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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER OR REFLECTION	4019
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	4019
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 213-20(1): HOUSING CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE	4019
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 214-20(1): UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN.....	4020
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 215-20(1): IMPROVING ACCESS TO DENTAL SERVICES IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMUNITIES.....	4021
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 216-20(1): MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE.....	4021
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS.....	4022
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1059-20(1): RETIREMENT OF JUANITA SANGRIS FROM THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION	4022
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1060-20(1): HOUSING SUPPLY IN COLVILLE LAKE	4022
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1061-20(1): ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM	4022
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1062-20(1): 2026 GWICH'IN GATHERING	4023
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1063-20(1): LONG-TERM CARE PROGRAM REVIEW.....	4023
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1064-20(1): DRIVER AND VEHICLE OFFICE IN BEHCHOKO	4024
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1065-20(1): RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	4024
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1066-20(1): FUNDING FORMULA FOR EDUCATION AUTHORITIES	4025
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1067-20(1): RECOGNITION OF ANDREW NUNEZ AND THURSTEN GOHL.....	4025
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1068-20(1): APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS.....	4026
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1069-20(1): AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA'S 2026 REPORT ON CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	4026
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1070-20(1): 56TH ANNIVERSARY OF BUFFALO AIRWAYS.....	4027
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1071-20(1): ENBRIDGE LINE 21 EMERGENCY RESPONSE EXERCISE	4027
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1072-20(1): CONDOLENCES FOR NUNAKPUT CONSTITUENTS	4028
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	4029
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4030
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 16-20(1): CHRISTINA JOHNSON GRADUATION.....	4030
ORAL QUESTIONS	4030
QUESTION 1274-20(1): ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS	4030
QUESTION 1275-20(1): RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	4030
QUESTION 1276-20(1): CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES.....	4031
QUESTION 1277-20(1): LONG-TERM CARE PROJECTIONS	4032
QUESTION 1278-20(1): DRIVER AND VEHICLE CENTRE SERVICES IN BEHCHOKO	4033
QUESTION 1279-20(1): DELIVERY OF HOUSING UNITS TO TULITA.....	4034
QUESTION 1280-20(1): AKLAVIK COMMUNITY AIRPORT	4035
QUESTION 1281-20(1): APPRENTICESHIP, TRADES AND OCCUPATION CERTIFICATION BOARD	4035
QUESTION 1282-20(1): TRANSBOUNDARY WATER AGREEMENTS	4036
QUESTION 1283-20(1): SUPPORTS FOR CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIAL WORKERS	4037
QUESTION 1284-20(1): FUNDING FORMULA FOR EDUCATION AUTHORITIES.....	4038
QUESTION 1285-20(1): ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM	4038
QUESTION 1286-20(1): FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS EXIT INTERVIEWS.....	4039
QUESTION 1287-20(1): 50TH STREET HOUSING COMPLEX.....	4040
QUESTION 1288-20(1): CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES.....	4040
QUESTION 1289-20(1): WORKFORCE TRAINING FOR MAJOR PROJECTS	4041
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	4042
TABLED DOCUMENT 535-20(1): PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 50: MARINE TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION ACT.....	4042
TABLED DOCUMENT 536-20(1): STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL 50: MARINE TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION ACT	4042
TABLED DOCUMENT 537-20(1): UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACTION PLAN	4042
TABLED DOCUMENT 538-20(1): INDIGENOUS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN REPORT ON THE INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PLAN RESULTS 2024-2025.....	4043
TABLED DOCUMENT 539-20(1): INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING \$250,000 (APRIL 1, 2025 TO MARCH 31, 2026).....	4043

TABLED DOCUMENT 540-20(1): PROTOTYPING A RESILIENT NORTHERN HOME: ONGOING BARRIERS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS, PHASE 1 – BACKGROUND RESEARCH REPORT	4043
TABLED DOCUMENT 541-20(1): PROTOTYPING A RESILIENT NORTHERN HOME: ONGOING BARRIERS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS, PHASE 2 – FINAL REPORT	4043
TABLED DOCUMENT 542-20(1): CANADIAN HEALTHCARE TECHNOLOGY ARTICLE: “ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES TO SPLIT INTO 4 PARTS”	4043
TABLED DOCUMENT 542-20(1): CITYNEWS ARTICLE: “ALBERTA TABLES BILL TO SPLIT AHS INTO DIFFERENT AGENCIES” ..	4043
MOTIONS.....	4043
MOTION 79-20(1): CONSULTING PARAMEDICS ON THE REGULATION OF PARAMEDICINE, CARRIED	4043
RECORDED VOTE	4051
FIRST READING OF BILLS	4051
BILL 53: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), No. 1, 2026 2027	4051
SECOND READING OF BILLS	4051
BILL 51: AN ACT TO AMEND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ELECTION ACT, CARRIED	4051
BILL 53: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), No. 1, 2026 2027, CARRIED	4052
BILL 50: TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION ACT, REFERRED TO COMMITTEE	4052
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	4052
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	4053
THIRD READING OF BILLS	4053
BILL 32: AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC SERVICE ACT, No. 2, CARRIED	4053
RECORDED VOTE	4055
BILL 48: AN ACT TO AMEND THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT, No. 2, CARRIED.....	4055
RECORDED VOTE	4055
BILL 51: AN ACT TO AMEND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ELECTION ACT, CARRIED.....	4056
RECORDED VOTE	4056
BILL 52: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), No. 1, 2026 2027, CARRIED	4056
RECORDED VOTE	4056
BILL 53: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), No. 1, 2026 2027, CARRIED	4057
RECORDED VOTE	4057
ORDERS OF THE DAY	4057

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, June 3, 2026****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, 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): I'd like to thank Ms. Cleary for opening prayer. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 213-20(1):
HOUSING CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, the lack of adequate housing remains one of the most significant challenges facing the Northwest Territories today. Across our territory, too many residents face barriers to safe, suitable, and affordable housing.

The findings of the territorial housing needs assessment confirm what we are hearing in our communities: That elders, seniors, singles, and vulnerable residents, are disproportionately affected by core housing need and are at increased risk of homelessness.

These challenges are compounded by aging housing stock, where many units are approaching or exceeding their intended service life, and by the unique realities of building and maintaining housing in the North. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the need is urgent, and the scale of the challenge requires sustained, coordinated action.

Mr. Speaker, this government is taking that action. Through a strategic multi-year investment of \$150 million dollars, this government is transforming how housing is delivered across the Northwest Territories. This investment is focused not only on building new homes but on protecting and modernizing our existing housing supply so it continues to serve Northerners for years to come.

Over the life of this Legislative Assembly, Housing NWT is on track to deliver hundreds of new housing units while also advancing repairs and retrofits to extend the life of hundreds more.

In the first two years of this government, 96 new homes have already been completed with an additional 264 units at various stages of planning, procurement, and construction.

Mr. Speaker, a central part of this work is a territory-wide modular housing program that is now moving from planning and procurement into full production and delivery. Across nine communities, from Ulukhaktok to Fort Smith, 98 social housing units are being manufactured in the NWT. These homes are designed primarily for single persons, a group that has been identified at the high risk of homelessness. These new homes demonstrate immediate action to address a growing need identified through our housing needs assessment and the pressures we see on singles waiting for social housing in communities across the territory.

Eighty-four of these new modular units are being constructed in Hay River by METCAN Building Solutions with an additional ten units for Behchoko to be manufactured at a Ticho-owned facility. Four will be manufactured at the new K'ahsho Got'ine Trades Centre in Fort Good Hope. Construction is already well underway on the first of these units expected to be delivered to Fort Simpson later this year. Ten new units for Ulukhaktok are expected to be shipped North from Hay River this season. These deliveries mark a clear shift from planning to visible on-the-ground progress.

Mr. Speaker, this modular approach is helping us deliver housing more efficiently and at greater scale while ensuring homes are built to meet the standards of northern climates. Just as importantly, these homes are being built in the Northwest Territories, supporting local industry, Indigenous partnerships, and jobs in communities across the North.

At the same time, we continue to invest significantly in repair and modernization of our existing housing portfolio. Through this government's three-year \$150 million investment, more than \$30 million will be used to improve the condition of more than 800 homes, helping to improve safety, energy efficiency, and overall living conditions for the families who depend on them.

Mr. Speaker, these efforts are about more than numbers. They are about supporting healthy communities, strengthening our economy, and addressing one of the most pressing social challenges we face. While we know there is more work ahead, we are making meaningful progress. We are turning plans into action for more safe places for Northerners to call home. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 214-20(1):
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION
IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples establishes the minimum standard for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous peoples worldwide. First voted on by the UN general assembly in 2007, this vital human rights instrument affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and authority to manage their own affairs. Its implementation in Canada has been a long time coming.

In 2023, the 19th Legislative Assembly made history by passing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act creating a clear framework for the Government of the Northwest Territories to advance this work in partnership with Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, this was a landmark moment for the Northwest Territories and for Canada. The NWT became only the third jurisdiction in the country to legislate implementation of the UN declaration, following the federal government and British Columbia. But what sets the Northwest Territories apart is not only that we acted; it is how we acted.

Our legislation was developed collaboratively between the Government of the Northwest Territories, Indigenous governments and organizations, and Members of the Legislative Assembly. That cooperative approach is groundbreaking in Canada and reflects the unique government-to-government relationships that exist here in the territory. We are demonstrating that meaningful partnership is how to advance legislation in a good way.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will table the first action plan developed under the Act, another significant milestone. The action plan was co-developed through a special committee that brings together the GNWT and participating Indigenous governments to identify the first

concrete steps towards aligning the GNWT laws, policies, programs and practices, with the principles and rights affirmed in the UN declaration. This work affirms the Northwest Territories place at the forefront of reconciliation and Indigenous rights implementation in Canada.

The action plan identifies priority areas where this work will advance, including decision-making, lands and resources, and social and economic well-being. It establishes a clear and practical path for implementation while recognizing that this work will evolve over time.

Mr. Speaker, implementing the UN declaration is transformative work. It requires governments to examine how decisions are made, how relationships are built, and how Indigenous rights are reflected in laws, policies, and institutions.

This work will happen in phases. In some areas, the focus will be on immediate improvements to engagement, collaboration, transparency, and information sharing. In others, the work will involve longer-term efforts to review and modernize legislation, policies, and systems.

This action plan also reflects a commitment to accountability and transparency, outlining what work has already begun, what is planned, and how progress will be tracked and publicly reported.

Last month, the draft action plan was released for public comment to help residents better understand this work and how implementation will proceed. Residents raised important questions about timelines, engagement, and what implementation will mean in practice. That feedback reinforced the importance of clear and consistent communication as this work moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of the UN declaration in the Northwest Territories will not happen overnight. It will require a long-term commitment from all of us. But today's tabling of the first action plan marks an important step forward, demonstrating leadership not only within the Northwest Territories and across Canada but also in the broader global efforts to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples.

I want to thank the Indigenous governments and organizations that have contributed their knowledge, leadership, and partnership to this work. The progress we are making together reflects the strength of collaboration and a shared commitment to a future grounded in respect for rights, recognition of Indigenous knowledge, and meaningful partnership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 215-20(1):
IMPROVING ACCESS TO DENTAL
SERVICES IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
COMMUNITIES

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, oral health is an important part of overall health. Yet for too many residents of the Northwest Territories, especially in small and remote communities, getting dental care has meant long waits, cancelled clinics, or costly travel outside their home.

Today, I am pleased to update Members on the concrete steps I have taken as Minister to fix the long-standing barriers and bring dental care back into communities where people want and deserve to receive care.

First, I am proud to say that our government has secured a new agreement with Health Canada through the Oral Health Access Fund. This agreement brings approximately \$3 million over three years into the Northwest Territories to repair, replace, and modernize dental equipment in community health centres across the territory.

This is a significant achievement. For years, outdated and broken dental equipment has been one of the biggest reasons dental services could not be delivered consistently in small communities. Even when dental professionals were ready and willing to travel, there was no dedicated funding to maintain or replace this equipment and as a result residents could not receive dental care close to home. By negotiating this agreement with Health Canada, we are fixing the foundation that dental services depend on.

In the first year of the agreement, funding will be used to hire a technology planner to assess the condition of dental rooms and equipment in community health centres and develop standard, safe dental room layouts, and put standing agreements in place to support installation, training, and the removal of old equipment. In year two and three, the focus will be to shift and getting equipment repaired or replaced in communities, starting in the Beaufort Delta and Sahtu regions, and then expanding to the Deh Cho, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife regions. This work will be carried out with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, which manages our community health centres where dental services are delivered.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement is a key step toward our government's mandate priority of providing care closer to home. When dental spaces are safe and reliable, fewer residents will need to travel for routine dental care reducing stress for families and lowering travel pressures on the health system.

Second, I am also pleased to confirm that we have signed a contract with Adam Dental Clinic to restore visiting dental services in communities where equipment has already been assessed as safe for use. Dental services are expected to resume this summer in Fort Simpson, Fort Resolution, Fort Providence, and Norman Wells, with additional communities coming online as readiness work is completed.

Mr. Speaker, while dental treatment is not an insured under the Northwest Territories health care plan, it is often delivered through federal programs such as non-insured health benefits. Our government remains committed to ensuring residents can access timely, reliable dental care as close to home as possible. This work is about removing barriers, improving safety, and restoring quality service where people live. For residents, this means more reliable dental clinics, fewer cancelled appointments due to equipment failures, and fewer trips out of the community for basic dental care.

There is still more work ahead but these actions represent a real, measurable progress. By securing new federal funding and rebuilding the infrastructure that dental services rely on, we are bringing care back into communities and improving access for residents across the Northwest Territories, especially in small and remote communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Ministers' Statements. Mr. Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 216-20(1):
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the Honourable Member for Thebacha, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, will be absent from the House today and tomorrow to attend the Canadian Council of Ministers of Forestry in Langford, British Columbia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' Statements. Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1059-20(1):
RETIREMENT OF JUANITA SANGRIS FROM
THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh constituent Juanita Sangris who last month retired after an extraordinary 5-year career serving the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Who knew back then that what began as an opportunity to work in her home community would become a 45-year career of outstanding services. But it was a natural fit. Juanita's skills and dedication meant she quickly became an essential part of the building of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation government into what it is today. That is no overstatement. This is the true magnitude of her 45-year service.

