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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 28, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Ministers' statements. Minister for Infrastructure.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 27-20(1):
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories formed the Marine Transportation Services, or MTS division, in 2017 to ensure that remote communities on Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River, and the Arctic Coast would have continued access to essential everyday goods. After seven sailing seasons providing reliable, this commitment has not wavered. Actions speak louder than words, Mr. Speaker, and MTS's work during an extremely challenging 2023 season exemplified our dedication to customer service. The operating conditions faced by both MTS and the fuel services division in 2023 required staff to be creative and decisive to overcome the obstacles climate change and Mother Nature threw at us. Not only was the season disrupted by two evacuations of Hay River, where MTS's head office, main terminal and shipyards are located, but there were also unprecedented low water levels on the Mackenzie River. When it became apparent early in the summer that water levels on the Mackenzie River might threaten the delivery of essential goods and fuel to communities in the Beaufort-Delta region, staff quickly pivoted and developed contingency plans. That is why MTS made the decision to truck 33 loads of cargo to Tuktoyaktuk instead of sending it by barge on the Mackenzie River. We did not want to take the chance that this essential cargo would not make it to those communities. It is also why MTS and the fuel services division decided to have fuel delivered by tanker along the north shore and then offloaded to MTS barges near

Tuktoyaktuk instead of barging the fuel from the main terminal in Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say we succeeded in shipping 22.7 million litres of fuel and 3,400 tonnes of cargo to 11 northern communities last year. However, despite the hard work and dedication of our staff, some of the challenges remained and were insurmountable.

The final delivery to Tulita and Norman Wells was cancelled in September, negatively impacting clients in both communities. This was not the outcome anyone wanted, and we worked to have priority grocery items flown into Norman Wells in October. Other freight was stranded, both dry goods and fuel, and it is being trucked to Norman Wells and Tulita on the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road or will be delivered by barge from Hay River in the 2024 season.

And speaking of the 2024 sailing season, early indications are that water levels throughout the Northwest Territories could be low once again, and the wildfire season is only a few months away. To provide the best service possible, MTS staff are busy developing contingency plans on potential obstacles to operations, so our communities and customers get their fuel and goods when they need it.

Mr. Speaker, providing the best value for the communities and customers we serve and setting a sustainable path forward are the GNWT's top priorities for MTS operations. A comprehensive independent review of the MTS governance and operations model is currently underway. We are committed to reviewing multiple options to determine the best long-term plan for the territorial government's involvement in marine transportation. We expect to have a draft report ready by this summer that will outline the MTS governance options. I will share this report with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment when that becomes available.

Mr. Speaker, residents and businesses will continue to depend on marine resupply services for years to come. No matter what governance option is chosen, what will not change is the number one priority of MTS which

is delivering cost-effective, reliable, professional, and essential resupply services to northern communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Ministers' statements. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 28-20(1):
CELEBRATING FRANCOPHONIE IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: [Translation] Mr. Speaker, March is Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, a nationwide celebration of French language and culture. This year, the Government of the Northwest Territories has teamed up with our Francophone partners CDETNO, Collège Nordique, and La Fédération franco-tenoise to deliver a contest and celebrate our vibrant Francophone community. So be sure to visit the Education, Culture and Employment website for more details at the start of March.

Mr. Speaker, the difference in GNWT French language communications and services from 10 years ago to today is immense. The GNWT now has an established Francophone affairs secretariat and a network of French language service coordinators within every department. Employees receive training to effectively deliver programs and services to the public and feedback mechanisms exist to identify what is working and where improvements can be made. We also have staff receiving bilingual bonuses and public-facing material is available in French in all significant demand communities.

In the 2022-2023 fiscal year alone, 2.7 million words were translated to French for GNWT public communications. Within this same timeframe, Services NWT saw an increase of nearly 60 percent in requests from the public from the year before, and 174 GNWT employees received the French bilingual bonus. These improvements would not have been possible without our valued partnerships with French language groups in the NWT. I would like to thank the organizations and individuals who have contributed their feedback and recommendations to help us improve our services.

Beyond the growth in this government's communications and services, the territory's Francophone community is also growing. According to the 2021 census, the number of residents who could have a conversation in French, or who used French most of the time at work, reached an all-time high of nearly 4,400

people, almost 11 percent of the population of the NWT. Across the Northwest Territories this school year, there are over 2,700 students enrolled in French second language programs.

Mr. Speaker, the Francophone community makes important contributions to the territory's social, economic, and cultural fabric. We will continue to work with the Francophone community and routinely review, evaluate, and improve our French language services and communications to meet the current and future needs of our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Translation ends]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Ministers' statements. Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 29-20(1):
ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE'S
APPROACH TO WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion in this House and across the Northwest Territories about the 2023 wildfire season. The territory experienced its worst wildfire season last year, with a record amount of land burned and the most impact on residents and individual homes, businesses, and cabin owners. Severe drought conditions, record high temperatures, and extreme wind events resulted in fire behaviour unlike anything our most experienced firefighters have ever seen before. Other jurisdictions like British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, and Nova Scotia also experienced record fire seasons and faced the same challenges we did, and in many cases with even greater impacts and losses.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of the Northwest Territories had a front row seat to the 2023 wildfire season, seeing what happened in their own communities and watching it unfold across the NWT through the news and social media. Everyone had their own unique firsthand experiences, and I know many people have questions. Given my personal role and extensive experience in wildfire management, I feel it is important to help people better understand how we manage wildfires in the territory.

The NWT has a well-established wildfire management program supported by highly-trained, experienced, and dedicated crews, wildfire experts, and support staff. We work closely with wildfire agencies across Canada and share resources and expertise with each other as needed through mutual aid-sharing agreements. Last summer, many firefighters from the NWT's northern

communities spent multiple rotations in the southern NWT and over 1,000 people came to the NWT to help with our response.

It is important to note that fire is a natural and important part of our ecosystem and is essential to keeping our forests healthy. A natural wildfire regime results in a patchwork of forest ages, which is important to support the wildlife that rely on it, and limit the size and spread of future fires.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT does not have a let it burn policy. All new fires receive a response. Decisions on which fires to actively manage are made by experienced wildfire managers based on the need to protect values at risk while allowing fire to play its important role in our ecosystem.

Over the past 30 years, 109 fires were successfully put out in the areas around Enterprise. Within the same period, 104 fires were extinguished in the area that burned toward Behchoko last summer. In 2023, a combination of built-up fuels and the extreme and unprecedented conditions we experienced resulted in wildfires that were too extreme to control. We will always work to put out fires close to communities but fighting every fire is not the answer. Fighting all fires that are not threatening values at risk results in the build-up of forest fuels which can lead to larger fires in the future that are extremely difficult to control. We saw this happen near several communities last summer.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT's forest fire management policy guides all decisions and approaches to wildfire management. It includes a value at risk system that prioritizes responses to wildfires based on the protection of human life first, followed by the protection of property, critical infrastructure, and other values such as cultural sites and key caribou habitat. This policy was developed collaboratively over a three-year period. Its development included engagement with every forested community in the NWT and was led by a working group that included Indigenous governments and organizations, GNWT departments, and other stakeholders. While this policy is over 30 years old, its principles remain valid today.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change's wildfire management approach includes a strong emphasis on community collaboration and using all available local, Indigenous, and scientific knowledge to inform wildfire management decisions. I can reassure residents of the Northwest Territories that every fire was assessed last summer, and every fire that posed a threat to communities or value at risk was actioned. We faced very challenging

conditions that grounded aircraft and crews at times, and we experienced extreme fire behaviour that was sometimes too dangerous to put crews in front of. Despite these challenges, we did everything possible to fight these fires and protect our communities.

