June sitting of the first Session of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Yours Truly, Gerald W. Kisoun.

Ministers' Statements. Mr. Premier.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 201-20(1): SESSIONAL STATEMENT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, as we begin this sitting of the 20th Legislative Assembly, we are entering a period of opportunity unlike anything we have never seen before in the territory. The rest of Canada and countries around the world are looking North for defence, secure supply chains, critical minerals, Arctic research, strategic infrastructure, and reliable partnerships. Increasingly, they are looking to the Northwest Territories.

Our responsibility as a government is to ensure those opportunities create lasting benefits for Northerners. That means stronger communities, better infrastructure, good jobs, and new opportunities for the next generation to build their futures here.

The work ahead requires cooperation across the territory. No government can build the future alone. Success depends on close and continued collaboration with Indigenous governments, community leaders, businesses,

non-governmental organizations, federal partners, and residents.

That spirit of working together has long been one of the NWT's greatest strengths. Across the Northwest Territories, residents continue to show determination, resilience, and a deep commitment to one another. Communities are stepping up for each other. Indigenous governments, municipalities, businesses, and residents are working together to solve problems and create opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, this government has spoken often about the importance of major infrastructure projects to the future of our territory. Today, we are seeing real progress.

In March, the federal government referred the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Taltson Hydro Expansion, and the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor, to the major projects office. That decision marked an important milestone for the NWT, and reflected years of advocacy and partnership planning and building.

These three projects will connect communities, enable economic growth, and create long-term opportunities for Northerners. Improved transportation corridors, energy infrastructure, airports, and supply chains will strengthen the territory's economy while helping lower the cost of living and the cost of doing business in the North. These projects will also create opportunities for skilled tradespeople, Indigenous businesses, heavy equipment operators, environmental monitors, engineers, and young Northerners preparing to enter the workforce.

This progress did not happen overnight. Indigenous governments, community leaders, Members of this House, industry partners, and the federal government all played a role in bringing us to this point. Their efforts deserve recognition and thanks.

This government is now working closely with the major projects office and federal departments to improve coordination and communication, and to identify opportunities that will streamline regulatory processes while maintaining strong environmental oversight, and meaningful engagement. At the same time, we are positioning the Northwest Territories within Canada's growing focus on Arctic sovereignty and national defence.

The GNWT is working proactively with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure territorial priorities are reflected early in planning processes. Defence investments in the North must create lasting benefits for Northerners through jobs, support for local and Indigenous

businesses, and infrastructure that strengthens communities long after deployments or exercises conclude.

This work reinforces Canada's presence in the Arctic while helping to build a stronger and more connected North.

Mr. Speaker, the momentum is real, but success is not guaranteed. We have a lot of work before us, and we are doing everything we can to get ready and meet the moment. Major projects require continued collaboration, thoughtful planning, and long-term commitment. Strong partnerships with Indigenous governments, communities, regulators, industry, and the federal government will remain essential as this work moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, even more than large-scale projects, residents want to see progress in their home communities and daily lives.

The suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing is one of the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly, and housing remains one of the clearest examples of this government delivering visible, on-the-ground results.

Since the start of the 20th Legislative Assembly, Housing NWT has completed 96 new social housing units across the territory. Another 180 units are currently under construction, and 84 more are in planning and procurement. In total, 360 housing units are planned in 24 communities during the life of this Legislative Assembly.

Much of this work focuses on replacing housing units that have reached the end of their serviceable life, meaning they are too expensive to maintain, and may be uninhabitable. Targeted investments in repairs and maintenance are also helping protect existing housing stock and extending the life of homes.

Nearly all new Housing NWT capital projects are being delivered through modular construction. Many of these homes are prefabricated within the Northwest Territories before being assembled in communities. This approach improves efficiency, reduces construction risks, and supports the delivery of durable and energy-efficient homes designed for northern conditions.

The progress being made would not be possible without partnerships. These projects are being delivered alongside Indigenous governments, local housing organizations, community governments, contractors, and federal partners. Housing NWT continues to

expand agreements with Indigenous governments across the territory because local involvement is essential to long-term success.

These projects are making a real difference for residents. They are helping families access safe and stable housing while reducing pressure on aging infrastructure and are improving living conditions in small communities.

Mr. Speaker, keeping communities safe remains one of the core responsibilities of this government. As the territory enters wildfire and flood season, preparedness remains top of mind for many Northerners.

Over the past year, the GNWT has worked with communities and Indigenous governments to strengthen emergency readiness across the territory. Community wildfire protection plans have been updated. Critical infrastructure assessments have been completed. Thermal scanning has been used to identify winter holdover fires. Emergency planning and coordination efforts have continued to improve.

The GNWT has modernized its wildfire program through improved training, updated modeling tools, increased FireSmart investments, with \$1.8 million per year committed to the program until the end of the 2027-2028 fiscal year, and the creation of a new Wildland Urban Interface program that strengthens coordination between community fire departments, and wildland firefighters.

Emergency Preparedness Week, which took place earlier this month, also serves as an important reminder that preparedness is a shared responsibility. Governments have a critical role, but residents also play an important role by creating emergency plans, preparing emergency kits, and staying informed during emergencies.

I want to thank the firefighters, emergency management staff, Indigenous governments, municipalities, volunteers, and community leaders who continue to work tirelessly to protect Northerners.

This government is also continuing work to strengthen public safety legislation by prioritizing new laws, including the new Trespass to Property Act, and the proposed Civil Forfeiture Act and Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, to protect property and improve community safety.

Mr. Speaker, supporting the well-being of residents means helping people build healthy, stable, and hopeful lives. This government continues to invest in children, families,

workers, and communities across the Northwest Territories.

Earlier this year, the GNWT and the Government of Canada announced the creation of 355 new childcare spaces across the territory, exceeding our original commitment of 300 spaces. These new spaces will support working families, create jobs, and help ensure children have access to safe and licensed care closer to home.

This government is also strengthening inclusive schooling across the territory. In April, the GNWT announced an additional \$30 million in stable funding to support inclusive education in the 2026-2027 Budget. This investment will help stabilize services and ensure students receive the supports they need to succeed.

Economic uncertainty continues to affect some sectors and workers, particularly within the diamond mining industry. In response, Canada and the GNWT jointly launched the Workforce Tariff Response Initiative. This government will help residents affected by tariffs and global market changes access training, employment supports, and financial assistance as they retrain, upskill, and transition into new opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, partnerships remain essential to everything this government hopes to achieve. The Northwest Territories has always been strongest when people work together, and that spirit of collaboration is clearly visible across the territory today. It can be seen in housing partnerships with Indigenous governments, in wildfire preparedness and emergency management efforts, and in major infrastructure planning and economic development initiatives.

It can also be seen in the work underway to support community programming in former community learning centres. Engagement with communities and Indigenous governments has already led to five subsidized lease agreements that will help ensure these facilities continue serving local residents.

This government remains committed to meaningful engagement and shared decision-making because local involvement leads to stronger outcomes for communities.

The future of the Northwest Territories cannot be built by government alone. Residents also play a role through volunteering, championing local initiatives, mentoring, building businesses, and continuing to invest their energy and optimism in the North. To the thousands of residents who show up for the territory every single day, thank you for everything you do to help make the Northwest Territories what it is.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the future of the Northwest Territories, we are ultimately talking about the next generation. We are talking about young people growing up in communities across this territory who deserve access to quality education, safe housing, strong infrastructure, meaningful employment, and opportunities to succeed without having to leave the North behind.

This government is working to help build that future. We are investing in infrastructure that connects communities and supports economic growth. We are strengthening housing, education, childcare, and workforce development. We are ensuring the Northwest Territories plays an increasingly important role in Canada's Arctic future.

The work ahead will not always be easy, challenges will continue to arise, but the Northwest Territories has never been defined by the obstacles in front of us. This territory is defined by the people who continue to meet those challenges with determination, creativity, and a willingness to work together.

Today, there is real reason to feel hopeful about where the Northwest Territories is headed. Opportunities are growing. Partnerships are strong. Momentum is building. Together, we are building a brighter future for the Northwest Territories, and for the generations that will follow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' Statements. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 997-20(1): REGULATORY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the increased momentum and funding behind major projects such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the Arctic Economic Security Corridor, once again it's easy to paint the regulatory system as the bad guy, the thing standing in the way of our big plans and our future prosperity.

First, I want to point out that the regulatory system is often used as a convenient scapegoat when project delays are actually due to other factors such as uncertain financing. But I do think there is legitimate frustration with the regulatory system in how it often forces industry or proponents to spend money on the minutiae while seeming helpless to protect the big picture things that we really care about. We're missing the forest because we're too busy counting the trees. We're busy helping

individual caribou cross a road but somehow haven't managed to prevent the Bathurst Herd from plummeting from 186,000 animals to 3,600 animals in only 20 years of diamond mine operations.

When the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act was first designed and passed back in 1998, it was cutting edge in Canada because it established ways to manage cumulative impacts, that bigger picture, like allowing for strategic regional environmental assessments. But this promise, I would argue, has never been fulfilled.

I understand that for the first few years there was a need to gather more information, build up monitoring, but now it's been almost 30 years, and it's time to get serious about using that accumulated information and wisdom, both traditional knowledge and science-based, to manage projects differently. The whole point of these nation-building projects is to catalyze larger-scale mining and oil and gas development across entire regions. No one project would be the death of an entire caribou herd, for example, but if you keep adding more and more and more disturbances, at some point it's too much and a population could collapse. So it's our job to know where those tipping points are and to stop before the point of no return.

While some industry and infrastructure proponents will likely be upset at the idea of hard limits, the idea that some projects or routes might get a no, there are benefits. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

So the benefit in the approach that I am proposing is in proponents knowing the rules well ahead of project planning and the potential to take away some of the regulatory burden that forces proponents to monitor the millions of minutiae towards actions that would protect the most important big-picture values like caribou herd survival. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 998-20(1):  
TERRITORIAL ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

**MR. TESTART:** Merci, Monsieur le Presidente. [Translation] Merci, Mr. President. It is a pleasure to be back for our latest legislative. We will continue to work for the economy and the safety of the public. We'll continue to work on

all the issues, but there's still no action from the leaders of the territory. There are now investments of several billions of dollars from the federal government, and they will come in the next year; therefore, we have to prepare. We have to prepare this generational change. We are not ready, Mr. Speaker, but I will talk about it later. For now, we have to examine immediate economic concerns. [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, last year my colleagues issued a red alert on mining in the NWT, warning that 30 percent of our economy and the jobs, revenues, and royalties that support our communities, were at risk. We knew closures were only a matter of time, and now that time has come.

Earlier this month, despite a \$175 million federal loan and \$60 million in emergency financing, Arctic Canadian Diamond Company, and its parent Burgundy Diamond Mines, entered creditor protection, a last resort after exhausting their cash reserves. The move follows a collapse in the diamond market driven by lab-grown diamonds, weak consumer demand in Asia, and US tariffs on India, which left Ekati with a \$120 million net loss and pushed the already heavily indebted companies carrying roughly \$655 million in liabilities into crisis. Creditor protection halted collections, leaving suppliers, contractors, and Indigenous development corporations exposed to \$63 million in unsecured debt and the territorial government, our own government, owed just about \$10 million in taxes and fees.

Northern workers and businesses are struggling to understand how, even after the Government of Canada committed to a staggering \$235 million bailout to support Ekati, the jobs have disappeared and nobody can be paid what they are owed. A bailout can be justified, Mr. Speaker, if it sustains the northern economy, but I draw the line when taxpayer support leaves Northerners and their businesses holding the bag while workers are left behind.

In moments like this, we need leadership. The federal government has stepped in to support our mines. Now the territory has to step in and support our people.

Mr. Speaker, this government's absence of leadership on this file has strapped Northerners onto a resource rollercoaster and we are plunging with no end in sight. My constituents have a clear message for this Premier, Mr. Speaker: Get us off this dangerous ride so we can stand on solid ground again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 999-20(1):  
LAYOFFS OF EDUCATORS IN INUVIK

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address a grave concern affecting our community of Inuvik. I am speaking, Mr. Speaker, of the recent cuts to the French immersion program and the layoff of 13 teachers. In a community of just 3,300 people, losing 13 educators is not just a statistic; it represents a substantial loss, support of our students, families, and the broader community.

Mr. Speaker, the invaluable contributions of our teachers extend beyond academics. They are coaches, mentors, and active members of our community, serving on various non-profit boards and helping to shape the very fabric of Inuvik. Their presence is integral, not just in the classrooms, but in the lives of our children and families.

I have received an outpouring of concern from parents whose children have benefited tremendously from the support of these educators. I have heard firsthand the anxieties expressed by students, worried about what their future of schooling will look like without the essential guidance they have come to rely on, whether transitioning from a French immersion setting to a different learning environment or having to succeed without teachers' assistance, both pose significant challenges and uncertainties for these students.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot turn a blind eye to the implications of these cuts. We must hold ourselves accountable and ask the tough questions. How do we ensure that every child in our community has access to quality education that respects their linguistic and cultural heritage?

Our government has received, Mr. Speaker, over \$40 million in funding from the federal government aimed at ensuring we provide Francophone options. This funding underscores our commitment to education, yet we find ourselves at a crossroads where our French immersion program is being dismantled.

The decisions on how our curriculum is developed rest, Mr. Speaker, with the district education authorities, yet we must ask ourselves how did we arrive at this point?. The French immersion program has a long-standing history in Inuvik, existing long before Jordan's Principle funding came into play. To assert that Jordan's Principle funding cuts are solely

responsible for these layoffs is an oversimplification that disregards the complexities at hand.

Mr. Speaker, the parents of my community, the teaching staff of my community and, most importantly, the students of my community are looking for answers. Answers and solutions, Mr. Speaker, answers that to date I have not been given.

As a military community, and Inuvik has been a military community for many years, and we expect, again, it to grow with the investment coming from DND, we know that one quarter of Canada's military is Francophone. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To say that the closure of the French immersion is a step in the wrong direction is certainly an understatement, Mr. Speaker. It's time to prioritize our students, invest in our teachers, and uphold the values of inclusivity and diversity in education that our community stands for. We must do better for the future of our children and for the future of Inuvik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1000-20(1):  
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY  
PERMITTING

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address what can only be described as a historic NWT milestone. The Prime Minister of Canada, on March the 12th, came to Yellowknife and announced NWT priority projects, a referral to the major projects office in Calgary. More specifically to the Sahtu, Mr. Speaker, is the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Mr. Speaker, additional news of this milestone was we will start building the highway this summer; a moment of construction we were waiting for decades for, Mr. Speaker. However, failure of leadership on renewal or extension of the only allowable permit is a setback.

Last November, Mr. Speaker, the land-use permit to construct the remaining half of the 13-kilometer Prohibition Creek access road expired. Mr. Speaker, the economic imperative on project transition is critical to efficient project management. Permitting is definitely mandatory, essential. This allows project

execution, one element in building a disposable economy.

The Prime Minister's announcement was 77 days ago. We need to put more words into action. Mr. Speaker, this project is estimated at \$6 billion. The right-of-way Wrigley to Inuvik, 800 kilometers, of which, Mr. Speaker, 70 percent is within the Sahtu region. You can do your math on the expense.

70 percent, Mr. Speaker, the Sahtu is not a footnote in this project. We are the backbone of it. Without Sahtu, stakeholders' readiness, land access, maximum security benefits create uncertainty and prevails. But readiness, real readiness, both modern treaty holders require more than slogans and press releases. It requires the Government of the Northwest Territories to recognize and respect both comprehensive land claim agreements, section 35 duty to consult -- Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you. Thank you, colleagues. Both comprehensive land claim agreements, section 35 duty to consult, SSI, GTC, PKFN are waiting.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Sahtu have been let down and expired permit and empty talk about readiness do not inspire confidence; they only stir frustration and distrust. I will have questions to the appropriate Minister. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1001-20(1):  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back to everybody.

Mr. Speaker, the Deh Cho region is facing a growing mental health crisis. In our communities, many people are living with the impacts of addictions and violence, often rooted in deep trauma. Without proper mental health support, that harm can spread through families and place heavy strain on the home. In some cases, it leads to family break down or child apprehension, criminal activity. As those pressures build, the effects are felt across the wider community creating safety concerns and contributing to increased crime. Over time, these harms can become a cycle, and the longer it goes unaddressed the harder the cycle is to break.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about blaming our people; it is about recognizing that those who

are struggling need consistent support and those who are vulnerable need protection. Families deserve peaceful homes, elders deserve to live without fear, and our youth need hope for the future. This government has made safer communities a priority but safety cannot depend on enforcement alone. The RCMP, teachers, nurses, and frontline workers are often left responding after the damage has already been done. That is not prevention. That is a reaction. Real prevention means early intervention and effective programs grounded in culture and connection.

Mr. Speaker, our people have the knowledge and strength to guide this work, but local leadership needs the resources and flexibility to build solutions that reflect Deh Cho community realities. The GNWT must move beyond one size fits all approaches and work directly with Deh Cho leadership to develop local mental health and healing strategies. When communities are trusted and supported to lead, healing can begin. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1002-20(1):  
SOCIAL SERVICES SPENDING

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back.

Mr. Speaker, one of my favourite sayings, one that I try to live my best -- my life by is be kind because everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. The unseen struggles that we all deal with weigh heavy on each of us. And by us, I mean every person you meet. With that in mind, one of the things I am most grateful in my life -- for in my life is that I have been able to access therapeutic supports for my mental health in modalities that work for me. At my lowest, I have had people hold me up and connect me with professionals that could help me add adaptive tools that I needed to get through the battle a bit better.

Mr. Speaker, I know my battles are small in scale compared to those that some residents in this territory face every day. I am privileged to always have had a roof over my head, a warm place to sleep at night. When I talk to street-involved people, they are, by and large, trying their hardest to be kind in our community because their battles are extreme.

Mr. Speaker, if we truly want our territory to succeed and if the rising tide of federal investment is going to raise all ships, we must

ensure that we are also raising Northerners with the least and those who are fighting the hardest battles.

Incoming DND and infrastructure federal investment must be balanced with social services spending. I am thankful that the Premier spoke to this directly at my constituency meeting last week and his statement today. He heard from my constituents that federal dollars are top of mind. Jordan's Principle funding and job training initiatives to meet these investments were two hot topics.

The Premier noted at the constituency meeting that the federal government does not fully realize the scope of social need in our territory. I am also grateful that the last week's Council of Leaders communique aligns with what my constituents see here and happening in Yellowknife too.

Mr. Speaker, I have previously spoken to the actions within the government's business plans on our priority of addressing the effects of trauma. Those actions are framed in Cabinet's mandate that they will, quote, "prevent, interrupt, and address the effects of trauma", end quote. Those actions were created well before federal announcements earlier this year. These actions are not meaningless but do seem very small in the face of our lived reality and with the opportunities we have before us now.

Mr. Speaker, we can't have a prosperous territory for residents without having a healthier, healing territory first and foremost. It's only appropriate, then, that the head of government should advocate tirelessly for the NWT's extreme need for its social priorities. I will have questions for the Premier later today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1003-20(1):  
ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN MACKENZIE DELTA

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents in my constituency are witnessing trouble and steady rise in illegal activity within their communities. Increasingly, these activities are occurring openly in broad daylight in full view of community members. The consequences are serious and far-reaching, negatively affecting the well-being of residents, undermining public safety and placing our children at significant risk.

Mr. Speaker, the issue I am referring to is the illegal sale and distribution of drugs and alcohol operating out of our public housing units in our communities. Residents are observing public housing units being used as hubs for the unlawful sale of drugs and alcohol on a near-constant basis, often without visible consequences. This activity has grown over time and now threatens the safety, stability, and social fabric of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, while local authorities and housing associations are making efforts to address and limit these activities, it is increasingly clear that existing measures are not sufficient. These illegal operations can no longer be tolerated. In many ways, we have allowed this behaviour to become normalized and embedded in everyday community life.

Mr. Speaker, it is understood that mechanisms currently exist to respond to these situations; however, these mechanisms are limited, complex, and too often fail to deliver timely and effective outcomes. The current housing policy and legal processes required to address illegal activities within housing units can be lengthy, layered, and burdensome. In many cases, these delays provide opportunities for drug dealers and bootleggers to alter their behaviour, relocate to another housing unit, or simply wait until enforcement attention subsides. This reality is deeply concerning. Community members are left feeling frustrated and vulnerable while dangerous activities continue unchecked.

Mr. Speaker, the residents have the right to safe homes, healthy communities, where families and children can live, grow, and prosper without the threat and harm caused by the sale of illegal drugs and bootlegged alcohol. I will have questions for the appropriate Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from McKenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1004-20(1):  
LEAD IN SCHOOLS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] Masi, Mr. Speaker. This item I am going to talk about, there are lead in the water system and the elementary children that are -- [Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, the discovery of elevated lead levels in school drinking water has left many with unanswered questions. The government's response has focused on flushing protocols

and remediation. These measures address future risks, but they do not address the past. Former students and staff deserve to know what years of exposure could mean for their long-term health.

The drinking water results from Chief Jimmy Bruneau School and Chief Jimmy Bruneau residents show lead levels far above Health Canada guidelines. Multiple fixtures tested at nearly 20 times the guideline. One fixture in the residence building tested at approximately 22 times the guideline after setting overnight and remained at 12 times the guideline during regular daytime use.

Mr. Speaker, until 2006 that building housed students from across the Tlicho region. Some were young mothers living with their children. House parents and residence managers lived there as well for many years. This was not short-term exposure but months and sometimes years of relying on that water every day. By 2006, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School was already 35 years old. Today, schools far younger are recording lead exceedances. The possibility that lead was present while this residence building housed students and families cannot be ignored.

Mr. Speaker, this issue does not only concern current and future students. It also concerns former students and staff who lived there and trusted that the water they used every day was safe. What is needed now is transparency, not only about the safety of water today but about the risk that may have existed for years. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1005-20(1):  
MAJOR PROJECTS OFFICE

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Somehow it feels like it's been a long time since we were last in the House, even though our last sitting was less than two months ago, and I think it may be due to just how much has changed in the short time between March and now. As we all know, the federal government recently announced a huge suite of investments in our territory which completely shifted the narrative from what are we going to do about the circumstances facing our territory to how are we going to do it. For me, the most important question is what I've already been asking and advocating for since becoming an MLA: How can we maximize benefits of investments and development in the territory for our residents.

Mr. Speaker, the territory has been in this position before. 30 years ago, a huge wave of development swept over the territory with the diamond boom. It brought a lot of benefits with it but, as I have repeatedly noted, a lot of the potential benefits flew right over our heads. As we have recently seen also, the difficulty with having such an undiversified economy is that if one commodity is hit with challenges, we can quickly end up in serious trouble. I am fearful that all this time later, these circumstances will repeat themselves if we do not take action to learn from the past and make changes.