When Juanita first started, she was essentially a one-person operation in a small band office in Dettah, with very little structure and just a few colleagues along her side. But what the Yellowknives Dene First Nation did have was a vision at the time when the relationship between Indigenous governments and First Nations was evolving, and they had Juanita who dutifully managed the band office, the financial day-to-day operation day in and day out. As well, we all know vision alone is not enough. It has to be matched with sound financial management to build something that lasts. I am sure all Members in this House can appreciate just how important sound financial management are to the long-term success of any government or institution.

But beyond organization and administration, Juanita's dedication to her work with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation was deeply personal. As the YKDFN grew in capacity, she trained and mentored the staff and over time helped build a culture of diligence and professionalism and steady service.

I would also like to recognize that Juanita is here today in the gallery, joined by her husband former Chief Jonas Sangris who served 12 years, who also has dedicated much of his life to the Yellowknives Dene First Nation as well. As well, their children Derek Sangris, Lisa Pellissey, Sheena Green, and they have a huge family and a lot of grandchildren that I can't mention here right now, but I just want to mention that.

This Assembly thanks her for her extraordinary services. There are so many who look to her example, who hope to contribute as much as she has. I wish her and her family all the best in the new chapter in their retirement. And I want to say thank you for your services, and I ask my

colleagues to join me in recognizing them in the gallery here today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member from the Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1060-20(1):
HOUSING SUPPLY IN COLVILLE LAKE

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we conclude our spring sitting and releasing information to our constituents, it is as critical as home security. Mr. Speaker, a stable home environment is the pillar of family growth, security, stability, and environment to eliminate mental health stress.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Tulita has allocated ten homes during this upcoming seasons. I say seasons, Mr. Speaker, because we rely on two seasons. Hopefully there's a barging season and a dependable shortening winter road season. So later I will have questions there to the appropriate Minister.

But focusing on the home itself, Mr. Speaker, is just as important as community growth. A stable home really provides security for the children. The children can focus on their studies after having come out of their nice home. And we have the abilities here in the North in recognizing the emerging industry in the community of Fort Good Hope with the NDL, or Ne'rahten Developments Limited facility. Now we can design our own home to the applications of our climate change. So we have all the resources here. And I am glad to hear the Minister's statement earlier. It really emphasizes the need, and it really tells the audience that we are drafting solutions. And I am in total confidence if we have more homes going to our communities, we'll have healthy communities. People are secure, people are happy, and the children can focus, as said, on their studies.

So I look forward to supporting this initiative and, as I mentioned, I will have questions to the appropriate Minister later on. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1061-20(1):
ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health and Social Services is well aware, I have a strong interest in what health data we can and should collect to make better informed decisions, as well as the interoperability of health records between our

jurisdictions and ones residents must go to for medical travel.

Much of that dialogue has focused on the upcoming planned electronic health records system replacement. It's of little wonder, then, that I have been reviewing some of the RFP documents for said replacements records system. The RFP package is quite extensive and detailed. I don't pretend to be a proponent that would be able to accurately assess the requirements and provide a financial estimate. I think, however, that this is a key topic that the Assembly should keep tabs on as this process moves forward to modernizing our system and ideally reaching the end of limping along and modifying our current one with endless customizations that have made it unwieldy, Mr. Speaker.

There's one line that stood out to me in the RFP. Quote, ultimately the goal of the EHR project is a single comprehensive electronic health record which is accessible by NWT residents and authorized custodians to health information collected across NWT's entire health continuum of care. End quote.

I commend this vision. In short, I am pro-EHRS replacement; however, I am still curious about how we got here and how the replacement system will be steered into the future. As such, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1062-20(1):
2026 GWICH'IN GATHERING

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to formally invite my colleagues of this Assembly to attend the upcoming Gwich'in Gathering in Fort McPherson. The dates for the Gwich'in Gathering is scheduled for July 17th to the 21st, 2026.

The Gwich'in Gathering represents an important occasion for communities, families, and visitors to come together in recognition and celebration of Gwich'in culture. It serves as an opportunity to honour the knowledge of elders, acknowledge the role of the youth, and strengthen the cultural connection that continues to sustain our communities.

Mr. Speaker, events such as this are significant not only to the Gwich'in people but to Northwest Territories as a whole. They contribute to the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous

languages and traditions while fostering understanding and collaboration among people and communities. The community of Fort McPherson is pleased to host this important gathering and look forward to welcoming participants from across the territory and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to consider attending this gathering as an opportunity to demonstrate support for Indigenous culture and the ongoing work of cultural preservation and revitalization in the Northwest Territories.

I would also like to acknowledge and commend the organizers, volunteers, and community members whose efforts and commitment will make this gathering possible. Delegates from Alaska, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories will be among the thousands of people gathering in Fort McPherson during this time.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to welcoming colleagues to Fort McPherson for this important event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1063-20(1):
LONG-TERM CARE PROGRAM REVIEW

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again today I'd like to talk about the long-term care program review that was completed in 2015 for the Northwest Territories. And at the time, it was said that there was 115 beds per 1,000 people aged 70 or older required.

Mr. Speaker, I know I've done Members' statements on this in the past, we went through that; that equated for Inuvik at the time 43 beds. There was then a proposal brought forward to this government for a 48-bed long-term care facility built and designed -- either built and owned by, built and operated by, a partnership between both the Indigenous development corps in my community.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, in addition the operational plan had been developed based on best practices in long-term residential care and created an alignment with key GNWT documents, including the integrated service delivery model, continuing care framework, and action plan Our Elders, Our Community.

So having said all that, Mr. Speaker, I know those plans have changed. I know that was then, this is now. I know the plan -- and I know the Minister and her department have been working on an updated long-term care

projections for Inuvik, for the territory. I know some of that work was done. I can see some of that work has happened in Inuvik as well. What residents of Inuvik now would like to know, Mr. Speaker, is the current status of that work that's been done, the results of the current work on what the needs are, the current status of the expansion, and certainly when they can expect to see this long awaited construction of this facility in the community of Inuvik so we can continue to care for our folks that require long-term care for peace of mind for them and their families, Mr. Speaker. So I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1064-20(1):
DRIVER AND VEHICLE OFFICE IN
BEHCHOKO

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Behchoko is one of the fastest growing communities in the Northwest Territories and the regional centre for all Tlicho communities. As the population grows, regional services must keep pace. This includes accessible Class 5 drivers testing.

Access to Class 5 testing matters for everyday life, but it is also crucial for economic development. Many entry level positions, especially in transportation, require a full license before our residents can even apply.

When residents must travel to Yellowknife to obtain that license, Mr. Speaker, Behchoko is left with a service gap that affects both workers and local employers. The rationale for this gap has been that Behchoko is lacking some of the road test condition needed for unrestricted testing. But if certain features are missing from the local road test route, then the route should be improved. We are talking about modest improvement: A designated parking area for manoeuvres, crosswalks, stop lines, and selected lanes marking where the route requires them. As for higher speed testing conditions, Mr. Speaker, Behchoko is located directly off Highway No. 3. There should be no reason that part of the road test cannot be covered through the use of the highway.

Mr. Speaker, for comparison, both Fort Simpson and Behchoko are regional centres. Fort Simpson's population is smaller than Behchoko. The road conditions and transportation infrastructure are comparable yet one community has access to unrestricted testing while the other does not.

Behchoko's proximity to Yellowknife should not become a reason to provide reduced services. The GNWT should establish a designated road test route, make the modest improvements required, and provide unrestricted classified driver testing in Behchoko. I will have questions from the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Member's Statements. Member from Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1065-20(1):
RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. TESTART:

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And workloads that are unsustainable which puts vulnerable children in danger. And we have to create responses for financial measures. And this problem is persisting. It's getting worse. Social workers have told me that they were disappointed by the responses by the Minister to their concerns last week when she did not propose any solutions to remediate this status quo that doesn't work.

[Translation Ends].

Mr. Speaker, the auditor general's devastating report on child and family services is behind many of the failures identified is a growing staffing crisis fueled by frontline worker burnout and turnover leaving vulnerable children to fall through the cracks which widen with each vacancy which is as high as 34 percent. That crisis has been raised in audit after audit, and it points to an inescapable truth. The government's focus on financial incentives as a fix-all for recruitment continues to miss the mark. Three-quarters of frontline staff would not be operating above the department's 11 case cap, and nearly a quarter would not be carrying more than 30 cases if those solutions were working.

This is not just an administrative failure. It is a human resource crisis that has already led to staff missing mandatory monthly wellness checks for 91 percent of children in care.

Last week I raised these concerns, and consistent with the approach of her predecessors, the Minister's response did not address excessive caseloads or workloads standards. Instead, she returned to housing shortages and national recruitment pressures failing to engage with the fact that her department can't even retain workers in the first place.

We know we can address the needs of social workers. In the United Kingdom and Australia, governments are moving beyond rhetoric and taking concrete action with mandatory 20 percent caseload reductions for early career social workers and automated workload tracking introduced to signal when a regional office reaches unsafe capacity. Yet here in the NWT, health and social services has never actually assessed the financial and human resources required to deliver these services despite being called to do so since 2010.

My question to the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Speaker, is clear: When will she stand up for social workers and the families who depend on them and commit to codified caseload caps and structured workload protections for frontline workers? When will she stand up for the social workers? Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1066-20(1):
FUNDING FORMULA FOR EDUCATION
AUTHORITIES

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Yellowknife school boards continue to experience significant pressures under the current GNWT education funding formula and have been advocating to MLAs for change. The current funding formula is intended to provide equitable funding across education authorities; however, in practice, it does not fully reflect the real and escalating costs associated with inclusive schooling, staffing pressures and operating schools. Several of our school boards face unique cost drivers that are not adequately recognized in the formula.

Unlike most other education authorities in the territory, Yellowknife education districts directly manage their own human resources, facilities maintenance, and operational services. These responsibilities create additional fixed and variable costs.

The current formula does not respond to changes in student complexity or mobility. When schools welcome students with complex learning, behavioural or medical needs, funding does not adjust to reflect the additional staffing, supports, and resources required to ensure those students can be safely and meaningfully included in school communities.

Similarly, when students transfer into schools during the school year, there is no corresponding adjustment to operating or instructional funding despite immediate impacts

on class composition, staffing pressures, and space.

As a result of these gaps, Mr. Speaker, boards are required to dig into surplus savings, which should be used for facilities maintenance, to supplement core GNWT funding to meet student needs often reallocating resources away from other priorities to maintain effective learning environments. This approach is not sustainable and a solution is needed which recognizes the unique circumstances facing these school boards. We need a review and refinement of the education funding formula to ensure it more accurately reflects actual costs faced by the school boards facing these unique circumstances including

- The full cost of inclusive schooling,
- Staffing recruitment and retention pressures,
- Student mobility and mid-year enrolment changes, and
- The additional operational responsibilities carried by the boards who manage their own facilities and staffing.

Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring the funding model supports both equity and adequacy, and that our education authorities can meet the needs of all students without continued reliance on board level supplementation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1067-20(1):
RECOGNITION OF ANDREW NUNEZ AND
THURSTEN GOHL

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the safety and well-being of children is one of the most important responsibilities we hold. When concerns are raised, they must be met with honesty and accountability. Policies and programs matter, but the heavy lifting is done by the people who show up for our children every day. That work deserves recognition.

Today I want to show my gratitude to our community workers, along with our teachers, mentors, first responders, and everyone who helps to care for and protect children in our communities. I also want to recognize two people, one of which has been awarded for the

work he did in our community of Fort Providence. Both are greatly appreciated and honoured for their contributions to the community.

First, I want to recognize Constable Andrew Nunez. Andrew was recently honoured with the 2026 recipient of the IOD RCMP Community Relations Award for his contributions to the community engagement in Fort Providence. He is a former child protection worker, which speaks to his longstanding commitment to children and community safety. Congratulations to Constable Andrew Nunez.

I also want to recognize Thursten Gohl. Thursten has been honoured for his dedication as a coach and mentor for the positive example he sets for young people. His service reminds us how powerful it can be when a young person has someone steady in their corner. A big mahsi to Thursten.

Mr. Speaker, children and community members remember the adults who made them feel safe and cared for. They remember the person who believed in their future. In small communities, that kind of presence can change a life.

To all the community workers who continue to carry the weight of a community system, to Andrew and Thursten and to everyone who cares for and protects children, thank you. Your work matters deeply, and our communities are stronger because of you. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Members' statement. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1068-20(1):
APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, we need to get our act together with our apprenticeship and trades program. It's not serving apprentices or employers the way it should be, and now more than ever this territory needs skilled tradespeople. If we're going to build and maintain the new housing we need, if we're to ensure upcoming major projects actually use northern labour, if we are to boost employment numbers in smaller communities, all of these need a well-functioning apprenticeship program.

First, we need to seize every opportunity and be more flexible to offer trades programs closer to people's home communities. That way, they can maintain more continuity with their employers while literally building up their own communities.

Now, we have an ATOC board that is set up to be a bridge between industry and government

and advise the Minister but ATOC seems to have no role in directing or advising Aurora College which is, of course, our only trades training provider. That's a problem because the college is arm's length from the Minister and a lot of the valuable feedback from employers relates to problems with implementation.

For example, the college often doesn't offer courses every single year so unless an apprentice is given special permission to go down south to continue their training, they have to wait a year or two which stalls their progress and momentum. Sometimes college trades courses are even cancelled at the very last minute, leaving students high and dry.

There's no formal system to connect employers with apprentices whereas an employer could call up an Alberta Trades Institute and get a list of, say, second-year electrician apprentices they could reach out to. But ECE or Aurora College can't offer that information so an employer has to wait for students to come to them.

We have heard a major bottleneck is a shortage of Red Seal journeypersons. One strategy might be to assess whether there are cases where a journeyperson might be able to safely supervise more than two apprentices at a time, which is currently the limit in our regulation.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few ideas to help draw attention to the need to improve our apprenticeship and trades program to ensure the success of our apprentices, our northern businesses, and ultimately our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1069-20(1):
AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA'S 2026
REPORT ON CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue, like my colleagues, on the auditor general's report with respect to the child and family services. Mr. Speaker, it's not that just things are getting worse. It's the fact that we can't seem to realize or recognize how much worse they're getting.