Mr. Speaker, Environment and Climate Change is working closely with communities to prepare for the 2024 wildfire season. Regional and headquarter staff continue to meet with community governments, Indigenous governments, and the public in every forested community. We are working with communities to update their wildfire protection plans and implement wildfire prevention and mitigation measures like FireSmart projects. Managing fire at the forest and urban interface is a shared responsibility, and it is critical that we work together.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude for the tremendous work done by our wildfire management team, fire crews, communities, contractors, and others who protected our residents and our communities last summer. I am confident that they will be ready to face the challenges for the next fire season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 130-20(1): PINK SHIRT DAY

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide some history behind the reason that we celebrate Pink Shirt Day. I have adopted a post from the Northern Mosaic Network that speaks to this history.

Pink Shirt Day began in a small town in Nova Scotia in 2007. Pink Shirt Day started as a movement by students and teachers at a school that decided to wear pink shirts in support of a 2SLGBTQIPA+ student after they were bullied, harassed, and threatened for wearing a pink shirt.

Pink Shirt Day is often overlooked and overshadowed by the focus of anti-bullying having moved away from addressing homophobia that the students face in our schools often by their peers and sometimes adults in their school communities. Regardless of how you choose to recognize Pink Shirt Day today, please take the time to make sure that you're reflecting that this day started as a

reaction to address homophobia and not just anti-bullying and though days of allyship are -- like today are important, active allyship is standing up against homophobia on days when you're not asked to wear a pink shirt and you likely won't get recognition.

Students in our schools across the territory still suffer from homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, and our communities need to come together and help create safer, healthier, and supportive communities for our young 2SLGBTQIPA+ people. As one of the founders of the Northern Mosaic Network, Jacq Brasseur, likes to remind people every year Keep the day, Keep the gay, in Pink Shirt Day. I'll have questions for the Minister of ECE. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 131-20(1):
WATER REGULATIONS AND RED TAPE
REDUCTION

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when people refer to changes needed in our regulatory system, it is often said that we need to cut the red tape. As someone with experience working in this system, something which stands out to me is that in many cases sweeping regulatory reform is not what we need to or even should be talking about. Rather, there are many achievable and short-term changes we can make regarding how the system is working and how we work within it. I think the GNWT has more agency in this regard than it gives itself credit for, and we have an opportunity to make changes within the term of the 20th Assembly which can bring more clarity, predictability, and efficiency to our regulatory system.

One of those changes is initiating amendments to the waters regulations.

In fall 2023, the water boards of the Mackenzie Valley initiated public consultation on interpretation of the waters regs with regards to use of water for ice bridges. The boards acknowledged in their engagement that the legislation is not entirely clear, which is the crux of the issue, Mr. Speaker. Legislation which leaves things such as this open to interpretation creates problems for everyone involved in the system. It creates ambiguity and uncertainty.

In their submissions on the questions raised by the boards, GNWT raised concern with the board's interpretation of the regs citing concerns about significant increases in regulatory timelines, additional costs, negative

industry perceptions, all of which could disincentivize mineral exploration in the NWT. In their response, the Tlicho government said that they took concerns raised by the GNWT seriously and that they have merit; however, and in their words, we must work with the regulations we have been dealt. And therein lies the problem, Mr. Speaker. We can talk about interpretation for years, but the underlying issue is that the current regulations are not clear. The TG called on the GNWT and federal government to take a proactive approach and come together with Indigenous partners to review and potentially amend the regulations. I appreciate this suggestion and agree, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a proactive approach to the problems we face, particularly when we are in a position to change them.

And with the little bit of time left I have, Mr. Speaker, for this statement, I wanted to acknowledge that I was really impressed and encouraged to see the interdepartmental collaboration on this issue that was done by ECC and several other departments. That's great to see. It's exactly what we need to be doing. And I appreciate the good work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 132-20(1):
ON-THE-LAND EDUCATION

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, something very close to my heart is on-the-land education. In my previous life, I worked with Bush Kids NWT. We started with a simple wall tent and a fire pit out behind the Yellowknife fieldhouse, along with a bucket of tools like an axe, a saw, rope, tarps. Our team always included Indigenous elders and knowledge-holders. We would spend all day outside with kids, anywhere from three years old to high school age, even in the coldest days of winter. Our mantra was that we were learning to take care of ourselves, take care of each other, and the land. It sounds simple and in some ways it is, yet we put up barriers to making on-the-land education happen in this territory partly because of our own fears. What if they get cold? What if they burn themselves on the fire? What if they fall and hurt themselves? What if they get attacked by wild animals? What if the wall tents get vandalized? It's easier just to keep the kids safe and keep them inside. But are the kids really safer inside?

We assume the status quo is risk free yet our kids are not attending school, they're disconnected from their cultures, they're struggling with mental health and even suicide.

We overcomplicate things by creating these huge budgets for on-the-land camps thinking we need to build big facilities and travel way out into the wilderness, but then we can only afford to do it maybe once a year.

Kids need to go outside on a regular basis close to home. When a kid is labelled a troublemaker but then they get to go outside and they're trusted with an axe, supervised of course, and the responsibility for keeping the camp warm, they suddenly feel important. They have a role. They have a sense of identity. I've seen incredible transformations in kids when we let them be curious, come up with their own questions, get excited about exploring the land on their own terms, when they learn about Indigenous culture not in a theoretical way but do it in a hands on way, it's incredible to see the self-confidence that they gain. And when the group experience conflict in that setting, I mean all kids are going to be jerks sometimes, let's be real, but there's something about being on the land that brings out our instinct to be kinder to one another. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these kids are our future public service. Imagine the transformation in this government if we raise our future civil servants to be confident in their Indigenous identity, to be curious, to take initiative, to explore new paths, to take risks not out of recklessness but skillfully with careful preparation, to be kind and take care of one another? What an investment in our future, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 133-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES CULTURAL SAFETY
POLICIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on Pink Shirt Day, as this year's Black History Month comes to an end, to speak to the government's cultural safety and strategy. Safety certainly is a spectrum, Mr. Speaker. There are many obvious ways we must keep ourselves and each other safe from mental harm and physical harm every day. Cultural safety and trauma-informed approaches, particularly outlined in the Department of Health and Social Services's cultural safety action plan, is creating a space where Indigenous peoples feel safe and respected, free of racism and discrimination. Of course, in the spirit of solidarity and with the nature of systemic racism being what it is, these are values we obviously want to uphold for

every racialized community and marginalized culture as we should not tolerate or perpetuate racism or bigotry of any kind. The imperative behind the Department of Health and Social Services establishing cultural safety strategies, specifically to create safer spaces for Indigenous communities, is, as we all know, because our governing institutions and the services they provided were not initially created to be safe for Indigenous people at all. In fact, quite the contrary. The delivery of health and social services in its various forms throughout the history of Canada was used to perpetuate colonialism and assimilate Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous people still struggle with the effects of these policies and the racist culture that persisted in health care to this day. There is a deep mistrust built into the system, and we need to rebuild that trust and tear down those colonial attitudes so that health care and social services can be delivered safely and effectively to Indigenous peoples in ways that respect their cultures and traditions.

Mr. Speaker, this mistrust extends beyond our health and social services. The legacy of colonialism persists across the GNWT. We need to extend cultural safety and trauma-informed approaches to public policy beyond health care to every department and agency. We need a whole-of-government approach from the executive to make this happen. The GNWT sees a future where it's not a colonial government, and the previous government took some major steps in that direction. I encourage this new government to keep moving in the right direction. Let's make the GNWT a responsible, safe government for all Indigenous peoples, and all racialized peoples, so we can work closer together as a territory united in a vision of equality, justice, and prosperity for all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 134-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMIC
FUTURE

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Predicted economic concerns and notices there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT economic is on the trajectory that will see its mining, oil and gas sector diminish to a small fraction of what it is today. It will leave the territory's economy almost entirely dependent on Canadian taxpayers to fund its very existence. This may sound farfetched, alarmist, and perhaps even controversial.

The purpose of this paper is not to frighten or stoke the controversy. It is fact that the NWT diamond mines will close, and the oil production in Norman Wells will come to an end. It is also fact that minerals, oil and gas, make up the lion's share of the territory's total exports equivalent to 66 percent. Mr. Speaker, when these products are no longer available for sale, the territory will lose an important resource, a source of income, that find the its way through the economy affecting businesses, labour, government revenues. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it seems reasonable to look at the pending loss of mineral, oil and gas production with concern and to learn what we can do about the implications of a diminished resource sector.