We need to ensure contracts for large projects are issued in such a way as to ensure northern businesses can directly benefit from opportunities and can plan and grow as necessary to rise to the challenge. We need to strengthen the Heritage Fund Act to ensure future resource revenues are better captured and invested. We need workforce development plans and goals in place to maximize local employment for large projects. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I remain concerned about the pace of transition of Aurora College to a polytechnic university. The polytechnic continues to stand out as the natural anchor for workforce development planning. We need to work closely with and fund Aurora College appropriately to finish the transition and get out into the communities and start preparing people for what's coming. Let's change the narrative this time and ensure we are preparing our territory to maximize benefits from outside investment and ensure that development is something we are fundamentally a part of, not just something that happens to us.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, we need to continue our efforts to diversify our economy and lift ourselves out of the boom and bust cycle. That's how we develop this territory right and ensure that we learn from the mistakes of the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1006-20(1):  
FUEL PRICES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin with a simple question to the House: Raise your hands if anyone likes the idea of higher fuel prices. I didn't think so. I didn't think I'd see a one, Mr. Speaker. Yet today that's exactly what our people are faced with. They're forced to live with these prices as they skyrocket upwards. It's a burden felt at every single kitchen table, every small business, and let me tell you when they're facing the pumps, it doesn't matter if you live in Yellowknife, the

Sahtu, or even in the Mackenzie Delta, everyone is feeling the pinch of the pump price, Mr. Speaker.

Now, just under a month ago, the federal government took action. What did they do? Well, there was a nationwide announcement that they'd have a fuel tax holiday of 10 cents per litre off gasoline and 4 cents off diesel. For families, now, Mr. Speaker, trying to stretch that dollar, that is real relief, Mr. Speaker, and it's been welcomed relief seeing what's going on. So across Canada we're seeing other leaders take action, whether it's the Premier of Manitoba or Ontario. It doesn't matter about your politics; they care about their people and they're showing it.

Mr. Speaker, it's time we look and step up. That's what the people are asking for. There's an uncomfortable truth, unfortunately, because this government isn't doing anything.

So let's start with first. What are they doing? Nothing.

Second of all, with respect to this, the hands have been tied.

So while our residents look for leadership of this government and not see it, I am saying we need to look within ourselves to find how do we unlock legislation that has been in place since 1997 that has frozen our tax rates on gasoline.

Mr. Speaker, I think about that. Nearly 30 years ago, almost a generation ago, wrote a law that stuck our gas prices into an Act, and we just can't change it if the times like this, where we're facing a modern crisis of affordability, and yet we can't do anything. Mr. Speaker, those rates are trapped in rigid legislation. We need to reflect and ask ourselves how do we get them into nimble regulations.

As families are facing these challenges, whether you're a truck driver going down the Mackenzie Valley Highway someday or maybe you're just a family trying to get by buying groceries here in Yellowknife, we're all facing these challenges of crisis.

The seed of opportunity here, Mr. Speaker, is this government could do something. It could pivot very quick. It could move and move that locked-in gas fuel tax rate into regulations, and we could be helping people. Mr. Speaker, as my time dwindles away, I will have questions for the Minister during oral question period. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1007-20(1):  
NAHENDEH YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN  
RAPHAELLE JOSEPH

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, it's been my practice in the past, I will present the Member statement on behalf of the Nahendeh Youth Parliamentarian, Ms. Raphaelle Joseph. She spoke about the inadequacies she experienced firsthand as an immigrant wanting to work in Canada. To give you some background, she's an immigrant from Australia and the United Kingdom. Her family and her moved from England to Canada so her mom could take up a teaching position in Fort Simpson. Since then, she has been building their lives here in the Northwest Territories adjusting to the completely new community, climate, and way of life.

I am currently in Canada on a student visa and have been living here for almost two years. In that time, I've gone to school here, made new friends, and tried to become part of my community, while also still being aware that my status is temporary. Right now, my family and I are working towards becoming permanent residents so that we continue to contribute to Canada long term and full settled here.

As I stated, I have a student visa. This only allows me to go to school and let me travel within Canada as well as visit my extended family in Australia and the United Kingdom. I feel grateful to have been given the opportunity, a chance to live here in Canada, but also very happy to be able to live here in the Northwest Territories. I've made great friends and experienced some new things in the NWT like snowboarding, speed skating, taking part in Super Soccer Cager, and many more experiences.

I have experienced struggles, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to getting a job in Canada, specifically in my community of Fort Simpson. In regional areas such as Fort Simpson, there are opportunities to work at the local store. I am willing and able to work, and I cannot due to the restriction placed on my visa. This made me feel limited compared to my classmates who can apply for a job, gain experience, and earn their own money. I want to be independent, start building their skills early, but the rules don't give me that opportunity. Financially, it can be difficult. Even though I live with my parents, there are personal expenses like clothes and activities that I wish to help pay for. Not being able to work means I have to rely entirely on my family.

The restrictions doesn't just affect my ability to earn money. It affects my independence and my sense of belonging. I want to change, to

contribute, learn, and grow like any other student. But right now, the opportunity feels out of reach.

One big improvement would be clearer and more flexible work rules for young students. Allowing part-time work, like a set number of hours per week during the school year, would make a huge difference. It would let students gain experience, earn their own money, and feel more independent, just like their Canadian classmates.

Another thing that would help is better communication on the rules. A lot of students and even employees don't fully understand what study permits holders are allowed to do. If the government provides simpler, student-friendly explanations, employees might be more willing to hire them instead of avoiding the situation altogether.

Fairness matters. High school students on student visas often live with their family, following the same rules, and go to the same schools as Canadian students. Giving them similar opportunities to work part-time would help them feel included and give them the real-world skills that benefit them and the community long-term.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Mr. Premier.

### Returns to Oral Question

#### RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1071-20(1): COST OF LIVING

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question 1071-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 24, 2026, regarding the Cost of Living.

The Government of the Northwest Territories takes a comprehensive approach to address cost-of-living challenges while maintaining fiscal stability. Our approach combines immediate financial relief measures with strategic infrastructure investments and intergovernmental advocacy which allows us to address both acute cost pressures and underlying structural factors, while recognizing the diverse needs of different regions and communities across the territory. Measures include changes to income security programs, emergency evacuation funding and measures to lower energy costs for residents. Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a document titled Additional Information for Return to Oral Question 1071-20(1): Cost of Living, that gives a comprehensive list and details of the extensive actions that the government has taken to support residents with the cost of living.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Return to oral questions. Minister of Justice.

#### RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1189-20(1): CEMETERY LEGISLATION

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question 1189-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 6, 2026, regarding the cemetery legislation.

The GNWT works with Indigenous communities and the federal government to identify and document residential school burial locations and there are special provisions for the protection of burial sites in the Archaeological Sites Regulations administered by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

The Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, and Tlicho Agreement all address the protection of burial sites as well as other specific responsibilities on those lands.

Municipal governments in the NWT may exercise their general bylaw making powers to establish and operate cemeteries within their municipal boundaries under the Cities, Towns and Villages Act, the Hamlets Act, the Charter Communities Act or the Tlicho Community Government Act. These Acts are administered by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Cemetery legislation varies across jurisdictions in Canada but generally supports community involvement in the care and maintenance of cemeteries and provides consumer protections related to accessing cemetery services for individuals and their loved ones. In the NWT, consumer protection matters currently fall within the scope of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs under the Consumer Protection Act.

The GNWT is not contemplating the development of cemetery legislation at this late stage in the mandate of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Indigenous communities and others with questions relating to the operation of cemeteries may raise these matters with their local municipality. Matters relating to the protection of on the land burial sites should be brought to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Such discussions may assist in identifying issues that could be considered in future legislative initiatives, if warranted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Return to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, I'd like to recognize four young ladies from Radium Hot Springs, BC: Jane Power, Cynthia Ibeck, Katherine Locke, and Clara Reinhart. Welcome to our chambers.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Dana Hemming. Dana is a former resident of Inuvik and a long-time family friend. Her and her husband Dan lived in Inuvik for several years and welcomed their three children there. Dana is currently a parole officer for Corrections Canada based in Edmonton and is in Yellowknife lending a hand to the office here. So welcome, Dana. Nice to see her at the legislature.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** First off, I want to recognize, Mr. Speaker, Kayina Garcon. She is my summer student this year. She's actually a returning person helping me at my constituency office. She's in the gallery today, and it's a great pleasure to have her back this year again. She's been doing fantastic working with me. And furthermore, I always like to recognize one of our interpreters Ms. Sarah Cleary. She's so kind and wonderful, and she provides services to us at the Assembly and I am always grateful when I see her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize today here Ms. Jenny Vandermeer-McPherson. Welcome to the Assembly. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to recognize one of the Interpreter Career Path trainees, my sister Cecile Deneyoua-Bonnetrouge. She's in the -- Cecile Bonnetrouge-Deneyoua, she's in the gallery, as well as Mary-Jane Cazon, our interpreter for the Deh Cho. Thank you.

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

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Susan Pepper. Susan is a longtime colleague of mine, and it's nice to see that she's participating in the internship program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome, Susan.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Mr. John Gon who I think is in the interpreter's program as well and is a resident of Frame Lake. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] John Gon is also -- he's also doing interpreter training. And also I would like to say thank you Jonas Lafferty and also Mary Lou Sunberg who are also doing -- they're here as an interpreter. Masi [Translation Ends].

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

If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. We greatly appreciate you giving us the honour of representing you and the people of Northwest Territories. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

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

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 1199-20(1): FUEL TAX HOLIDAYS FOR TERRITORIAL RESIDENTS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today was really talking about the fact that Ottawa isn't going to save us. We have to save -- from ourselves, and we need to help Northerners with the cost of fuel and cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, noting that the cost of fuel tax rate has been locked into legislation since 1997, is the Minister aware of this and is there anything she can do about the challenge that other folks are rising to which is giving fuel tax holidays to their residents? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been

watching this closely. Obviously saw that Canada did institute a fuel tax holiday. Very few, if any, of the other provinces or territories are actioning that. And, Mr. Speaker, the reason is, at least from our end, when we did some quick math in terms of what an average gas tank impact would be, under \$10, which certainly does add up. Nonetheless, the impacts on the other side to the revenue that the government would receive is in the order of \$15 million. We already pay significant impacts as a result of fuel and will continue to pay those impacts, and as a result of which we're also paying higher subsidies. So for instance on territorial power support programs, for example, or seniors home heating for their fuel costs. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, with that, trying to figure out that balance, we want to ensure that we have the fiscal capacity to maintain programs and services for residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the Minister got their \$10. I am not going to say that math is bad. That's the Department of Finance; their math hopefully is good. But I can tell you that my gas on my small vehicle went up almost 40 bucks, so I am not sure where they got -- since the price jump.

Mr. Speaker, is there anything the Minister can do to move this out of legislation into regulation so we can pivot if that becomes the policy discussion of the day to help meet this challenge? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are not right now considering moving or changing where the gas tax resides. And what I was speaking to earlier is just the change from if we were to set to remove all of our gas taxes. So as I say, that change is not being contemplated at this time. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, frustrated constituents corner me at the gas station and say this government can give millions of dollars away to diamond companies that are closing, why can't they help me with the direct support.

Mr. Speaker, what can the Minister of Finance do to help people who are watching millions of dollars leave the territory when they feel they need something to help them get by? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a few different issues that seem to be coming out

there but, Mr. Speaker, I will confine this to speaking about what could be done with respect to gas taxes or gas rates.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have any control over the Strait of Hormuz. I have no control over the war in Iran, and I am unable to reduce gas prices at this present time. We do control gas taxes but, again, that impact is actually fairly small in comparison to the real impacts that we are all facing and that the government is facing from an increase in rising prices of gas. We are working to ensure that there is an increase in good jobs, more good jobs coming, more opportunities coming, so that people can continue to have good paying jobs here in the Northwest Territories to mitigate the costs and the volatility that is existing in the world at this time. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1200-20(1):  
BURGUNDY FISCAL SITUATION

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a similar topic, the \$63 million in unsecured debt that the Burgundy and ACDC owned mining group owes northern suppliers, contractors, and Indigenous development corps, is unsecured, meaning no one can collect on it until the rest of the financial restructuring is done. That means Northerners and northern companies are holding the bag.

So how is the Minister of Finance working to support those companies? We've already seen the federal government step in and spend an extraordinary amount of money, so what are we doing to ensure that that \$63 million is paid to Northerners as they deserve? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a CCAA proceeding is a legal proceeding. We are attending at that proceeding and we are a party there as the GNWT. Certainly would want to ensure that anyone that is a company that is -- also has the opportunity to attend at those proceedings. But, Mr. Speaker, at some point, a legal proceeding, I am somewhat limited to speak to. More broadly, though, Mr. Speaker, there's so much activity happening at this point in time with respect to ECE's efforts on the workforce development front and ITI's efforts in terms of supports for businesses. And as well, of course, the question seems to be a little bit difficult in that I am not quite sure if we want to support the mineral industry or don't want to support the

mineral industry, but to try to ensure that there was some stability for the industry, some stability for this company, certainly the federal government decided to issue a loan. That was on their decision to do so, but it certainly gave a fair bit of time for companies to be managing their affairs, to be getting paid, and to be having a bit more of a runway before we are at the stage we're at now. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to be clear, I support the mining industry. I think we all should be supporting the mining industry. It's not their fault this happened; it's the global market conditions. But what has happened is they owe Northerners a lot of money. So if the legal proceedings are not the avenue to do that, then what avenue does our government have? What tools do we have to support the businesses that are owed this? We've already seen 90 jobs leave Hay River and other parts of the Northwest Territories. We're going to see more if this money is not paid. So what are we going to do? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly large -- a large breadth of things that need to happen and that are happening. Everything from starting, Mr. Speaker, with respect to working -- worker training programs that are happening for individuals who have been employed at the mines. Fortunately, because of the planned closure for Diavik, that system was already well developed when Burgundy found itself in CCAA. Those pathways have been promoted widely through ITI and ECE and certainly happy to make sure that that information gets out to residents. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, we're working to ensure that companies and development corporations and communities are ready for the opportunities that we're now seeing. \$11 billion coming in for the Department of Defense, three projects that have been around forever, all referred into the major projects office. That's out of the 17 across this country, three here in the Northwest Territories. And we're going to work with businesses and development corporations to make sure they can take advantage of them and be ready to maximize their opportunities. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I am not talking about the Ekati workers. I am talking about the businesses that are owed this money where the unsecured debt is. So I don't have the same access to the federal government that the Minister has. It seems like the answer is going to be go to Ottawa anyway,

so will the Minister speak to her federal counterparts and tell them to pay this bill? Because someone's got to at the end of the day. Because if it goes sideways and that money isn't paid out, then we are going to -- these northern companies that have done the work, that have employees that need to be paid to put food on the table, they're not getting what they're owed, and someone has to pay that bill. And if it's not this government, then it should be Ottawa. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the diamond markets for -- well, the diamond markets have been struggling now for some time since COVID and not rebounding as they were expected to. During the course of probably about a year ago, Mr. Speaker, it would have been a very sudden and extreme shock were Ekati to have gone immediately into bankruptcy. And, Mr. Speaker, we had been speaking to Ottawa at that time. Ottawa did step in. They have tried to support a restructuring and provided a significant loan. It is a loan. It's certainly not by any means going to be a bailout. It's a loan that bought a significant amount of time. A number of companies that had contacted us and development corporations have had that time now to re-examine their own arrangements, their own workforce arrangements, their own engagements with the mine, and now the situation while we are in a CCAA is not good news, it is a much more orderly proceeding. We are at that proceeding, businesses are at that proceeding, and the federal government is there. And once again, we did speak to and engage with the federal government. They have stepped in to ensure that this could be a sales process, which once again buys a bit more time, allows the process to be more orderly, be more planned, and for all parties, including the businesses, to have an opportunity to see if there's opportunities for them through this process. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1201-20(1):  
COUNSELLING OPTIONS AND SUPPORTS  
DISCUSSED WITH THE COUNCIL OF  
LEADERS

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we cannot be fully prepared in accessing opportunities for all residents of the NWT without helping some residents heal. Can the Premier tell me what counselling options, on the land or otherwise, does he discuss as needed and urgent with his Indigenous

government counterparts at the Council of Leaders and bilateral meetings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave, Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am lucky to have a strong team around me, so it's the Minister of health who has those discussions at the Council of Leaders and the bilateral meetings. That being said, what the Member is talking about is a constant topic of discussion. I've said before that I think trauma is the biggest issue that our territory faces. What's the point of having economic opportunities if people aren't in a place where they can go take advantage of them. So I fully agree with it from that sense.

At the Council of Leaders, there is a health and social services working group at the officials level which works among all of the Indigenous governments who are involved as well as the Government of the Northwest Territories to look at those different options that would suit Indigenous governments, and that helps inform our advocacy efforts in Ottawa as well as our own policies.

In the last federal budget, there was an announcement of a northern and Arctic health assessment which the federal government is looking across the North at what services are provided, what can they do to enhance services, reduce the need for medical travel, make sure services are closer to home. And we convened a meeting of the Council of Leaders maybe a couple months ago maybe now and we had the federal officials in front of us, and feedback was provided by the Council of Leaders to them.

We always discuss the mental wellness and addiction recovery fund which is a very flexible fund that Indigenous governments and communities can access.

Jordan's Principle, that's always a topic of discussion. And, of course, when -- you know, at the Council of Leaders and bilaterals, we do joint federal engagement. So it's not just us going to Ottawa; it's much more powerful when it's us and our partners discussing these things. I will stop there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, then, can the Premier explain if and how he advocates for investment and wellness -- investment into wellness and healing when speaking to tables where the major projects and investments from the military are on the table insofar as for us to have the full benefits for everyone in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yes, I do combine those two the same way that the Member is saying, without having a healthy population who could take advantage of opportunities what's the point of having opportunities. And so when I meet with the Prime Minister, I raise that very issue. I talk about the trauma in the territory, the great potential that we have in the territory, and our need to ensure residents can take advantage of that potential. So this is something we discuss at the Western Premiers conference as well. So in a lot of my federal engagement, my engagement with other jurisdictions, this is also a topic of discussion, and I make a close connection between those two things, the infrastructure development and the mental wellness. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope those discussions can turn into actions in short order.

Mr. Speaker, last week, the Yukon Government and Canada announced up to \$100 million in funding to the Yukon housing corporation who will then distribute \$93 million to build up 500 new homes. I know the Premier spoke to 360 homes being developed in this Assembly. Can he elaborate if the NWT is anticipating to see any matching federal dollar announcements to start to address the continued crucial needs for our housing, especially for those who are under-housed and inadequately housed. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Nunavut has seen a large injection of federal dollars towards social housing. The Member just referenced a contribution to the Government of Yukon. So that's two of the three territories. One more territory left. And so yes, I fully expect that we're going to see some housing money, and I hope to be standing next to the Minister of housing when she makes that announcement. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1202-20(1):  
UPDATE ON THE MACKENZIE VALLEY  
HIGHWAY PERMITTING

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My follow-up to my statement is to my questions to the Minister of strategic infrastructure there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question, is the Prohibition Creek access road permit being applied for this summer's half-project,

7-kilometre procurement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, we are proceeding to have a secured land-use permit and water license application for phase 2. I'd also note, Mr. Speaker, that we have a funding request in through the Arctic infrastructure fund that went to Canada already last month or earlier this month. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would expect that the full project would move to procurement thereafter but those first two steps have already been taken. Thank you.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister for that response.

My next question on the permit that exists here until this November, and that's the DHU-1 quarry permit at Great Bear, the Great Bear Rock area. Is that project -- is that permit going to be executed and tendered out for the permit allowance for drilling and blasting and stockpiling the material for the Bear River bridge this winter? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct that this is currently a permitted quarry. But beyond that, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is put in -- again, on invitation -- a request for funding for the Great Bear River bridge to come back as a full project. Once we have that funding, we'll be proceeding with the planning phases on that project. The design and planning now are a few years old. With that in hand, we'd be in a better position to go back, and it may be that we'd be renewing the permit and then proceeding to get it fully ready for production. But to do so in advance, Mr. Speaker, we'd be putting it out of sync in terms of wanting to make sure we have the planning and design done and updated on the Great Bear River bridge prior to proceeding with the rock quarry permit. So again, Mr. Speaker, it is permitted for now, I acknowledge that, but we would have to simply bring that back, and I would not anticipate any difficulty in that regard. We are doing a lot of work right now to make sure that Mackenzie Valley Highway actually has a speedy and thorough and smooth procurement -- or sorry, permitting process for its entirety, including this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for that information and response from the Minister here. That leads me to the structural Great Bear River bridge that once was designed and procured in 2006. So if the design was completed at that time, it's similar in location, the colour is the same. So given those specs here that do exist, when is this government going to apply for the land-use permit and the water permits necessary for that structural bridge? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have the land-use permit and water license applications drafted and ready to roll for the Great Bear River bridge. As I mentioned, we've put the application in on invitation to the Arctic infrastructure fund which would be a significant, significant boost of funding to be able to get some of that work going to bring it back up to speed. It's several years old now. It does need to come back up and make sure we have a cost estimate that is well advanced, not Class D or Class 4, but bring it up so that it's well advanced and we know exactly the cost so we can then move forward with a plan to move out and to get to construction. But we do need to be at that point where we have that initial funding to get to the construction estimate and then at that point move forward. But that is exactly the work that's happening now. And as the Member said, Mr. Speaker, we have the design -- we have a base design, we have a land-use permit, we have a water license. They're historic, they need to be reviewed, they need to be updated, but that's much faster than starting from scratch. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 1203-20(1):  
UPDATE ON TEACHER LAY-OFFS IN  
INUVIK

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

As I had said in my Member's statement, Mr. Speaker, there is much anxiety amongst the parents and students in my community right now given the recent announcements. So my first question is fairly simple, Mr. Speaker. My community wants answers, parents and students want answers, answers that can only be given by the authority in charge of education in this territory, Mr. Speaker. My question is simple: What do I tell my constituents we are doing as a government to resolve this issue?

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by reiterating to the Member that I am absolutely deeply committed to ensuring that NWT students have access to quality education, and that includes education in our official languages.

Mr. Speaker, I understand and acknowledge the plight of both students, families, teachers, across this territory that the needs of students have changed over the course of the last decade dramatically. And for that reason, we are taking action to stabilize the education system. While these changes certainly are made at the local level, we do have a role to play here at education, culture and employment and at the Government of the Northwest Territories, and we are taking action to help stabilize our education system in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So apart from telling my constituents that we are taking action, I understand that, and I understand that the Minister is well aware of what's happening across the territory and that she's certainly passionate about education in this territory, but what I want is what is that action going to be, Mr. Speaker. Is that action going to be in the form of a supplemental appropriation that we can actually approve during this sitting if we'd like to ensure that French immersion is, indeed, still in Inuvik where it's certainly been there for many, many years? So what specific action am I going to go back to my constituents and say this is what this government is going to do to ensure that we don't lose one quarter of our teachers in a community of 3,300 people, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In short, the answer is yes, there is a supplemental appropriation coming forward specifically for inclusive schooling in the life of this sitting. That supplemental appropriation for inclusive schooling does account for the fact that there are more demands on our school boards and on our education systems.