Mr. Speaker, if I was, in theory, to provide an armchair diagnosis on this government, I would say it's somewhere between the Frank Sinatra stubbornness of doing it my way or the ODD, that's the oppositional defiant disorder, Mr. Speaker, because the government doesn't

seem to want to take advice and realize the concerns we're raising.

Mr. Speaker, if the 2026 Auditor General's Report wasn't just bad enough, again I quote the former Minister in 2028, it was gut-wrenching, that report. Sorry, I said 2028, my apologies, I meant 2018. And the 2014 report was an abysmal failure. That in itself should have been a call to action to the facts, if anything the baseline. One would stand to wonder, repeatedly, doesn't the auditor general have more important files to go to? No, apparently this is the file they keep coming back to and saying things aren't getting better and no one seems to be changing that.

Mr. Speaker, you know when things go wrong when the government spends more time defending how great they are and the Minister, and I think they've lost focus. And the focus is this:

The razor focus we have, along this side of the room, at least most of us I should say, is the kids that are the victims of this process. And while we hear things like oh, everything's fine, we got modest improvements. Well, the auditor general is the gold standard of reports. This is an abysmal failure, Mr. Speaker. So let us get on the vanguard of solutions and let's turn inaction to action, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I personally am going to say they haven't failed me; they've disappointed me. But they failed the children that are intended to be in the custody. And when I look to the Minister, Mr. Speaker, and say she's disappointed me, again I say she was doing a heroic job in the four years she was a Member. So what happened that turned the lights out on this issue? So the Minister has been in charge of this issue for 909 days. I say to this, if you're not interested in making things improvement, ask for a shuffle, Mr. Speaker. And I want to finish by sincerely saying I thank the Minister for joining us today so we can deal with this issue face to face.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife Centre, can you please withdraw that last comment.

MR. HAWKINS: Withdrawn.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member's statement. Member from Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1070-20(1):
56TH ANNIVERSARY OF BUFFALO
AIRWAYS

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate an incredible but unique milestone, the 56th Anniversary of a legendary northern

institution, Buffalo Airways. Talking to Mikey McBride the other day and I asked him why 56 years was a time to celebrate? In his usual comical tone, why not? We kept forgetting about all the other years.

What started as a small, ambitious business in Hay River, like others Kingland Ford, Wesclean Queen, and Igloo Building Supplies, Buffalo has grown to a world famous aviation icon. Founded by Buffalo Joe McBryan himself, this family-operated company has spent over half a century providing hard northern work and mastering the skies of the North with any weather.

Mr. Speaker, Buffalo Airways is the definition of a northern success story. From its humble beginnings flying under-serviced routes, it has expanded to reach far beyond the borders of the Northwest Territories. Today, it is recognized globally. Millions of people from around the world know their name, their vintage aircraft, the northern spirit and through the television show they had, merchandise and a numerous global fan base. I will also mention Mikey's YouTube channel.

But their fame has never changed their local humble heart. Buffalo always remained deeply committed to the communities that built them. They are a lifeline for the north. They deliver critical cargo, transport passengers with their charters, and provide essential firefighting services to help protect our North during wildfire seasons. During the 2023 wildfire in the Hay River area, Buffalo Airways soared high and transported many of our needs. They worked nonstop for us in the area and transported many people with the wildland urban interface program from Alberta, but they also transported essential cargo to Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, Buffalo Airways brings the spirit of the Northwest Territories to the global stage. I want to congratulate the McBryan family on the success of Buffalo Airways. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1071-20(1):
ENBRIDGE LINE 21 EMERGENCY
RESPONSE EXERCISE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, I had the opportunity to witness Enbridge Line 21 full-scale emergency response exercise last year at N'dulee Crossing, Fort Simpson and Fort McMurray, underscoring the critical importance of robust emergency preparedness on the Norman Wells Line 21 pipeline system and demonstrated the high standard of training

delivered by private industry in partnership with northern and Indigenous communities. This multi-day exercise showed how detailed planning, realistic field deployment, and genuine collaboration can reduce risk to land, water, and communities along the pipeline corridor.

At its core, the full-scale exercise was designed to test how Enbridge and its partners could respond to a potential incident on Line 21 from early notification and command decision-making through on-the-ground containment and recovery actions. By the activity and evaluation, evaluating the company's emergency response plan in real time, the exercise provided an opportunity to verify that internal procedures, communication, and logistics are not only complementary with regulatory expectations but also practical and effective in the unique condition of the Deh Cho and Sahtu region.

This kind of scenario-based training is essential to ensuring that if an incident occurred, responders are acting from practical experience rather than theory.

Equally important, the exercise highlighted the growing role of Indigenous governments and local leadership in shaping and delivering emergency response. Collaboration with Liiklii Kue First Nation, the communities of Wrigley, Fort Simpson, Jean Marie, Sambaa K'e, Norman Wells, Tulita, and one Alberta community, was not a symbolic gesture but a recognition that these who live along the line bring critical knowledge of the land, river system, and community needs. Their participation helped ensure that response strategies respected community priorities, traditional use areas, and culture value while also building mutual confidence that local perspectives are embedded in emergency planning. This approach reflected a broader shift towards partnership-based emergency management and that support reconciliation and shared partnership.

The Deh Cho focused activities during the FSE showcased the scale and professionalism of the private sector response capabilities. Establishing an incident command centre in Fort McMurray to oversee field operations at N'dulee Crossing and Fort Simpson demonstrated Enbridge is prepared to coordinate complex multi-site responses using recognized incident command structures and integrated planning.

Recognizing the time, I would like the rest of the statement be deemed as read and printed in Hansard.

In closing, I would like to thank Enbridge for including me in the exercise. It was an eye-opener, and I feel comfortable they are prepared for the future.

The participation of representatives from Norman Wells, Tulita, Wrigley, Fort Simpson, Jean Marie River, Sambaa K'e, and Chateh ensured that decision-makers could see first-hand how an incident would be managed and how information would flow between the IMC, field teams, and affected communities.

On the ground, the exercise mobilized approximately 111 Enbridge personnel, 34 local contractors, 8 on-site observers, 14 observers at the IMC, and 4 regulatory representatives, supported by 3 helicopters and 6 Enbridge boats. This level of deployment reflects a significant private-sector investment in equipment, training, and logistics capacity dedicated to environmental protection and public safety. Involving local contractors not only builds regional economic benefits but also ensures that people with direct knowledge of local rivers, currents, and access routes are fully integrated into response teams.

The Emergency Response (ER) Day and community feast in Fort Simpson, which drew an estimated 200-300 community members, were equally important components of the exercise. By making response equipment visible and explaining how it would be used during a real incident, Enbridge and its partners helped demystify emergency operations and provided residents with a clearer sense of what to expect and how to engage if something goes wrong. Public-facing events like this build transparency and trust, giving community members a chance to ask questions, share concerns, and see that safety is supported by real, tested capability rather than assurances alone.

Taken together, the 2025 Line 21 Full-Scale Exercise demonstrates that high-quality training led by private industry, when done in partnership with Indigenous governments, local contractors, and regulators, is a cornerstone of responsible resource development in the North. It strengthens technical readiness, deepens relationships with communities along the pipeline, and helps ensure that, if an emergency occurs, responders are equipped both professionally and culturally to protect people, lands, and waters.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements.
Member from Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1072-20(1):
CONDOLENCES FOR NUNAKPUT
CONSTITUENTS

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Member for Nunakput, I'd like to offer my condolences to the many families whose loved ones have passed on in the last number of months.

Condolences to the family of Miss Lucy Wolki with her recent passing - one of our matriarchs of Tuktoyaktuk, an elder, a sister, a mother, and annanak. A kind and gentle soul.

Condolences to the family with the recent passing of Ms. Violet Kikoak. I saw Violet grow up from a young girl in our community and take care of her parents and raise her family, a mother, annanak and sister. Violet was kind and a friend to many.

Condolences to the family with the recent passing of Mr. James Adam - a young man, a husband, father and son to Sandy and Sarah. Another tough loss for the family with so many young children.

Condolences to the family of Mr. David Noksana Sr. with his recent passing - an elder, a father, attatak, and brother. A good friend to many. David had many talents and was a confident person.

Ms. Louisa Gruben. Condolences to the family of Louisa with her recent passing. Louisa is a mother, annanak, sister, and good friend to many in the community. Louisa always let others stay in her House when they had no place to stay at home.

Condolences to the family of Mr. Freddie Voudrach. Freddie is a husband, father, attatak and a friend to many in the community. He would stop me in the Northern store and ask how his MLA was doing and make sure you take good care of us.

Condolences to Millie and the family of Mr. John Russell with his recent passing. John was a local businessman and a hardworking individual that took care of his family - a husband, a father, and attatak.

Condolences to the family of Ms. Maria Pokiak. A very young lady who left behind young children, a difficult loss - a mother, a sister, and a daughter. She will be missed.

Condolences to the family of Mrs. Linda Thrasher. Linda was a quiet individual in the community but always had a ready smile. She will be missed. A mother, annanak, and sister.

We lost another elder in our community, Mrs. Dora Raddi. Dora was a mother, annanak, and a sister. She struggled in the last few years but was so strong. Condolences to the family.

Mr. Fred Emaghok passed away in Whitehorse where he had lived for a number of years but was brought home to his family for burial. Condolences to the Emaghok family.

There has so much loss throughout the region. It's difficult especially in the smaller communities as it is much more apparent, and I want to provide my condolences as many times as MLA I am not able to the service. Quyananni Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Our condolences to all the families. And thank you for the recognition in this House today.

Members' statements. Members' statements. Return to oral questions. Return to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Range Lake.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to recognize two of my neighbours from the Range Lake riding, Hannah and Elise Neudorf. Elise is five months old so I am excited that she's getting her first look at democracy in action. I'd also like to recognize Fiona Wray. Fiona is an Indigenous social worker. She also happens to be the daughter of Gordon Wray who was a former Member and Minister of this Assembly. Thank you all for being here today and observing our proceedings.

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

MR. HAWKINS: I wish to follow in the same vein as my colleague for Range Lake. I'd also like to recognize Fiona Wray, a social worker, a warrior for the cause to keep machinery running. And we don't have enough Fionas up there, and I really wish we do. And I've known her for a long time. But I also want to say, a shout out to the memory of her father. He was a good friend of mine. I knew him in his post-political career but I also remember him when I was a page here, and that he was always such a wonderful man to get to know. And when you crossed his -- when you crossed his way, point of view of the world, he made sure he told you. He had an opinion, and it was usually quite sharp. But I miss him because he was a great guy.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. You've allowed us, the 19, to be present and represent the people of Northwest Territories. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings, and it is always nice to see people in the gallery.

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

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 16-20(1):
CHRISTINA JOHNSON GRADUATION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge the graduation of Christina Johnston from the Aurora College school of health and human services with a Bachelor of Science in nursing degree. Christina was born and raised in Yellowknife's Range Lake riding, and her family has a history of working in the medical field. She continues a journey now in nursing as a registered nurse in the Northwest Territories. Congratulations on this milestone, Christina. I am looking forward to your promising career in northern nursing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1274-20(1):
ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Social Services explain what parties within the GNWT provided the extensive requirements for a new electronic health records system RFP; that is, if the oversight included end users such as healthcare professionals, both medical and administrative, as well as technical or subject experts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the requirements that were developed through a structured collaborative process led by the department working closely with three health and social services authorities. There were nearly 500 people across the GNWT health system who provided input. This included frontline users such as physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, administrative staff who use the electronic records every day. Their involvement ensured that the requirements reflect the real practical needs in the healthcare setting. It also included technical and subject-matter experts who were involved, including IT specialists, health informatic professionals, privacy and

security experts, and procurement advisors. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a proponent is selected for the new health records system, is there an anticipated prototype testing period; that is, will NTHSSA or the other authorities staff and/or technical GNWT staff test that and will the proponent be able to identify and squash bugs? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after a proponent is selected, the project will include several testing stages such as configuration, user acceptance testing, health authority staff, including clinical administrative users as well as GNWT technical staff will take part in this testing. This testing will help confirm that the system works properly in real world NWT health care environments. The procurement process also includes proof of concept stage to confirm the system will function within the GNWT's technical environment. And under the control of the proponent, it will be responsible for fixing any problem found during testing, including software bugs, performance issues, and other deficiencies before the system is fully rolled out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell me who will be responsible for day-to-day governance decisions that will steer the management of this new record system, especially if it's found at a later date to be deficient in key areas such as technical, privacy, operational usability, or any other key concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a formal governance structure will oversee the day-to-day management of the new electronic health record system. Governance committees will include representatives from all three health authorities including physicians, clinical staff, health leadership, department officials, technical experts, and these bodies will be responsible for guiding decisions and addressing the system if it's found to have technical, privacy, usable, or operational concerns. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1275-20(1):
RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS OF CHILD
AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given that 75 percent of frontline social workers exceed the 11 case cap and nearly carry half -- sorry, nearly double and sometimes triple the workload, which I consider unsafe working conditions, can the Minister of Health and Social Services explain why the department has never done an assessment of their total resourcing needs required to support their operations in the social services space. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the child and family services department, within NTHSSA, they -- I believe that the assessments that have been done and then they do the -- you know, when they do the business process and put forward for additional positions, that within 2018 until 2026, they did put forward a number of positions forward because of the assessments that were done. I believe that there was 56 additional positions put into child and family services to support the system. However, with the shortages and the vacancies right now, I believe that there is ongoing work internally to analyze internally and also they're going to be doing an assessment and working with and reaching out to staff right now before December. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And even with -- I was around for those 56 positions. You know, even with those 56 positions, the assessment was never done. So now we're hearing it will come in December. I hope the Minister will -- well, I hope we will see those numbers because we need to see them. Mr. Speaker, I talked about a number of initiatives other jurisdictions have taken. So let's talk about mandatory caseload caps on new social workers to ease them into the job. This is done in many other jurisdictions to great success. Why has the Minister not looked at practical solutions like that that support social workers, keep them from being burnt out, and keep them from immediately being saddled with caseloads that are unsafe, as I said earlier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the department right now is currently in the process of doing this jurisdictional scan and it should be available for -- it's going to be completed by October 2026. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, don't do the scan. Just get it in place. That's what we're asking for today. We're asking for some immediate action. That's the question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister make that commitment today to put safeguards and safe -- safety guards around social workers who are coming into the profession so we can keep them from burning out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in discussions that I've been just having with the department of child and family services at the department level, there is a proposed float team approach right now to try and relieve some pressures in areas where there's larger vacancies. They're initiating some peer support and debriefing teams. We're looking right now at mentorships and part of onboarding training processes as this has been identified by staff, and all of this will be, you know -- and clinical and supervisor training for this summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1276-20(1):
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My concerns are really about systematic deterioration. Well, at least my first question is about that.