Mr. Speaker, what will economic life look like after when the resource sector is no longer a dominant part of the territory's economic landscape?

The Northwest Territories economy has endless potential transitioning to a low carbon stability as a global imperative one. Our region is ripe with strategic metals fundamental to the EV industry and, collectively, we must institute measures to make capital investments, such as that in our natural resources. Natural resources are put to a sustainable development stage. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement today.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this addendum to the working paper Eyes Wide Open is to start a second conversation regarding to the risk of becoming a welfare state and why the territory might want to avoid its possibility. The discussion points are just the starting point for a deeper conversation and many conversations but, more importantly, to start having them now. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 135-20(1):
AKAITCHO AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE
NEGOTIATIONS

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, it has been 24 years since the Akaitcho Dene First Nation, the Government of Canada, and Government of the Northwest Territories came together to sign an interim measures Agreement, and they worked towards a land claim self-government agreement. Negotiations to reach an agreement-in-principle have contingencies since then without much progress until last year when the former Premier Caroline Cochrane

announced that there's an agreement on land claims and self-government agreement for the Akaitcho was finally in sight. A draft agreement was reached last year, and Premier Cochrane stressed that this was a result of the GNWT's sincere interest in building meaningful partnership with Indigenous governments. Premier Cochrane's term ended afterwards, but her Premier seemed hopeful that she was handing her successor every opportunity to finally reach an agreement-in-principle within a few years.

The people -- sorry, the Akaitcho region needs a land claim, a self-government agreement with the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada. They need control over their lands, access to resources and royalties, and have a recognized self-government. It's also true through the fact Northwest Territories needs a land claim and self-agreement with Akaitcho, an agreement on land claim -- sorry, this land claim is an economic environmental industry wants to investment in cooperative Indigenous people in their governments. Everyone benefits in a true nation-to-nation relationship with the GNWT and Indigenous governments because it means more prosperity for everyone. This isn't a conversation that's just about distribution of wealth and land. It's a conversation about the future and shared wealth where everyone in the Northwest Territories can thrive.

Our new government has signalled that it wants to pursue these nation-to-nation relationships. Our new Premier has the vision of collaborative government in the Northwest Territories where power is shared between them and Indigenous governments. The vision is simply incomplete without the land claims and self-government agreement.

Agreement with the Akaitcho, now that we have a new government that seeks to build upon the work of the last government which introduced United Nation Declaration of Human Rights of Indigenous People and signed the draft agreement with the Akaitcho leadership, my people want to know what will happen now. Where does the work and agreement-in-principle stand today? And what is the new government doing to get it done properly for the fair cooperation with the Akaitcho Dene First Nation. I look forward to hearing from the Premier on this progress made towards the goal later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 136-20(1):
ADDICTIONS AND HEALING IN SMALL
COMMUNITIES

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the problems that we are encountering within our smaller communities is not the same as the bigger centres. The leaders and community members are the people who best understand the concerns of their specific communities; therefore, financial resources should be allocated to the communities to heal their communities.

Mr. Speaker, back in the 1970s, Elizabeth Collin, Bertha Francis, Jane Charlie Sr. and Dorothy Alexie, took it upon themselves to go for treatment to address their addiction problems. They did not like the way their lives were leading. They wanted a better lifestyle for their families. They went to Henwood, Alberta, and participated in the 28-day treatment program. This led to other members of the community to follow suit and go for treatment themselves. This was a community initiative.

Mr. Speaker, after a few months of enjoying their new lives, a few of these ladies attended an AA roundup here in Yellowknife. It is here they saw the support that is shared with each other and how strong it made them. This newfound strength that these ladies possessed, they wanted to share that strength with their communities. They applied for a fund to open a local AA centre, a safe place for the residents to come and enjoy each other's company without the use of alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, the financial resources that was provided did not include wages for anyone. This was strictly on a volunteer basis. I can remember going to this safe house and engaging with others of all ages. The centre stayed open into the 1990s but again due to financial restraint from the government, the centre had to close its doors. The volunteers continued to provide counselling service to community members from their homes or they would go to potential clients' home. This is an example of caring.

Mr. Speaker, the statement is addressed to all departments of this government. When we have social programs within our communities, it has an impact on all departments. I would like to see community social programs being funded by all the departments so that we can live in a safe and healthy community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 137-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about Indigenous employees in the GNWT. It's a topic that has been raised numerous times in this House, Mr. Speaker. The public service is the largest employer in the Northwest Territories, whether it's federal, territorial, or municipal community government. The public service is present in every community and employs the majority of NWT residents.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know the GNWT has grown over the years. The latest labour force activity reports show a total public service in the NWT grew by 500 over the past year. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned that as the public service grows, is the number of Indigenous employees also growing? Based on the 2022-2023 Public Service Annual Report, Indigenous Aboriginal employees represent 29 percent of the entire public service, including departments and agencies, Mr. Speaker. Out of a total of 6,481 employees, 1,883 are Indigenous Aboriginal. Also, Mr. Speaker, Indigenous Aboriginal females have far greater representation in the GNWT workforce at 21.1 percent whereas Indigenous Aboriginal men represent a mere 7.9 percent.

Mr. Speaker, what are the supports in place to bring Indigenous Aboriginal men into the GNWT workforce and to develop their skills over time?

Mr. Speaker, I do want to recognize the significant work that was accomplished over the life of the 19th Assembly to increase Indigenous representation in the workforce. In response to the standing committee's report on Indigenous representation in the Northwest Territories public service, the GNWT committed to developing a new policy that solely prioritized to hiring of Indigenous persons. Mr. Speaker, this is one tool the GNWT has to improve Indigenous hires in the GNWT. I encourage what tools have been used successfully over the past few years and what policies and programs actually improved the outcome of Indigenous hires in the GNWT. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 138-20(1):
PINK SHIRT DAY

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is Pink Shirt Day. It is a day across Canada that we stand up

against bullying. Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that bullying has become part of our culture and society. Bullying is a form of lateral violence that crosses all ages, and bullying comes in so many forms.

Mr. Speaker, bullying happens with children on the playground, with youth in the classrooms, gossiping and making fun of people, to teenagers with verbal attacks on social media. And we know that bullying doesn't end in our childhood. Mr. Speaker, all too often we see that it continues into adulthood in our social life and workplace. When bullying goes unaddressed, we allow it to become normalized.

Mr. Speaker, as Indigenous people we know all too well how bullying can take many forms from colonizations to the residential school systems to the 60s Scoop. As Indigenous people, we have been living against bullying our whole life. Indigenous women and girls especially have suffered from this system from racism, sexism, jealousy, intimate partner violence, police brutality, to those who are missing and murdered. Indigenous women continue to survive a system that has been designed to bully them.

Mr. Speaker, the only way we can fight lateral violence is with kindness and identify uprooting causes of violence. And it starts with each one of us in our private lives and our public lives. Mr. Speaker, we all have a gift of our voice. We should not use our tongue as a weapon. We need to lift each other up and support one another, especially those who may be struggling. Mr. Speaker, as elected Members, it starts here in this House as well. Let's use this day to remind one another we are all here to support our constituents.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi, your time is up.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Can I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We should be an example of our behaviour we want to see across the territory. We don't always have to agree in this House or like all the decisions that are made, but with consensus government we can show how we can disagree and still be respectful and kind as we move forward together. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Before we move on to the next person, the translators have asked us to slow down a bit so please slow down a bit. And it's just everybody, so. Thank you.