What we do know from the Beaufort Delta District Education Council is they considered things like enrolment, staffing, sustainability of programs, and also community interest. There are a lot more demands on our school boards across this territory for programming, and that's causing them to have to make very difficult decisions. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen, and I appreciate that, that there's a supplemental appropriation coming. But, again, the answer I am looking for is will that supplemental appropriation either through -- I don't know if it's going to be through a ministerial directive or if it's going to be -- is that supplemental appropriation going to ensure that the French immersion continues in Inuvik and it doesn't get cut as was announced last month? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under the Education Act, no, I do not have the authority to direct a district education council to have a specific school program like French immersion that they deliver within their schools. So while we set the curriculum, the actual programming that is delivered, that decision is made at the local level. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1204-20(1):  
ILLICIT DRUG TRADE AND USAGE IN  
PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement, when someone is allocated a unit they sign a tenancy rental agreement, and one of the clauses is on evictions if they're engaging in any illegal activities within the housing unit.

What is the Minister -- can the Minister outline what steps her department, in collaboration with the local housing authority, are taking to reduce and prevent illegal activity in public housing units across the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is something that Housing NWT and our territories facing over the last number of years is the rise in illegal activities across the North, specifically in public housing units. But I will tell you this: I don't have much patience for illegal activities in public housing units, and I encourage the local housing organizations to proceed with any type of rental office order and termination notice for leases and evictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's really good news to hear, some implementation on some of these policies.

How does the Minister measure the effectiveness of current responses to illegal activities in public housing, and does she believe those measures are producing meaningful results? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is again a community issue, a territory-wide issue, and it's something that Housing NWT and our local housing organizations are facing on a daily basis. So the effectiveness is within the community itself. It's working with the staff, it's working with the tenants, it's working with the organizations, and it's working with leadership. We all have to be speaking the same language, especially in a community when we're facing immense illegal activity. We're facing public housing units where tenants are, you know, harbouring drug dealers, and this is really concerning, especially the effects of trauma and the effects with children across the North. So it's something, again, that I work with the local housing organizations and Housing NWT to encourage them, to counsel them, to provide them supports because they're the ones working with the tenants on a daily basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education and implementation of these policies is important and working with the local leadership, working with the housing authorities to ensure that everybody is aware that these measures may be impacting themselves and their families. A lot of them have small children but, you know, they're killing our own people.

So what assurances can the Minister provide to residents who feel unsafe and believe illegal activity in public housing has become normalized in our communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not normal, and that's the message that everybody needs to lend across the North, that this is not normal, and people need to vocalize their concerns to the local housing, to leadership, to community council, to the RCMP. They need to be vocal, and we can't stay silent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1205-20(1):  
UPDATE ON THE AURORA COLLEGE  
POLYTECHNIC TRANSITION

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Mr. Speaker, there remain a number of milestones for the polytechnic transition which are behind schedule. Can the Minister detail for the House how she is working with the board to get the college back on track? I know we have some new board members. I am sure they're excited to meet with the Minister. 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. We do have some new board members. I very much look forward to getting to sit down and meet with them shortly here.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, imminently we expect to be receiving the review back from the external reviewers who provided their evaluation and submitted it to the CAQC out of Alberta. We expect to hear their formal recommendation any day now, and that will give us an idea of what needs to be done for Aurora College to continue to pursue its journey to becoming a polytechnic and through accreditation.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I continue to work very closely with the board chairperson, including advocating for additional funding through federal resources and third party funding as well. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Minister perfectly segued into my next question.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask, is she seeking funding for campus infrastructure? I know that we need campus upgrades, there's housing upgrades that are needed from the Build Canada Strong fund for our communities to help build up the college and help prepare it for the expansion that will come with the transition. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I am working very closely with the college based on their prioritized direction of what infrastructure they would like to pursue for both third party funding and federal funding as well. 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 am sure all of us are very excited to hear about the fruits that come from that advocacy, Mr. Speaker.

Thirdly, has the board identified any needs which aren't currently being met to deliver programming, complete the transition, or prepare for the workforce buildup that we're going to need with the major projects announcements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this role I can confidently say I have never spoken to any organization who has said don't give us any more money. And certainly there is always ways for institutions, especially educational institutions and especially at opportunities right now, to find different ways to pursue funding and to pursue opportunity. And certainly we're at a time where we're going to have to be very strategic, we're going to have to be very purposeful in our choices, and we're going to have to make sure that we're prioritizing both, you know, education and investment that Northerners are looking for and Northerners need, because we're going to need full classrooms. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1206-20(1):  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS IN THE  
DEHCHO REGIONS

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

Can the Minister identify what resources are available to support Deh Cho community governments in delivering prevention-focused mental health and addiction supports? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, the mental wellness and addiction recovery fund prioritizes Indigenous governments and supports the delivery of community-based mental wellness and addiction recovery programs that meet the unique needs of respected communities. There's the community suicide prevention fund that communities can apply on. And I just want to highlight that the Deh Cho First Nation has a multi-year agreement from 2025 to 2027 and that they are accessing annual funding for mental health and wellness programs for the Deh Cho First

Nation. The Ka'a'gee First Nation has also an application under review under the community suicide prevention fund for this year. And the Chief Sunrise Education Centre and KFN has a signed agreement under the suicide prevention fund for their community this year.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi for that. Can the Minister explain how the GNWT is improving access to mental health and addiction supports for residents in Deh Cho communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is committed to ensuring people can access a variety of flexible mental health and substance use supports based on the unique challenges, needs, available supports. The GNWT provides counselling, GNWT mental health counselling. We now provide detox and facility-based -- we provide detox, and we also provide facility-based addiction treatments. People who want to access facility-based addiction treatments, they can access the mental health supports within their community. We have psychiatric care. We have land and culturally-based healing that we provide funding for to Indigenous governments.

And I just want to highlight that many of our Indigenous governments is -- the fund that we created, we used to have on the land and we had different pots of funding, and we amalgamated them from recommendations from the Indigenous governments so that they could access those and to be able to have multi-year funding so when they were creating and hiring staff and program supports in their communities that were structured for their communities, that they could -- they could gear that. So I can share that again with the Members. There's -- you know, there's multiple, virtual supports for those who want to access virtual supports and many other supports that -- and I can share the online information as well to the Members so they have that there in their offices. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to working directly with Deh Cho community governments and provide information, I guess, to the -- not I guess -- provide information to the communities on preventative measures for mental health and health healing strategies? Will the Minister commit to working directly with Deh Cho community governments and Indigenous leadership to develop community-led mental

health and healing strategies? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the Department of Health and Social Services and, you know, we have the Deh Cho health authority. We're all -- we're very committed to being able to work with Indigenous partners. And I know that we most recently, you know, had these conversations at the Council of Leaders. And we do have the Council of Leaders health working group and we've kind of directed their executives and staff from within the department sit on that executive working group to -- what we're doing right now is we're -- we have mapped out what we know that -- of services for mental health and addictions in the Northwest Territories, but we want to work with their executives to see where they might have -- because they have direct funding that are from the feds. So we want to know what's all available in the Northwest Territories right now because we -- you know, what we need to do is we're all trying to fill areas in different regions; however, we don't know what everybody's doing. And, you know, I want to be able -- I am not going to tell Indigenous communities how they need to run mental wellness programs and what's best for their program, but I want to be able to work with them to establish a strategic plan so we're all working together for residents in Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1207-20(1):  
IMPROVING ACCUMULATIVE IMPACT  
ASSESSMENTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT  
AUDIT

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I have questions for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in follow up to my statement today.

So the 2025 environmental audit provided a number of recommendations on how to improve cumulative impact monitoring and management. I appreciate that it is the land and water boards in most cases and not the GNWT that is tasked with ultimately approving or denying projects, but the boards can only make good decisions if they're provided with clear input based on science and TK and there are clear wildlife management and land use plans, all of which the GNWT has a critical role in.

So first question: How is the GNWT acting on Environmental Audit Recommendation 2-4 in particular? So this is to direct more resources

from cumulative impact monitoring towards providing the kinds of predictions and scenarios and risk analysis that would support better decision-making. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Cumulative Impact Assessment program is a key part of environmental assessment in the Northwest Territories, and certainly the work that's done in that area is very important and really informs development all across the North and certainly with all of the economic opportunities that we have certainly sitting in front of us right now. So what the department has done is we have focused on our collaborative effort, along with the Mackenzie Valley land and water boards, and focusing our program resources to more information sharing and working together toward developing some tools. And after, as the discussions go along, hopefully a pilot project that will be able to implement some of that collaborative work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do look forward to hearing more specific things about those tools as they get developed.

I wanted to ask about the Cumulative Land Disturbance Framework, and so that is mentioned in the Bathurst Caribou range plan in particular and it's supposed to set limits on human activity. Can the Minister clarify, would that mean that, for example a new all-weather road would be prohibited through a zone that was deemed high risk in this kind of land disturbance framework? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're currently working on some policy documents that will help to guide, you know, all-weather roads through caribou habitat. So this work is ongoing. Currently there's no defined route for the Arctic Energy Security Corridor so very hard to answer specifically until a route is developed. But certainly, you know, the Bathurst and all of the caribou in the Northwest Territories are top of mind, and we are certainly looking at all of the potential impacts and how we can mitigate those along by working with our Indigenous partners all across the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I wonder if the Minister can clarify the current status of the strategic regional environmental assessment for the Slave Geological Province that was initiated in early 2023, one of the tools I mentioned in my statement that's in our Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so that project, it was initiated in 2023 as the Member has indicated. It never did get off the ground in a meaningful way, so the budget and the resources that were assigned to the project have now been reassigned to individual Indigenous governments to address and work on areas of concern directly related to the Arctic Energy and Security Corridor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1208-20(1):  
IMPACT OF LEAD IN LEVELS IN  
TERRITORIAL SCHOOLS

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, government always does what they think is best, you know, is in the best interest of the Indigenous.

Mr. Speaker, lead in school water is a serious concern. Research indicates no amount of lead is safe for children. Even low-level lead can cause permanent neurological damage. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide clear information to former students and staff, especially those who live or work in the residence, about the potential long-term health effects of exposure to elevated lead levels at Chief Jimmy Bruneau School? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Monfwi, which Minister? Okay, thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that when this first came out that there was a lot of information, and I would have to go back to gather that information. I think it was a combination between ECC sharing that information and -- as they were the lead of this. So what I will do is I will go back and get that information and share that with the Member.

I will also say that parents who have concerns about their children's potential exposure from lead, or any employee that may be concerned with an exposure, that they would need to contact their local health provider and state

that, and then they can have a health assessment with that. And based on that health assessment, you know, they may request lead testing. But they do have -- employees should consult their employer because they do have occupational health guidelines to follow up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, what I would like the department to do is contact these people. Will the Minister commit to working with the Minister of ECE to identify and directly contact former resident students and staff who may have been affected by this exposure? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is something that I will have to take back and have a conversation with ECC. Like, as myself, I don't know who works in the schools. I don't know who's in these schools, you know, and that's why there was public information that went out over the last few months since the very first lead that was detected. So if public has concerns, if they attend any of these schools that have said that there's exposure and they have concerns, they can reach out to 8-1-1 and they can reach out to the health provider within their community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, GNWT has all the information of all the staff and the students that went to school in the Northwest Territories. They do have all the information. So will the Minister consider providing targeted health screening, follow-up, and appropriate supports for former residents and staff who may have been exposed to elevated lead levels for extended period of time? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that's pretty much everybody that's lived in this Northwest Territories their entire life, you know, and I guess, you know, if you're having concerns and if there -- you know, if you look at online and, you know, if you -- where, like, the Member said, you know, the highest risk is for young children, you know, and so what we know is that, you know, over the course of the life of the way that the Canadian standards are -- and I know that Dr. Kandola did a public -- when we did that public presentation and to committee and answered questions, that the levels changed and there are some communities and schools that up until the levels changed wouldn't have met, but we have one of the highest thresholds in Canada of where we measure lead than any other

country which, you know, is not a bad thing. But what we need to know -- like, we need to make sure is that when -- if there's concerns around this, it's up to the people. I can't force -- it's like any other thing. I can't go out and tell everybody. What we do is we do public service announcements when it's a large population, and they are free to go in and access free health care in their health centre, access their physician, call 8-1-1 if they have concerns, and they will be assessed by that. And if they need testing, we've done -- you know, in the Northwest Territories, I know there was some testing done and random testing through the population over the years and lead levels were not identified in that. So that shows that, you know, that it's not showing up. So I am just going to say that we do it by public service announcements, and it's up to the public to be able to attend the free health care that we have. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1209-20(1):  
UPDATED LEGISLATION FOR FUEL TAX IN  
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to return to the Minister of Finance to just further drill down about the affordability issues of the fuel tax. And I think most of us are here to improve the lives of Northerners and certainly help them in the crisis of affordability.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to bring forward emergency legislative amendments to address this gas tax problem where the gas tax numbers are calculated in legislation. And to be clear, Mr. Speaker, I'd be willing to sit a couple extra days, I'd be willing to come back later in June or even July to get something like this passed. So if we're not fighting for Northerners, I am not sure who is. So would the Minister be willing to bring forward emergency amendments to the fuel tax? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, at this point in time that's not something that's under consideration. And, again, the reason for that, Mr. Speaker, isn't because fuel taxes aren't a dire situation for every resident, arguably for just about everybody in the world I would suggest, certainly people in the North are feeling it significantly. We pay a lot for gas already. We are very dependent on fuel. Mr. Speaker, the long term and even short term and

medium term is to reduce our reliance and dependence on fuel, on diesel, on gas, by improving our connections in terms of transportation, by reducing our reliance on diesel energy and ensuring that we have programs and services to support residents until we get there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that is the approach that we are taking. It's a similar approach, as I understand a lot of my provincial and territorial colleagues are also taking, and it's one we will stay with. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think the Minister misses the issue. This is an issue in the pocketbooks of everyone and she can, you know, telegraph great philosophy, but the truth is it's about affordability to the moms, dads, everybody living here going to work.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister refuses to bring forward emergency amendments, there's another option: The Minister could provide rebates to Northerners and come up with a system. We did it during the wildfires. We could come up with a system. We have very smart people who can figure out what a fair and balanced way to do this. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister do that, and would she do that?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier the impact to residents individually from the gas taxes is not going to mitigate the cost and the situation that we're all facing with almost \$2 a litre of gas at the pumps, let alone the cost of fuel on heat, let alone the impacts on our utilities. The situation that this country is facing right now is an economic war, Mr. Speaker, and what we would be taking away in terms of the revenues to the GNWT from removing the gas tax or of trying to spin up a quick relief program, Mr. Speaker -- the relief program on the wildfires received a lot of challenges because it was spun up quite quickly. And, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we're about to go into wildfire season and it is unknown as of yet just what those costs would be.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we will continue the path that we are on of ensuring that we are trying to provide training for folks who need it, access to good jobs, a pathway to diversification of the economy, a pathway to increases in all of those things, Mr. Speaker. But for the time being, reducing gas taxes or trying to figure out a way to fix a situation that is so much bigger than us by taking away the little bit of funding that we have as a territorial government, that's not the pathway that we're on right now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I wish I had friends who thought that money didn't matter, Mr. Speaker. I wish I had a job that paid that much that nobody complained that it didn't hurt their pocketbooks. Mr. Speaker, everywhere I go, I speak to somebody. I was in Hay River two weeks ago. They complained about it. Fort Providence. So, Mr. Speaker, if Wab Kinew can do this, if Doug Ford can do this, why can't the Minister be creative and help the everyday Northerner rather than stand here today and shout out philosophies that won't help the everyday people today. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's very unlikely that any Member of the Legislative Assembly or any elected leader is not hearing about affordability and not hearing about the cost of gas and the impacts it's having on everyday people, on businesses, and on community governments. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has a responsibility to ensure that we continue to provide programs and services, including emergency programs and services, even in the course of this crisis. It's an economic war right now. There's a gas price crisis, affordability crisis. It's affecting communities, it's affecting residents, it's affecting businesses. Mr. Speaker, the little amount of flexibility that we have within our fiscal environment means that we must make evidence-based decisions, we need to make thoughtful decisions, and we need to make sure that we keep the programs and services, including the relief programs, including the subsidy programs, and maintain the fiscal capacity to see those through.

For now, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're doing. It's the approach most provinces and territories are using. That doesn't mean we don't keep monitoring. We will continue to keep monitoring it, Mr. Speaker, and adapt if we need to. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Colleagues, remember, do not use people's names, positions, titles. We need to focus on, please and thank you.

Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 1210-20(1):  
LOANS TO BUSINESSES IMPACTED BY  
MINING CLOSURES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I spoke earlier, there's a \$63 million bill that's come due. Many northern

businesses are struggling with that loss of revenue. Will the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment provide zero interest loans to NWT businesses who are impacted by the Ekati creditor protection to secure their cash flows which will prevent further layoffs until there is a resolution of these court proceedings? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would have to speak with Prosper NWT to see if any businesses have contacted them to ask them specifically for that. That is our lending arm, as we do that work through Prosper NWT, and I'd be happy to reach out to them to find out if they've had outreach from the business community. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. Well, that's good due diligence, but I think it'd be better if we just announced we were going to do it and invited businesses to apply. So I will ask again, will the Minister direct Prosper NWT to announce those loans that are available, to provide those loans, to make the cash available to those communities? Because if we don't, I fear we will have more job losses in our communities. And not just here in Yellowknife, but across the territory, and every job loss in a regional centre or small community is worth ten or more in the capital. So we need to stop this before it gets worse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would want to ensure that the supports we're providing to business is responsive to what businesses are looking for. So certainly, like I said to the Member, I would definitely want to follow up with Prosper to find out if they have had outreach from the business community. And then part of the work that we're doing right now is actually talking to the business community about what it is that they're looking for -- and that's not just in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker, that's outside of Yellowknife as well -- and making sure that we're being responsive.

One of the things that we're hearing from businesses right now is they want the ability to upscale if need be, so to take out loans, yes, those still exist, and then to be able to retrain workers. And we've recently secured \$1.5 million extra from the federal government to beef up our workforce development programs because we definitely believe that making sure that Northerners participate in this work is incredibly important.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that we have to think of the future, and we are planning for the future. We've got a lot of work to do there. I agree with that side of the House on this. But what I am talking about is this immediate problem. So the Minister surely has heard concerns from the business community, from the Aurora Group, I am sure, from others. I am speculating here. But can she report to the House those conversations she's had with businesses impacted by this creditor freeze and how she is responding to that. Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the conversations that I am hearing most from the business community are we need to make sure that we have opportunities in front of us tomorrow, we need to make sure that we have opportunities in front of us that get us to the other side of the river, we need that suspension bridge between diamond mining and building roads and building DND infrastructure. That is the primary concern I am hearing from the business community. So making sure that we're being transparent about our own procurement opportunities from the GNWT, and people are aware of them regionally is incredibly important, but also making sure that we have information to the business community about other opportunities that we know that are coming up as well in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1211-20(1):  
FRANCOPHONE FUNDING SUPPORTS  
FOR INUVIK SCHOOLS

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my line of questioning for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment around education in Inuvik, I mentioned in my Member's statement the little over \$40 million, I think around \$41 million, that we received for Francophone funding from the federal government.

Can the Minister kind of give an outlay of what that funding is used for and if any of that funding is earmarked for French immersion programs in communities such as Inuvik? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of ECE.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't have a breakdown based on per education

body. I know that there's about \$1.8 million that are going to all education bodies specifically for French second language programming. While we provide those dollars, there aren't rules as to what exact model that funding has to follow. It doesn't necessarily have to be French language -- or sorry, French immersion programming. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So it's a little confusing. And I understand, part of the conversation here is that the Minister can't direct, the Minister can't intervene with what the local education authorities are doing; however, we are the department of education, we are the Minister of education, not the Minister of let's get a board to do this, Mr. Speaker. So my question is maybe it's time that we take a look at the legislation around how the Acts are administered around the education bodies, and is the Minister willing to have that conversation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this work is already underway. It has definitely been a very eye-opening experience to become the Minister of education and the Minister ultimately responsible for the education system. But we have a very decentralized system in the Northwest Territories.

What I am certainly learning from my colleagues in this House is they want to be able to hold me accountable for things that aren't always within my authority, and so this is definitely very live conversation and definitely things that I would recommend that all residents of the territory participate in this review when it comes to their community and speak with their MLA because governance will certainly be a hot topic and certainly be a part of the complete modernization of our Education Act in the territory. Thank you.

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

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you. And I appreciate that, and I understand that the decisions being made that we're expecting that the Minister are going to wear those decisions. That's why we're elected. And I also understand that there is certainly a decentralization happening with education bodies, but. So okay, the work is underway. Can the Minister commit to when that we expect to see that review done and any timelines around having that work done so we can certainly have a look at that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this will

be the first piece of social legislation that the Government of the Northwest Territories does in collaboration with Indigenous governments. And so certainly the GNWT is not the only participant at the table in this piece of legislation. So on one hand, we need to make sure that it's responsive and we're getting it done, but also need to make sure that we are providing appropriate time for our partners to participate in the modernization of this legislation. I would love the opportunity to be able to sit with the Standing Committee on Social Development and go over this should they request a briefing. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1212-20(1):  
ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEPUTY  
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND  
INVESTMENT

**MR. MORSE:** Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ITI. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister announced a new assistant deputy minister of economic development recently. Can the Minister help us understand how this position will relate to workforce development and planning. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly I would love to be able to, you know, hire and pick deputy ministers, but that was definitely the Premier that announced that. The role of this associate deputy minister is to strengthen cross-government coordination, improve alignment of economic priorities, and ensure a more strategic and unified approach to long-term economic development. Found within that, and between the lines, is certainly workforce readiness, Mr. Speaker. Some of the first core things we're going to see come out of this new position is an economic strategy that will be worked on for the next year because it will be done in collaboration with Northerners and investment strategies that are going to be tied to some metrics and some KPIs. There's going to be ongoing and evolving policy pieces because we know that we are going to have road bumps along the way and we need to get rid of them. And, Mr. Speaker, of course, there is business and workforce readiness that is a priority of mine, and that includes bringing together -- and they're already working together -- education, culture and employment, industry, tourism and investment, as well as Prosper NWT, and the role of this new associate deputy minister. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the Department of ITI developing or changing plans or strategies for workforce development in light of new major projects announcements? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a time where we need to be incredibly purposeful with our actions. We need to make sure that we're supporting the business community to partake in these opportunities that are coming our way. And it's not only industry, tourism and investment. Like I said, education, culture and employment plays a massive role. We need to make sure that training is available to Northerners where they call home.