Given that the Minister has held the health portfolio for 909 days and during the Minister's tenure, her department's failure rate regarding children in care has actively worsened from the already catastrophic 88 percent to 91. Mr. Speaker, the question really is, does the Minister finally accept statutory responsibility for this decline, or will she continue to blame the systematic failure remains the fault of her predecessors or even just the process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've already stood up, I've already said that we accept -- I accept, and I accept that there is still work to do. I understand that I've been here for 909 days, as the Member has stated, but the system that was developed, that is where we're currently sitting now, didn't happen in 909 days and I, as the Minister, am continuing to work in this department and continuing to show

improvements. As the OAG has stated, there has been improvement since the 2018 report. There are things that were highlighted that, you know, that we've had 79 percent improvement with supervision of workers out of territory placement. We've had increased improvements of more consistent of key foster caregiver documents. The previous reports were with an 81 -- like a 70 percent increase. So where we were and where we are now, yeah, it's not done. The work is not done. I still have lots of work to do, and the Minister after me will continue to have this work to do because the system was set up. It wasn't set up with Indigenous people. It is -- you know, it is Indigenous kids in the system. It hasn't had -- until we had Bill C-92, that's why we have the legislation moving forward so that we can work with Indigenous governments because it will be in our legislation to say that this is what you have to do to make care plans to care for these children, to move them into a better place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: It sure sounds like it's the system's fault, if you listen carefully, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Minister is the sole corporate trustee and legal guardian of these children under the territorial law. She has possessed the clear documentation and the knowledge and experience, Mr. Speaker, on this challenge so the question really comes down to is, because you continue to operate at 14 to 34 percent frontline vacancies of social workers to be our champions and heroes of this job, with three-quarters of a billion dollar budget, Mr. Speaker, why do you continue to fail this industry when we need to entice them to stay and bring new ones in? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, any Indigenous or any non-Indigenous or any social workers that are, you know, wanting to come into this work, you know, this is where we are. We have the advertisements. You know, we have recruitment going out this summer to the universities. You know, Aurora College is transitioning into having the social work diploma program graduates within the next, you know, two years or three years. And so there is still work that we need to do to improve the recruitment of, you know, Indigenous social workers and all social workers within the system. However, you know, in the last year we've increased, you know, where social workers were able to get the market labour supplement because, you know, they were left out the first round and that was negotiated in for them to be able to try and recruit more because of the cost of living in some of these communities. And we will continue to do the

work that we need to do. That's why staff has said they need support, they need training. We are creating those pieces, and there is some restructuring going on. And there is also duplication of paperwork where we know that we can streamline some of that. And we're also utilizing some of our other staff that can do some of the work that are not needed by the social workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, it's clearly not money is the issue here and certainly cancelling the social worker program wasn't the solution either. But thankfully bringing it back. So, Mr. Speaker, by law, the department of health must assess children within 24 hours yet the files prove that some wait as late as 16 days.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister accept that allowing her department, her system, her system that she has fought against, to violate their statutory regulations and deadlines? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that within that -- you know, it's not acceptable, and that's why we currently have put in place since -- the audit was done between a certain time period and since that, since I became Minister, there has been things put in place that the department is screening the quarterly audits and providing those to managers to make sure that everybody's -- you know, making sure that everybody's meeting the standard statutory obligations within this. And we're also reviewing many of these things across jurisdictional to see where -- you know, where all of our standards meet to make sure that, you know, we are making sure that our standards are able to meet the Canadian standards and in the territory that how do we create the system that we're going to be able to action those things within that time frame. And so that work is currently going on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1277-20(1):
LONG-TERM CARE PROJECTIONS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will go a little slow to give my colleague, the Minister of health, a chance to catch her breath. Seems like she's the only one answering questions today.

Mr. Speaker, following up on my Member's statement regarding the long-term care facility in Inuvik, you know, I went back to the history of what's been happening. So I understand the Department of Health and Social Services has been anticipating updated long-term care bed projections. Can the Minister please tell us what we can expect to hear about those projections and what they will mean for long-term care in our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services has been updating the long-term care projections to ensure that we're planning appropriately for the needs of our aging population. Those updated projections are expected to be released later this summer. I've just recently been briefed on them, and they'll be released this summer. Once released, the projections will inform how we work with communities to ensure seniors can access the care that they need as close to home as possible and will support ongoing discussions about infrastructure, staffing, and service delivery in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister update the House then on the current status of the expansion in Inuvik and how those bed projections will be factored into the project once they are completed this summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, currently the process of issuing the RFP for design, we're currently in the process of issuing this. I believe it's in the infrastructure ready to -- going through that procurement process to go out for design services. The bed projections will provide important territory-wide data and then for our -- like, for each long-term care, it will show where we have planning in place if that's enough beds once we build them. So in Inuvik, you know, the numbers will remain the same. I believe there's additional 18 beds. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and yes, if it ends up being 18 beds, 20 beds, or 15 beds, certainly that will be appreciated.

I know I've had conversations with the Minister both publicly and in our constituency meetings in our hometown regarding the design stage,

and we're anticipating construction starting in 2027. Can the Minister speak to when she is now anticipating construction to begin, and are we still looking at 2027 for shovels in the ground, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have a schematic design cost estimate completion anticipated for March 31st, 2027. And then we have a construction completion date by 2032. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1278-20(1):

DRIVER AND VEHICLE CENTRE SERVICES
IN BEHCHOKO

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure.

Given that licensing numbers for the Tlicho region are overshadowed by Yellowknife within the broader North Slave region, will the Minister provide the most recent numbers for how many restricted class 5 driver's licenses were issued in Behchoko? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That level of detail, I'd have to go to the department to find out the amount of restricted driver's licenses that have been issued in Behchoko or the Tlicho region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort Simpson provides unrestricted class 5 testing when it is a smaller regional centre with comparable road conditions and infrastructure while Behchoko continues to receive limited service. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to lifting the restricted driver's license status for NWT small communities? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would love to lift the restricted licenses across the territories however restricted driver's licenses do apply. Actually in just a quick little Google search, I found that they still exist in many provinces across Canada and territory. You know, usually what happens is because we follow a Canadian standard, there is infrastructure that is missing within communities. You know, some of the things that Behchoko may not have compared to Fort Simpson is street markings, street crosswalks painted on, stuff like that, and also

maybe curbside -- or curbs. However, I am committed to work with the Member for her community to see what infrastructure is required for the community of Behchoko and if we can work with the community government to see how we can improve the infrastructure there and work on getting the restricted driver's licenses lifted for Behchoko. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you for that response. So will the Minister commit to establishing a designated road test route, making the modest improvements required, and providing unrestricted class 5 driver testing in Behchoko? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, this is a lot to do with the Canadian standards and national standards of what we follow for testing. And like I said earlier, we'll have a look at it and see what we can do in the community of Behchoko to work with the community governments and the ability to improve the infrastructure and if it's something simple that we can do, like line painting, that's something we could probably look at doing with our regular seasonal contracts of line painting. But, again, we'll look at what we can do in Behchoko to improve the driver's testing and hopefully get rid of the restricted driver's license in Behchoko. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1279-20(1):
DELIVERY OF HOUSING UNITS TO TULITA

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up to my statement on housing, my questions are to the Minister of Housing NWT.

The first question, Mr. Speaker, can the community of Tulita expect materials during this barging season given the fact that it's allocated ten units to that community? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the Tulita housing delivery, the modular units for Tulita are being provided by two contractual agreements, each with NWT-based manufacturers. Four units, again, we talked about this earlier in session, are manufactured in Fort Good Hope with the

K'ahsho Got'ine Trade Centre with units -- with plans to bring the units to the community on the 2028 winter road. The remaining six units will be manufactured in Hay River by Metcan Building Solutions, an Indigenous-owned business. These units will be delivered to Tulita on the 2027 winter road with the 2027 barge as a contingency plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister. We're not only growing the community home needs, but we're growing the NWT economy. That's very grateful to see.

My next question, what benefits can the region expect? It's a project, it's a contract, is there training plans within the procurement system of these developments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier, I think it's important to recognize that four of the units are being built in Fort Good Hope, a small, remote community in the Northwest Territories. So much benefits to the community, especially around local labour component and a workforce component as well as an apprenticeship and training component. And the units with Metcan in Hay River, again training and employment, local labour workforce. So many benefits across both communities adding to our housing stock. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share this inspiration for trades. Locally, we have a young fellow that has his journeyman as an electrician. So that adds to -- is there a capacity on trades from these projects and for the other customer builds in Good Hope, some kind of trades component to be shared with the young people and the high school students as well? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the MLA for sharing that. It's really important to recognize that we need tradespeople locally in our communities, in the workforce, every day, and also apprenticing like others. Because I think right now in the Northwest Territories we're seeing a lower level of tradespeople compared to perhaps the last generation, and we need to boost up that capacity, like the Member has indicated, especially with major projects and Build Canada Homes. The potential in Northwest Territories is great. It's just that we've got to get the local workforce engaged. And that's why Housing NWT is placing that in their contractual agreements that there is that

apprenticeship makeup in the agreement itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1280-20(1):
AKLAVIK COMMUNITY AIRPORT

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. I emailed the Minister responsible for the airports within the NWT. The concern is with the community of Aklavik and the airport. There are many deficiencies surrounding the airport. There are willows that are growing at a rapid rate, and the fencing is laying on the ground, more than half of the fencing. There are wildlife crossing the airport coming out of the willows, and it's posing a threat to both aircraft and human life.

What will the Minister instruct his department to do to rectify the severity of this problem at the Aklavik community airport which is adjacent to the community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, we were notified from the Member about the concerns. I immediately sent them to the department, and there's work being done to assess what the hazards are. Obviously, if the -- you know, the fencing's down, that's something we have to look at and get it fixed. We'll confirm that time and date with the Member in the response to him. And also, if there's any other concerns, we'll get those addressed. So this is something that's being looked at as we speak. So once I get the information on what's going to be done, I will share that with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that response. These concerns are coming to me from members of the community, Mr. Speaker. How is the department given reports on deficiencies surrounding NWT airports before they pose a threat to human life and aircrafts? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many communities have contractors that work in them for the airports or their staff. You know, if there's any concerns they're usually brought up that way. However, this is my first time hearing about this. I don't know if it's been addressed before but my first time hearing about it through the Member and other

individuals. So immediately, as soon as I received it I shared it with the department. Safety concerns are always a top priority, and we want to get them looked at right away. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister provide a timeframe as to when the remediation work will commence and be completed before there's an accident being reported? I've worked at the airport before and, you know, these are very important. Can the Minister provide a timeframe for completion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am waiting from the department to hear what's going to be happening. And I know the Member is concerned about safety. Again, you know, the contractors and whoever else is working there is required to do, you know, facility and grounds checks essentially to make sure that everything is safe, runway checks. You know, if there's concern and one of the issues is wildlife, if there's concerns about wildlife, you know, the pilots usually do fly passes or can see them on their approach so, you know, we're always aware of that. And hopefully the fence, when it goes up, it's going to restrict some of that or stop some of that. So once I get more information about it, I will share it with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1281-20(1):
APPRENTICESHIP, TRADES AND
OCCUPATION CERTIFICATION BOARD

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So similar to my colleague from the Sahtu, I am also passionate about skilled trades, and I'd like to ask questions to the Minister of ECE, education, culture and employment, about our apprenticeship, trades, and occupation certification board, or ATOC. So ATOC reviews appeals and provides advice to the Minister of ECE; however, there appears to be no public record of the board's work, such as meeting minutes or reports on what advice they've offered or what the Minister's responses have been. Can the Minister commit to making the work of ATOC public, including meeting minutes and reports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have used the ATOC board numerous times in my time as Minister. I share the Members' interest in trades and seeing them grow. I certainly would want to have a conversation with the ATOC board themselves to see if they have any concerns about that. Certainly, I am very happy to find a way to log my letters to them with education, culture and employment but would want to make sure that I am closing the loop with ATOC first. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that transparency would benefit everyone in this case. Secondly, now that the college is arm's length, Aurora College, does the Minister believe it's sufficient for ATOC to provide advice only to the ECE Minister given that the Minister doesn't necessarily have direct control over operations at the college? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, certainly the ATOC board provides advice to the Minister. That's their role within regulations and legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Member is right. Aurora College is arm's length. Aurora College does have its own academic advisory council. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, it has a board of governors who come from a very varied work experience background. Their current chair definitely has experience in trades and comes from that sector, and that is certainly not a happy accident at all. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So if employers or apprentices have complaints based on their experience with the apprenticeship program, are they to direct those complaints to ATOC or to the Minister, or is there even a clear process for who is ultimately accountable with this program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, we definitely do have a process. There is an appeals process for people who, you know, have concerns around termination, cancellation, or refusal of an apprentice. Any of these concerns can -- or employers or apprentices can contact the director of apprenticeship trade or occupational certification for more information on how to

essentially log the appeals process. It certainly does not come directly to me. But it would be best for people to reach out directly to the director themselves. It is worth saying, Mr. Speaker, that I am currently in the process of doing a review of the regulations to do with trades given where we're at as a territory, given also the opportunities that sit in front of us, and making sure that the regulations that we have in place as well as the processes speak to the need that we have in the territory and that we're ultimately working with industry and with employers to make the system better. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 1282-20(1):