Members' statements. Member from Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 139-20(1):
K'ATLODEECHE FIRST NATION 42ND
ANNUAL K'AMBA CARNIVAL

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight a fun-filled event happening in my constituency this weekend, K'atlodeeche First Nation, and that is the 42nd Annual K'amba Carnival. Mr. Speaker, this carnival will be taking place over four days starting tomorrow, February 29th, to Sunday, March 3rd. There will be cultural events, both indoor and outdoor, such as dog sled races, traditional games, a hand games tournament, raffle ticket prizes, and a bingo. There will also be an adult talent show with people competing for best singing and best jigging, including seniors jigging which will also feature the great northern band North Country Rock. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the K'amba Carnival will have a teen dance, a talent show, drum dances, and royalty competition which will crown the annual K'amba Princess, Prince, and Queen.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage all NWT residents and any visitors here in the territory to come have some fun and enjoy the festivities that will occur in K'atlodeeche First Nation this weekend. People of all ages are welcome to attend.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to give a huge thank you to all the event sponsors, organizers, volunteers who dedicated their time and efforts to help make this annual event possible. And as residents from across the way, I hope to see the Premier and Minister McKay at this carnival as well. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 140-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CAPITAL
INVESTMENT AND LABOUR FORCE
STATISTICS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to first bring my Member's statement today about one of my -- and begin by acknowledging one of my favorite sections in the GNWT. That's the NWT bureau of stats, my goodness. I don't know how I'd get along without them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the recent updates talked about the capital investments in the Northwest Territories and its decline by 11.2 percent. Now, that adds up to almost 900 -- \$900 million to the North. But the bad news doesn't start -- stop

there, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker. The NWT labour force activity has showed continual drops. In other words, our unemployment rates continue to increase. So, Mr. Speaker, what's happening in the 83 days since this Cabinet's taken office?

Now, I'm not saying they directly relate but one could say it's coincidental.

Mr. Speaker, the only person who -- only section in Canada that has a worse employment sector than us is the Yukon. So, Mr. Speaker, are people giving up, or are they just leaving? I don't know. But, Mr. Speaker, sometimes in our problems therein lies the solution. The Government of Canada has said publicly before, in the summer of 2023 has said, hey, we need military bases for these 88 new F35 planes they want to put around Canada. And the delivery starts in two years, Mr. Speaker. That's two years. It's very close. Not far away.

Mr. Speaker, the defence department wants to establish three bases, whether they're going to renew old ones or build or develop new ones. So they want to put one in eastern Canada, one in western Canada, and guess what? They're shopping around for the North saying hey, we'd like to put one somewhere up there. Mr. Speaker, this means new federal infrastructure dollars could hit the Northwest Territories if we did it right. New dollars are good for investment, good for people. It creates an economy. It helps stimulate the North and the activity. Again, going back to the minus \$900 million going into our current economy. Mr. Speaker, we cannot miss out on this particular opportunity.

Now, I can tell you the airport plan for years in Yellowknife has reconsidered options about redeveloping and extending its runway. Is this the right opportunity for Yellowknife? Well, maybe. Maybe not. I would hope so. But that said, Inuvik is another prime location this airport could go to support the military and their development and their action in protecting Canadians, all Canadians throughout the North. Mr. Speaker, don't let this opportunity fly over us and miss Northerners a genuine opportunity to stimulate our economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 141-20(1):
PINK SHIRT DAY

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I told my kids that I wanted to use Pink Shirt Day as an opportunity

to say something at the Assembly about bullying, and I asked them what they thought I should say.

My 12-year-old said, You need to catch bullying quickly. You can't let the situation repeat itself. It gets harder to stop the longer the behaviours continue. You cannot let it be normalized. You cannot let it be routine. Disrespect should never be routine. She is right. It gets easier to ignore when a behaviour becomes normal. And so days of recognition like Pink Shirt Day are good occasions for a check-in.

My 9-year-old said, I know what Pink Shirt Day is to me and what I would say but it isn't really what I think you should be saying at the government. At first, I wanted to remind him that every voice and every experience matters. But I realized there's another side to what he was saying. Someone with the privilege of political leadership should use that opportunity to speak in a way that will help advance respect, dignity and equity. When leaders use bullying language or tone, it normalizes it, which brings me to the second half of what I wanted to say as the MLA for Yellowknife South on Pink Shirt Day.

Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent who lives in fear for her children because of the words being spoken by some political leadership in Canada about two-spirit, transgender, and non-binary youth, and their access to gender affirming care and for safe accepting spaces in schools where youth can access information free about their bodies and their sexual health. My constituent's family needs access to gender affirming care at time when there are political leaders in Canada speaking in a tone, manner, and content that is stereotyping, disrespectful, hurtful, and harmful.

One province's teachers association said this, quote: Transgender youth are five times more likely to think about suicide and nearly eight times more likely to attempt it than other children. We must be mindful of the vulnerability of these students and their need for safety, security and support.

Mr. Speaker, as a political representative for my constituents, including all 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth, adults and their families, I want them to know their political leaders will defend their right to access medical care and education with the same expectation and experience of dignity and respect as anyone else. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 142-20(1):
EULOGY FOR VINCENT JAMES BERTRAND

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Ladies and gentlemen, with a deep heart I will be doing this eulogy. Vincent James Bertrand was born in Yellowknife on September 4th, 1985, to parents Norma Bertrand and Melvin Timbre. When Vince was younger, his dad would make him a toboggan out of cereal boxes and pop cans. Vince would play outside for hours pulling his toboggan with his toys inside of it.

Vincent grew up in Fort Liard and was raised by his grandparents Mary Jane and William Bertrand. His grandfather William gave Vince his traditional name of SehSeh. Vince loved spending his time with his grandparents and traveling with them to Fort Nelson. Vince and Vanessa were inseparable since Vanessa was born.

When Vanessa had her first firefighting training with the hamlet, she broke her foot. Vince did not believe Vanessa until he saw the foot. He drove her to the health centre. Six hours later, Vince showed up at the health centre with a broken foot. He broke his foot by almost falling off the riverbank. Vincent and Vanessa both got medevaced to Yellowknife. Later they both laughed at how they broke their foot on the same day.

Vince worked as a youth coordinator for the hamlet of Fort Liard, and this is where I got to meet him. He loved having movie night at the hall for the children. He volunteered as a firefighter for hamlet and was always available to keep the community safe especially during spring break up. Vince was always participating or volunteering when there was a community event. He made sure to help out wherever he could. Vince worked with his father-in-law Ken Bard making deliveries. He enjoyed playing softball with his best friend Arthur Loe and encouraged others to participate. Vincent enjoyed collecting movies, comics, video games, Pokemon cards, and animated cartoons.

Vince was proud of his culture and lived a traditional life. He enjoyed going to hand games, drum dances and drumming. He loved his drum his grandmother Mary Jane got made for him. Vince loved his family, friends, and was always there for them. I can tell you he was always happy and smiling. I don't think I have ever saw him upset.

Vince looked up to his uncle Floyd Bertrand and would phone him or text him whenever he needed advice.

Vince met and fell in love with Kirsten Bard in 2014. Vince lived in Fort Liard while Kirsten

lived in Fort Nelson. They kept their relationship strong by always seeing each other and keeping in contact. Vince moved to Fort Nelson to live with Kirsten and proposed to her in 2020 of July, and Kirsten happily accepted.

I can tell you my experience with Vincent was very much how the family talked about him. I can tell you he was always willing to help take youth on sporting trips. Numerous times, I witnessed him using his own vehicle to ensure all youth got a chance to participate in the event. Like the old army saying never leave any man behind, his was always ensure youth get the opportunity to experience travel and participate in sport and recreational activities.

Colleagues, Vincent passed away on November 8, 2023. I can tell you he was loved and will be sadly missed by his fiancée Kirsten, his mother Norma, grandmother Mary Jane, sister Vanessa and Vickie Williams, and numerous friends and family. He will be sadly missed.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. SPEAKER: Members, I would like to recognize Steve Dunbar, the chief electoral officer who is in the gallery with us with a number of returning officers from the smaller community ridings. I will allow the Members to recognize the returning officers from those ridings. As well, Mr. Dunbar used to work in the Legislative Assembly as our support staff in the 18th and a little bit of the 19th. So thank you and welcome here.

Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to recognize a member from the constituency of Fort Resolution, Lorraine Villeneuve. Lorraine also does a lot of work in the community. Not only she does the territorial election, but she also does the municipal elections. She also does tons and tons of volunteer work in the community, and she's been an active member of the Rangers for a while. So I just want to welcome here to the Assembly. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize my sister Grace, Grace Martin. She's very active in the community of Fort McPherson's political arena

and also volunteering, and I'd just like to welcome her to the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta and your sister Grace for being here today. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize Valerie Erutse from Fort Good Hope, the Sahtu regional electoral officer. That's probably why I'm sitting here today. But thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and welcome Harriet Koyina of Behchoko. Thank you.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome Berna Matto from Fort Providence. Berna did electoral stuff and that's why I'm probably here. And also I would like to say -- recognize my sister-in-law Valerie Yakeleya Erutse. Welcome to the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your Chambers. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 128-20(1): CHANGES TO WATERS ACT REGULATIONS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke to a suggestion by the Tlicho government that we engage in discussions on amendments to the water regulations. I'd just like to know from the Minister of ECC has the department initiated those discussions as suggested? Thank you.

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

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is open to

and has proposed amendments to the Waters Act for several years. The process the GNWT proposed included incorporating the interests and input of all parties into the Waters Act and then to have a focused review of the waters regulations. Other legislative priorities of the GNWT and Indigenous governments have advanced ahead of this work. The department is aware of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board has initiated a review process to receive input regarding the interpretation of water use for ice bridge constructions under the waters regulation, and the department worked with the Department of Justice to provide its position on the interpretation of the water regulation in the October 2023 submission to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. At this time, it would be premature to bring amendments to the water regulations forward prior to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board making a ruling on this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain to us why the department making a ruling is precluding the department from initiating discussions and moving forward knowing that changes to the regulations could take some time. I don't personally see why the work can't occur alongside. Can the Minister provide some more clarity? Thank you.

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, submissions have been made to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board by numerous parties, including the NWT Chamber of Mines, industry, the Tlicho government, and others. Nearly all submissions have been of the same opinion, that their interpretation of the water regulation should not consider water use for the ice bridges in the type of water license or that use is exempt from licensing. We look forward to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board making a decision on this matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for the answer. Respectfully, Mr. Speaker, what I was asking is whether we can initiate discussions and initiate movement on amendments to the waters regulations while waiting for the board's decision. Is there any reason why waiting for the board's decision precludes the GNWT from moving on this issue? Thank you.

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is committed to continuing discussions with the land and water board and the Tlicho government and the other interested parties on this type of water use and its interpretation.

Making the changes at this time -- sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MORSE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, I just want to get clear is the Minister open to initiating changes to the regs. I know that there's talk about changing the Waters Act, but I would suggest that's going to be a process that will take some time. Is the Minister open to initiating changes to the regs ahead of or alongside development of a new Waters Act? Thank you.

HON. JAY MacDONALD: The department believes that the issue could be resolved by interpretation of the regulations rather than an amendment to the regulations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 129-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES CULTURAL SAFETY
TRAINING

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services has an excellent cultural safety unit that has made huge progress on decolonizing the government's -- the health department's approach to dealing with Indigenous peoples in the health care system and creating a safe environment for Indigenous peoples. I'm wondering -- and MLAs have all been part of that process as well, and I can speak from personal experience that it was a good one. Is the Premier willing to move that unit into the department of executive and take a whole-of-government approach to cultural safety training? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. The MLA noted that all MLAs actually participated in that training, and so I think we here in this room understand the value of it. Cultural safety, it's a concept that originates from health academics and the GNWT began, I guess, developing the program and offering it using federal funding, so under the health innovation fund I believe, and now through another pot of federal funding directly related to health. So that's why it has been situated in health. That being said, we have

expanded the delivery of that program to a few different groups. So the MLAs, I know the deputy ministers, and assistant deputy ministers have taken in. And there's another opportunity for those who haven't gotten to as well. So I understand what the Member is saying. We can look at perhaps where this program might fit better, but that's not a decision to make lightly. So I appreciate the Member has a policy proposal and an organizational structure redesign that he's suggesting, and so I'm happy to go back to the department and have them look into it, but these aren't the kind of things that I want to just say yes to on the floor of the House. There's a lot more thought and research that needs to go into these things behind the scenes before we could advance something like that. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Premier. I appreciate that we can't make decisions here. but we can ask succinct questions. I think that's the best way to do it. So will the Premier at least ensure that a policy lens for cultural safety is included when policy analysis is done on government briefing notes? There's a matrix that they use, can cultural safety be one of those to ensure that we're not missing out when we're making decisions or advising Ministers and decision-makers on how we should proceed on things. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to look into that as well. I appreciate that when we are developing programs and policies, we need to have a certain mindset. I've seen -- you know, my time as an MLA, I've seen policies and programs that you could tell were missing a certain lens at the very beginning, whether it was an economic lens, an environmental lens, or a cultural safety lens. So I'm happy to go back and see exactly what the process is, what is considered, and how we may be able to improve that process. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe -- or, if not a full unit or the full program, can the Minister ensure that there is someone in Executive and Indigenous Affairs who can provide that ongoing advice if requested by other departments so we can at least ensure there's someone who's active in providing cultural safety expertise to departments when needed? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I understand that this -- the group in health has already provided that type of advice. I actually have someone in my office who is an expert in this area as well so I'm happy to have that conversation and see whether or not we

can -- or how we can better support departments. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier extend that training to middle management as well, so it's not just the deputy minister level and our honourable colleagues here but also managers of the public service who are really doing the day-to-day operations of the GNWT? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't make any commitments -- I don't want to make any commitments on behalf of the Minister of health. But I think that's a good suggestion. It is a very labour intensive program to offer. As Members know, it's not easy. It's not easy on the facilitators either. And so we also have to take into consideration that the people who are delivering this training, you know, there's an impact on them as well. So there's a number of things that we need to consider. I agree that it's something that I wish we could offer it across government, and there have been constant movements in that direction, to expand it to more people, to make it a more robust program. So I'll go back, and I will have those conversations. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 130-20(1):
POSSIBLE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL
DEFENCE BASE IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I put it out the department of national defence is looking for some place in the North to house some of their F35 planes, Mr. Speaker. They're buying new -- they're getting delivery in two years, Mr. Speaker. So my question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. And I'd like to know what the department is doing in recognition that the national defence department of Canada is shopping around for a new base. Is the department aware of this, and what are they doing with that knowledge? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are aware of that. I'm happy to have some attention brought to it, happy to have it brought out publicly that we're aware of. And more specifically, Mr. Speaker, the department's senior officials have already met with department officials from the

department of national defence and looking forward to continuing that conversation. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, that's certainly good news. I'd like to hear what the department officials are doing or where are they anticipating the potential base, if that's part of the conversation, could be located in the North. As I said, I'd be happy for it to be in Yellowknife but that said I recognize opportunities it may make better sense in Inuvik. So I'd like to hear what the Minister has to say. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ultimately a decision about where a national defence base or a national defence expansion would take place is the national department of defence decision. Our purpose and our goal is to ensure that wherever that base is that it's in the Northwest Territories. No disrespect to our colleagues on either side, but we want it to be in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: So, Mr. Speaker, what is the department doing in the sense of selling this as an opportunity other than saying pick us? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, there's a number of things. One of those things is housing. So this is where it does become a whole-of-government issue. We want to ensure, of course, that if it's Yellowknife or wherever it might be, that the investment be aware that there's housing available for that staff. We want it to be -- them to be aware that there's land available for the expansion. So, again, the department of land's involvement. And we want them to be aware of the support from the government broadly, both from the perspective of infrastructure but also from the perspective of economic development, opportunity, and, really, a good quality of life for the potential residents who would be coming here. So it is a sale's job about the Northwest Territories and from that perspective, again, very happy to have the opportunity to rise on the floor and answer these questions and demonstrate that the entire Assembly is interested and that we want to roll out the carpet for this kind of investment. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister able to or willing to share whatever the sales pitch and package they're presenting to the department of national defence to make