Mr. Speaker, we also need to make sure that Prosper NWT is involved in that because, like the questions from the Member for Range Lake, we need to make sure that we're listening to the business community and aligning them with both the business supports, both as far as financial resources, but also business training that they need. There's going to be such an incredible shift and such a massive surge in this territory that we need to make sure that the workforce and our businesses are prepared to take part. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how is the department engaging with major projects and adjusting policy, legislation, or requirements for contracting to ensure our northern businesses will benefit from the wave of development that's coming? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in short, the person who fills this role is a very welcoming person, easy to talk to, easy to work with, great relationships across the board within the government and also externally. And so we get to know what is needed, Mr. Speaker, by having these conversations and forming a plan and forming a strategy and making sure that that strategy is actionable and that we're adhering to it. This Assembly, the MLAs, have brought forward to me examples of very effective pieces of strategies from the past and so definitely learning from lessons learned from the past and also successes of the past to make sure that we're moving forward collaboratively and that we are working with Northerners to get there. There's been a lot of conversation that's already occurred and not just from the departments that I am responsible for but also in collaboration with my fellow colleagues that sit over at this table because we know that getting prepared is

going to require every single Minister over here, from housing to health to infrastructure. It's going to be all hands on deck and everybody working in the same direction. Thank you.

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

### Follow-up to Oral Questions

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 7.2(7), I have received follow-up information for the following oral questions from the first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly: Oral question 924, 929, 935, 969, 971, 972; Oral question 1003, 1012, 1015, 1020, 1093; Oral question 1109, 1110; Oral question 1115, 1116, 1119, 1138, 1150, 1155, 1158, 1165, 1166, 1168, and 1192. These follow-ups will be printed in full in today's Hansard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1115-20(1): HOUSING IN THE DEHCHO REGION

Further to the response provided to the Member for Dehcho on Thursday, February 26, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

In 2025-26, Housing NWT has allocated deferred maintenance funding within the Dehcho riding to support minor maintenance work in several communities. This includes \$20,000 for Kátł'odeeche First Nation, \$2,000 for Kakisa and \$391,000 for Fort Providence. As there are currently no housing units in Enterprise, no maintenance investments were allocated to this community.

In 2026-27, Housing NWT will allocate \$718,000 to the Dehcho riding to support minor maintenance work. This includes \$81,000 for Kátł'odeeche First Nation, \$25,000 for Kakisa and \$612,000 for Fort Providence. As there are no housing units in Enterprise, no maintenance investments have been allocated.

In addition to deferred maintenance funding, Housing NWT is advancing significant capital work in Fort Providence. This includes a biomass retrofit project and major renovation projects to a total of 38 units. Housing NWT is also progressing development on five social housing duplexes, 10 units total, in Fort Providence, which is currently underway and is estimated to be completed in 2027-28.

Housing NWT determines the allocation of capital funding based on evidence-based housing need assessments. Investment decisions consider key criteria including the age and condition of existing units and community waitlists to ensure resources are

directed where they are most needed. This approach aligns with the findings of the Auditor General of Canada, whose recent report affirmed that Housing NWT must provide NWT residents most in need with equitable access to housing and housing supports through its public housing and homeownership programs.

Housing NWT works with the Local Housing Organization and local Indigenous governments to provide opportunities to discuss project goals, design considerations, and the location of proposed construction and major renovations. This engagement helps ensure investments are informed by local priorities and community needs.

#### FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1166-20(1): HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES APPROACH TO WORKING WITH NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh on Wednesday, March 04, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

Minister Kuptana and appropriate Housing NWT staff are willing to meet with Dene National Chief George Mackenzie at a time of mutual convenience. This meeting is intended to focus on how Housing NWT and the Dene Nation can work together to address housing needs. Housing remains a top priority of the 20<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, and we are committed to working with Indigenous governments across the NWT to find ways to address housing needs.

#### FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1015-20(1): BIOMASS ENERGY

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on February 12, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

For the last couple of decades, biomass has been providing reliable and affordable space heating for buildings in the NWT. The GNWT played an instrumental role in making biomass an established source of heating in many, if not most, of our communities. This was achieved by the GNWT taking on a leadership role and setting up an environment of collaboration in several ways:

About 15 years ago, the GNWT started transitioning its buildings to biomass heating, to reduce operating costs while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. As of 2024-2025, 52 biomass boilers in all NWT regions provide 34% of GNWT buildings' heat, using 7,627

tonnes of wood pellets. This represents over \$2.9 million in utility savings and a reduction of 10,201 tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions. Most of these projects were funded via the Capital Asset Retrofit Program and benefited buildings from all departments (e.g. INF, HSS, ECE, ECC).

In addition, Housing NWT has initiated several biomass projects to provide heating to its buildings, which benefited from GNWT's experience and expertise.

In recent years, programs from the Arctic Energy Alliance (AEA) and the GNWT's GHG Grant program provides rebates to help residents, businesses, community governments, and non-government organizations adopt wood stoves and biomass boilers. While some of these programs have experienced a pause in the last couple of years, they are expected to be back and continue support of biomass adoption in years to come.

The AEA also occasionally supports projects advanced via third parties, such as the Dehcho woodstove program funded by Natural Resources Canada and proposed by Gonezu, set to install up to 350 woodstoves in the Dehcho.

Projects led by the GNWT sparked investments in biomass supply chains across the NWT, which were generally made by the private sector (at times with federal or territorial funding). Established supply chains allow, in turn, for additional adoption by residents, businesses, and organizations of biomass for space heating in many communities.

Projects led by the GNWT also allowed us to develop NWT-based expertise on biomass technologies, which is occasionally shared with other biomass projects proponents.

Today, biomass is the space heating option considered by default for virtually all new buildings and building retrofits developed by the GNWT.

This is also increasingly the case for buildings proposed by other organizations, and especially community governments (e.g. City of Yellowknife).

As such, the GNWT has a long history of collaboration and sharing expertise on biomass, across GNWT departments, Housing NWT, AEA, the Government of Canada, and occasional third-party players such as businesses. The Arctic Bioenergy Summit co-hosted by AEA and the Wood Pellet Association of Canada in Yellowknife in January 2026 offered an opportunity for industry, community and Indigenous

governments, non-government organizations, and the GNWT to reflect on this long-standing collaboration and chart the path for the future of biomass in the NWT.

Where we are now is a result of active collaboration between main players for the past 15 years, and it is unclear to us that additional coordination is needed currently.

Conversation on biomass has recently evolved to discuss biomass production in the NWT, including in new forms such as wood chips. These emerging issues discussed at the Arctic Bioenergy Summit are being monitored by the Department responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains as well as Infrastructure. In the past, my department has provided letters of support for organizations interested in exploring the business case of producing biomass in the NWT. We always welcome further conversation with interested parties on this, especially Indigenous development corporations, as developing territorial biomass supply would drive economic development, support energy security, and at times advancing fire-smarting of our vast territory. With respect to wood chips, we are aware that some boilers are equipped to burn this type of biomass and would be open to discussing how we could support a pilot, should there be some interest.

The Government of Canada and other GNWT departments also have programs able to fund communities looking at undertaking feasibility studies to set up wood harvesting and chipping operations, such as:

Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) program: The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment administers this program. Community governments and organizations and private businesses can receive funding for feasibility planning related to economic development through the SEED program.

Indigenous Forestry Initiative: The Government of Canada administers this program. It provides funding for Indigenous-led projects in the forestry sector – including identification, consideration and pursuit of economic development opportunities.

Lastly, I wanted to say a few words about GNWT support to the biomass

Building off this success, AEA is considering offering the training more regularly and is exploring funding opportunities to make this possible. As one main user of biomass energy in the NWT, the GNWT and Housing NWT will continue to support this initiative moving forward.

Biomass is a true NWT success story, and I am proud of the GNWT's contribution to it. The GNWT and its partners (such as Housing NWT and AEA) will continue to explore ways to collaborate with other parties and support biomass as a secure, affordable, and low-carbon source of heat while developing the economy.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1116-  
20(1):  
APPRENTICESHIP POSITIONS IN  
INFRASTRUCTURE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 26, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

I committed to providing details on the number of apprenticeship positions within the Department of Infrastructure, including how many positions currently exist, and of those, how many are filled or vacant. As noted previously, in some cases an apprentice position cannot be staffed when the associated supervising journey-level position is vacant. This may result in an apprentice position marked as unfilled even though recruitment cannot proceed until supervisory capacity is restored.

Later today I will table the Infrastructure Apprentice Positions that provides a detailed breakdown of apprenticeship positions across the Department of Infrastructure.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1109-  
20(1):  
MIDWIFERY SERVICES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Frame Lake on February 26, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Department recognizes and values the contribution of midwifery as a part of comprehensive sexual, reproductive, and infant health care services provided in the Northwest Territories. We are committed to maintaining midwifery services that have been established in Fort Smith and Hay River.

Currently, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is utilizing midwives to support gaps in perinatal and obstetrical services at Inuvik Regional Hospital to ensure continuity of services in that region (including call coverage/after-hours urgent response, writing prescriptions, prenatal and postpartum appointments, birthing services). This work is intended to mitigate reduction of service risks and maintain birthing services in Inuvik. The Territorial Manager, Midwifery continues to support the integration of midwifery services in

the territory, including Fort Smith and Hay River, through ongoing policy review and development.

Our immediate focus is on sustaining and strengthening the midwifery programs already established. These programs are foundational to midwifery care in the territory and must be supported to ensure they can meet community needs and remain attractive workplaces for midwives.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1119-  
20(1):  
HEALTHCARE INFORMATICS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on February 26, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Northwest Territories meets national health data reporting requirements through submissions to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Notably, the Northwest Territories reports demographic, administrative and clinical data related to acute inpatient care and day surgeries to the national Discharge Abstract Database.

The National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, a health information database that captures data related to emergency department activities, complements Discharge Abstract Database by extending national reporting to ambulatory care services. Participation varies across the country, reflecting a range of operational models and capacity across provinces and territories. At present five jurisdictions, which include, Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Quebec, and the Yukon, have achieved complete (>95%) coverage. New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut and the NWT do not participate in National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, and the remaining jurisdictions only partially participate.

The Department of Health and Social Services has explored the possibility of participating in the National Ambulatory Care Reporting System. The Department assessed the operational requirements of the system, which include comprehensive abstraction and coding of all emergency department encounters and the submission of standardized data packages to the Canadian Institute of Health Information on prescribed timelines. While this assessment helped to clarify what participation would entail, it did not progress to a formal implementation plan.

A key consideration is the need for additional capacity to support an expanded coding and reporting workload. Existing resources are fully

allocated to meet mandatory Discharge Abstract Database requirements, and the health system continues to face challenges recruiting and retaining certified coding staff.

Given these constraints and competing reporting obligations, National Ambulatory Care Reporting System participation is not currently feasible. The Department continues to work closely with Canadian Institute for Health Information to strengthen data quality, enhance reporting processes, and ensure our submissions meet national standards. The Northwest Territories will continue to meet national reporting requirements through existing mechanisms. Future expansion into additional national data holdings will depend on the availability of sufficient, certified capacity to support it.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1158-  
20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES DIRECT APPOINTMENTS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided regarding Government of the Northwest Territories Direct Appointments.

Direct appointments within the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) are governed by established guidelines under the Public Service Act and in the Executive Council Submissions Handbook. These guidelines apply consistently throughout the term of the Legislative Assembly, including during the period preceding a general election, and limit direct appointments to specific, defined circumstances.

Direct appointments may be recommended where there is a clear operational or strategic rationale. This includes, for example, retaining specialized or unique expertise, supporting employee development and advancement, or filling positions where other staffing methods have been considered and determined to be inappropriate or ineffective.

Direct appointments may also be used in exceptional circumstances, such as to staff positions providing direct support to Ministers or Deputy Ministers, or to address organizational changes, including the integration of employees from external entities into the public service.

Separate processes exist for programs such as the Regional Recruitment Program, Internship Program, and Indigenous Career Gateway Program. These programs are designed to support workforce development objectives and

are administered with guidance from the Department of Finance.

All proposed direct appointments are subject to multiple levels of review and approval. Hiring managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable legislation, policies, and guidelines. Departments and agencies apply internal review processes prior to submission. The Department of Finance reviews all submissions to confirm that the proposed candidate meets position requirements and that the rationale for a direct appointment is appropriate. All direct appointments require approval by Executive Council.

In addition, the Process Convention on Transition Stewardship establishes clear expectations for decision-making during the pre-election and transition period. The Convention directs that, wherever possible, outgoing Cabinet and the Financial Management Board avoid making new or significant policy decisions, contractual commitments, or appointments. It also requires that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight be provided with a confidential briefing in advance of dissolution outlining any anticipated decisions or matters that may arise during the transition period and is given the opportunity to review and provide written comments on the briefing.

Together, these legislative requirements, policy frameworks, and established conventions provide safeguards to ensure that direct appointments are made in a manner that is consistent, justified, and subject to appropriate oversight, including during the period leading up to a general election.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1003-  
20(1):  
INTERNATIONAL HIRING FOR  
HEALTHCARE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on February 11, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Government of the Northwest Territories has not been approached to open a chapter of Canadian Health Care Infusion in the Northwest Territories for US healthcare workers.

The Departments of Finance and Health and Social Service collaborate on issues associated with bringing Internationally Educated Nurses into the workforce as Registered Nurses in the Northwest Territories. A Territorial Internationally Educated Nurses Working Group has been established in partnership with

the College and Association of Nurses of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, Tlicho Community Services Agency, Aurora College and the Department of Finance's Human Resources. This working group has been tasked, in part, with providing recommendations on how the health care system can support Internationally Educated Nurses currently working in or looking for work in the Northwest Territories.

The NWT health system requires access to reliable and accessible transition support programming, particularly for Internationally Educated Nurses who transition directly from another country into nursing practice in Canada. Supports such as Educational Bridging Programs and Supervised Practice Experience require significant funding, new positions, and specialized training tools.

Internationally educated nurses who are legally able to work in Canada and looking to become licensed in the NWT are encouraged to contact the College and Association of Nurses of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut for information on the registration process. A notable difference from larger jurisdictions is that Internationally Educated Nurses registering in NWT and Nunavut require prior registration as a nurse in another Canadian jurisdiction and a minimum number of practice hours in Canada as part of the College and Association of Nurses of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut registration process.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1168-  
20(1):  
DIRECT APPOINTMENTS REPORTING

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided.

The Department of Finance will review how direct appointments are currently reflected in the Public Service Annual Report to ensure greater clarity and transparency.

Beginning with future reports, the Department will include additional information to more clearly identify direct appointments. This will include providing a clearer breakdown within the "staffing actions" section, so that direct appointments are more readily distinguishable from other forms of internal mobility. The department will also consider including a brief overview of the guidelines governing direct appointments to provide context for how and why they are used.

The intent is to ensure that reporting is clear, accessible, and supports Members and others in understanding how these staffing actions are applied in practice.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1165-  
20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES REMOTE WORK POLICIES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories Remote Work Policies.

The Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) Remote Work Policy was enacted in early 2022, establishing a framework for employee remote work arrangements. The policy identifies three types of arrangements: full-time remote and hybrid work, long-distance remote work within the territory, and out-of-territory remote work.

Remote work is based on employee request and is available based on an assessment of the suitability of the position to ensure that the duties can be completed remotely without negative impact on service delivery, and then an assessment of the employee to ensure they are well suited to work remotely in the arrangement they have proposed. The employee assessment is based on the employee's history and where an employee is denied their request to work remotely, they are provided with a written breakdown of the rationale for the denial.

Departments are responsible for assessing each request to ensure it is appropriate and that it is not being used in place of leave provisions.

These arrangements are formalized through written agreements and are subject to regular review to ensure they continue to meet both operational needs and policy requirements.

With respect to monitoring and oversight, departments are responsible for ongoing management of remote work agreements. This includes reviewing arrangements periodically and addressing any issues related to performance, operational impacts, or unexpected costs.

Out-of-territory remote work is subject to additional scrutiny and limitations and is only to be considered or requested by Departments in rare and exceptional circumstances. These requests require approval by the Deputy Head of the Department of Finance to ensure consistency in application across government, and they are typically time-limited.

Further guidance issued in an Interpretation Bulletin dated January 2025 reinforced that these arrangements must meet a high threshold, be operationally necessary, and be limited in duration.

The Remote Work Policy is currently undergoing scheduled review. Elements of the review include employee engagement, interjurisdictional research, and gathering insights from the first years of operation of the policy.

Details of this review and information about the GNWT's existing remote work arrangements will be reported in future Public Service Annual Reports, including an overview of the policy, how it is applied and how it is monitored.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1093-  
20(1):  
HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN TLICHO  
COMMUNITIES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on February 25, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority manage contracts with out-of-territory supportive living service providers.

In the Tlicho region, twelve individuals are currently placed in supportive living arrangements outside the territory.

The Tlicho Community Services Agency provides case management services to clients residing at home, as well as those in both in-territory and out-of-territory placements. These services include coordinating home and family visits, addressing and managing concerns related to living arrangements, liaising with supportive living service providers to ensure client needs are met. Additionally, conducting annual in-person visits to assess living conditions, confirming appropriate supports are in place, and supporting clients in navigating health-related billing.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1012-  
20(1):  
ACCESS TO MAGNETIC RESONANCE  
IMAGING SERVICES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on February 12, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

As of March 27, 2026, Alberta Health Services has a total of 826 Magnetic Resonance Imaging requests in progress for Northwest Territories residents. Of that, 101 have not yet been booked and are therefore considered to be on

a waitlist. The remaining 725 have been completed or are currently scheduled. Further detail on the status of those appointments has been requested, however no response has been received from Alberta Health Services. This data refers to all Northwest Territories residents seeking this service, regardless of the payer, including private third-party insurance and territorial benefit programs.

All referrals for Magnetic Resonance Imaging are booked through a centralized system at Alberta Health Services and are not tracked by Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority.

The average wait time for Magnetic Resonance Imaging services is currently being reviewed by Alberta Health Services. Wait times typically range from two to six months, depending on the urgency of the patient's clinical condition.

Later today I will table a document that presents the total estimated annual cost of sending residents to Alberta for Magnetic Resonance Imaging services, including both examination volumes and associated travel expenses. Medical travel costs were calculated per person and include return airfare from Yellowknife to Edmonton, as well as accommodation and per diem expenses. For estimation purposes, travel costs assume one round-trip flight and a one-night stay per patient.

Patients may have had other services provided at southern health facilities aside from Magnetic Resonance Imaging that would have warranted medical travel however, there is no mechanism to identify when a patient is travelling exclusively for Magnetic Resonance Imaging without looking at individual patient records.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1192-  
20(1):  
CAPACITY LEVELS OF GENERAL  
PRACTITIONERS IN YELLOWKNIFE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 6, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority measures staff vacancies quarterly. The average vacancy rate for family physicians in Yellowknife, specific to Primary Care Clinics, for each quarter of the 2025-2026 fiscal year remained at 40.5%. This vacancy rate includes physicians that are on various types of long-term leave, for example deferred, parental, etc.

Current data systems do not track locum data for specific clinics and clinic locations. Data

specifically for Family Physicians in the Primary Care Clinic in Yellowknife is not available.

The latest data available for locums is for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. There were 284 unique locums used across the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority to cover family practice services including Emergency, Obstetrical, Anesthesia, Clinic and Hospitalist services.

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

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on February 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided regarding Government of the Northwest Territories actions against misinformation and denialism regarding residential schools:

The Government of the Northwest Territories supports Indigenous governments with residential school healing strategies by providing funding support and technical assistance. GNWT programs are intended to complement Indigenous-led initiatives and priorities. The GNWT has also established initiatives to advance truth and reconciliation, including a residential school monument, cultural training, and support for burial site research. In addition, the GNWT continues to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, including adopting the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*, supporting Indigenous languages revitalization and expanding community-based healing programming.

In fall 2021, the GNWT initiated work on a Residential School Monument in response to Call to Action 82. This monument will commemorate Indigenous children who never returned home and honour survivors, their families, and their communities. The GNWT is committed to a survivors-led process in the monument's development. Once complete, the monument will affirm GNWT's commitment to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and serve as a permanent, publicly accessible reminder of the legacy and impacts of residential schools. The monument is scheduled to be unveiled in June 2027.

In support of Calls to Action 43 to 44, the GNWT passed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act* and is set to release the inaugural action plan which will guide the GNWT's ongoing work

towards alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Supporting Indigenous languages revitalization is another key component of reconciliation efforts. The GNWT is working in partnership with Indigenous governments and communities to address the lasting impacts of residential schools on Indigenous languages. This includes advancing Calls to Action 13 to 15 through the *Officials Language Act* and Indigenous languages programming across the school system from junior kindergarten to grade 12.

The GNWT is also advancing reconciliation through cultural training and education. *Northern Studies* is a mandatory course requirement for high school graduation and includes key learnings on how all northern people need to work together to foster healing, address injustice, and celebrate diversity and living well together through the 21st century. The GNWT also delivers Living Well Together, a mandatory Indigenous cultural awareness and sensitivity training program for employees to support reconciliation and foster culturally respectful public service.

The GNWT continues to work with Indigenous governments and organizations in the NWT to support their efforts to identify potential unmarked burial sites. This work aligns with Call to Action 76 and emphasizes community leadership in the development of strategies for research, identification, and commemoration.

Addressing the effects of trauma is a mandate commitment of the 20th Legislative Assembly and the GNWT is advancing reconciliation through this work by:

Ensuring that policies and programs are designed and renewed with a trauma-informed, anti-racist and cultural safety lens that is informed by residents;

Supporting Indigenous governments and other partners to develop and deliver culturally appropriate, northern and regional trauma treatment, mental wellness and addictions programming by removing administrative barriers and streamlining supports;

Enabling residents to focus on healing by making programs and services easier to access through an integrated and person-centered service delivery approach and by working in collaboration with Indigenous governments, community governments and other partners; and,

Encouraging community wellness and self-determination by supporting the development and delivery of community-based wellness

programs to address mental wellness, prevention, early intervention, and holistic health.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 969-  
20(1):  
FAMILY VIOLENCE SHELTERS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on February 9, 2026, the following additional information is provided regarding Family Violence Shelters:

The Government of the Northwest Territories responded to the YWCA Northwest Territories' letter, requesting financial support of \$340,000 for the 2026-2027 fiscal year and assistance in finding ongoing funding for the Safe Homes in Fort Simpson and Fort Good Hope, on March 24, 2026.

Minister Kuptana, Minister responsible for Housing NWT, advised the YWCA that the Gender Equity Division within the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs will be financially supporting the Safe Homes projects through the most appropriate funding mechanism.