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER AGREEMENTS

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, on June 10th, the Premier is joining a fireside chat hosted by Gary Maher for an event titled Canada's Arctic Future Runs Through Alberta. But the future of Canada's Arctic depends on Alberta respecting the sacred treaty rights and transboundary agreements. My question is to the Premier. Is the Premier going to bring a message to this event that's working with Northwest Territories means respecting our rights and treaties? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member's referencing an upcoming speaking event. I am not exactly sure which one. I've been doing this for the past couple months, and I am going to continue to do this for the next little while. What I do is I go in front of the rooms of policymakers, business leaders, federal Ministers, and just folks around Canada who we want to educate about the North. And I say, in the North, we have a system where development can happen. We have the resources that you want. And we have -- and the way to come to the North and work is to work with Indigenous governments. Our regulatory system involves the participation of Indigenous governments. They're partners along with the Government of Canada and the GNWT. And so that is the message I take everywhere around Canada. I say we're advancing three major projects, and the reason they're advancing is because we're working in collaboration with Indigenous governments. And that's -- yeah, and that's the way to get things done in the territory. So that's the message that I am trying to get out to everyone in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this ticket event required paid admission to attend the discussion of Arctic development and economic alignment, my question is how will the Premier ensure that these policies, conversations, which affects our treaty rights, resources, development, and health of our communities remain transparent, accessible to all Northerners, not just political insiders who could afford to attend the meeting? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: So the question is how are those remarks going to be known to the public? I just said what I was going to say. I am happy to publish any sort of speech I make. It's always the same content. It's always the same message. Whenever I can, I try to go to these events with Indigenous leaders. The last couple of times it's fallen through, but we make honest attempts to do that. I think that's actually the best way to go out and show the public that we are working together and that the territory is a place you want to come and do business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the premiers' conference last month, Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew publicly corrected Alberta Premier Smith on misinformation regarding the duty to consult Indigenous people. Mr. Speaker, my question is particularly -- is about the Premier disregards to the treaty rights and their obligation under a transboundary water agreement with Alberta. My question is why must my constituents look to the Premier of Manitoba for his leadership rather than our own to promote the health and safety of downstream users in the Northwest Territories?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure why they would have to. I've had that conversation with Premier Smith. I've had that conversation with the Prime Minister. I've had that conversation with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs in Alberta just last week. I've said that Alberta needs to -- and I've said this to the Premier Smith as well. Alberta needs to come to the Northwest Territories, speak with the Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories, because water is -- water and caribou, those are two issues that are non-negotiable. Those are the hills we're going to die on, Mr. Speaker, and we need to ensure that the people of the territory are informed and on board with decisions that are going to affect those resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1283-20(1):
SUPPORTS FOR CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES SOCIAL WORKERS

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. What supports are in place for the mental health and well-being of child and family service social workers, and how is the department making sure these supports are accessible? Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for supports for social workers or any government employee, we do currently have the employee family assistance program that you can access virtually online to telephone. We do have critical incident debriefs for when there's situations that arise and Teams meetings for support for social workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. What immediate and long-term steps is the Minister taking to bring caseloads down to a safe level, especially when some social workers are carrying double the expected workload? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now they're reviewing historical charts right now, and I think what's -- one of the things that the department has told me is that they're looking at inactive files and making sure that they've been reviewed, and then they're closing them. So that way there's not -- you know, there's no need to making sure that they're being followed up. The prioritizing of cases, hiring, jurisdictional scan, as I mentioned that they're doing right now, right now they're currently in the process of looking into a float team to be able to go around and support areas that are having high needs and high vacancy rates, as well as a peer support team. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 front line social workers to identify what they need to do -- what they need to do to do their jobs safely and effectively? Mahsi.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that my department is doing the review, and then I said that they'll be reaching out to staff and they'll

have some -- a template of that work that's been going on by December. But I also would like to say that I've also told them that they could establish a town hall for myself and front line child and family service workers with some of the leads that we have so that they can bring forward these issues as we did within the health system. But I want to specifically target it for front line child and family service workers so that we can try to get these solutions directly from them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1284-20(1):
FUNDING FORMULA FOR EDUCATION
AUTHORITIES

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Continuing with the statement that I made earlier today, Mr. Speaker, and considering the various issues with the current funding formula, has the Minister considered reviewing and updating the school funding formula to close the gaps identified by school boards who manage their own facilities and staffing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my time as Minister, I've definitely treated the school funding formula as a living formula, making updates when we can. Even as recently as this past main estimates, we've made increases to the school funding formula, and that includes expansion of the school-based mental health and wellness funding, significant increases to senior secondary small schools funding, targeted inclusive schooling, and operational supports, including schools in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that those changes were brought forward; however, the school boards are still struggling -- still struggling with the fact that they are unique in having to deliver their own facilities and staffing. So, again, I would just ask, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister -- will the Minister adjust the funding formula to respond to mid-year changes to staffing and support needs associated with inclusive schooling? Mr. Speaker, I am asking how can we make our funding more adaptive. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, yes, this work is one of the deliverables from the inclusive schooling review, and so starting in the fall, along with education partners, one of the first pieces of work that education partners will open up is a review of the inclusive schooling formula itself, making sure that it can be responsive and adaptive, understanding that students do move from school to school in the Northwest Territories and that there are mid year pressures that occur as well. Especially as we go into early screening, there may be pressures that arise in the middle of a year that educators are finding out about. And so we need to make sure that we're working alongside educators to find out what a formula could look like in order to be responsive to that but still making sure that we can fund for that on -- within the House here when we pass our appropriations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, finally, Mr. Speaker, I note that in the answer to my first question, the Minister listed a bunch of changes that had been made. What I was asking is, will the Minister commit to meeting with the school boards and adjusting the formula as necessary to meet the current needs that they're bringing to us today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I meet with the education bodies themselves on a regular basis. Some of the changes that we do see in the main estimates that were passed in March of this year were directly responsive to what I heard at the education leaders' table. And those, for example, are the school-based mental health and wellness expansion. And including, Mr. Speaker, we continue to -- not just as Yellowknife MLAs, but as MLAs from across this territory, have the opportunity to sit down with educators, and certainly, the expansion of the inclusive schooling, along with the review is part of those conversations. And so my answer to the Member is absolutely, yes, I will continue to make sure I have close relationships and the opportunity to hear from educators. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1285-20(1):
ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to continue my questions on the electronic health records system to the Minister of health. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell me what privacy risks were assessed prior to the

RFP being released and how the OCIO or the health authorities propose to mitigate all of these risks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, privacy risks were identified during the early planning and requirements gathering before the RFP was issued. These risks include unauthorized access to personal health information, privacy breaches, weak access controls, and securing sharing of information across systems and jurisdictions. To reduce these risks, strong privacy and security requirements are built directly into the RFP, including encryption, access controls, audit logging, and compliance with territorial privacy laws. Privacy impact assessments and threat risk assessments will be completed and updated throughout procurement and implementation, and the selected vendor will be required to meet these requirements and address any additional risks identified before and during system rollout. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister comment on whether connectivity issues in small community health cabins can be mitigated appropriately for the new electronic health records system so that we can finally say goodbye to fax machines, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the procurement process includes a proof-of-concept stage to confirm the system will work in the Northwest Territories, including in small and remote community health cabins. While the use of the fax machine is expected to decrease, faxing remains a common method for sharing information across Canada between jurisdictions. As a result, faxing is expected to continue to play a role for the foreseeable future, particularly where connectivity and limitation exists. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I tried. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister comment on whether it's contemplated that a new electronic health records system will have ongoing licensing costs until such a system is sunsetted and replaced at the end of its life and/or for evolving technology. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the electronic medical -- or health record system will have ongoing licensing costs, and these costs have been included into the department's short- and long-term operating and system replacement planning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1286-20(1):
FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS EXIT
INTERVIEWS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the things the Department of Health and Social Services has implemented with respect to social workers when they leave the position, their exit interviews. I'd like to ask the Minister, what are the top three reasons identified in exit data for child protection workers and social workers, front line social workers, and how many of those reasons relate directly to high caseloads? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to confirm, does that data exist, Mr. Speaker?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe there's a process through offering exit interviews to all employees that resign from the GNWT, and NTHSSA is within public service, so they would be offered an exit interview. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, is it being used in these improvements the department's working on? Because, again, we've had questions about, are you listening to the concerns of front line workers. So the question today is, if you have the data, if it does exist, how are you using it to improve the quality of life for those workers so we can fill those vacancies, keep kids safe, and support families in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the data is -- to we do obtain is used in order to make the -- to

look at the changes that -- and right now where they're currently doing the review and they're providing the different supports and putting those in place, they're also -- with the training, they're also looking at -- and from the high caseloads, they're -- you know, they're looking -- like I said before, they're looking at the use of the other employees within the system. So we have family preservation workers, we have cultural workers, and if there's ways to decrease the amount of work that's on the child protection worker that's not actually connected to their statutory duty that they could pass on to some of the other staff, we're utilizing those recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1287-20(1):
50TH STREET HOUSING COMPLEX

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to try a different subject, which would be news to some folks over there. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of housing if she could give this House an update on the Tony Whitford building that's being constructed on the 50th Street downtown. There's a lot of buzz in the community about the new Whitford building and they're pretty excited to see it, almost at six floors, and things are shaping into a wonderful home for many families we look forward to. So can the Minister start off by giving us a construction and timeline update on the Whitford building. Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, it's not the Whitford building yet. We do have to respect the honours advisory committee process, and that's through the Speaker's office, so let's respect that. In terms of the building itself, I mean the sixth floor, with the mass timber walls, that's being built today, we're hoping to have a topping off ceremony probably the last week in June. The building will be entirely enclosed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that may be technically a fact it hasn't been named that yet, but the community is starting to recognize it as the Whitford building, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the next question which I was hoping we'd get to -- and I don't know if she's just giving me air time. I thought she was going to jump to it, which is when do we anticipate this building to be ready for

occupancy? At one time they were talking 2026, and I heard from people internally in the system saying stop saying that because now it's into 2027. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister give this House an update when they think the building will be ready for occupancy and when they think they'll be able to get people actually in there. Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, I was giving myself air time. No, just kidding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is early 2027. That's the expectation. I don't have an exact date, but early 2027 was the reassurance from Housing NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next question I've raised repeatedly with the Minister -- and she's already nodding even though she hasn't heard the question. The last bit and phase of this particular initiative of the Whitford building has come up in different phases, but they seem to keep forgetting the local MLA and all Yellowknife MLAs on the Whitford building. I am just wondering if the Minister would encourage the department and anyone else to invite not only me as the MLA where it's built, my colleagues throughout the House, and lastly, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, the Yellowknife Housing Authority because they will eventually be deemed as the administrators of the building, and they are our key partner to make this a success. Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, agreed, and absolutely there will be an invite. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

QUESTION 1288-20(1):
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome the Minister back into the chamber --

MR. SPEAKER: I've spoken twice about this. Let's focus on what the questions are. Thank you. Remark.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. [Audio] I'd like to say that residential school lives in the child welfare system today. So given that Indigenous

people are haunted by the spectre of residential school and child family services is no different, does the Minister accept that she's running a colonial system of child apprehension, reinforcing harmful legacy of residential school, and further traumatizing our people under her policies? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, I do lead the Department of Health and Social Services. This department has been structured and, you know, every one of us that sit in this House ran to sit in this House to be able to guide the policies and the procedures and change this legislation. And as Minister of Health and Social Services, I am here to be able to do the work that needs to be done to make the changes in this system, that, yes, we have history and the legacy of, you know, residential schools, then we had the 60s Scoop, and then we talk about this, and child and family services is where this is happening. But since under my leadership, you know, the direction that I've given the staff is to be able to support more families at home, in their homes, which we've seen an increase in families being supported in their homes and a decrease in children being taken under child protection issues. So as the Minister, you know, I will be bringing forward legislation later on in this government. And that is the important work that I am doing to make sure that the system doesn't continue the way it has for many, many years that was set up. Not by me. But I am here to do the work to make that change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the CFS reforms to decolonize the system was to implement legal mandated cultural safety plans, yet two-thirds of Indigenous children, or 91 percent, are in care with lack of these plans. That's unacceptable. My question to the Minister is, what has the Minister not prioritized these cultural safety plans and other measures to root out systematic racism in the social services system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as of now, there is training that is being done with all of our new staff. They're restructuring to make sure that every new staff onboarding is getting this training, that they're -- they know that these are requirements that they need to do this. Within the new -- you know, moving forward within the legislation, I think that the new legislation -- and I can't speak to the details in it, but it is to

respect Bill C-92. And with that, it is to work collaboratively with Indigenous governments. So that is the work that I am doing to make sure that these things are getting done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My people are constantly victimized by the colonial social services system. It is my -- it must be dismantled, and authority handed back to the Indigenous government. Will the Minister commit to a clear timeline and a plan to do so with Indigenous government to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do not disagree with the Member. I believe that the Indigenous governments do play a role in this and -- you know, and we most recently signed one agreement. We've reached out to all Indigenous governments. I have had my staff re-reach out to Indigenous governments to -- if -- you know, to be able to do this work, they -- you know, they'll -- we'll work with them. We'll support them through transitioning whatever they -- the areas that they want. It was a trilateral agreement, the agreement that we signed with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. They did receive a large sum of money to be able to provide services for their Indigenous children. And so if there are Indigenous groups out there that want to do this, our department is sitting here waiting, willing to go and do that work with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1289-20(1):
WORKFORCE TRAINING FOR MAJOR
PROJECTS

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of strategic infrastructure, I believe. But you could direct it. Has there been any interest in oral consultation to work with Deh Cho communities to develop the needed human resources for the newly major projects, namely, training, to begin training? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Okay.