sure we get all Northerners on side for this type of infrastructure investment and job creation that could be very important and critical to our depressed economic economy when we need it most. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certain I can provide some summary. I only want to be conscious that I'm not sharing DND information that is not mine to share, but can definitely provide more information about what kind of sale's pitch we're giving. And, again, happy to have more attention on it. I certainly would want to make it very plain and very clear that I share the interest, and I share the enthusiasm. We want to see that investment here. We think the Northwest Territories is the right place for it. And so I'll make sure and get something that we can all share and get behind. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 131-20(1):
2SLGBTQIPA+ SAFETY IN NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES SCHOOLS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Members of the 2SLGBTQIPA+ community are watching their rights erode in other jurisdictions in Canada. Pride flags and crosswalks have been banned in Westlock, Alberta, and politicking by the UCP has resulted in gender affirming health care being removed for youth. The community has also seen disregard for queer lives lead to the death of a young two-spirit person in Oklahoma after they were beat up in a school bathroom mere weeks ago. What assurances can the Minister of ECE give to us and the public today that trans and queer youth are safe in NWT schools? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Great Slave. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start today by letting the Member know and letting residents of the Northwest Territories know that as the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I will not endorse or support policies that -- or legislation that I see is harmful to residents of the Northwest Territories, including our youth. What is being done today, Mr. Speaker, under the Education Act and safe schools regulations, schools in the Northwest Territories are required to provide a safe and caring environment for the school community. So ECE hosts a territorial safe and caring schools subcommittee. This is made up of

representatives from each education body across the Northwest Territories. And their role is to plan, coordinate, and action processes, activities, and projects related to implementing the safe school's regulations. In addition, the territorial school code of conduct also exists and confirms that schools and education bodies are wholly responsible to ensure that all members of the school community are provided with a safe, positive, respectful, and caring environment regardless of orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

To support education bodies and schools in fostering 2SLGBTQIPA+ equity, safety, and inclusion in schools, ECE has also developed the guidelines for ensuring LGBTQ2S+ equity, safety, and inclusion in Northwest Territories schools.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the Education Act and safe schools regulations, all NWT schools have safe and caring school plans. These plans include bullying prevention, intervention, and education strategies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I believe later in the day I saw she might be tabling some of those documents, and that's also welcomed.

Mr. Speaker, what partnerships does ECE undertake with the Northern Mosaic Network and school-based rainbow clubs to foster safety for queer youth? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECE collaborates regularly with the Northern Mosaic Network through the safe and caring school subcommittee. And this supports education bodies' needs around ensuring that 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth are -- have access to safety, equity, and inclusion. The Northern Mosaic Network is invited and provides sessions as well to NWT educators through annual in-services. And recently, the Northern Mosaic Network provided in-service on supporting 2SLGBTQIPA+ diversity in secondary and elementary education at the program support teacher in-service that just occurred in February 20th to 22nd of this year. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister also answered my next question, which is great, which had to do with what training and professional development may be required for teachers and other school staff to ensure that they understand safe practices, language, and inclusive environments for all students? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the items that I have already mentioned, there is also a gender support plan that schools have which provides a guide for staff members to understand ways a student's gender can be affirmed while the student is supported at school. ECE also supports evidence-based healthy relationship training for school staff and a safe school regulations mandate that safe school plans must include, like I said before, the bullying prevention, intervention, education strategies that integrate evidence-based healthy relationship programming into the school curriculum itself and daily classroom activities.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, ECE includes what is called the fourth R for grades 7 to 9, healthy relationships, plus for grades 10 through 11, and gender sexuality alliance and healthy relationship programming for 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth as well. And what I will also say, Mr. Speaker, is the healthy relationship program that I've just mentioned is a small group of positive mental health promotion program for gender, sexual, romantic minority youth and is available for gender sexuality alliances as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. As we shift to the new BC-based curriculum, is there any elements of that curriculum that are inclusive and supportive of queer students? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the draft NWT adapted curriculum does have topics on gender and identity that are covered in grades 4, 5, 6, and 9 that I indicated earlier this week that those are the grades trialing the new curriculum. So in the draft curriculum, grades 4 through 6 health curriculum is supported to be able to describe and apply strategies that promote safe and caring environments, such as culture of consent and awareness and acceptance of different races, ethnicities, cultural practices, and gender identities and expressions. Also it supports to understand physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during puberty, including those involving sexuality and sexual identity.

In this curriculum, topics around identifying and addressing gender-based violence and discrimination are also covered in the draft -- in the draft grade 9 health curricula as well. And

work is currently ongoing adapting the BC grade 7 and 8 health curriculum which also includes many of these elements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 132-20(1):
AKAITCHO AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE
NEGOTIATIONS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous government say that they had made serious progress towards an agreement-in-principle with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations. Meanwhile ten years after devolution, the Akaitcho are not receiving no royalties from their lands and resources. Mr. Speaker, my question would be to the Premier. How close is the GNWT to signing an agreement-in-principle with the Akaitcho Dene First Nation? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A consultation draft of the agreement-in-principle has been completed. It is with the Akaitcho leadership, and they are reviewing it internally. So the ball is in their court right now, and so I don't have a timeline on how long things will take but I can say there is forward progress on this file. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Premier, for your response. Does the Premier think an agreement-in-principle is possible within the life span of this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I definitely think it's possible. We are not the only party to these negotiations though so there is a lot that's out of our hands. I mean, the federal government is -- you know, they have an evolving approach to negotiations as well so they might introduce a new way of doing business that could add more time to the process. So there's a lot of unknowns, but I am confident that we're headed in the right direction and we're moving at a good pace. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. In the 19th Assembly, we passed the UNDRIP bill and more or less defining the Indigenous rights of the people here in the Northwest Territories. Can the Premier ask -- my question is to Premier, again. It's unfair that my region is being excluded from not signing on to

devolution agreement. Can the Premier commit to having the Akaitcho receive the monies that is made off their lands and resources and backdated to April 1st, 2014? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do not have the authority to make that commitment. The GNWT is also signatory to the devolution agreement as are a number of Indigenous governments, and so it's that group of governments who would make that decision, not myself as Premier. And as I understand, the last direction was that the signatories receive those funds. Thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Premier. Would the Premier be able to go back and talk to the Indigenous leaders and figure a way around how we could get Akaitcho involved to getting royalties off their backyard? I think if we could maybe start that dialogue, that would be great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was, I think, a few years ago was the last time there was a real indepth discussion among the group about this item. So I can bring it to the group and say that this has been raised by an MLA and see what their thoughts are on having the discussion but I can't -- again, I can't make any promises. We don't set the agenda. We don't make decisions. But whenever I hear concerns from MLAs, I do bring them forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Premier. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 133-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES POLICY ON INDIGENOUS
HIRING

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance. In the last Assembly, the Minister committed to create a new policy to prioritize hiring Indigenous people. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide the status of this new policy to support Indigenous hiring?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's been quite a number of different pieces that have rolled out in support of hiring of -- more hiring and stronger hiring of Indigenous people in the

Northwest Territories. There's the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework is really the vanguard item that we have on that. The Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework has quite a number of action items in it for each department, and each department has its own individualized framework or plan, action plan, within that. They're all available online. I won't start to name them off now, but there's been an initial reporting on some of those action items. For example, having job descriptions reviewed, all job descriptions reviewed, to ensure that we're having job availability and accessibility that aligns to people's skill sets and that doesn't become exclusive or exclusionary in a way that doesn't actually achieve the targets of that job. So all of those are available online. All of the actions there are available online, and they're meant to address and break down some of the barriers that people have seen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned the Indigenous Retention Recruitment Framework. Can the Minister say how this framework is being monitored and the success of the departments to implement the employment plans are being monitored as well? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Multiple questions means I can just talk all about the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework. So in this case, Mr. Speaker, I can be quite succinct because in some ways it's simple. Every department has submitted their own employment plan. Those were published in November of 2022. They then have a responsibility to meet both short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives. In October of just this last year, the employment plans were all posted online, and it shows columns of what is expected for short, medium, and long term. So there's status updates that are going to be going out online to those employment plans. As I said, the last one was just a couple of months ago. The next key marker I would put on people's radar is with respect to hiring targets, so actually setting some targets and breaking those targets down by types of employment, so not just a blanket putting people into positions but actually ensuring that we're moving people through and up to higher positions of senior management. So that's the next marker I'd put on the radar. But that's a short-term goal, and that will be one of the next ones that needs to get published in the not too distant future. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And certainly good to hear that there are targets being set. I know the last Assembly was clear that departments were to set targets, and