A meeting has been scheduled with Health and Social Services Minister Semmler and Minister Kuptana to discuss coordination of family violence shelters and safe homes across the Northwest Territories.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 972-  
20(1):  
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife North on February 9, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

As of March 31, 2026, there are 19 permanent family physicians based in Yellowknife. When accounting for those on long-term leave, 15 are currently active. While each of these physicians is assigned to a primary care team, they also provide a range of other services beyond primary care; as such, this number does not fully represent the staffing capacity of the primary health care clinic. One additional family physician is scheduled to join the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority in Yellowknife on June 29, 2026.

Family physicians also provide hospital-based inpatient care, emergency department services, labour and delivery care, general practitioner oncology, and long-term care, as well as support for various programs within the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. In addition, they deliver

primary care services to residents at Avens and the North Slave Correctional Complex.

Many of these services are considered essential and must be staffed at all times. As a result, physician time is prioritized for these essential services, with remaining capacity allocated to primary care. Consequently, the number of physicians assigned to primary care teams does not accurately reflect their availability within those teams, as primary care capacity depends on multiple complex factors. Service gaps are actively managed through locum coverage and scheduling adjustments.

There are currently eight Nurse Practitioners across the four Primary Care teams who are permanent staff currently in Yellowknife. With upcoming long-term leave, only seven are considered active.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1110-  
20(1):  
NURSE RETENTION

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 26, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The retention of nurses within the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is supported through a coordinated, multi-level approach. The strategic approach is led by the Talent and Organizational Development Division, specifically the Strategic Learning and Talent Development Unit, which develops system-wide programs, tools, and resources to support retention across all staff groups. Nursing-specific strategies are delivered in partnership with Clinical Integration to align with nursing practice and service delivery needs. Lastly, operational level techniques are tailored by leaders across regions, sites, and units to reflect the specific needs of nursing teams.

Retention initiatives are guided by the 2025 - 2028 Health and Social Services System People Strategy that builds on the foundations established by the 2021-2024 Health and Social Services Human Resources Strategy. The People Strategy is informed by ongoing staff feedback, including exit survey data.

Exit interviews, facilitated by the Strategic Learning and Talent Development Unit, provide valuable insights that directly inform the development of targeted retention strategies. These include initiatives to strengthen leadership support, enhance psychological safety and well-being, and improve training, career development, and onboarding practices.

The Health and Social Services System leadership development programs are

designed for leaders within a Health and Social Services environment and are built on nationwide best practices through the Canadian College of Health Leaders. They are designed to strengthen leadership capability, accountability, and communication. The LEADS Health Leadership Pilot Program launched in Fall 2022, the Leadership Essentials Program launched in May 2025, and the Managers Orientation is set to launch in Spring 2026.

Engagement and wellness initiatives, alongside leadership tools, have been implemented to address workplace culture and psychological safety concerns identified by staff. Psychological Health and Safety Training is set to launch in Spring 2026, and an Employee Wellness Program Specialist is currently being recruited to develop and lead programs tailored to the needs of Health and Social Service System Staff.

Customized internal e-Learning modules are continuously being developed, providing relevant and accessible training to all nursing staff through the Health and Social Services System's Learning Management System, myLearning, enabling immediate application in practice, improving confidence, and reducing variability in care delivery across regions.

The Professional Development Initiative and the Targeted Academic Support Program continue to support self-directed and advanced learning opportunities for nurses across the system, from attending conferences to pursuing Nurse Practitioner designations and master's-level education. The Specialized Nurse Transition Program, established in 2022, helps prepare nurses for practice in high-demand clinical areas and supports internal career advancement.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1138-  
20(1):

STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL  
EMERGENCY ROOM SECURITY

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on March 3, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Stanton Emergency Department has multiple safety policies, operational procedures, and environmental controls in place to support staff and patient safety and to prevent and respond to incidents of workplace violence. These are supported by regular Workplace Violence Prevention assessments and continuous quality improvement initiatives.

The Emergency Department participates in formal Workplace Violence risk assessments in

alignment with the Authority's Violence Prevention Program. A follow-up assessment was completed in April 2025 to evaluate progress from the initial December 2023 assessment. These assessments include staff interviews and environmental walk-throughs to identify risks, assess mitigation strategies, and inform action planning. Manager unit-specific action plans are developed following each assessment to address identified risks and reinforce ongoing monitoring and improvement.

Emergency codes, standard operating procedures and staff support tools are reviewed and updated regularly. Notably within the past fiscal year updates were made to Code White – Aggressive/Violent Behaviour, Code Silver – Weapon/Violence Threat and Code Black –

Bomb Threat and the Duress System standard operating procedures. Ongoing staff education and tabletop drills are used to reinforce understanding of emergency codes, duress activation, and response expectations.

Environmental and security controls are in place. The Emergency Department closes doors and controls access overnight as a violence prevention measure, reducing unauthorized entry and improving staff safety. On-site security officers provide continuous support in the Emergency Department, respond to duress alarms and incidents, and assist with de-escalation and coordination with Royal Canadian Mounted Police when required. Identified safe spaces, improved signage, restricted-access signage, and environmental design considerations, which include visibility and sightlines, are actively being strengthened based on Workplace Violence assessment findings.

Communication, monitoring, and community coordination are priorities. Security staff use a "be on the lookout" process to increase awareness of individuals or situations that may pose an increased risk to staff safety. A multidisciplinary Security and Royal Canadian Mounted Police committee is in place to coordinate planning, information sharing, and response to safety concerns. This committee has been expanded to include the Yellowknife Region, local shelters, and key community partners, with the intent to strengthen communication pathways, improve shared situational awareness, and support coordinated responses to individuals who may present safety risks. The Behavioral Health Workers circulate periodically through the waiting room to support Dexterra security and to be proactive in de-escalating potential situations before they become an issue, if necessary.

Dexterra, as the Stanton facility service provider, implements Security Standard Operating Procedures at the Stanton Territorial Hospital through its contracted security services provider. Oversight is provided by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, and procedures align with Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority policies, hospital emergency codes, and the Project Agreement.

A combination of formal policies, updated standard operating procedures, environmental controls, security presence, community collaboration, and ongoing workplace violence assessments reflects the Emergency Department's continued commitment to staff safety, preparedness, and continuous improvement in violence prevention and response.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1150-20(1):  
REVIEW OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON LANDS AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Further to the response provided to the Member for Frame Lake on March 3, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The 7-year review is a requirement of the Northwest Territories Intergovernmental Agreement on Lands and Resources Management. The terms of reference for this review were approved by the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat, in May 2024. These terms of reference establish an internal committee to the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat and require a contractor to conduct the review. The internal committee is comprised of representatives from the GNWT, Tłı̨chǫ Government, Gwich'in Tribal Council and Northwest Territory Métis Nation. The scope of work for the review was developed by the internal committee and approved by the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat in January 2026. The approved scope of work was used to develop a request for proposals, or RFP, to hire an external contractor to conduct the review. The review is expected to be completed this calendar year.

The RFP followed the GNWT's procurement procedures and was posted on the GNWT's contract event opportunities website from March 10 to March 31, 2026. Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a document that contains the RFP that was posted on the GNWT's contract event opportunities. The contract will be awarded upon a review of applications by the internal committee.

The contractor will engage with all 10 government signatories to the Intergovernmental Agreement to hear their perspectives. While the terms of reference do not require the contractor to engage with the Legislative Assembly and the public, there will be opportunities for Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, or MLAs, to provide feedback to the internal committee that will inform the final summary report. Further details will be shared with MLAs about how they will be engaged through the review once the contract has been awarded. The contractor will provide a final summary report for review and approval by the Intergovernmental Council.

The Intergovernmental Council recognizes the importance of issuing joint press releases, statements or other communications on matters related to the Intergovernmental Council or of mutual interest to the signatory governments of the Intergovernmental Agreement. These are published online on the Intergovernmental Council website at [www.igcnwt.ca](http://www.igcnwt.ca).

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 971-20(1):  
APPROVAL STATUS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF DINAGA WEKEHODI PROTECTED AREA

Further to the response provided to the Member for Monfwi on February 9, 2026, the following additional information is provided regarding the Approval Status for Establishing of Dinaga Wek'ehodi Territorial Protected Area:

Significant progress was made by Indigenous governments, Indigenous organization partners, and the GNWT in the initial drafting of a Multi-Party Agreement for the future Dinàgà Wek'ehodi Territorial Protected Area. Indigenous governments and Indigenous organization partners, however, have been unable to come to consensus on the composition of the future Management Board, specifically regarding the number of management board seats that each government should be allocated. The process has been stalled since 2023 as a result.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is exploring potential options and next steps to work towards potential resolution.

The GNWT recognizes the importance of protecting Dinaga Wek'ehodi and is committed to continuing to work towards resolution with the partners.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1155-20(1):  
SUPPORTS FOR RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Great Slave on March 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

GNWT Departments collaborate with non-governmental organizations to support persons with disabilities through a coordinated, whole-of-government approach.

The Department of Health and Social Services provides ongoing disability-related support, including:

Funding to the NWT Disabilities Council who provide information on disabilities and support to NWT residents with disabilities. This funding includes Respite Funds that provide community-based non-medical daytime respite services to caregivers of persons with disabilities.

Low vision rehabilitation services that are provided through a contract with Vision Loss Rehabilitation – Alberta.

Membership on the Canada Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, or FASD, Partnership, together with the CanFASD Research Network, to support the development of an Indigenous FASD Framework. This project focuses on establishing a national FASD Indigenous Framework grounded in community engagement, to advance Indigenous-informed assessment, diagnosis and supports.

GNWT representation on Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Disability and Accessibility Forums, Committees, and Working Groups. The Department leverages this cross-jurisdictional work to inform the approach to improving programs and services for persons with disabilities in the NWT.

Implementation of the recommendations of the NWT Supported Living Review to establish a new person and family-centered, culturally safe, and inclusive model for delivering Supported Living services in the NWT.

Collaboration with the NWT Disabilities Council and NWT Human Rights Commission to honour recipients at the annual Accessibility and Inclusion Awards, including administering the GNWT Accessibility and Inclusion Award.

Collaboration with the Department of Infrastructure and Housing NWT on accessible housing planning for persons with disabilities.

Collaboration with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment on navigating school-based rehabilitation services.

Housing NWT provides ongoing disability-related support in the following areas:

Funding under the Mobility Modifications program to improve the accessibility of homes for people with a disability in the form of a forgivable loan of up to \$50,000.

Prioritization of applications from households that have a person with a disability or medical issue aggravated by current accommodations on the territorial social housing waitlist.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment provides ongoing disability-related support in the following areas:

Funding for the Labour Market Program to the Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest and Inclusion NWT to support the delivery of employment-related programming for persons with disabilities in the Northwest Territories.

Funding to the NWT Disabilities Council through the Learning Supports for Persons with Disabilities Fund to help adults with disabilities overcome barriers to learning and reach their learning goals.

Collaboration with program delivery partners on program design, performance monitoring and reporting requirements, which contributes to ongoing analysis of service delivery outcomes and client participation. This collaboration supports shared learning across government and disability-serving organizations and helps inform continuous improvement of labour market programming for persons with disabilities.

Collaboration with government partners to strengthen policy alignment, and evidence-based decision making related to disability supports. As part of the Income Assistance Program Review, the Department updated the definition of persons with disabilities to align more closely with the *Accessible Canada Act*, strengthening consistency with national standards.

Collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services to develop the Disability Assessment Form for the Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities program. This was done to ensure that the determination of what is a disability is based solely on the decision of the medical professional and to improve accessibility and equity by broadening the range of qualified professionals who can complete the form, as remote communities may have limited access to physicians. This collaboration has supported more consistent assessment practices and improved program integrity.

Collaboration across departments to develop and implement the new Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities program, which was designed to reduce administrative burden for clients and provide enhanced basic benefits that better reflect the additional costs associated with living with a disability. Following a similar program review, the department also expanded the definition of students with disabilities for the Student Financial Assistance program and increased the financial assistance available under the Study Grants for Students with Disabilities.

The Department has improved Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation, a program that supports children with enhanced or complex needs in early learning and child care. Improvements include clearer communication, a streamlined program application process to receive funding quicker, and updated legislation so early learning and child care operators can share necessary child information with Education, Culture and Employment staff for evaluation and reporting.

Work to improve the Special Needs Rate for home-based facilities is ongoing, as the Department works with providers to ensure all early learning and child care facility types have clear and easy access to supports.

Tracking of progress on inclusion indicators within early learning and childcare agreements with Canada and associated action plans.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs provides ongoing disability-related support in the following areas:

Collaboration with the Department of Finance to support the delivery of property tax relief under the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief Act that supports eligible residents remaining in their homes and communities.

Collaboration with community governments to support the development of land use plans that shape the physical environment of communities. Through guidance, tools, and technical support, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs helps communities consider how planning decisions can enhance accessibility and reduce barriers to participation for persons with disabilities. This includes providing the Accessibility and Age-Friendly Design Considerations Guide to support inclusive approaches when community plans are developed or updated.

Partnerships with community governments, organizations, and other stakeholders to advance inclusion through the NWT Active Living Framework. This framework supports

safe, barrier-free recreation opportunities, encourages participation and promotes accessible programs for persons with disabilities and other equity-deserving.

The Department of Justice offers a wide range of programs and services that persons with disabilities may access, including:

Services from the Office of the Public Trustee, to help manage the financial affairs of individuals who have been assessed by a physician as incapable of doing so, and who do not have an existing power of attorney in place, or family or friends able to assist them. In these circumstances, the Office obtains a court order appointing the Public Trustee as trustee to support vulnerable and disabled persons. Outside of Yellowknife, and where individuals prefer or require services in an Indigenous language, the Office works closely with Government Service Officers and community partners to help deliver these supports.

Wellness Court, which provides an alternative court process to address underlying issues of drug and alcohol addiction, mental health and cognitive challenges for accused persons with high needs. Wellness Court has recently adopted Justice Canada's Substance Use Treatment Court Information System to better track outcomes for program participants including connection to community resources, and long-term recidivism rates. Wellness Court is currently exclusively available to Yellowknife residents due to the nature of the supervision.

An inclusive approach to Correction Services to provide alternative individual support to adult and youth offenders and inmates with cognitive difficulties and other complex needs. Planning for the reintegration of offenders into their communities takes place from the beginning of the sentence through an individual case management plan. Corrections staff work with Pathfinders with the GNWT's Integrated Service Delivery program for additional assistance to inmates who need to access multiple government services and resources, as well as community partners to facilitate access to interagency services and homelessness support.

Recent legislative changes to Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Protection Against Family Violence Act to expand and define categories of people who can apply for an emergency protection order to include individuals in a "care relationship", where dependency exists for assistance in daily living due to disability, illness, aging or impairment, and ensures that individuals are not prevented from accessing protection due to challenges in perceiving fear.

Amendments to Bill 27 are expected to come into force in summer 2026. The Department of Justice is working with the RCMP and partners such as the YWCA NWT and Victim Services providers across the NWT, to ensure those who work with victims of family violence are trained and informed to offer support and advice in line with the amended legislation.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 924-  
20(1):  
STATUS OF LOCKSMITHS, SECURITY  
GUARDS AND OTHER SECURITY  
OCCUPATIONS

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Justice has reviewed the Legislation and Regulations for Private Security Act and understands that it did receive assent on April 18, 1991. It was then amended by An Act to Amend the Locksmiths, Security Guards and Other Security Occupations Act on December 10, 1992. The legislation was finally repealed in 1998 when Bill 5-13(6), the Regulatory Reform Measures Act, received assent.

Based on the record, it appears it was felt at the time that it would be too costly to properly regulate the industry and was repealed as a cost-saving measure. There were also concerns about the potential financial and administrative burden the Act would place on small businesses in the NWT.

Given the fiscal realities currently being faced by the Government of the Northwest Territories and the economic impact it would place on small NWT businesses, the rationale for repealing the Act in 1998 is still applicable today. The Department of Justice agrees with the decision to repeal and has no intention of reintroducing this Act as one to govern private security.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 935-  
20(1):  
FINE OPTION COMMUNITY JUSTICE  
PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE  
COMMITTEES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Range Lake on February 4, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

The Department of Justice supports Community Justice Coordinators and Community Justice Committees through contribution agreements with Indigenous governments and local service providers. These Coordinators and Committees are not

present in all NWT communities. Participation in the program is community driven, and all communities that express interest in operating a Community Justice Coordinator or a Community Justice Committee are funded. The Department of Justice also proactively engages communities without these supports to encourage participation and provide training, start-up support, and ongoing assistance.

As of January 2026, there are 18 signed funding agreements, seven single-year and 11 multi-year, supporting services in 23 communities.

Communities without a Community Justice Coordinator and Community Justice Committee include Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort Good Hope, Tulita, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Kát'odeeche First Nation, Wrigley, Sambaa K'e, and Łutsek'e. Smaller communities including Jean Marie River, Enterprise, Nahanni Butte, Sachs Harbour, and Colville Lake are supported in neighbouring communities.

FOLLOW-UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1020-  
20(1):  
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
SPECIAL CONSTABLES

Further to the response provided to the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 12, 2026, the following additional information is provided:

Historically, there were three Special Constable positions in RCMP "G" Division; however, the Special Constable Program was discontinued by RCMP National Headquarters and is no longer an available policing model in Canada. Through attrition, only one position remains active in Canada and that individual is employed by RCMP "G" Division.

This member works and resides in the South Slave Region and focuses primarily on community policing rather than front line detachment duties, investigations or regular shift schedules typically assigned to regular members, although they may provide backup when required. This Special Constable also serves as an instructor for various RCMP operational training programs within RCMP "G" Division.

The Special Constable Program has since been replaced with enhancements under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. The Department of Justice secured cost-shared federal funding through Public Safety Canada for the period of 2023-2032, with 48 percent funded by the Government of the Northwest Territories and 52 percent funded by Public Safety Canada. This funding has supported the

creation and staffing of 22 First Nations and Inuit Policing Program positions in RCMP "G" Division.

These positions provide enhanced community policing services in addition to regular detachment duties and serve as primary on-call members in their communities.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Oral questions. Written Questions.

Colleagues, recognizing the time and we need to give our translator a break, we will have a quick break. Thank you. And there's a reception in the great hall.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Returns to Written Questions. Mr. Clerk.

### Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 32-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL COSTS, BUDGET  
PRESSURES, AND TRAVEL VOLUMES

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a Return to Written Question 32-20(1) asked by the Member for Range Lake on February 24th, 2026, regarding medical travel costs, budget pressures, and travel volumes.

The Member asked for an outline of the specific factors that are driving the cost increases for medical travel services year after year.

Scheduled air travel, the new air ambulance contract in 2025-2026, and increased use of boarding homes are the three largest contributors to growth in expenditures over the past five years. Increased volume of travel and inflation have also contributed to the increased costs.

The previous air ambulance contract was in effect for ten years, and costs were capped by annual inflation adjustments tied to the Consumer Price Index. However, the aviation and medical industries experienced inflation that outpaced the Consumer Price Index over the final years of the previous contract. A large year-over-year correction was anticipated in 2025-2026 for the start of the new air ambulance contract.

Much of the increase in scheduled air travel expenditure is due to the increase in dental travel, primarily for clients eligible under Non-Insured Health Benefits. Non-Insured Health Benefits dental travel is fully recoverable from

Indigenous Services Canada. Later today, at the appropriate time I will table a document outlining this data.

The Member asked for a general breakdown of the annual medical travel budget into major cost categories such as flights, accommodations, escorts, and administrative processing so the public can understand where the program is coming under financial strain. This breakdown is also captured in the document to be tabled later today.

The Member asked if the Department tracks cases in which residents travel for medical purposes without prior approval; and, if so, how many such cases occurred in the last fiscal year.

Through the appeals application and decision-making process at the Department of Health and Social Services, cases are documented in which residents travel for medical purposes without prior approval. In many of these instances, residents subsequently appeal the Medical Travel Office's decision to deny reimbursement due to the lack of pre-approval.

There are also cases where residents do not submit an appeal; the number of these cases is unknown. In the 2025-2026 fiscal year, there were 30 documented cases of residents travelling without prior approval from the Medical Travel Office.

The Member asked how many medical travel requests, both scheduled and emergency, were submitted in the last fiscal year, and how does that compare to the average volume over the previous five years.

In fiscal year 2024-2025, Medical Travel handled 23,009 travel cases, an increase of 36.6% or 5,912 cases compared to an average of the previous three fiscal years. Dental travel cases accounted for almost 50% of this increase. Excluding dental travel, Medical Travel handled 17,857 cases in 2024-2025, an increase of 20.8% or 3,069 cases compared to an average of the previous three fiscal years. In 2024-2025, there were 1,665 medevacs, a decrease of 7.3% or 131 medevacs compared to an average of the previous three fiscal years. This data is also captured in the document being tabled later today.

The Member asked for the number and percentage of medical travel requests denied last fiscal year, along with the top categories of reasons for denial.

There is no available data indicating how many travel requests were denied. However, common reasons for denial include the patient

not being a resident of the Northwest Territories or not actively enrolled in the Northwest Territories Health Care Plan, travel benefits not being approved prior to travel, or the medical service being provided through a private clinic without the required prior approval from the Department of Health and Social Services. Additional reasons for denial include situations where the medical or dental service requires approval from a supplementary health benefit provider, such as Non-Insured Health Benefits or Alberta Blue Cross for dental services or prosthetic fittings, and that approval was not obtained, where the appointment was not sought at the Nearest Centre as outlined in the Medical Travel Policy, or where travel originated outside the Northwest Territories and did not meet the parameters of the Medical Travel Policy.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 33-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL DELAYS AND  
COORDINATION

Mr. Speaker, I also have a Return to Written Question 33-20(1) asked by the Member for Range Lake on February 24th, 2026, regarding medical travel delays and coordination.

The Member asked for the average and maximum wait times for medical travel approvals over the past fiscal year, and for an explanation of what actions are being taken to reduce delays for patients who need to travel urgently.

The medical travel case management system does not have a way to generate reports that track approval times or benefit applications that are not approved. Cases are created in the system when the travel is approved, and statistics are generated from expenses incurred.

However, as a part of the medical travel improvement work initiated in January 2026, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority conducted a detailed audit of a sample of medical travel cases. The medical travel process for 280 cases from 2025 was reviewed, and included the review of all documentation, case notes, purchase orders, invoices and travel itineraries. The response to this question is based on the data from this audit sample.

Note the Northwest Territories health and social services Authority's medical travel program is not involved in employer-sponsored medical travel benefits, which accounts for approximately one third of all NWT resident medical travel.

Based on the medical travel sample cases reviewed, it took an average of 6.2 days from when the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority became aware of a clinic appointment to when the clinic submitted the application for travel benefits.

On average, it took 4.5 days from when the medical travel Office received an application from the clinic to when travel arrangements were confirmed.

On average, patients were given 10.6 days' notice between receiving their travel confirmation and the date of their appointment.

The medical travel Office intentionally prioritizes benefit applications based on "lead time," meaning that applications with the least amount of time before the medical appointment are processed first. As a result, looking only at the average processing time across all applications does not reflect how applications are prioritized based on urgency.