MR. SPEAKER: [Audio]. Thank you. Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a question that involves more than just strategic infrastructure but also human resources, ECE. So I understand it does touch on a number of our departments. And short answer, Mr. Speaker, there's much work to do. There's going to be a lot of need for trained folks to undertake these projects over the next short while and particularly in the Deh Cho region. So that will be the entry point for certainly Mackenzie Valley corridor, and we'll certainly be needing, as I say, all hands on deck. Work right now in terms of developing a workforce strategy and community readiness is accelerating. In the past, that would often be something that gets done only right before construction. That's not how we're going to do this project. There won't be time to deliver the project. So we are developing a pretty -- an intense plan for the workforce readiness preparedness that is in development right now, in draft already, and looking to get out to the Deh Cho over the summer to have a final engagement on whether that will work with those communities, and then to start to implement the plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. Very exciting times are going to be coming. When does the department anticipate any training to begin? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, step one is to make sure we have a plan. So obviously, certainly if folks have the opportunity to do upgrading, complete high school, look and get trades, I expect there will be no shortage of need for trades, for drivers, for all manner of road construction crews. That said, Mr. Speaker, more detailed analysis of it, that is what's going to give us the tools to say which communities at which time. And that work, as I said, we have a draft engagement plan right now, and then with that, we can do the heavy lifting of a workforce development. But that is top of mind for myself, for other Ministers, for the major projects office. So once we have a more settled plan, I would think that then that -- then it begins in earnest to ensure that we deliver on the training. Thank you.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. We look forward to the work that needs to happen or the capacity building that needs to be built in the

community. What communities have been contacted in the Deh Cho region? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know there's an expectation to be in the Deh Cho region over the summer. I don't know which communities on which date, so I will certainly commit to get that plan to the Members so that we can help publicize when the team is in the region. But also, Mr. Speaker, I also want you to be organized about that. There's been consultation on this project over the course of much time, and it's important that we now not wear out communities, not wear out folks, but that they understand when we're coming this time, it's because it's an expectation that this project is moving, it's moving quickly, and we want all hands on deck. So, again, I will commit to get that to the House as well as to the Member so that everyone can participate. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains. Colleagues, the time for oral questions is over.

Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Infrastructure.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 535-20(1):
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 50:
MARINE TRANSPORTATION
CORPORATION ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 536-20(1):
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL
50: MARINE TRANSPORTATION
CORPORATION ACT

HON. VINCE McKAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Plain Language Summary for Bill 50, Marine Transportation Corporation Act. And the Statement of Consistency for Bill 50, Marine Transportation Corporation Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 537-20(1):
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
ACTION PLAN

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 538-20(1):
INDIGENOUS RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION FRAMEWORK AND ACTION
PLAN REPORT ON THE INDIGENOUS
EMPLOYMENT PLAN RESULTS 2024-2025

TABLED DOCUMENT 539-20(1):
INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING
\$250,000 (APRIL 1, 2025 TO MARCH 31,
2026)

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework and Action Plan Report on the Indigenous Employment Plan Results 2024-2025. And Inter-activity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 (April 1st, 2025 to March 31st, 2026). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife North.

TABLED DOCUMENT 540-20(1):
PROTOTYPING A RESILIENT NORTHERN
HOME: ONGOING BARRIERS AND
ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS, PHASE 1 –
BACKGROUND RESEARCH REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 541-20(1):
PROTOTYPING A RESILIENT NORTHERN
HOME: ONGOING BARRIERS AND
ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS, PHASE 2 –
FINAL REPORT

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following documents: Prototyping a Resilient Northern Home: Ongoing Barriers and Alternative Solutions, Phase 1 - Background Research Report. And Prototyping a Resilient Northern Home: Ongoing Barriers and Alternative Solutions, Phase 2 - Final Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

TABLED DOCUMENT 542-20(1):
CANADIAN HEALTHCARE TECHNOLOGY
ARTICLE: "ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES
TO SPLIT INTO 4 PARTS"

TABLED DOCUMENT 542-20(1):
CITYNEWS ARTICLE: "ALBERTA TABLES
BILL TO SPLIT AHS INTO DIFFERENT
AGENCIES"

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table. They're both related to the same subject. The article is really about breaking up a health department so they can make it easier to manage. And the first article is written by Canadian Health Care Technology. And the second article written is Edmonton City News Everywhere. And they're recent documents so they should be relevant to future debates. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Colleagues, the time we need to have the interpreters to give them a break. So we'll have a quick break here.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Member from Range Lake.

Motions

MOTION 79-20(1):
CONSULTING PARAMEDICS ON THE
REGULATION OF PARAMEDICINE,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS paramedics provide an essential service to residents across the Northwest Territories through the delivery of emergency medical care and integrating paramedics into small communities is part of the small community model of care review;

AND WHEREAS paramedics practicing in the Northwest Territories are currently regulated through professional regulatory bodies in other Canadian jurisdictions rather than through a Northwest Territories regulatory framework specific to paramedics;

AND WHEREAS in the absence of regulation for paramedics in the Northwest Territories, there is a lack of clear understanding about where complaints of malpractice are directed and who is liable if a mistake or accident occurs;

AND WHEREAS concerns have been raised that paramedics may not be adequately protected or insured under regulatory bodies from other jurisdictions;

AND WHEREAS regulating the profession of paramedicine under the Health and Social Services Professions Act is necessary to

ensure public safety, mitigate liability concerns, allow the profession to grow, and support emergency care for residents of the Northwest Territories;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Yellowknife North, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to immediately begin formal consultation with paramedics and paramedic operators practising in the territory on how paramedicine can be most effectively regulated as a profession under the Health and Social Services Professions Act;

AND FURTHER, that this consultation seek input from paramedics on how regulation could protect both residents and paramedics by clarifying professional oversight, complaints of malpractice, liability, and insurance;

AND FURTHER, that it be done in close consultation with provincial paramedic regulators to both ensure a mutual understanding of current jurisdiction of provincially regulated paramedics working in the Northwest Territories and to gain understanding of best practices in paramedicine regulation;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories report back on the results of this consultation, including the level of support among paramedics and any recommended next steps for developing regulations under the Health and Social Services Professions Act;

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

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a longstanding issue for some Members in this House who have looked at the need for the regulation of paramedicine in the Northwest Territories and the need to expand on the role of paramedics in our healthcare system.

Mr. Speaker, this is a live issue at the Standing Committee on Social Development, and certainly something that that committee, and Members of the committee, have spoken to the Minister of Health and Social Services about, expressing our strong desire to see the profession regulated.

Now a full stand-alone paramedics Act is ideal for this kind of complicated medical profession.

And that's typically what you see in other jurisdictions, large and small. But given that we have the opportunity to use the Health and Social Services Professions Act to incorporate health professions that are not currently regulated, this is a great opportunity to make do with what we have on hand. And in this case, professionals can petition the department to begin a formal regulatory process and bring them under the Act, or the Minister can initiate that process on her own recognizance.

So what this motion calls for is exactly that, is to begin that process through formal consultations.

I have had informal consultations with paramedics, including the medical director at the Yellowknife fire department, members of -- firefighters who work for the fire department, and private contractors who work in paramedicine. And the consensus from all those conversations has been we need to do something as a government to regulate paramedicine.

We have also, through our work on standing committee and as Members, we've heard from stakeholders that there are significant concerns from the frontline of healthcare professionals regarding the lack of regulation for allied health professionals, including paramedics, in the Northwest Territories and the subsequent concerns about trust in these roles as a result.

The standing committee has heard clearly from stakeholders that the government considered establishing regulation of these allied health professionals but unfortunately that effort, when the Act was passed, was not followed through with because it did become quite complicated due to some labour mobility issues. My understanding is those issues have been cleared so there's nothing standing in the way of this work going forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is to provide regulatory oversight for a profession that is interested in improving the knowledge, skill, abilities, of their profession and to uphold a mandate of public safety, which is one of the priorities of this Assembly. And given that safely integrating paramedics into small communities is a goal of the new small community model of care, it is urgent and essential that the GNWT prioritize regulating paramedicine. We can't make use of them as an essential component of that strategy to improve health care in rural and remote communities, the small communities that have some of the highest needs, if we are not -- if we do not have a safely regulated profession.

Paramedics can add to health care teams. They don't take away from the work that nurses and doctors do. They complement it with their skill sets, especially in the areas of acute and emergency care and, of course, medical transportation. Paramedics are often the last line of medical treatment -- or the first and last line in some cases, and we owe so much to paramedics who offer lifesaving care to people in very dire straits. Regulating the paramedic profession is an absolute necessary step to ensure both public safety and also to mitigate liability concerns for the paramedics we want to operate in the North, and that is a key consideration of fire departments including the -- or anyone who wants to operate those, not just private companies but municipalities like the City of Yellowknife that has full-time paramedics through their fire department. There are very significant liability concerns that just kind of go unaddressed, and no one's really -- it's not clear legally who's responsible for those liabilities which creates, of course, a whole bunch of hardship for the community I represent and uncertainty for the firefighters I represent.

So this is not a nice-to-have. It's a necessary step forward in improving our model of care, in particular and specifically, in small communities but also across the entire Northwest Territories. And I haven't heard a single word of complaint or pushback from any paramedics working. They want this. It ensures safety and ensures continuing education and it ensures that a lifesaving profession is under proper regulatory scrutiny. And I think that just makes sense to most people.

If you went to the average Northerner and said hey, did you know paramedics aren't regulated? They would probably say, excuse me, are you serious? Oh, it's not -- they're regulated somewhere else, just not here. I don't think that's satisfactory and certainly that's why we're bringing this motion forward. We've tried letters. We've tried Members' statements. We've tried oral questions. Now we're going to try a motion. I hope it gets through. I hope it becomes -- I hope these consultations begin. And that's all we're asking for, which I think is a very reasonable request. And the department can do its work, and it already has the tools to bring the profession forward. And certainly there are plenty of paramedics, including one of my constituents, who would be more than happy to spearhead this initiative and provide a great deal of detail about how this system could work. That individual and others have been actively involved with regulatory bodies and paramedic regimes in other jurisdictions, and they'd be happy to lend that knowledge to the Government of the Northwest Territories, so.

And I do want to thank the seconder of this motion, the Member for Yellowknife North, as she has been a vocal advocate for this action and bringing paramedicine under regulation. And I also want to thank my colleagues on the Standing Committee for Social Development for adding their voices and leadership to this issue as well. And I hope that the House will adopt this motion and we can move forward on regulations for paramedicine in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion, and I want to be clear first, too, that my concerns about the increasing use of contracted private paramedics in our small community model of care go beyond regulation. And I've spoken about that in the past because I believe there is a danger that we may be creeping towards trying to replace community health nurses with paramedics. But today I want to focus on the need for regulation as well.

And so the purpose of regulation, it's not just, you know, a bureaucratic administrative exercise. The purpose is to protect the public, to protect patients, and it's to protect the paramedics themselves. And it's to protect the nurses, doctors, the other practitioners who are working alongside the paramedics potentially delegating tasks to them. It's to ensure, first, that paramedics have the proper training and skills before they start work and those training -- that training and skills should be appropriate for the particular jurisdiction that they're working in. In this case, northern healthcare settings, which we all know can be quite unique and challenging.

Regulation is to ensure that the paramedics keep up their skills over time and do enough regular professional development. And it's to ensure that whenever a complaint is raised that it's investigated fully and fairly to everyone involved, both for the patient's sake and for the paramedic's sake. If a paramedic did do something wrong that was egregious enough, they would lose their license, you know, in a regulated system and that would be on the public record, both for every other employer and every other jurisdiction in Canada to see. The danger, of course, that in an unregulated system someone could raise a complaint, it goes to the employer, the easiest thing potentially to do is to fire that person. That could be unfair both to the paramedic, the employee, if they didn't get a chance to make their case or if they felt they were accused of something unfairly, but it also means that that doesn't sort

of go on a public record. They could be hired again somewhere else and then the public and patients might be in danger of having someone who is not competent or qualified, you know, working somewhere else.

Now, as my colleague from Range Lake mentioned, the Standing Committee on Social Development has been involved in correspondence with the Minister, trying to ask for some progress to be made on this and in, you know, letters that we've been told can be shared publicly, committee expressed concerns, first, that other paramedic regulatory bodies, you know, in other provinces -- because that's who we're apparently relying on to regulate the paramedics working here -- the committee is concerned that those bodies might be unaware, uninformed, that they're supposed to be responsible for regulating the paramedics working here and asked the Minister to reach out to those provincial paramedic regulatory bodies to make sure that, first of all, that they're even aware that they have licensed paramedics that are working up here and asking them, you know, whether they're willing to assume responsibility for them, would they investigate complaints against those staff that are working up here if they were made to those bodies. And we were told by the Minister that essentially that the department was not willing to do that, to do that work, that those provincial bodies should already be aware and essentially it's not our problem, somebody else's problem. Maybe it's the employer -- if it's a private company, it's the employer's problem. It's the provincial body's problem but it's not our problem.

The Minister argued, for example, that regulatory bodies would require applicants to, you know, provide their address or location if they're applying for a license or to renew their license so the provincial bodies should know.

Well, I've looked into this and in some cases, when you're applying for a license for another regulatory body that if you're filling out the form, that line where it says address or location it might be optional. So, first of all, they might not know who the employer is or where that paramedic is operating. But even so, in doing some investigation myself I have heard from some provincial bodies that, in fact, they do not assume responsibility for paramedics working outside their jurisdiction, that their provincial legislation does not allow them to, and that they would not investigate complaints.

So this puts us, in my mind, in a dangerous situation and something that needs to be addressed quickly. And this is not something to put off to the next Assembly, to some later time. This is already a problem that needs to be

addressed now -- or, I mean, should have been addressed yesterday or years ago but certainly needs to be addressed now. And given the fact that health and social services continues to push forward with -- towards a small community model of care for primary care that explicitly increases the use of paramedics, I feel that the issue is urgent. It needs to be sorted out. And we can't sort of put our heads in the sand and say it's someone else's problem, not our problem.

The other thing that is concerning to me about the Minister's responses -- let me just pull it up here -- is when asked about what would happen if there was a complaint, the response said that if there was a complaint that arose from an incident involving an employee of a private contractor, which in our case almost all of our paramedics working in the territory work for private contractors, that the contractor would be responsible for conducting the investigation and connecting with that paramedic's registered regulatory body. So that's very concerning to me that we would entrust that responsibility to the employer. It seems like a conflict of interest to me, and I think we need a more robust system in the territory to protect the public and to protect paramedics themselves.