GNWT were to set targets. Can the Minister tell me what those targets are, Mr. Speaker?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can, and what I would suggest I do, though, is perhaps we can -- I don't know if we'll be able to table it by tomorrow but at the earliest opportunity, Mr. Speaker, we could put that information before the House or at the very least perhaps circulate where people can find it. It's on the Department of Finance's website under the diversity and inclusion services, the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework. There's a very long document. And then there's a very long list, every single department, every single agency has their own plan. Every one of them is published. And within them, it shows all of their individualized actions as well as those targets. So it's a long list of information and I would, again, be happy to put that information before the House. I believe it was actually included in business plans and would be included in business plans going forward. So it may be that the next opportunity I have is during main estimates when business plans would be before the House again. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. Direct appointments, Mr. Speaker, are a tool that the GNWT can and does often use to place employees in the positions without running public competitions. Can the Minister provide the number of direct appointments in the GNWT over the last fiscal year and which of those were Indigenous? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly can provide it. I don't have it in front of me, Mr. Speaker. But I would note that in general, direct appointments, at least over the last four years that I can speak to, were in -- I believe 90 percent or so were of individuals who had either P1 or P2 status, which would be Indigenous individuals as well as long-term Northerners, but I'll ensure that we've broken that down to reflect specifically Indigenous Northwest Territories residents. It is a very high percentage of the direct appointments that are -- that go through. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Finance. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 134-20(1):
ON-THE-LAND EDUCATION

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Firstly, so as we're

rolling out the new BC curriculum, how is on-the-land education being incorporated into this new curriculum? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the draft NWT adapted curriculum is streamlined, and it focuses on competency building more than content retention. So this actually ends up providing more opportunities for place-based learning, which in our northern communities translates into land-based learning. The adaptation of the BC curriculum ensures that many explicit references to the BC curriculum to Indigenous ways of being and knowing are NWT-specific. So this curriculum adaptation almost gives us more opportunities than working with the previous curriculum in order to ensure that there are land-based options in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that's good news. So how is ECE supporting educators and child care workers to gain the training and skills and confidence for them to be able to deliver on-the-land education? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECE provides a variety of professional development and training opportunities for educators across the Northwest Territories. So specifically JK to 12 school educators receive training on the Indigenous languages and education handbook and in both Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit that guide Indigenous education in the Northwest Territories. ECE also allocates funding directly to education bodies for resource development and community support, which includes professional development for language and cultural education training, including land-based training. In addition to that, there is the educational leadership program which is a mandatory requirement for sitting school principals across the Northwest Territories. And a component of this is also on-the-land training facilitated by ECE staff, local knowledge-holders and language-keepers as well. And ECE also provides funding to support delivery of professional learning opportunities to early learning educators working in licensed programs throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that was a very long list of things. I think specifically on-the-land education was listed in there somewhere, but I'll have to look back through the transcripts. Does ECE have any

funding available for schools or child care facilities to build basic infrastructure like wall tents or fire pits so that people have a place to go nearby to do on-the-land education? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that one I'd actually love to hear more about. If the Minister could just clarify what the title of this funding program is called or how we could direct people towards it, that would be appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm too long, I'm too short; I just don't know. I'm happy to provide information.

School education bodies receive funding directly. People can also apply for separate funding. There is also funding available through Aurora College when they participate. They get funding directly from ECE to participate when they're doing their training for the early learning and child care certificate and diploma program. And so there's a multitude of different kind of avenues that funding comes from. But I am happy to provide more detailed information to the Member for sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 135-20(1):
GENDER AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my friend from Great Slave mentioned that other jurisdictions in Canada who are taking heartless steps to traumatize and disenfranchise people for being themselves. I'd like to know from our Minister of Health and Social Services how trans and nonbinary youth or individual -- or other individuals seeking gender affirming healthcare, which would have previously gone to Alberta, are going to get the care that they need through our health system? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Range Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the NWT residents that healthcare services for

transgender individuals, including children and youth, will continue to be available under our existing model as there -- at this time we are still utilizing the same referral plan as usual. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure many are relieved to hear that; I certainly am. When these individuals are going for treatment, where are they going? If not Alberta, is it British Columbia? Is it Ontario? Saskatchewan's out of the picture. Alberta's out of the picture. So where are we sending these folks to get the care that they need? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if an out-of-territory referral is made for an NWT resident, including child or youth, and medically necessary service is not available in Alberta, we arrange to have these services made available in other locations in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think Alberta's feeling pretty unsafe these days and I think this is a safety issue. So is that taking into account if patients are coming to get care, are we ensuring it's gender affirming care and we're taking their safety concerns into account when we're making -- when we're making those travel arrangements for them? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to work with Alberta in -- there's -- nothing has changed, and I want -- I think that's the thing is right now, within our health care system our referral process is to Alberta. There is no change in that referral service. The -- they are still -- they are still providing the service in Alberta. If -- and I think -- so people are aware, we will continue -- like our department is continuing to work with the Government of Alberta to clarify Alberta's proposed policy and how they may impact residents of the Northwest Territories receiving out-of-territorial referrals. And for -- you know, there's referrals that have to go elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, they will still fall within access to care. So if they can't access the care in Alberta, we will provide the medical travel that's necessary for those members to travel to other areas where they can access the care. I hope that answers the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It does confuse it somewhat. So I mean, Premier Smith's been pretty clear that these changes are taking effect and, you know, these are

transphobic and, you know, atrocious policies that no health system in Canada should have, so are they -- is the Alberta government making exception for NWT patients within this policy? I'm just -- want clarity on that. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time within the Department of Health and Social Services -- like, within my department, we are, as I mentioned, connecting with the Alberta health department on the proposed policies that Alberta has made. We will continue to keep those discussions ongoing to see if there is any changes and if there are changes that are going to impact the residents of the Northwest Territories, then we -- like I said, we will have other options for those members to be able to access the care that they need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 136-20(1):
STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to ask the next batch of questions to the Minister of education.

Under the Student Financial Assistance Act, section 10(3)(a), so that doesn't mean much to the public, but what it is is it specifically points out to the cap of SFA provided to Northerners attending post-secondary school, Mr. Speaker, which happens to be \$60,000 in total. That's your total cap of what you can take.