Later today at the appropriate time, I will table the data that provides a summary of processing time relative to lead time, frequency of processing time ranges, and compliance data.

The Member asked for an explanation of what specific steps the Department is taking to streamline coordination with non-insured health benefits, especially for cases waiting on non-insured health benefits escort or travel approvals, and how many medical trips were delayed last year due to pending non-insured health benefits decisions.

The Department of Health and Social Services is working with Indigenous Services Canada and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority to improve how non-medical escort decisions are adjudicated. This work is expected to shorten processing timelines and give medical travel staff clearer direction on approval criteria under the federal framework.

Medical trips were not delayed due to pending Indigenous Services Canada decisions in any of the samples audited. Indigenous Services Canada decisions typically relate to non-medical escort approvals unique to the non-insured health benefits policy, not the approval of medical travel for a patient. Such decisions did impact the timeframe for approving the full set of travel benefits in 0.1 percent of cases reviewed, but not in a way that delayed travel or the medical appointment itself.

The Member asked what portion of medical travel expenditures in the last fiscal year were driven by avoidable travel, such as repeat trips caused by appointment cancellations,

inadequate pre-screening, or delays in diagnostic services, and what measures the department is implementing to reduce preventable travel.

There is no data available to provide an answer to this question. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority received funding in 2026-2027 to introduce medical travel Nurse Case Managers whose role will include the collection of information about medical travel costs avoided through improved coordination and redirection to virtual care, where appropriate.

The Member asked what service standards, if any, exist for communication with patients regarding itinerary changes, cancellations, or approval updates, and how often those standards were met over the past fiscal year.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is developing service standards using the results of the audit of sample cases. Preliminary targets and compliance using 2025 baseline data from the samples audited are outlined in the data tables referenced previously. The preliminary performance framework defines greater than 90 percent compliance as Excellent, 80-90 percent compliance as Good, 70-80 percent compliance as Below standard, and less than 70 percent compliance as Poor.

Service standards for communicating with residents about flight changes or cancellations do not currently exist. As part of the ongoing medical travel Modernization work, the current medical travel process was mapped to identify where service standards are needed to improve both system performance and client experience. These service standards will be established and communicated as part of the rollout of the updated medical travel policy on September 1, 2026.

The Member asked what proportion of medical travel cases last fiscal year involved repeat travel for the same medical issue due to cancelled appointments, incomplete treatments, or diagnostic follow-ups, and what strategies are being implemented to reduce unnecessary repeat travel.

The audit showed evidence of many trips being rebooked for later dates (prior to travel) due to canceled or rescheduled appointments, however, there is no.

Information available on the number of trips taken due to incomplete treatment or other incomplete medical services.

Appointments canceled either by the patient or the provider prior to travel occurred in 8 percent

of the cases reviewed. Clients did not travel on the outbound flights arranged for them in 8 percent of the cases reviewed. Flights were delayed/canceled, or clients were waitlisted and were unable to travel in 7 percent of the cases reviewed. Complexities emerged during the trip, such as missed appointments or complications relating to return travel in 17 percent of the cases reviewed.

The medical travel Nurse Case Manager initiative aims to provide information about reductions in patient travel through improved coordination and efficiency of health system resources.

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 34-20(1): MEDICAL ESCORT POLICIES ELIGIBILITY AND APPEALS

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 34-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 24th, 2026, regarding medical travel escort policies, eligibility, and appeals.

The Member asked the Minister to provide the total cost from last fiscal year related to non-medical escorts.

Later today at the appropriate time, I will table the data that shows the overall trend in Medical Travel cases with approved escorts. The total cost of non-medical escort travel in 2024-2025 was \$16,370,233. The cost in 2025-2026 is projected to be \$18,575,298.

The Member asked the Minister how many cases in the past fiscal year involved patients who met the criteria for a medical escort but did not receive one, either due to administrative errors, capacity limitations, or policy interpretations. There is no data available to provide a response to this question.

The Member asked the Minister how many of the medical travel requests that were denied last fiscal year were later overturned through appeals, Members of the Legislative Assembly inquiries, or Ministerial interventions.

The medical travel case management system does not have a way to generate reports to track administrative errors. However, as a part of the rapid medical travel improvement work initiated in January 2026, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority conducted a detailed audit of a sample of medical travel files. The medical travel process for 280 cases from 2025 was reviewed, and included the review of all documentation, case notes, purchase orders, invoices and travel itineraries.

For fiscal year 2025-2026, there were a total of 30 appeals submitted to the Department of Health and Social Services, and seven cases that were originally denied by the Medical Travel Office were overturned through the appeals process. Some of these cases were a result of referrals being submitted late to the Medical Travel Office, so they were not in place at the time of travel. The audit of the sample medical travel cases found evidence of human error from the Medical Travel Program in 0.4% of cases, although errors did not necessarily result in missed appointments.

The Member asked the Minister what steps the Department is taking to ensure that escort eligibility is identified early, particularly for vulnerable patients to prevent last-minute denials or unnecessary hardship during travel.

Through the Medical Travel Modernization project, the Department launched a public awareness communications campaign to enhance awareness around medical travel benefits, and how to access them for residents and health care practitioners. The campaign supports residents in identifying the need for a non-medical escort early and communicating it to their practitioners. This work aims to prevent last-minute denials as specific escort criteria with supporting documentation will be more consistently included on the form, reducing unnecessary hardship for residents who require support with travel.

At present there is no process for clinicians to proactively identify patients who may need assistance with travel prior to the need for medical travel arising.

The Member asked the Minister what quality assurance processes are in place to review cases where medical travel arrangements were made incorrectly, such as missed bookings, incomplete itineraries, or communication failure, and how many such administrative errors were identified in the past fiscal year. There is no data available to provide a response to this question.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 35-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 6th, 2026, regarding the cost of living.

The Government of the Northwest Territories, or GNWT, does not currently have a standalone cost of living strategy. However, the GNWT continues to address cost of living pressures through a range of initiatives and performance measures that are embedded within

departmental Business Plans. These measures are monitored on an ongoing basis and publicly reported through regular Business Plan updates, ensuring transparency and accountability in how the GNWT responds to cost of living concerns across the territory.

The GNWT currently maintains programs and services in several areas that contribute to addressing the challenges associated with the cost-of-living for residents across the NWT.

The Department of Education Culture and Employment supports Income Assistance, Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, the Senior Home Heating Subsidy, the NWT Child Benefit, the NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit, Student Financial Assistance, a Child Care Fee Reduction to reduce childcare costs to an average of \$10/day, and adjusts the Minimum Wage.

With respect to Food Security, the GNWT supports the Anti-Poverty Fund, the Northern Food Development Program, the Healthy Choices Fund, the Small Community Homelessness Fund, Community Wellness Initiatives, the Community

Harvester Assistance Program and the School Food Program.

With respect to Housing, programs include covering costs of Emergency Repairs, Mobility Modifications, Preventative Maintenance, Seniors Aging in Place, Seniors Home Repair, Housing NWT's legacy mortgage program, as well as the Home Purchase Program, Homeownership Initiative Program and the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit.

Through the Department of Justice, Legal Aid Services are provided.

Additionally, emergency relief funding is provided through the NWT Emergency Evacuation Relief Program.

Structural Reform and Infrastructure projects that will address the challenges related to the cost of living include the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor and the Water and Waste Services Funding.

With respect to Energy and Power Rates, the GNWT supports public-facing energy rebate & energy efficiency programs and services through the Arctic Energy Alliance, the Greenhouse Gas Grant Program and the Territorial Power Support Program. Additional measures to support NWT residents include the GNWT Rate Equalization Program, the

Government Electricity Rates and the Cost of Living Subsidy.

With respect to taxation, the property tax relief under the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons *Property Tax Relief Act* also supports NWT residents.

The GNWT has implemented a series of initiatives to address the challenges associated with the high cost of food, fuel and housing. The Department of Infrastructure manages the purchase, transport and storage of bulk petroleum products for 16 NWT communities not serviced by the private sector. It also manages the purchase, transport and storage of diesel fuel on behalf of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation for 20 NWT communities. The GNWT's Petroleum Products Program delivers on average 35 million litres of petroleum products each year and is operated on a break-even basis.

To further limit the cost of electricity for residents, the GNWT approved a short-term support effective February 1, 2026 to March 31, 2028, through the Cost of Living Subsidy. This subsidy is applied to communities where electricity is reliant on diesel or other fuel-based generation, and South Slave communities served by the Taltson hydro system.

The GNWT takes a comprehensive approach to food security, focusing on both immediate needs and long-term solutions. Food security efforts include supporting local food production, country food harvesting, and food storage. Although climate change has created challenges for food supply and traditional harvesting, programs like the Northern Food Development Program and federal partnerships help to address these impacts.

The Anti-Poverty Fund and Healthy Choices Fund support local food initiatives, while community-based projects like meal programs receive funding from the Small Community Homelessness Fund. Schools and education bodies also receive support to provide healthy meals, and Indigenous governments use Community Wellness Initiatives to strengthen food security.

In addition, the GNWT offers the Community Harvester Assistance Program and Indigenous governments can also access funds from partners such as Canadian Feed the Children for distribution to schools.

Federal partnerships remain key. The GNWT continues to advocate for federal support through frameworks like the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, while the Department of Education, Culture and Employment works with Canada on the

National School Food Program. Additionally, Nutrition North Canada has expanded its support for isolated communities with subsidies and grants for traditional harvesting and food sharing. The GNWT's integrated efforts, combined with federal partnerships, provide a strong foundation for improving food security in the NWT.

Housing NWT supports addressing cost of living through its Home Repair Programs such as the Emergency Repairs, Mobility Modifications, Preventative Maintenance, Seniors Aging in Place, and Seniors Home Repairs Programs and through rental and home ownership support. The Home Purchase Program helps first-time homebuyers purchase a modest home with a forgivable loan for a down payment.

The Homeownership Initiative Program assists eligible Public Housing clients to transition to homeownership. The Canada-NWT Housing Benefit, or CNHB, is a federally funded program administered by Housing NWT in a cost-sharing partnership. CNHB provides financial assistance to low/moderate income households, living in private market rental housing, and paying more than 30% of their gross income towards shelter costs. Approved clients can receive up to \$800

per month to subsidize the monthly rent payment to help bring their monthly shelter costs down to 30%. The GNWT is also expanding the criteria for forgiveness of debts under Housing NWT's legacy mortgage program. Residents with legacy Housing NWT mortgages may be eligible to have their remaining mortgage forgiven.

In collaboration with the Department of Finance, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs supports the delivery of property tax relief under the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief Act. This exemption-based program reduces ongoing housing costs for eligible residents, helping seniors and persons with disabilities age safely and independently in their homes and communities while easing the overall cost of living. Municipal and Community Affairs' Water and Waste Services Funding helps community governments keep essential water and solid waste fees more affordable for their residents. In addition, Municipal and Community Affairs provides funding and works closely with community governments to facilitate access to federal programs for essential municipal services and public infrastructure, reducing financial pressures on residents and supporting sustainable community development.

The GNWT regularly engages with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, community governments, and local non-governmental organizations to improve programs and services, including the ones associated with addressing the challenges related to the cost of living.

The GNWT meets bilaterally with some Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations annually or bi-annually to discuss topics of shared interest, including initiatives to lower the cost of living for residents of the NWT. The Northwest Territories Council of Leaders is a multilateral forum where the GNWT and Indigenous leaders have had and continue to have the opportunity to discuss issues surrounding the cost of living and agree on joint outcomes for collaboration.

The Local Government Administrators of the NWT and the NWT Association of Communities are two organizations through which the GNWT engages with community governments on topics of shared interest, including challenges associated with the cost of living. The GNWT also engages directly with community governments as needed.

Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, are key partners in delivering initiatives that address the cost of living, including housing suitability, accessibility, and affordability and food insecurity. The GNWT's review of its funding approach to NGOs, informed by engagement with NGOs, resulted in increased funding in this year's budget and application process being streamlined by removing duplication, simplifying how information is requested and providing clear guidance to ensure alignment with the overall purpose of both funds. This investment and streamlining of applications were made in response to long-standing requests raised by our partners.

The GNWT strives to streamline administrative processes, policies and legislation across government to enhance the capacity of the public service to work better together and support the delivery of programs and services to NWT residents. For example, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment recently completed a review of the Income Assistance Program to reduce barriers and increase benefit levels and income exemptions. During this review, Education, Culture and Employment worked closely with other departments by sharing information on the new design of the program and identifying any impacts it may have on other programs. The new Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities program was also

designed to reduce the administrative burden both on residents and staff.

The GNWT has also created the Governance and Service Integration Unit which is responsible for leading and coordinating structural system-level change across the GNWT to strengthen accountability, efficiency, quality, equity, and resilience of government provided services. This unit is leading service integration efforts, including the establishment of five service integration teams across the territory in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Behchokq. The ultimate outcome of service integration is to enhance system capacity to provide more equitable, agile, streamlined and timely services to NWT residents by simplifying access, reducing administrative burden and reducing duplication and barriers.

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 36-20(1): SENIOR ENVOY

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 36-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 6th, 2026, regarding the senior envoy.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has appointed a Senior Envoy to the Government of Canada as part of a comprehensive approach to strengthening intergovernmental relations and advancing territorial priorities.

The Member asked 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.

The work of the Senior Envoy involves facilitating connections between Indigenous governments and federal decision-makers, providing a senior GNWT presence at key events and conferences and offering senior level strategic advice to the Premier and Ministers.

The Senior Envoy had discussions with 17 different Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations of the NWT. The Senior Envoy attended meetings and participated in engagement at bilateral meetings with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations of the NWT, and multilateral forums like the Northwest Territories Council of Leaders and the Intergovernmental Council.

Topics discussed at these meetings are varied and include GNWT priorities, major projects, housing, Jordan's Principle Funding, and Non-insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit. The consistent theme is advancing discussions related to respective priorities and how they are aligned with the priorities of the GNWT. This work has contributed to building connections and relationships with the federal government to ensure that the interests of the NWT are advanced systematically and strategically.

Since assuming the role, the Senior Envoy has delivered sustained and focused federal engagement on the GNWT's key priorities. This work has included Budget 2025 advocacy and targeted outreach to federal ministers, as well as support for major territorial files which include:

- The Mackenzie Valley Highway;
- The Arctic Economic and Security Corridor; and,
- The Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project.

The Senior Envoy engaged with the following federal departments and agencies in support of NWT Ministers, Indigenous governments, MLAs, or one-on-one:

- Indigenous Services Canada;
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada;
- Health Canada;
- Department of Finance (Canada);
- Department of National Defence (Canada);
- Canada Infrastructure Bank;
- Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada;
- Natural Resources Canada;
- Privy Council Office;
- Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat;
- The Office of the Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories;
- Public Safety Canada;
- Transportation Canada; and,

- Canada Water Agency.

The Senior Envoy also met with other stakeholders, including:

- the US Attaché;
- Alberta's Senior Representative to Ottawa (Alberta Government);
- representatives from NWT Municipalities;
- NWT-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses;
- West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation (Nunavut);
- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated;
- Government of Nunavut;
- Institute of Governance;
- Canada's School of Public Service;
- Public Policy Forum;
- Assembly of First Nations;
- Odawa Friendship Centre;
- Academic institutions from within and outside of NWT;
- Kivalliq Inuit Association (Nunavut); and,
- NWT-based non-governmental organizations and businesses.

The Member asked 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.

In March 2025, expenses of \$6,416.57 were incurred for attendance at the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Finance Ministers' meeting in Ottawa.

In May, expenses of \$1,321.43 were incurred for travel to Fort Smith to attend Smith's Landing First Nation Treaty Land Entitlement 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

In July, expenses of \$1,480.28 were incurred for travel to Fort Smith related to Prime Minister Carney's visit.

In August, expenses of \$184.98 were incurred in relation to a cancelled trip to Fort Smith for an invitation from the Salt River First Nation.

In November, expenses of \$2,358.35 were incurred for travel to Yellowknife for the Intergovernmental Council annual meeting and GNWT bilateral meetings with the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Tłı̨chǫ Government.

The Member asked 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.

The work of the Senior Envoy has contributed to building connections and relationships with the federal government to create a bridge between the NWT and the federal government to ensure that the interests of the NWT are advanced systematically and strategically. That work is a strategic presence, not a specific agreement or policy, it is about presence and influence to advance all opportunities.

The Member asked 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.

Certain aspects of the Senior Envoy's work, particularly those related to strategic advice to the Premier and intergovernmental engagement are inherently confidential. Accordingly, detailed internal planning or individual employee work plans are not publicly released, and the employer does not disclose performance-related documents.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 37-20(1) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on March 6th, 2026, regarding the Mackenzie Valley Fiber Optic Line.

The Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link was procured and built under a public-private partnership model, or a P3 model. The P3 Agreement has a 20-year term and expires in 2037. Northern Lights General Partnership is the operator for the duration of the P3 agreement while the GNWT retains ownership. Annual costs for the P3 agreement are approximately \$12 million. The payments are based on a financial model blending various project components including construction, life cycle and operating costs. The P3 agreement cannot be provided due to confidentiality.

The Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link generates approximately \$2.3 million in revenues annually for the GNWT from 10 customers. Northern Lights General Partnership undertakes outreach activities and is responsible for sales and marketing support. This has included sustained national and international engagement to position the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link as a strategic public asset delivering long term value, federal alignment, and return on public investment. Northern Lights General Partnership has consistently highlighted Inuvik and the established satellite ecosystem, highly reliable fibre connectivity, accessibility, and availability of skilled local technical support at both national and international forums.

This strengthened awareness among international operators evaluating high-latitude, and Arctic deployment opportunities, directly supports long-term utilization of the fibre infrastructure.

The Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link provides bandwidth to local Internet Service Providers, or ISPs, who then may resell a range of service options to individuals and businesses in communities. GNWT's role is to ensure the backbone infrastructure is stable and available and to encourage greater utilization of the asset.

More broadly, the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link and the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk fibre extension are one part of a network of infrastructure that supports broadband connectivity in the North.

Local ISPs linked to the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link and the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk fibre line extension provide service to most communities in the Mackenzie Valley including: Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells, Tulita, Wrigley and Fort Simpson. Colville Lake, Sombaa K'e, Ulukhaktok, Paulatuk, Lutselk'e, Gamèti, Wekweèti, and Sachs Harbour are satellite-served communities with a maximum of 15 Mbps speeds available through northern providers. All other communities in the Northwest Territories have access to 50 Mbps or above speeds. In addition, Starlink is available across the NWT and can provide speeds of 100 Mbps or greater.

The MVFL generates revenues from both Satellite Ground Station Operators and ISPs. Billings to customers are completed on a monthly basis and are monitored by the GNWT and Northern Lights General Partnership. NLGP regularly undertakes outreach activities to highlight opportunities such as the Inuvik satellite ground station strategic positioning and improved resilience for established through traffic routing redundancies.

Expanding utilization of the Mackenzie Valley Fiber Line remains a priority to maximize value for northerners over time. Decisions about how telecommunications traffic is routed are made by ISPs and are governed by technical requirements, redundancy needs, and federal regulatory frameworks.

As for costs for other jurisdictions, the Government of British Columbia has published several studies of connectivity benefits within their communities. The Rural B.C. Connectivity Benefits Study highlights both short-term and long-term economic benefits of investment in connectivity projects. The study estimates that initial provincial investment of \$289.4 million in connectivity in rural British Columbia will generate \$2.5 billion in short and long-term economic benefits to the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** 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. Member from Range Lake.

### Reports of Standing and Special Committees

#### COMMITTEE REPORT 41-20(1): STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS: REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2024-25 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, NO. 2: COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

**MR. TESTART:** Merci, Monsieur le Président. Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2024-2025 Public Accounts, No. 2: Community Government Infrastructure Funding Arrangements and commends it to the House.

Following its first report on the 2024-2025 Public Accounts, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (committee) had additional questions and invited the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) to provide a public technical briefing on community government infrastructure funding and support on April 27th, 2026.

MACA manages a \$282 million community infrastructure funding portfolio that combines annual funding streams with long-term federal programs to support projects across all NWT communities. The committee examined whether funding structures and supports ensure equitable access, value for money, timely delivery, and transparent reporting.

MACA has introduced training and a new asset management system to support capital planning, but low uptake suggests gaps in training, follow-up, and ongoing support, particularly in communities facing staff turnover and limited local capacity. Committee emphasized that effective delivery depends on accessible, relationship-based training, and concluded that a standardized regional approach with consistent in-community support is needed and makes the following two recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories:

**Recommendation 1** The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories implement a circuit-style training and support program that delivers regular on-site expertise to communities, supports local staff in their responsibilities, and builds long-term institutional capacity, including a train the trainer component to ensure knowledge is retained locally despite staff turnover.

**Recommendation 2** The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories increase community participation in the asset management system through ongoing training and a staged rollout approach, with communities that opt-in beginning participation within the life of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

MACA identified that project delays are often caused by factors outside its control, including shifting community priorities, contractor shortages, and logistical challenges. Despite this, committee found that persistent capacity gaps within community governments and uneven access to departmental support contribute to delays, and concluded that stronger, regionally based support is essential to improve project delivery. As such, committee recommends:

**Recommendation 3** The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories fill regional capital planning and infrastructure support positions with qualified individuals based in the regions they serve in order to ensure consistent support for community governments and to address longstanding regional vacancies.

Committee's report highlights prior recommendations to strengthen community capacity through dedicated funding and technical supports, noting that increasing infrastructure demands place a disproportionate burden on smaller governments. While recognizing both the potential and risks of emergent artificial intelligence tools to reduce administrative

workload, committee stressed the need for clear governance and concluded that stronger oversight and direction are required to support responsible adoption, therefore recommending the following:

**Recommendation 4** The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take an early-adopter and structured approach to the use of emergent artificial intelligence as part of its community infrastructure support model, including developing a policy, rules, training and safeguards for its use through the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Committee found that MACA has improved how major federal infrastructure programs are budgeted and reported by aligning spending with realistic project timelines and moving them into the capital estimates, addressing past concerns about apparent year-end variances. Committee considers these changes a meaningful improvement to transparency and will continue to monitor whether the new approach is applied consistently and clearly communicated.

Finally, committee noted the significant reliance on grants, contributions, and transfer payments in delivering GNWT programs, particularly within MACA, where these mechanisms account for the majority of spending and are central to achieving departmental objectives. Drawing on findings from a comparable federal audit, committee raised concerns about governance, efficiency, and value for money, and concluded that a similar review in the GNWT context would help assess whether current structures effectively support outcomes for recipients. Subsequently, committee recommends:

**Recommendation 5** The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake a comprehensive internal audit of grants, contributions, and other transfer payment mechanisms across the government, including the policies and guidelines that govern them through the Internal Audit Bureau within the Office of the comptroller general to assess governance, efficiency, and value for money, and to identify opportunities to reduce administrative burden, strengthen oversight, and enhance the timely and effective delivery of funding to recipients.