So for those reasons, I support this motion. I believe we need to move forward with this initiative very quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member from Hay River South.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and just speak about a more broader aspect of this. And I appreciate the Member bringing this forward however my initial look at it shows me that it's very Yellowknife focused, and I would say that in the fact that some of the concerns that are already brought up about, you know, using paramedics in communities are a lot driven behind working in a healthcare setting where they will be covered under either their protocols, their scope of practice, or the medical directives, or their -- yeah, or their scope of practice.

I will say I am concerned about with this being a broader aspect of the communities across the Northwest Territories and the impacts to people trying to do good things in the communities. And when I say that, you know, I am going to date myself. I did my EMT training, emergency medical technician, 25-plus years ago which I've never been accredited. I've never done any re-scope of practice. However, I did volunteer in Hay River for many, many years. I've done onboarding, continued training, and about halfway through I did my emergency medical

responder training also just for the heck of it to maintain my skills. That was being a volunteer.

If I was required annually to write exams, pay a licensing fee, have all these headaches behind that, I probably wouldn't volunteer. I probably wouldn't commit any of my time to doing that because I know what a headache it's going to be.

We're speaking paramedics. We're speaking a very narrow term. When we have other professions out there, like emergency medical responders, we have primary care paramedics, we have advanced care paramedics, we have flight paramedics, we have paramedics that, you know, work under a medical doctor, physician aide. I just want to highlight the fact that I think we're putting barriers up in communities where we don't need to. And I know this has been driven a long time ago at a fire chiefs conference to have the, you know, paramedics licensed in the Northwest Territories. It'd be detrimental to the Northwest Territories.

If the issue is with the healthcare setting, for sure there's ways to deal with that, there's ways to work around it once you're an employee and all that stuff like that. There's paramedics used in hospital settings across all of Canada.

When we're trying to put volunteers in communities across the Northwest Territories and we're trying, you know, to get a couple communities set up with a medical response and if we start putting these barriers in front of them, it ain't going to work. There's a lot of communities like Behchoko that run EMR services, emergency medical responders, and they -- you know, they work for the health authority. You know, there's all kinds of ways that they're covered under their protocols and how they operate.

I would suggest talking to the fire chiefs association, getting more of a territorial aspect to what these impacts could potentially be. I am not saying this is a full bad thing; however, I am concerned, again, of the impacts. As I stated earlier, with the added costs with your accreditation, your annual fees, your licensing bodies and whatever the case may be, I don't know what small community where you're struggling to get volunteers is going to stick their neck out and have to go through this process of being a volunteer in a small community. As I said earlier, works great in Yellowknife for sure, but it's not going to work in a small community.

Again, just going back to, you know, in today's world where we're working and trying to get volunteers in the communities. For an example

in Hay River, they have a medical director, they have procedures, they have standard operating procedures, they have ways of operating in the back of an ambulance and those are set guidelines on how they operate, which are signed off by a medical director. Some scopes vary, and they get approvals to do that. They get approvals from the medical director to do different things.

So, you know, I could go on about the concerns that I have, and I appreciate, you know, what's trying to be done here in trying to license a profession in a larger centre. For 44,000 people, we're a very small territory and the more barriers that we put up for small communities is not going to be good for us. It might work here in Yellowknife. It wouldn't work in the smaller communities across the territories. And that being said, this is not only just from me speaking of the information that's presented. This is also experience in the organizations that I've been involved with and the many discussions with people involved in emergency services across the Northwest Territories. This isn't just, you know, me talking. This is lived experience. So that's all I will say for now. I just think there really needs to be a broader look at this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just letting everybody know that we'll be abstaining from this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did want to comment on some observations made by the Minister before I get into my overall comments. But, you know, it's funny, we often say about, you know, get them on a wedge issue. That's how you corner somebody. This feels like a wedge issue. Oh, it wouldn't work in the small communities. I say, then, I guess, how do we do anything in the small communities by that attitude? I mean, Mr. Speaker, training is important. I mean, if it's important enough, we will find a way. Could you imagine doing meetings over Zoom and training over Zoom? People take their masters over Zoom. You know, so there's ways to do these things. And if training is in the way of filling jobs, I guess maybe we'll fill absent teacher people with -- we'll just pull somebody off the street and say, hey, you're now a grade 7 science teacher. No, I am being silly, clearly. Training matters, and if it's important, it matters. And we will find a way because it matters, Mr. Speaker. So, I mean, I rebuke the whole craziness in my mind that is that you cannot -- that becomes a barrier? As a matter of fact, I think people like training, and I think they enjoy the opportunity of learning more and growing and strengthening their skill sets and the

relationship that comes with those types of things. So, I mean, the Minister can scoff and shake his head and all of these things. I think it's an opportunity, not necessarily a weight to drag people down to the bottom of the water, Mr. Speaker. It is a huge opportunity. But more importantly, interestingly enough, if we think about the opportunity of the individual who has the training, but let's look at the people they're serving of the opportunity. I mean, okay, visually, it doesn't look so good on Hansard but that said, visually, I say, well, I'd want to be served by somebody with training or without training. Hmm, it's a tough, tough thing to communicate. And say oh, it's a barrier? I mean, my goodness. Mr. Speaker, I am going to get back to what I was going to say and I just -- it's important. Training is important. Creating opportunity is important. Growth is important. So I find that very difficult from a government that should be trying to raise people up, not the other way around.

So, Mr. Speaker, in case you didn't know, I will be supporting this motion. And in case that's not -- wasn't clear, I just wanted to make sure that it's on the record.

I mean, ultimately, this motion is fundamentally about safety, accountability, and respect for frontline healthcare heroes in our territory. They are heroes. I mean, sometimes they are the first on the line. They're taking -- they're under fire in different ways. And I don't mean from guns. But I am saying in the sense of stress, whether it's fire, whether it's, you know, dogs, whether it's what -- upset people. It is a difficult job, the stress that they take on. And that has to be recognized.

You know, the fact that -- we need immediate consultation with our paramedics and our teams out there to ensure that their voices are heard in this potential of regulating this industry.

This is a very important one. Every single day, as we know, paramedics are out there doing their thing, sometimes in a more stressful situation than others, no different than doctors or lawyers or firefighters or people who fly planes. But they deserve the respect of their industry, that it's framed up in a way that it could be served properly and professionally. And it's not to take away from the individuals when I say it that way. It's just their system has a system, and it's time we recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, this would become -- this concept is about making sure we roll out into all our communities. So whether our paramedics are delivering services in Yellowknife -- as the Minister had said, yes, it might be easier here. Maybe even in Inuvik and Hay River, it might be easier. But keep in mind, these are the same

paramedics that are driving down gravel highways in the back of something trying to help somebody or even flying in the back of a plane as it's making its way on a trip, an emergency trip potentially. These are essential services, Mr. Speaker. So let's be clear what we're talking about.

We have professionals who perform critical roles in our society. We have matured enough to say we need paramedics as a society. We need to mature enough as a government to say we need to support them in structuring them.

So our first responders manage many acute traumatic situations, and part of their process and training helps them get through that, and this structure, this concept of the motion, helps support the fact that we are behind them and we're going to help create a structure, as pointed out. So this is all about the continuum of care in a professional way. So as we look forward, we need to integrate these highly skilled professionals into our communities and in our city and in our regional centres with these types of community models of care review. So despite any immense weight to detract from that, we cannot allow them to operate in any type of regulatory vacuum. We have to recognize their service needs structure. And to understand that, as pointed out in the motion, consultation, they need to be part of that framework.

So first and foremost, let us not forget they fill critical roles, as I've pointed out. And certainly, often they are the switch-off between picking someone up at their worst and getting them to the next level of professional teams. Again, there needs to be work with that.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to plug ahead. And I am almost done by the way. But I want to plug ahead and say this isn't necessarily a perfect model of anything. The North has to adapt to a community-level model of care. It's not going to be easy. So in other words, just like Aurora College, you'll have a campus somewhere and you have learning centres. This may be introduced in different ways which is here's the structure, here's the framework, and it rolls out slightly different throughout the region. But let's not get ahead of ourselves and write this today on the floor of the House. Give it time to create, foster, develop, and find its way into some type of solution that works with these folks.

Mr. Speaker, lastly, this also protects the paramedics as well. So when we talk about how important the structure and training is and reliability, but we need people in the paramedic industry to be supported and recognized that they have risks and need to be protected. So, Mr. Speaker, the important part here is that we

must give this a go by regulating paramedics locally and territorially. We will ensure -- I am convinced we will achieve four critical goals.

We'll ensure the public is safe. We'll help mitigate liability. We will allow professions to grow, such as them. And we robustly will support emergency services to our residents in the most safe and practical way. So let us vote together and help support these paramedics, Mr. Speaker. And I urge the government to take this very seriously because it is very serious. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with Member for Yellowknife North talking about how this needs to be thoroughly looked at before we -- before I make a decision anyway, so. I know in our territory or in my area, we need medics. You know, we need people that can help if we have accidents on the road. Or we need that type of support so we could have like ambulances in our community. But that's what I -- that's what we need. However, like my colleague said it needs to be thoroughly looked at, not today but yesterday. So, therefore, I am going to have to abstain from this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've said to my colleagues in this House many times, I respect the work that any Member puts into putting together the information and the research to make a motion. I've told my colleagues that unless there's a reason, I would support motions that are brought to this House. I think it's important to recognize the amount of work and in this case, I think that the work and the reasoning behind why this motion is brought forward makes sense, and I would support that in any regard however it came forward. And in my opinion, if you would, Mr. Speaker, and again -- and we go back to this oftentimes, that motions that are made from any Member of the House on this side of the House or a Member of the AOC, are non-binding motions. So they're not motions that came from a collaboration with both. So anybody looking -- watching our proceedings here would make the assumption that we're debating something that's going to happen if we get the majority of the House to vote for it. That's not the case. These are non-binding motions. And in my opinion what that basically is essentially, then, a motion that's made gives an opportunity for any Member, as it should, to essentially give a lengthy Member's statement.

You get up to 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker, to speak on that issue and to bring that forward, as you should be able to do that. But I think it's important for people to know that because I do think that as that is the process, then the result will likely be garner -- you'll probably garner the same result from what we say here as you would from giving a Member's statement, and I think it's important that people know that.

Again, it is an opportunity to bring important issues forward, either from a Member's riding, from a Member's perspective, or as a collective, as in some cases that does happen, that several Members will agree that, hey, this is something that we'd like to see done.

So, sorry, with your indulgence, I just wanted to say that because it is an important piece of how we actually do work in the House and that these motions are, indeed, non-binding. But having said that, again, respect the work that my colleague has done, and I will be supporting the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I think the potential merits of this motion have been discussed pretty extensively by the Members, particularly from our committee on social development which I know has been working on this issue. And I do thank the committee for that work and support them in that work and therefore support the motion. And I am looking forward to seeing the government response and analysis that comes with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In short, I agree with the former presenter here from Frame Lake that we've had many -- much time deliberating this motion at committee. So in short, I will be supporting this motion. Mahsi.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with my colleagues as well. We have talked about this for some time, and I think it's important that, you know, we look at how we're going to deal with our first responders in our communities. And back home, I've got some first responders as well that need help, and we need to look at a way to deal with those issues. So this is just the beginning. So I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been called. Does the mover wish to close debate.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important when we are able to, to clarify positions and correct misinformation.

So to be clear, volunteer firefighters and medical first responders are not required to be regulated or certified as licensed paramedics anywhere in Canada, and I don't know why we would start to do that in the Northwest Territories. Instead, volunteers operate under a completely different regulatory framework, scope of practice, and oversight system. They're usually trained only to the level of standard first aid, CPR, AED, or specific medical first response technique. Their focus is on rapid intervention, scene assessment, and stabilizing a patient until an ambulance arrives. Paramedics, on the other hand, are regulated professionals trained in advanced pre-hospital care. This ranges from primary care paramedics, or PCPs, to advanced care paramedics, or ACPs. They can start IVs, interpret ECGs, intubate patients, and administer a wide range of controlled medications.

In most Canadian jurisdictions, provinces and territories, paramedic is a protected title. To practice, an individual must graduate from an accredited college program and be registered with a provincial regulatory body or college. They hold individual professional liability and are bound by a strict provincial scope of practice; however, volunteer firefighters and medical first responders are not individually registered with a paramedic college. Instead, they operate under the authority and insurance of their specific host agency such as a municipal fire department, a community government, or an organization like St. John's Ambulance. Their license to practice is tied directly to the agency's medical oversight protocol and local medical directors.

So to be clear, Mr. Speaker, we are not calling for every volunteer to be regulated as a paramedic. That would not make any kind of sense. This is about the trained paramedics who are operating in the Northwest Territories in unregulated environment that are -- have -- and from a government that has announced they will become increasingly more part of health care in the Northwest Territories, especially in small communities.

So I have not seen any evidence that the healthcare system is promising volunteer paramedics to be part of primary health care in small communities. I've heard them say they want to use trained paramedics along the lines that I address. So there's a distinction between the two, and it's an important distinction. And I think, again, it's important to correct that so we all know what this motion is about and what it's not about.

Mr. Speaker, I detest the divide and conquer attitude of Yellowknife versus the small communities on anything we do in here. When we bring things forward, we are bringing them forward because they are territorial issues of interest or, and when they're specific to our communities we make them specific to our communities. That is -- and we'll debate motions about that in this sitting, Mr. Speaker. But this one is about the territory. It is not about pitting small communities against large communities. It's about doing -- making smart public policy that where we've recognized a gap, and I thank the Members for speaking to it.

And to my friend from Inuvik Boot Lake, even though these are non-binding debates, let me say, for many of us this is what government should be doing, even if they don't do it at the end of the day. So even if there is not a binding resolution at the end of the day, it still has value because they show constituents and members of the public the direction that their elected leaders want to take and the support for those ideas that are in this chamber. And I think that's an important distinction to make as well. Yes, if it were up to me, I would love to be able to move motions and boss the government around, but that's not how our system works. But it is an important tool as a vehicle to bring policy alternatives to the floor of the House. Because we don't have a lot of opportunities to do that in a consensus government, and motions are the best way to achieve that. And if we're going to present an alternative to the approaches of government that we disagree with, and not because the government is particularly bad or wrong or anything like that but just they're moving in the wrong direction, then a motion is a way to take time to do that.

So -- and by the way, every parliament does this, Mr. Speaker. Motions are an important tool for any legislature. So that being said, I support motions. I support this motion. I support paramedics. I am glad to hear support from my colleagues on this. But I just want to be crystal clear here. This is not trying to bring a Yellowknife issue onto the floor by stealth. This is about the territory. It's about everyone in the territory, and it's motivated by bringing a profession that is regulated everywhere else in

the country into small communities practice without the protections that other jurisdictions in Canada enjoy that our small community members should be enjoying as well.

With that, I would ask for a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

RECORDED VOTE

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

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, ten in favour. Zero opposed. Seven abstaining. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Infrastructure.

Wrong, I just want to throw a curve to the Infrastructure Minister. Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 53:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1,
2026-2027

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 53, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2026-2027, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 53 is deemed to have had first reading and is ready for a second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Member from Frame Lake.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 51:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LOCAL
AUTHORITIES ELECTION ACT,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Range Lake, that Bill 51, An Act to Amend the Local Authorities Election Act, be read for a second time.

This bill would allow district education authorities to provide for bylaws for voting by mail-in ballot or by casting of ballots at the office of the returning officer and for the counting of ballots at a voting station by means of vote counting machines.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at its core, Bill 51 is about making it easier for people to participate in local decision-making. It is about removing unnecessary barriers to voting and making elections more straightforward, both for voters and for those responsible for running them. This bill gives district education authorities the same options that municipalities already have, facilitating alignment of administration where elections are run together. It does not require DEAs to use these tools, to be clear, but certainly gives them the flexibility to do so where it makes sense. This is especially important in communities where efforts are already underway to coordinate municipal and district education authorities' elections. Ultimately, this bill is about improving access, reducing administrative burden, and supporting voter turnout. So it modernizes the system in a simple and practical way while still allowing each district education authority to choose what works best for their community. So I look forward to working with my colleagues to move this important and simple amendment through the House. This is definitely an opportunity for the Assembly to quickly resolve a legislative barrier standing in the way of our education authorities, and I thank my colleagues for their support in bringing it forward.

And if I may, Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a little shout-out to our unsung heroes of our

legislative process, the legislative drafters and the various staff working day and night in the background to help keep our system moving forward. I dearly appreciate their work.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the school boards for bringing this idea forward and encouraging MLAs to make this change. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried. Bill 51 has been deemed read for a second time.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 51 move to third reading later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Member from Frame Lake is seeking unanimous consent to move to third reading. Any nays? Seeing no nays, the bill will be ready for third reading.

Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 53:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1,
2026-2027,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 53, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2026-2027, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditure of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. 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? The motion is carried. Bill 53 has been read a second time and is ready for third reading.

---Carried

Colleagues, we're going to take a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, thanks for indulging me for a brief break. Second reading of the bills. Minister of Infrastructure

BILL 50:
TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION ACT,
REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, second by the Honourable Member from Hay River North, that Bill 50, Transportation Corporation Act, be read for the second time. The proposed Marine Transportation Act will transition marine transportation services from a public service to a newly created Crown Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. The motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried. Bill 50 has been read a second time and is referred to the standing committee of the Assembly for further consideration.

Second reading of the bill. Consideration of the Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 3, Tabled Document 445-20(1), Tabled Document 483-20(1) with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now call the committee to order. What is the wish of committee? I am going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

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

---Carried

Thank you. I will rise to report progress. Thank you.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 3, Tabled Document 445-20(1), Tabled Document 483-20() and would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder? I think it's my buddy from Frame Lake today. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion carried unanimously.

---Carried

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 32:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC SERVICE
ACT, NO. 2,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, with Bill 32, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act, No. 2, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been some time since we have formally dealt with this bill but you may recall that at second reading I did not support it going forward for some concerns, and I will share those concerns now.

The first is the continuing constitutionality issues related to the bill. Since the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case came out in 2015, it's been fairly clear that locking a group of workers into a bargaining unit, such as currently happening under subsection 41(1.4) of the Public Service Act is arguably contrary to Charter rights, freedom of association, and could be subject to constitutional challenge in the courts.

The question is, what legacy does this legislature want to leave? The question needs to be asked. Does the 20th Assembly wish to leave a pivotal Act such as a new, reformed

Public Service Act, vulnerable to a constitutional challenge on grounds that subsection 41(1.4) violates freedom of association rights under the Charter? I prefer to think not, as do many of our constituents.

Legislating a solution to this issue is far better for public servants and the Northerners they serve than an imposition of the courts through litigation. All Members of this Assembly should feel compelled to discharge their responsibilities entrusted to them by their constituency to legislate fixes, such as what's needed to fix the Public Service Act, as opposed to leaving with constituents to litigate themselves.

Public servants are constituents as well, Mr. Speaker, and deserve the same freedom to associate as any other constituent. Public servants are owed the liberty to freely associate, to form bargaining units. They deserve the dignity to choose which bargaining agent will represent them. This issue is ignored in Bill 32.

Legislation to create a labour board that could certify a bargaining unit remains an unfulfilled promise and illusionary. Fixing subsection 41(1.4) of the Public Service Act would unlock the ability of public servants to freely associate and form bargaining units, and that should have been the priority of this legislation. Yet, and further disappointing, the priority in Bill 32 appears to be the normalization of career casual employees within the workplaces of the public service and the creation of a public service disclosure officer role to allow safe disclosure of wrongdoing or misconduct by employees of the public service. This raises another concern of the potential of this bill to sow division within the public service workplaces with career casual employment.

Bill 32 also proposes to normalize the presence of casual employees in these same workplaces as current members of the public service but without those casual employees being part of the public service. Under the proposed bill, contracts for casual employees can be a duration of 12 months, and there appears to be no restriction on the renewal of casual employment contracts. There is no waiting period for a new casual employment contract to be offered to an individual that was previously employed as a casual. There is no limit on the number of casual employment contracts that can be allowed for a given individual.

The coexistence of two types of employees within the same workplace of the public service will create a two-tiered public service - those with security of tenure versus those who will be precariously employed. Those with

comprehensive benefits versus those with far fewer benefits.

As drafted as is currently in the bill before us at Clause 9, section 19.4, this significantly narrows the field of what can be negotiated by a bargaining agent. This sets the stage for strenuous and contentious coexistence of casual employees with members of the public service working in the same spaces and providing the same work creating what could be argued is a class system within the public service between the haves, those with job security and full benefits, between the have-nots will inevitably lead to those divisions and conflicts that I have already warned about, potentially tearing workplaces apart.

Further, the lack of security and tenure for employees providing work in the public service will exacerbate issues with recruitment and retention.

Finally, the experience base and corporate memories will fade as these issues persist.

Yet another concern is the clear need for three separate Acts. The current Public Service Act is crumbling under its own weight, dying by a thousand stabs, handed down by serial and ongoing amendments. We already have two amending bills on the Public Service Act in this Assembly with a government commitment to bring forward a third amending bill on the same Act. This leaves our constituents with the impression of improvisation.

Mr. Speaker, no Act can be a silver bullet to all problems or address all issues in the NWT's labour landscape. The current Public Service Act, and its two amending bills, must arguably be very challenging for government lawyers and legislative drafters to maintain and manage as evidenced by the sheer number of motions and successive amending bills. If it is difficult for the lawyers to follow, then I can only imagine what a challenge it must be, even for Members of this House serving multiple terms in the Legislative Assembly to understand, both today and historically. And if it is difficult for both the lawyers and the lawmakers to follow, imagine the constituents who don't do this type of work and aren't trained for this type of work.

For the ordinary person on the street this mandate, and especially how the Public Service Act is being changed, is literally a very tough Act to follow.

The current Public Service Act should be split into three separate Acts as follows:

1. A new Public Service Act solely to manage the public service and its employees;

2. A labour Relations Board Act to create a labour relations board that can certify bargaining units; and.

3. A Public Interest Disclosure Act for the creation of the public interest disclosure officer role.

This brings me to my fourth concern, that the public interest disclosure legislation should be on its own and brought in to protect disclosure by contractors, suppliers, and also members of the public who interact with the public service. It has already been emphasized that the public interest disclosure legislation is a nice-to-have and should have yielded to labour board legislation as a priority. These are two very different projects.

From the perspective of concerned constituents, priorities are being handled in the wrong order. I see constitutionality of legislation as a priority of a public interest disclosure officer role. That said, if the role of the public interest disclosure officer is to be created by this legislation, not only should it be under its own Act but also the scope of this role should be expanded beyond employees of the public service.

Contractors, suppliers, and members of the public interacting with the public service see things. If they see things, they should say things. When declaring what they see, they should benefit from the protections under public interest disclosure legislation. Public service employees do not hold a monopoly on information that can assist the public interest disclosure officer in their role. The more sets of eyes, the more information will be available to the officer and more effective the role will be to make the public service more responsible and transparent to the Northerners it serves.

Mr. Speaker, I also have some comments on the amendments that were brought forward to Bill 32. The first is on committee Motion 16 regarding proposed Section 38.72. This is judicial review.

The courts, namely the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories, should be trusted to exercise oversight powers over the decisions of the public interest disclosure officer. The oversight powers of the Supreme Court should not be stifled. The proposed section 38.72 ties the hands of the courts and significantly narrows down the powers of the court to provide oversight and provide checks and balances on the fairness and reasonableness of decisions made by the public interest disclosure officer.

Section 32.72 should explicitly grant the power of judicial review with no limiting or suppression

of the court's oversight powers in judicial review.

No role or function is immune to mistakes, lapses in procedural fairness, acting without jurisdiction, or to decisions that are either unreasonable or incorrect. No public officer is perfect, Mr. Speaker. We know that from experience in this chamber, and the public interest disclosure officer will be no exception. That is why courts are needed to exercise oversight and provide redress when required. Checks and balances are needed on the work of any public officer. Judicial review should not be stifled. Let the courts exercise their critical role, just as the role of legislators should be respected, so should the role of the courts.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons and, in particular, the continued troublesome lack of rigor towards complying with Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I cannot in good faith support Bill 32. While I acknowledge the many hours of work put into the review of this legislation by the standing committee, the fundamental defects of the Public Service Act remain unaddressed as they did at second reading. To further complicate this, there is still no clarity on when the proposed labour relations board amendments will be brought forward. Passing this bill would be committing the NWT public service to a half-baked labour relations scheme that is apparently -- the dispute mechanism of which is apparently going to be repealed and replaced. In what, a few months? It's unclear. But it makes no sense to me, or most reasonable people, to establish an entire new labour relations dispute mechanism and then immediately repeal it with something else.

This is not good lawmaking from this Member's perspective, Mr. Speaker. It continues to speak to a piecemeal approach that continues to support a constitutionally dubious labour regime underpinned by legislation that is, again, overly cumbersome, large, and should, if not must, be split in order to better serve both the public and the public service and all public servants. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting Bill 32. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been called. The Member from Yellowknife South 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 South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand.

Colleagues, the results are 11 in favour, three opposed. Motion has been moved. Bill 32 has had third reading. Oh, and zero abstentions.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for WSCC.

BILL 48:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE WORKERS'
COMPENSATION ACT, NO. 2,
CARRIED

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Member from Hay River South has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North.

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

Colleagues, the results of the vote: 15 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstention. The motion is carried. Bill 48 has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Third reading of bills. Member from Frame Lake.

BILL 51:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LOCAL
AUTHORITIES ELECTION ACT,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Range Lake, that Bill 51, An Act to Amend the Local Authorities Elections Act, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion has been called. The Member from Frame Lake -- oh sorry, Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Yeah, ever so briefly, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I just wanted to point out something. The mover of the bill raised earlier about moving quickly to solve a problem. And this is a very quick process to solve a problem, and I want to thank the entire House for demonstrating that this -- our systems can move very quickly when we want them to. We can move rapidly to solve problems that are presented to the community. And I commend everyone here for doing so, because it is sometimes hard to break with tradition. But when there's a good result at the end of the day, it's always good to see politicians stepping forward to change things, to make things better for the lives of our constituents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question. Question has been called. The Member from Frame Lake has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The

Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunavut. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Detcho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

Colleagues, the results of the vote: 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstention. The motion is carried. Bill 51 has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 52:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2026-2027,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 52, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2026-2027, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been called. The Member for Yellowknife South 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 South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for McKenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North.

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

Colleagues, the results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstention. The motion is carried. Bill 52 has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 53:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1,
2026-2027,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 53, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2026-2027, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker. I would request a recorded vote you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Member from Yellowknife South 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 South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member from Mackenzie Delta. And the Member for Yellowknife North.

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

Colleagues, the result of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstention. The motion is carried. Bill 53 has had third reading.

---Carried

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 Economic Development and

Environment will meet at the rise of House today.

Orders of the day for Thursday, June 4th, 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 Motions
6. Motions
 - Motion 80-20(1), Closing the Land Supply Gap in the City of Yellowknife
 - Motion 81-20(1), Reorganization of Social and Health Governance
 - Motion 82-20(1), Extended Adjournment of the House to October 20, 2026
 - Motion 84-20(1), Establishment of a Special Committee on Transition Matters
 - Motion 85-20(1), Censure of the Minister of Health and Social Services
7. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 1249-20(1), Regulation of Prediction Markets
 - Oral Question 260-20(1), Navigating the Healthcare System
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
 - Written Question 38-20(1), Privacy Breaches in Healthcare System
 - Written Question 39-20(1), Government of the Northwest Territories Relief Measures and Ekati Mine Commitments to Indigenous Governments
 - Written Question 40-20(1), Inuvik Wind Project Costs and Review
 - Written Question 41-20(1), Operational Health and Capital Capacity of Prosper NWT
 - Written Question 42-20(1), Accountability and Limits for Government Direct Appointments

- Written Question 43-20(1), Child and Family Services Vacancies and Compliance
 - Written Question 44-20(1), Medical Travel Case Management and Referral Coordination
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, 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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, June 4th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:13 p.m.