Committee looks forward to the Government's response on the implementation of these recommendations and further recommends:

**Recommendation 6** The committee recommends that the Government of the

Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nunakput, that the remainder of Committee Report 14-20(1) Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Report on the Review of the 2024-2025 Public Accounts, No. 2: Community Government Infrastructure Funding Arrangements, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

**MR. TESTART:**

INTRODUCTION

From November 2025 to February 2026, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Committee) reviewed the 2024–2025 Public Accounts. The Public Accounts are the audited financial statements that show the financial results of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) for a fiscal year, as well as its Government Reporting Entities (GRE). The GNWT fiscal year runs from April 1 of one year to March 31 of the next calendar year.

The 2024–25 Public Accounts were made public by the Minister of Finance in November 2025 and tabled in the Legislative Assembly on February 9, 2026. On December 9, 2025, Committee held a public briefing to review the 2024–25 Public Accounts. Participants included staff from the GNWT's Office of the Comptroller General (OCG) and the Financial Audit Team from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG). Committee presented CR 38-20(1) Report on the Review of the 2024-25 Public Accounts to the House on March 3, 2026.

To further support its ongoing review of capital funding delivery, value for money and transparent reporting within the Public Accounts, Committee invited the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) to provide a public technical briefing on community government infrastructure funding

and support. The briefing was held on April 27, 2026.

#### Community Government Infrastructure Funding Framework

MACA administers a substantial portfolio of community government infrastructure funding delivered through both ongoing territorial programs and long-term federal agreements. At the time of Committee's review, this portfolio totaled approximately \$282 million.

Ongoing annual funding available to community governments totals approximately \$53 million per year, consisting of \$35.3 million in Community Public Infrastructure (CPI) funding and \$18.7 million through the Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF). These programs provide predictable funding that communities may accumulate or leverage over time. MACA reported that since 2007, more than \$315 million has been invested through CPI funding, while CCBF investments since 2005 total approximately \$232 million.

In addition, MACA manages several application-based federal infrastructure programs. The Small Communities Fund (SCF) provides \$38.4 million between 2015 and 2028 for thirty-five projects across all communities. As of 2025 to 2026, twenty-one projects were complete, seven were in progress, and five had been cancelled at the direction of community governments.

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) provides \$117.3 million for eighty-five community projects between 2018 and 2034. As of March 2025, twenty-three projects were complete, forty-two were in progress, and twenty had not yet started. Total expenditures under the program were \$50.4 million, with remaining funding reallocated to future years based on revised project timelines.

The Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund (CHIF), signed in 2025, provides \$74 million over ten years to support housing enabling infrastructure. MACA's presentation noted that three projects were approved at the time of Committee's review, with additional projects in the approval phase.

In the briefing, MACA advised that differences between budgeted and actual expenditures under these agreements primarily reflect project timing, as communities have long completion windows and are reimbursed for eligible costs once construction proceeds. Committee's review focused on whether existing funding structures, and departmental supports are sufficient to ensure equitable

access, value for money, timely project delivery, and transparent public reporting.

#### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Training, Regional Engagement and Asset Management

MACA described efforts to provide training related to capital planning and asset management, including the rollout of a new asset management system. Committee supports this initiative but is concerned by limited uptake and use across communities. Committee heard that only a small number of communities are actively using the system, suggesting that training, follow-up, and ongoing support may need to be strengthened. Committee also heard that knowledge retention and availability can be challenging where there are limited contractors or tradespeople, or where there is turnover of key positions, such as Senior Administrative Officers (SAOs).

Committee members emphasized that effective infrastructure delivery depends not only on funding and technical processes but also on relationships, trust, and practical knowledge within communities. Committee members have heard from residents in the communities that training delivered exclusively in Yellowknife is often inaccessible or ineffective for community staff and that more in-community and regional training is needed.

Committee concludes that training should be delivered through a standardized and predictable regional program that emphasizes face to face engagement, regular schedules, and continuity of support.

##### Project Delivery, Capacity and Delays

MACA identified several reasons why approved projects may be delayed, including changes in community priorities, limited contractor availability, staffing turnover, transportation challenges, and the need to respond to natural disasters. Committee accepts that many of these factors are inherent to infrastructure delivery in the NWT and are often outside the direct control of the department or the community government.

However, Committee remains concerned that persistent capacity limitations within community governments are a core driver of delays and under spending, particularly in smaller and remote communities. These challenges include limited experience with federal application processes, difficulties meeting cost sharing requirements, turnover in SAO positions, and limited access to project management and technical expertise.

Committee heard that while MACA provides a range of supports, access to these supports is uneven across regions and constrained by vacancies and workload pressures within the Department. Committee is particularly concerned by longstanding vacancies in regional capital planning positions and the practice of attempting to offset these gaps through positions based in Yellowknife. Committee does not consider this an effective substitute for sustained, regionally embedded support and notes that communities most in need of assistance are often those least able to access Yellowknife-based resources.

Committee notes that the Report on the Review of the 2024-25 Public Accounts, presented in March 2026, also made recommendations related to improving capacity in communities. Specifically, Committee recommended that the GNWT establish dedicated funding and technical supports for capital planning, project management, and financial administration, to be made available to community governments who demonstrate a need for additional capacity.

Committee discussed the growing complexity and volume of infrastructure administration and the disproportionate burden this places on small community governments with limited staffing. In this context, Committee highlighted the potential role of emergent artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support routine and time-intensive administrative functions. Examples discussed in Committee's deliberations included drafting funding applications, preparing procurement documents such as requests for proposal, and supporting basic financial analysis. Committee emphasized that early adoption of well-governed AI tools could allow community governments and the GNWT to realize efficiency gains and reduce administrative burden.

While Committee recognizes the risks related to accuracy, data protection, bias, and oversight associated with AI systems, Committee also acknowledges that these tools can meaningfully reduce administrative effort when implemented responsibly and with meaningful controls. Committee agrees that these tools should not replace professional judgment, accountability, or decision-making authority, but can serve as a practical support within a broader, government-led capacity-building strategy.

Committee notes that the GNWT has indicated it does not intend to develop AI policies or rules, instead relying on existing information management rules and a high-level guideline for AI use. Committee notes that the GNWT's

AI guidance states that "the GNWT should establish clear rules and responsibilities for using and managing generative AI programs so they work properly, are unbiased, and have proper oversight," yet has no plans to do so.

#### Implementation of the Recommendation of the Auditor General

Committee reviewed the changes made to the reporting of major federal infrastructure programs following recommendations from the OAG related to transparency and capital estimates reporting. At the time the ICIP and the SCF were signed, funding was recorded as disbursements funded by third parties using notional cash flow schedules that assumed early project delivery. This approach resulted in large year end variances when projects did not proceed as originally forecast, creating confusion about whether funding had lapsed or been lost.

In response to the OAG's recommendation, the Department shared that it implemented a change to shift these programs into the Capital Estimates and to more closely align budgets with realistic project timelines. Committee heard that MACA has since worked with communities to redistribute remaining program funding across future fiscal years based on updated construction schedules, particularly following program extensions due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Committee is satisfied that the Department has taken the OAG's recommendation seriously and has made meaningful improvements to how these programs are budgeted and reported. Committee agrees that the adjusted budgeting approach improves transparency, more accurately reflects multi-year infrastructure delivery realities, and reduces the appearance of significant year end lapses where no funds have been lost. Committee will continue to monitor whether these improved reporting practices are consistently and clearly communicated and looks forward to seeing the improved budgeting process reflected in the 2025-26 Public Accounts.

#### Auditing Grants, Contributions and Transfer Payments

As part of its review of community government infrastructure agreements, Committee noted the role of grants, contributions and transfer (G&C) payment programs in the delivery of GNWT services and infrastructure. Given the significant proportion of public funds delivered through these mechanisms, Committee notes the importance of confirming that current processes are effective and efficient, that governance, risk management, and internal

controls are operating effectively, and that these arrangements demonstrate value for money.

The question of value for money is of particular importance when considering MACA, where G&Cs account for more than 80% of the Department's operations budget. As a result, MACA's ability to achieve its objectives is heavily dependent on the effectiveness of the frameworks and processes used to administer and oversee funding provided to community governments and other recipients.

Committee notes that this characteristic is not unique to MACA. Across the GNWT, approximately 48% of total operations expenditures are flowed through to third parties and community and Indigenous governments in the form of G&Cs. Accordingly, a significant portion of GNWT operational spending relies on the effectiveness of governance frameworks, administrative processes, and oversight mechanisms that sit between departments and ultimate recipients, rather than within direct program delivery.

In this context, Committee reviewed the 2024 Audit of the Administration of Grants and Contributions conducted at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). That audit found that rapid growth in ECCC's G&C funding, combined with decentralized delivery models, fragmented and uncoordinated oversight, and inconsistent processes, limited the department's ability to demonstrate value for money in its delivery of G&Cs. Administrative complexity, duplication of effort, and uneven application of controls increased costs without commensurate improvements in outcomes for recipients, and in some cases delayed the flow of funds. The audit further found that significant structural aspects of the Department's G&C administration, including program authorities, terms and conditions, program architecture, and the departmental results framework, must evolve for program officials to fully implement a recipient-focused delivery model, particularly in relation to Indigenous recipients.

Given the scale at which public funds flow out of GNWT departments through grants, contributions, and transfers, Committee is of the view that a similar audit would provide meaningful insight into whether current governance and administrative structures are supporting efficient flow of funds, delivering value for money, and best serving the needs of the recipients. Committee emphasizes that value for money in this context includes not only financial compliance with the terms of the agreements, but also the efficient use of administrative resources, proportional

oversight, reduced complexity, and the timely translation of funding into intended results.

#### CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Report on the Review of the 2024–25 Public Accounts, No 2: Community Government Infrastructure Agreements. Committee looks forward to the Government's response on the implementation of these recommendations.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nunakput that Committee Report 41-20(1), Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Report on the Review of the 2024-2025 Public Accounts, No. 2: Community Government Infrastructure Funding Arrangements, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nunakput, that pursuant to Rule 9.5(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days, or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Mr. Premier.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 500-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RETURN  
TO ORAL QUESTION 1071-20(1), COST OF  
LIVING

TABLED DOCUMENT 501-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FOLLOW-  
UP TO ORAL QUESTION 1150-20(1),  
REVIEW OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL  
AGREEMENT ON LAND AND RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT 7-YEAR REVIEW

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table to the following two documents: Additional Information for Return to Oral Question 1071-20(1), Cost of Living; and, Additional Information for Follow-up to Oral Question 1150-20(1), Review of Intergovernmental Agreement on Land and Resources Management 7-Year Review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tabling of documents. Minister of Infrastructure.

TABLED DOCUMENT 502-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR ORAL  
QUESTION 1116-20(1), INFRASTRUCTURE  
APPRENTICESHIP POSITIONS

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: Additional Information for Follow-up to Oral Question 1116-20(1), Infrastructure Apprenticeship Positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 503-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN  
QUESTION 32-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL  
COSTS BUDGET PRESSURES AND  
TRAVEL VOLUMES

TABLED DOCUMENT 504-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN  
QUESTION 33-20(1), MEDICAL TRAVEL  
DELAYS AND COORDINATION

TABLED DOCUMENT 505-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WRITTEN  
QUESTION 34-20(1): MEDICAL TRAVEL  
ESCORT POLICIES ELIGIBILITY AND  
APPEALS

TABLED DOCUMENT 506-20(1):  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR ORAL  
QUESTION 1012-20(1): ACCESS TO  
MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING  
SERVICES

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following four documents: Additional Information for Written Question 32-20(1), Medical Travel Costs Budget Pressures and Travel Volumes; Additional Information for Written Question 33-20(1), Medical Travel Delays and Coordination; Additional Information for Written Question 34-20(1), Medical Travel Escort Policies Eligibility and Appeals; and, Additional Information for Follow-up to Oral Question 1012-20(1), Access to Magnetic Resonance Imaging Services.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

### Motions

MOTION 77-20(1):  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE  
TERRITORIAL CRIME REDUCTION  
STRATEGY,  
CARRIED

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I have two motions today. I will begin with one, of course, and do the other one once the second one -- first one's concluded.

Mr. Speaker,

WHEREAS the Northwest Territories continues to experience serious and evolving criminal activity, including violent offences and the growing presence of southern-based criminal gangs, posing a serious threat to the safety and well-being of residents;

AND WHEREAS the interconnected challenges of addictions, limited youth programming, and gaps within the justice system require a coordinated, whole-of-government response rather than isolated departmental efforts;

AND WHEREAS community leaders and residents across communities throughout the Northwest Territories have expressed an urgent need for strengthened local policing, better regulation of private security services, and accessible, in-territory recovery resources;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Range Lake, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to develop a

comprehensive, whole-of-government Crime Reduction Strategy;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure the strategy implement proactive supports for northern youth, including enhanced after-school programming, mentorship opportunities, and culturally grounded, land-based healing initiatives to prevent crime and addictions;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with policing partners, including the RCMP, to increase community policing capacity in all Northwest Territories communities to strengthen relationships between residents and law enforcement;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories advocate to the federal government for improvements to bail provisions to enhance community safety, particularly in cases involving violent or repeat offenders;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure the strategy expand in-territory addictions treatment options, including the establishment of at least one permanent residential addictions treatment facility and support for regional, culturally grounded healing programs;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories introduce legislation to license and regulate private security companies, including mandatory training, standards of conduct, and public safety focused oversight mechanisms to ensure the safety of both security personnel and the public;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories create a dedicated funding stream to support public safety and community policing initiatives at the municipal level to support municipal public safety initiatives, including community patrols, bylaw enforcement, crime prevention programming, and other identified priorities;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensure the overall Crime Reduction Strategy be fully costed, time-bound, and measurable, including clear milestones, publicly reported metrics, and annual reporting to ensure accountability to the residents of the Northwest Territories;

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

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today because this motion is very important. It strikes at the very heart of how we govern. The issue really before us is how are we supporting and treating our people. And I'm going to -- and I think that we need to move forward and recognize the consequences of inaction because we find ourselves in a crossroads not just in the history of governance but also in the very story of our communities. It is a story that has been long defined by resilience, by the quiet strength of people who know what it means to look out for one another in the face of the vast and often unforgiving landscape. But today, if we are honest with ourselves, that story is being tested.

The North we love and the communities we raise our families or children in with the comfort of unlocked doors and the feeling of the kind of chill one doesn't come with winter but the chill now of the insecurity people are suffering from. This growing sense has changed the way our North is. This motion is merely a collection of whereases, but to be honest, they're a collection of we must dos, because people are demanding to feel like we're taking part and taking ownership of our challenges. We must be all collectively a part of the solution, but the government must lead. So this is a call to reclaim our neighbourhoods in some ways, our communities, our families, to strengthen them. It is to acknowledge the hard truths that southern gangs have been poisoning their peddled devices and preying on the vulnerabilities of our people. Even the chief superintendent of the RCMP, two days ago, pointed out that 40 percent of these types of criminals are southern-based. And if I remember correctly, I think he said 19 percent of them come back, you know, so they don't give up. They keep coming back North.

You know, there's an old adage take the customer away and the seller will go. Unfortunately, addictions doesn't work that easy. I'd be fooled to pretend it was that simple. So we have to recognize this problem. We are now in a 21st century, but we're dealing with this in the 20th century silos.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the Department of Justice do its part. We know health and social services is trying to do their part, but the cracks between these silos are huge and people are falling through them.

When a young man in a small community loses his way, it isn't just a justice issue. It could be simply a housing issue of where it started. It

may even be an education issue. It's an issue of whether a warm meal or a mentor to tell this person that they mattered. That could have been the issue.

This motion is calling for a whole-of-government response, not just passing the buck. No more, that's not my department. We need one strategy, one budget, one goal, Mr. Speaker. The safety of our people matter, and that's the message this motion sends and hopefully that's the motion that they'll build upon and that's the message we'll see action on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about our youth. Every time a young person is recruited into a gang, it is a failure of our collective imagination, I'd say. We must out-recruit the recruiters. That is all our problem here. In other words, we're all part of that solution. We can pretend we're not, and we can point the fingers again and say, oh, it's someone else's problem. But everyone in this room is responsible in some way to help guide these folks right back into the normal path for our greater community. We must all offer a collective vision that the future is brighter than the false promises of the streets. That could mean, should mean, and I hope it means, things like better after-school programs that aren't just daycares but they're also arenas and mentorships. It means land-based healing and reconnecting our children, our young people, to the strengths of who they are, their culture, because that is the sense of pride we must continue to instill in people. Culture is something that could never be wasted. We must share it, and we all benefit from it. Even if it's not our culture, there's such lessons of embracing it that we will all gain greater strength within ourselves, including understanding. Because we know when children go astray and there are challenges, but we must not let them go.

We also need to be clear eyed about enforcement. Let us not be fooled. That is still a role. We need community policing where the officer isn't a stranger, but they are our neighbour. We must make them part of the community. And yes, even Ottawa has a role. Our government has a role to speak truth to power, have our government make sure that we articulate that the bail system must reflect the realities of small-town life.

In a community of 500, a no-contact order is a hollow promise. It just doesn't work. Even in Yellowknife, a no-contact order in a city of 20,000 people is challenging. Safety must be a priority. We cannot continue to put people at risk just to keep the paperwork moving along.

And for those struggling with the grips of addiction, the wait is over. We must do something. That's got to be the message. We cannot keep sending our people south to heal in a world they don't recognize, a world they may not want to be in, one they don't feel safe or familiar in. We need an in-territory treatment centre and facilities. We need a recovery aftercare program that happens to be either on the land, in their community, but around their family and part of the community in a meaningful way.

Now, let us be real. People will fail, and the lessons of stumbling and sometimes falling may be frustrating, but the lessons to be learned there is to be relentless and not give up. Even the witnesses, families, and friends to these challenges, we must not give up. So we have to recognize these lessons that they will be challenging, and we must be resilient in ourselves to help support them gain the strength so they can stand on their own.

And let us never forget, healing is not just a medical process. Healing is a journey. And you cannot do it alone. Even more reason, Mr. Speaker, why I say we need an in-territory process that digs deep and connects even deeper.

Finally, the strategy will not be a document that gathers dust. That's how I envision it, Mr. Speaker. I would like to see it costed, time-bound, and measured. Because the people of the Northwest Territories do not need rhetoric. They need results. They need to see them, but they also need to feel them. They need to know that their tax dollars are working as hard as they do. So as I work hard, you work hard, our community works hard, we know we're investing properly into a system that supports our people. We must continue to maintain that critical humanity. That's what we do here. We have to support people. Because I question why we're here if we're not. That is an important role.

These challenges we face are not easy, but we must do them because they're hard and someone must rise to the challenge. We must not be afraid to rise to that challenge. And at times it will feel impossible, Mr. Speaker. But I'm reminded of the words of those who came before us, those who built this territory out of hope and hard work. They didn't shrink from the challenges of their time, and I say let us not shrink to the challenges of ours. Let us choose hope over fear. Let us choose action over apathy. Let us pass this motion and begin the work of building a new North, a stronger North, a healthier North, a North that we can all feel proud that it's our home.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'll be requesting a recorded vote so I don't forget. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I am pleased to stand in support of this motion as a seconder, and I want to commend the mover for crafting a very comprehensive motion for consideration that is detailed and kind of hits every point that I think we've heard from the community on what we need to do to address these public safety concerns. And I think, unfortunately, far too often this issue of crime and public safety becomes a binary choice. You're either for the cops or you're against the cops or, you know, you understand root causes or you only care about surface causes. And I think there's a poverty related to that because it's, of course, more complicated than that. And this motion addresses that. We can't be successful unless we address the shortfalls in housing, the shortfalls in addictions treatment, the shortfalls in mental health support, and support for intergenerational trauma and the toxic legacy of residential schools, the 60s scoop, and all the other injustices that have been committed against Indigenous people in the Northwest Territories.

But likewise, we can't be successful at combating southern-based drug gangs that represent 40 percent of all drug crimes that the RCMP charged and convicted last year. Those are the most recent stats. We can't be successful in that with social programs. A social program is not going to make -- the RCMP -- and for context, when I was a kid here I couldn't even conceptualize someone with a violent crime committed with a handgun or someone even having a handgun in the community. That was something that happened down south. And even the superintendent of the RCMP at our town hall two days ago, the Member for Yellowknife Centre and I, he talked about when he started as a police officer up here. He was surprised to see one handgun, if one emerged once a year, you know, you might find a handgun. Now the RCMP are confiscating between 30 to 40 handguns every year.

A social program isn't going to take guns off the street. We need police for that. But we cannot use the police to solve our social programs. It doesn't work that way. And the people who are saying that are the RCMP. And this Assembly has committed a lot of resources towards supporting the work of policing. We have three new, very important pieces of legislation that are going to make a difference. We have invested millions of dollars in new policing tools

that are making a difference. That's why we see bricks of cocaine confiscated at the border in Hay River or in Inuvik or in Yellowknife, and they're seizing the handguns, they're getting the guns off the street. And we're keeping our officers safe while we're doing it with the new resources they need. And, you know, the superintendent also said that years ago he couldn't imagine that kind of support coming from the territorial government, and he was very relieved that this Assembly cares about the safety of officers and the safety of communities.

But where we are falling short is on the pernicious issue of addictions in our communities. And that is what we're hearing. Every time the Member for Yellowknife Centre and I have these town halls, that is the number one issue that comes up. It is the drug crime, the drug gangs, the addictions. And outside of Yellowknife, we hear it from our colleagues from smaller communities that it is the drugs that are killing people in their communities and it is the drugs that are bringing crime into the communities.

And, unfortunately, drug problems exist because there is a demand for those substances because people are hurting. And it's true, a recovery journey is not an easy thing to do. It requires comprehensive supports. But if we start to invest in a strategy that addresses that from the root causes all the way to the symptoms, then we can start to see progress. And right now, we're doing a bit more at the top to support those policing resources. But we still have to align our efforts with those underlying conditions.

You know, and the comments, people are so frustrated. You know, the answers of why we can't do things just aren't satisfying them. We heard they -- from the meeting, fortify -- and I've seen it online as well, we need to fortify our border against drugs. There's only one highway. Why can't we shut it down? The territory is going down because of drugs. Taxi drivers are selling crack. Crack is not medicine. Small community people are killing each other, burning houses down, we're killing one another. I lost my child from drugs. What am I going to do, bring my daughter back in a body bag?

Mr. Speaker, these are, in their own words, comments we hear when we have very emotional town halls where people speak their truth. And those comments, most of those comments come from Indigenous people who are seeing this, living this experience, either as former addicts or people who live close to these addictions and experience them on a direct and personal level. These are not, you know, suburban Yellowknifers who have -- who stay far away from downtown and have a lot of

personal income, you know, all that kind of stuff. The perception perhaps that you get from southern Canada, of gated communities, hiring private security companies, and saying, you know, lock people up, send them away forever. That's not what's happening here.

You know, our RCMP G-Division, it represents a fourth, a quarter of total community engagement in Canada. So of all the policing engagement with communities in our country, the NWT does a fourth, a quarter of that work. That's pretty commendable for the police services to be reaching out to the communities they serve and having those dialogues. And, again, we heard the commander say to a group of our community, we are not the solution to these problems. We are here when the solutions are -- when we need to be, when they reach that crisis point.

So if, again, we are to be successful, we've supported these tools, we're seeing the police are making progress on fighting violent drug gangs from the south, but if we're going to address those addictions then we need solutions for those addictions. We need to talk to young people and make sure they have a meaningful future that they can see themselves in, you know. And the future is scary for a lot of people. The world is changing at a phenomenal rate. And as economic opportunities dry up, despair leads people to find ways to dull that pain and that despair, and that can lead to a cycle of criminal behaviour of violence, and ultimately can destroy families, destroy communities, and destroy lives. We want that to stop.

So I think the Member has brought -- the Member for Yellowknife Centre has crafted something that is important, it is effective, and strikes at all aspects of this continuum. And I hope we can start to have this discussion as more than just that southern perspective of are you for the police, are you for the criminals, you know, are you anti-police, do you not believe in institutional racism. Those dialogues, while you'd would be foolish not to recognize those, it's just a different reality here. And I always point this out when I speak to people who are very critical of any kind of support for the police, for more policing resources, that the push for this isn't coming from Yellowknife; the push for this is coming from the representatives of our smallest communities, Indigenous voices who are calling for more resources in their community, who are calling for RCMP police resources that have never been there because they're needed. And that speaks to the problem that those -- again, the supports we need to give to the foundational issues just aren't working. They need to be doubled. We need to build more houses, we need to have actual

treatment programs here in the North. It's easy to go down and get, you know, treatment, but when you come back it's a lot harder to stay out of the same kind of patterns of behaviour that got you into the problem in the first place. This motion addresses that.

I know these motions often -- these are non-binding motions, but it speaks for what we could achieve if we actually treated this seriously and built a costed plan to address this. And at this point in this government, this isn't going to be a plan for this Assembly, but it could be a plan for the future of the Northwest Territories. It could be a plan that's staged over a decade, you know, to align with all of the work that's going to come, the billions of dollars of investment from the federal government that are also going to bring problems with them if we're not careful. We see that in major developments like Fort McMurray, the oil sands, how many drugs and -- illegal drugs came into those environments because people have easy money and great opportunities, and it's easy to get distracted. So we need to make sure that our communities don't become victims of our success and give them the support they need to be successful with this economic -- incredible economic opportunity that's coming.

So I hope we take this opportunity to build something better, to build something that is holistic across the board, that addresses everything from the need to curb violence at the top to the need to treat addictions and homelessness at the bottom. And by building a plan that addresses the full continuum, we'll start to find ways to actually curb these problems and see real improvements. Because no matter what the statistics say -- and the police have their own statistics, the government has their own statistics, but how people feel is just as important, and people don't feel like their community is the same community they grew up in. And if we're going to change that feeling, we need to do more and give confidence that our leadership is moving the territory to a safer, healthier place.

So I encourage all of my colleagues to support this motion so we can start taking action on the most serious impact, the most serious problems that we're facing, which is, again, this crisis of addictions, this crisis of organized crime, and the damage it does in our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am against crime. It's a bold position

to take, I know. I have, indeed, supported the additional investments that this Assembly has made into the RCMP through the creation of a new territorial crime reduction unit. The problem is that I don't believe it's helping to continue talking in broad, sweeping terms about crime in general without defining the problems we're trying to tackle, with only vague ideas about who the bad guys are or appear to be and how to get them out of here. I think if we're actually going to improve anything we have to think carefully about the priority problems we're trying to solve. So in this Assembly, we've certainly talked a lot about crime and public safety, but we have dug very little into actual analysis or tried to find evidence, including statistics, as to, for example, what are the rates of particular types of crime, what are the patterns in particular communities, who exactly is participating in these criminal networks, how is it organized, who makes the most money off of this crime, how does the economy of it work, meaning who's making money, how is the money flowing, who are the most vulnerable participants in the crime, who are the most common victims.

I don't have answers to any of those questions right now. This motion I see as a mishmash of different assumptions. Sometimes contradictory. It begins talking about the need to focus on violent crime and southern gangs. This implies a theory that the criminals in this territory are mostly foreigners from down south, gangsters, bringing their guns, I assume. I assume there's a desire to focus on illegal drugs, and certainly we've heard from the mover and seconder that that is intended to be the focus, but oddly it's not even mentioned in the motion. Although there is mention of addictions treatment. But the stat was cited that 40 percent of those being charged with drug trafficking are from down south, but I would flip that around and say but 60 percent of those being charged are NWT residents. So I am not sure how we could create an entire strategy around an assumption that most drug traffickers are from the outside, are from down south.

The motion talks about bail reform, implying that one main solution is to keep offenders locked up. But we haven't really come to terms with what we should do when it's our own people, when it's long-time members of our communities that are committing drug crimes that are participating in the trafficking in some way. What do we do when it's family members? You.

Can send individuals to residential addictions treatment. We know that that is not a panacea, as healing can be a lifelong process. But I think

it's worth pointing out that not all traffickers are even addicted to the substances that they're dealing. It's primarily an economic activity. It's a livelihood for some, including some people in our communities. So how do we address that? How do we deal with that? How do you heal a community that is torn apart by these kinds of economic activities?

The motion also puts a fair amount of focus on youth and how we should be trying to keep them busy with more programming. Now, certainly we need to support our youth and help them find meaningful productive lives, but the motion is implying that youth are the troublemakers when we know, according to the RCMP, that 89 percent of drug offenders in the territory are adults.

I am also not sure that it helps to frame the problem of youth through the lens of seeing them as troublemakers, that we're doing these after-school programs and mentorship programs and on-the-land programs because we believe that they're troublemakers or criminals in the making. I don't think that's actually a helpful starting point to truly support our youth.

The motion also focuses on increasing supports around private security and municipal bylaw enforcement. Now, I do certainly support the need to regulate the private security industry, but I am not clear what that has to do with stopping violent crime or gangs. Dealing with drug trafficking kingpins is different from dealing with loitering, trespassing, people, homeless or not, who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol in public that are acting aggressively or who are destroying and defacing the hallways of housing units. Different strategies and approaches need to be taken than when we're talking about how to reduce violent crime and, for example, drug trafficking.

I also want to point out that when we talk about crime and public safety in these big, sweeping terms, we tend to make certain types of crime invisible. Nowhere in this motion does it mention the extremely high rates of family violence in this territory, including intimate partner violence. Nowhere does it mention sexual assault or sex trafficking. Nowhere does it mention fraud or financial crimes. It also doesn't mention organized crime or organized crime networks. This motion is a sprinkling of different actions, many of which I do agree with on their own, but I don't think that mashing them all together haphazardly into one crime reduction strategy is actually going to make any meaningful difference to reduce crime, violent or otherwise.

So for those reasons, I will not be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciated all of the commentary that came from the mover and seconder's town hall; specifically, the comments that NWT RCMP Chief Superintendent Dyson Smith shared with those present, including Cabin Radio. And I want to take most of my time speaking to this motion to share some of the chief superintendent's comments from an article that was published earlier today because I believe they are important.

Smith said that the RCMP often interacts with people who didn't get the help they needed somewhere along the way, like mental health or addiction supports. If there was an investment into a lot of these other programs, I would be the first one to say take away some of the policing positions, said Smith. He said what police operations are successful at doing, even if they don't result in charges, is disrupting activities and discouraging further drug trafficking. Smith said RCMP officers join municipal enforcement officers in the GNWT when they visit encampments. He said that the RCMP is sharing data with its partners on the number of calls for service that it receives related to encampments and to help determine when an RCMP response is actually needed. Quote, it's not a crime to be homeless, and it's not a crime to have addictions. It's not a crime to be mentally ill, end quote, said Smith.

Smith also explained RCMP priorities in the NWT, which are set by the GNWT, and offered some statistics from policing efforts in Yellowknife. Quote, it shouldn't be a secret what we do, and it shouldn't be a surprise what we do, he said.

Smith said the NWT RCMP has four priorities to direct their policing efforts:

- Targeted enforcement to reduce illegal drugs and alcohol;
- To build strong relationships with Indigenous communities and residents;
- To provide policing services that reflect recognition and efforts to reduce harm to Indigenous women and girls; and,

- To increase community knowledge and understanding of police roles and responsibilities.

Smith said that the RCMP are halfway through the three-year term for this set of priorities.

The RCMP have increased policing related to drug trafficking in the last few years, said Smith, including the creation of a territorial crime reduction unit, which has been very active across the NWT. Smith said there is a perception in the territory that youth are being recruited to traffic drugs, which he said is actually not the case. He said 89 percent of drug offenders in the territory are adults and only 11 percent are youths. Smith said that the increased policing of illegal drugs has already seen success, like what the RCMP said was the largest seizure of cocaine in the territory in October.

The increase in drug policing is in part thanks to investments from the GNWT, Smith said. He said the RCMP will again receive \$200,000 in territorial funding for recruitment. The salaries of members on the territorial crime reduction unit are also paid by the GNWT, he said. Generally, the NWT government is responsible for 70 percent of the costs of RCMP operations in the territory while the federal government covers the remaining 30 percent. The GNWT's latest budget earmarked \$66.77 million in spending for policing in 2026-2027. The RCMP have recently started tracking officers' effort at community engagement, and Smith said the NWT makes up for 26 percent of RCMP engagement nationwide.

Speaking to policing in the Yellowknife specifically, Smith said the number of calls for service has not changed much from 2024-2025 to 2026, but alcohol and drug complaints in the downtown core went down 10 percent in that same period from 4,126 to 3,614. Smith said police are now doing 60 patrols in Yellowknife's downtown core a day or about four every hour. While there has been a slight increase in the number of criminal charges, Smith said that that doesn't necessarily mean crime has gone up.

In 2024-2025, police laid 299 criminal charges in Yellowknife; and, in 2025-2026, the police laid 352 charges. He attributes the increase to better luck with investigations.

Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Yellowknife North, I find this motion disjointed and confusing. The commentary provided by the mover and seconder are also a bit all over the map. Much of what they said, I don't really necessarily disagree with and especially as it comes down to addictions treatment gaps. But that was only one clause within the motion.

When I hear from my constituents who provide commentary on the narrative of what is going on and what the discussion is coming out of these town halls, it's often confusion and frustration.

I also want to thank the Member for Yellowknife North for pointing out a few points that I agree with. For instance, no standing committee has conducted thoughtful oversight into the positives and negatives of our current approach, the GNWT's current approach, or analyzed evidence beyond anecdotes. The people of the NWT do deserve meaningful action and not rhetoric. The tactic of doing something just for the sake of doing something without measured evidence-based actions that are demonstrably identified as a need by the RCMP, which has a continual conversation between both themselves and the Minister of Justice, is not something that I think I can support. If the motion spoke to building on and improving these priorities, I would be in support. I don't think starting from zero and expect the government to start from scratch without a firm evidence-based recommendation is a smart move.

As this is not the case, the motion is not something I can support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. To the motion. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I realize and, you know, Members have spoken at length on this motion, particularly the mover and the seconder. The motion is not the be all and end all, of course. You know, it has clauses that I think are certainly appropriate. I think that the motion has been thought out. Certainly, you know, the motion came from, you know, the two public meetings that this Member from Yellowknife Centre has had, along with the Member from Range Lake. Obviously, it's coming from a place of passion, it's coming from, you know, information they've heard. We all know what's happening in the territory around the drug trade and around crime.

The motion, Mr. Speaker, is non-binding, you know, and I appreciate that it may not end up being anything more than another opportunity for Members to -- you know, to speak on the floor in this House about this very, very important issue. I certainly support any action that aims to reduce crime in our territory, aims to reduce the drug trade in our territory; therefore, I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

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

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we already know that the territory is facing a huge drug addictions problem. It doesn't matter which community you're from. And I've heard stories in the communities that I represent. I've seen things. So I am totally convinced that we have a huge problem, and it's a crisis. So anything that is going to reflect towards minimizing and addressing that problem, I am in total support. I would rather advocate and save one life. And if I did, I am certainly moving in the right direction, whether it's traditional on-land healing. I've never seen executions in my home birth community. I see it. There's prostitution. I've never seen that before. Handguns. It's just beyond a crisis, and we need every ounce of reflection and support from this government to address that. And other evidence, Mr. Speaker. You go catch an airplane, you're encountering canine services. Again, I've never seen that. And I would rather make every ounce of effort to address that problem because I cannot tolerate losing another life or attending another funeral because of the crisis. If I can make a difference, I am all for it. So keeping it short, we've got a problem and we need all hands on deck, and I will be supporting this motion. Mahsi.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. The establishment of a comprehensive territorial crime reduction strategy, I think it's a good strategy. Yes, there's a lot of issues. There's a lot of stuff that's mentioned in here that the Indigenous government are working on, are trying to deal with drug trades involving criminal activities in small communities. Even a lot of our -- we never really had issues before until the drugs came to small communities. And when you look at it, in our justice system it is overpopulated with by -- you know, it's overpopulated with young Indigenous men in there. And we have most children in care, the Indigenous children are in care. This is really alarming for us. And I know that even just recently we met with the Department of Justice with our local leaders addressing a lot of these issues.

So you know, before then it was not an issue, like I said. And the most vulnerable one that I see with criminal activities and drug trades are communities with no policing. I have two communities, you know. There's a lot of issues there. They don't have an RCMP detachment there, and this is what the community really want to fight against these criminal activities

involving drug trades. And there's a lot of that in the small communities. So with this in mind, you know, like, I do appreciate my colleague bringing this forward, and it's really greatly needed in small communities. We've seen where a house that cannot sit vacant for a long time. There's always a lot of break and enter that's happening in small communities. And a lot of children are in care, like I said. And there's a lot of prostituting. And all these things, we cannot dismiss, you know. It's a serious issue, serious concerns for our community members. And some of these are young girls, young boys, and this is going to have an impact in the long term. You know, it's going to have a traumatic effect on their lives going into their adulthood. We need to stop it. We need to deal with it. We need to do something about it.

With that in mind, I will support this motion. Thank you.

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

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anything to do with fighting crime or making -- fighting against the drug trade, saving lives of our smaller communities and our regional centres and our capital, I would be -- I am in favour of making healthier communities, and I think this addresses some of these, or not most of all the -- the hurt that we're going through within our communities. I've addressed this in my Member's statement with how it's affecting our whole community. One person comes into our community and starts to sell drugs to our community members, get our younger population involved as runners, and it hurts everybody. Money doesn't stay in our community. I don't know where the money comes from, but there's all sorts of crime being committed, break and enters and theft. So anything that deals with fighting crime or fighting against the drug trade, then I am in favour of it and I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lots has been said about this motion. I am going to keep my comments brief.

Mr. Speaker, I think residents would appreciate and benefit from the government summarizing and assessing their crime reduction actions. It's certainly something that I do hear about from residents. Insofar as I am interested in seeing that, I will support the motion, though I do share some of the reservations shared by my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I think the idea to have standing committee, particularly the Standing Committee on Social Development, contribute to that analysis is a great idea, and I would definitely support that. I think if we're concerned about crime in the territory, digging into the analysis of what's going on, understanding the issues better is certainly the best way to get us towards effective solutions to the problems. I would encourage the government to continue engaging with the RCMP and committee to do the same, investigate root causes, increase resources where needed to address those root causes, because that is the ultimate solution to any crime is just figuring out where it's coming from, what's causing it. I've spoken to that in the media before. I've spoken to it on the floor. Reducing poverty, increasing education rates and literacy rates, these are the things that help people come on the path to a productive life.

Mr. Speaker, if the government determines a territorial strategy would be beneficial, I would just want it to ensure that it is evidence-based and based on the assessments that were previously recommended. So I will leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My region has -- you know, I've got reports indicating that I had a high crime rate and violent crime rate in the Deh Cho region, so the establishment of a comprehensive territorial crime reduction strategy is something that they're going to look at, they're going to examine things. So, you know, to prevent -- I always talk about prevention, prevention, prevention, in a lot of things that I bring up, health prevention, crime prevention stuff, initiatives and stuff, so I think -- and listening to all my colleagues talk about how they're going to -- how this pertains to their areas, we need something comprehensive. We need something that's going to move things along. And in my riding, we're dealing with a lot of drugs, people getting caught with drugs, either in the community or on the highway, and so there's -- we're really affected by drugs in our community and violent crime and crime in my communities. So for that reason, I too will be supporting this motion. It's non-binding so we'll see what happens to it. So thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. To the motion. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I failed to mention, on May 1st the community of Behchoko went through a lockdown involving drug trades and

that drug trades had gone wrong involving guns. It was posted on social media. And the school, the children did not go home until 9 that evening. And some of the children, I'm sure -- you know, like it was on the media too where some of the children -- there's a young boy that I know and said, is my mommy okay, and that's not right. It's -- okay. Okay. So there is -- so I was just saying that, you know, one of the young boy who at an early age was exposed to some form of violence said to the grandpa, is my mommy okay. So these -- so I'm really glad, grateful, that -- to my two colleagues for bringing this forward. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion. Member from Thebacha.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this motion directs Cabinet, we will be abstaining from the vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. Does the mover wish to conclude or close debate.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, brief as I can. But, I mean, I'm not going to come too hard on this. First off, I want to thank the colleagues -- I'll start with the MLA for Range Lake -- for supporting the motion to get it on the floor. And certainly my community colleagues for their support on the initiative, and of course, Yellowknife colleague.

I think it's important to say that this motion wasn't drafted in isolation. I didn't go into a dark room by myself with a pen and crayons to come up with something. I actually used some of the advice I got from the RCMP. I also used some advice that we got from our technical expertise in this building. I won't go too far into that detail, but -- so it was those types of people that provided me the inspiration and wording and how to point stuff out.

I do want to highlight a couple of areas because the crime and -- sorry, the criminal and -- sorry, let me try it again.

The crime severity index has gone up 128 percent over 2021 to 2024. In just a few years, it spiked up 128 percent, Mr. Speaker. The stats are well -- well publicized. I'm not going to waste the time of the House by going through them one by one, but I'd say that if folks think that this motion is out of touch or it's a bad motion, I think the fact is that isn't the idea of getting these ideas on the floor and try to develop them and

create them and create some action. If there was one message in this whole thing that I want to be clear is it's about bringing people together. So many of our resources are by themselves, separated.

And for those who are concerned about, well, the youth issue, I'm not blaming the youth. I'm saying they matter so much, I made sure there was an extra line to stress how much they matter. Not just to me, not just to some of my colleagues. I think most of my colleagues see, we -- you know, so that was part of the emphasis of that and why it came that way.

For those who have said that they're going to vote against it, I respect the fact that, you know, it's clear you put a lot of time and energy to pick it apart. Okay, if that's what you're here to offer -- I am. Thank you. I'm saying it's okay. I'm saying it's okay. But these aren't vague ideas. These are very important details. They're not assumptions.

Mr. Speaker, this motion calls for measurable outcomes, actions, et cetera. And I think it has to start with the government, that all the partners, all the pieces need to come together. And only the government can do that. And once they produce a plan, a draft plan hopefully, they will bring it to the Assembly, to the Members, to the committee.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it's so important to remind folks that that 60 -- the 40/60 ratio was an observation made by the RCMP, and I appreciate that. But where do you think the 60 percent's getting the drugs from? The 40 percent that are bringing it here.

You know, Cabin Radio, I'm sorry, respectfully, ain't the end all and be all of facts. I can tell you that. So if people are using their position just from a radio or a news thing -- I mean, it's important. They are facts but they're not the only facts.

I can tell you the Member for Range Lake and I have spent hours talking to people well in advance of this meeting. Our staff, who work with us together, have talked to people. I know talking to my colleagues, they talk to people. And then we stay after these sessions to talk to people about the impacts of these issues on their lives. So this wasn't just we ran in there for 15 seconds for a photoshop picture in the middle of it and then get out of there and say, oh, crime matters, we're fighting this. No, we spent hours to this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want people to get any impression that someone who may not like the motion doesn't think we didn't spend time thinking about it. We spent a lot of time getting to where we are today. And I agree, we could

spend more time. If we were to do a comprehensive motion for all the -- what we'll call it -- warts and all situation, we would have spent days and weeks and months writing a motion. And guess what? That is the truth of doing nothing. It's better to get something on the table and work with it than to sit here and do nothing. I think maybe that was what even the chief superintendent said. It would be better to be -- you know, swing and a miss than not to swing at all when he said trying to fight crime and sometimes it doesn't work out. Well, that's the same with a motion. It's better to get something on the table and do something. Even if it doesn't work out, we need to push and push on this file.

Mr. Speaker, I want to sum up by saying that the constituents in my community, MLA -- or the Mackenzie Delta community, the Tlicho community, the Inuvik community, you know, the Sahtu communities, the Deh Cho communities, you know, Yellowknife community, I mean, I go all around and I don't hear anybody say things are better.

I will say -- and I wasn't there to challenge him because I did not want to challenge chief superintendent -- oh, well, it's a title, not name. I didn't want to challenge his role. He's right, things may not appear, you know, that -- to worse, but the problem is they're stabilized at the highest crime rates. So when I've researched the stats, the Northwest Territories is very bad when it comes to criminal stats. So what he's getting at is things might be bad. Well, when I call bad normal or view it as normal, well yeah, I guess maybe that's a perspective he has too, that we've got the worst stats in Canada on crime. Oh, well, things are stable at the worst levels.

So you have to look at it; in other words, you have to look at how do you look at stats, how do you perceive them, what message you send on that.

So ultimately, Mr. Speaker, finishing with this, all it's asking for is finding ways to come together, come up with a strategy, work together, have it measured, have it cost, and make sure we report it. And I think if someone wants to find fault in that, well, okay. But I'd rather be blamed for doing something and standing for something than not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** 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 Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu.

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

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Yellowknife North.

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

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Cam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those in favour, 8. Opposed, 2. Abstentions, 7. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister responsible for WSCC.

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

BILL 48:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION ACT, NO. 2.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, May 29, 2026, I will present Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for WSCC. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with the Member from the Sahtu in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Members, we will now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wishes of the committee? Member from Boot Lake.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely):** Thank you. Members, there is a motion on the floor. All those in favour? It's non-debatable. I see none. Okay, the motion is carried, and I will now report progress.

---Carried

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill No. 3, Tabled Documents 445-20(1), Tabled Document 453-20(1), and would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Government Operations will meet at the rise of House.

Orders of the day for Thursday, May 28th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Notices of Motion
6. Motions
7. Returns to Oral Questions
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

15. Reports of Standing and Special Committees

16. Tabling of Documents

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 Thursday, May 28th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