So, Mr. Speaker, recognizing the costs and ever changing needs of Northerners seeking education and recognizing the fact that we want to support Northerners to get education and even go on to graduate education such as become lawyers, doctors, etcetera, and come back here, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to address the cap by raising it to what would be considered reasonable and modern amounts reflective of the needs of students attending post-secondary school? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this was -- this idea was explored in the previous Assembly when the review of Student Financial Assistance was done and, at that time, the decision was made to not expand the cap and to put dollars from ECE, in fact, into other programs. There was changes made to the

Student Financial Assistance Program at that time, but this change was not one of them. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I didn't know that the 19th Assembly could fetter the decisions of the 20th Assembly in this regard, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that was the old Minister. We don't have any use for that old Minister. We want the new Minister to take some leadership around that. So, Mr. Speaker, would the new Minister of education be willing to go back and address this cap?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this point, you know, there's been conversation about putting extra dollars into early learning and child care. There's been comments about expanding the -- or removing the cap and putting dollars in there. There's been requests for putting more money into seniors' home heating subsidy. And there's only so much that I can move dollars around within the department in order to accommodate those. So some difficult decisions are going to have to be made on behalf of this whole government as a team. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, we're not really talking about a lot of students here. We're literally talking anywhere from 10 to 50 students who need to go beyond that \$60,000 cap, Mr. Speaker. What's the Minister's apprehension, really, at the end of the day for expanding the cap? Because we know it's not a lot of students, and she would have the numbers of how many exact students would be attending. So what's her apprehension? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No, I hear what the Member is saying, absolutely. But whatever I provide right now has to be provided to future students down the road, and I am -- I've done the research in the previous Assembly on this one. I've spoken to students who are part of that minority of students that are looking for that. I understand that trends in post-secondary education are changing across the country and that people are taking on average five years to do their bachelor degree these days instead of the four, and they are wanting to continue on and potentially do a law degree or a master's in something else. And I -- you know, do we really want to support these students? Absolutely we do, and we want them to come home. That being said, Mr. Speaker, we do have a budget that we have to maintain, and we have to make sure that any decision that we make for one student can be accessible by every student in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of that answer was certainly acceptable. The second half, less good. I'm certainly going to say that.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to do an analysis on how many people actually uptake on the full potential \$60,000 and weigh that in the sense of information and balance that against those who go beyond the need of the 60,000? So in other words, are all students accessing the full amount, and can we do analysis over the last two years? And I think we shouldn't go too much further than that because spend a lot of time and money doing it. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I love data and evidence-based decision-making, and I'm always game to see what numbers are out there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 137-20(1):
REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR DEPARTMENT
OF EXECUTIVE AND INDIGENOUS
AFFAIRS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given my theme this week is employment, and I likely sound like a broken record to the Premier on this issue, but I'm glad to see that a regional director of finance has been hired in Inuvik. My question is to the Premier on where we are with the department on the regional director for infrastructure -- sorry, regional director for the executive in Inuvik. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: From Inuvik Boot Lake. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're in the same place we were when the Member asked a couple weeks ago. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: So I assume, then, that the same position as the position is ready to be advertised and we'll soon have a new regional director up there?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The position has not yet been filled so we are still looking into this and considering all of our options as we develop the mandate for the 20th Assembly and we look at the budget for the upcoming sitting. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when developing the mandate and reviewing it, then am I to assume that the position may or not be filled, or is the position going to be filled?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at all of our options. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary.

QUESTION 138-20(1):
IMPLEMENTATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
CURRICULUM IN NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES SCHOOLS

MR. HAWKINS: So exciting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't contain my excitement. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, my next set of questions is targeted to the -- I shouldn't say targeted, but being offered ever so kindly to the Minister of education. And so during the campaign, a lot of the teachers complained about the BC curriculum coming in because the lack of foresighted training for -- and prep for them. So in other words, they're being handed these packages of saying hey, now good luck, and they had to implement it. Mr. Speaker, what can the Minister of education do to help support these teachers who still haven't had the full and robust training in the BC curriculum which they have asked for? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find that the news isn't all bad. A lot of people that I've had the opportunity to speak with, parents included, are quite excited by the opportunity presented to the Northwest Territories by the BC curriculum. That said, I do have meetings booked with education bodies in April, and I'm very excited to get their feedback at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had heard and spoken to some people on the education industry that report cards could have been delayed, and there was a bit of an off-the-rails process about having the right training and ability to fill out the report cards based on the BC curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister look at sending people to the education boards to make sure that we have that knowledge on how to work through them in a cooperative and collaborative way? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll make the commitment to first find out if there is a challenge at the education board and school level. And if there is a challenge, I will make the commitment to ensure that it's addressed. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might not have had a third question but I just want to clarify on the record, in my case I'm not worried about board; I'm worried about boards as a territorial MLA and hence the issue to me is if it's reflective in Yellowknife, it could be reflective in every riding. So will she ensure that all ridings are -- sorry, all education districts receive the same type of question and support? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for Yellowknife; I'm the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for the Northwest Territories. So yes.

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

QUESTION 139-20(1):
SUPPORTING THE MINING INDUSTRY
WITH A NORTH OF 60 TAX CREDIT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seeing as there's extra time, I thought I ask my friend the Minister of Finance if she -- what she's going to do to support the mining industry here in the Northwest Territories. She's got the money. We need some tax credits. Has the Minister reviewed the submission -- the prebudget submission that the chamber of -- of the NWT Chamber and Nunavut Chamber of Mines has put forward to the federal government for a North of 60 tax credit? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have been a Minister that's been advocating in support of a North of 60 tax credit now for the mineral resource industry for four now going on five years. I have done so alongside Ministers from Nunavut and the Yukon as well and have done so at the finance table as well as at the mineral resource tables that I have been sitting at under previous iterations as well as the Minister of Infrastructure responsible for energy and for regional energy initiatives. So we'll certainly try to find further opportunities to do that.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that to date, the federal government has not been receptive but hope spring's eternal. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: And I'm glad to see the Minister spring into action to support our mineral's industry.

Mr. Speaker, if the federal government's not going to fund it, what are we going to do? What tax credits and incentives can the Northwest Territories offer to our exploration industry to make it more -- to level the playing field with other jurisdictions? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the mineral exploration tax credit is a flowthrough tax credit tool that's used, and it's not one that would be effective here. We don't have the sort of financial institutions and large-scale investors that would make it useful as a tax tool from the Northwest Territories. We really are looking at the federal government where for them, in our view, there would be no revenue losses. It would be an opportunity to really just create this opportunity for more investment in the North and for an incentive to invest in the North.

To look more generally at what can be done to incentivize investment in the Northwest Territories financially, I mean there certainly are programs that are run obviously through the department of my colleague to my left, of ITI, and, you know, always be looking at different opportunities across a whole of government, but there's a lot that we can do, you know, within the fiscal sustainability strategy that we do have to look at what's effective. So looking at some of the programs and services that we offer, looking at ensuring that we make those programs and services effective, everything from tax credits and the mineral incentive policy to also the kind of direct engagement that you'll see where we had multiple Ministers attending at Roundup recently, meeting directly, sitting down, listening to the proponents, and making sure they know that they have an opportunity to see ways to fit through the system here in the Northwest Territories. That's something we can offer, and that's something that we are doing. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I recognize that we are -- we are a small jurisdiction in the global field of the minerals industry. We do have a great program, the Mineral Incentive Program. The Minister talked about it. Will she triple the Mineral Incentive Program? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a nice little opportunity to note that unlike other systems

where a Minister of Finance might actually create the budget for the government, in our system I don't actually create the budget for the Northwest Territories government, Mr. Speaker. The financial management board, which is all Ministers, sit together. I chair it. But I actually don't even vote at it, Mr. Speaker. I bring people together. I'm responsible for the policy, responsible for the management, but every department does come forward with their incentives, with their initiatives, with their asks, with forced growth. All Ministers are part of financial management board and the decision-making that goes into it. But, again, in terms of speaking to industry and wanting them to know that certainly from the perspective of Finance, very live to what's happening to our GDP, very live to what's happening to the potential for revenues that come into the Government of the Northwest Territories, and want the industry to realize that this is a good place to invest, that they have a government that's wanting to work with them and that's going to help them find ways to see good return on their investment here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And I know our friend, the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, is a big supporter of this program. So I'll ask will the Minister in her capacity as a Member of Cabinet, a Member of this consensus government, lend her support to the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment to increase the total amount of Mineral Incentive Program to at least double, if not triple? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: (audio) anywhere else, Mr. Speaker. So while we've gone down from tripling to doubling, Mr. Speaker, all the initiatives come through together. So the first step, of course, is the development of the mandate, which as done by Cabinet, but certainly involves review and input from Members, and then with that we'll go through the process of the budget establishment, and that includes once we've got that mandate we can look at initiatives. Initiatives are meant to actually then support the mandate. Obviously one of our four key items is economic growth, and the mineral resource industry continues to be the driver of the private sector in the Northwest Territories. So, Mr. Speaker, whether it's this initiative or whether it's another, certainly Cabinet and the Department of Finance, as part of Cabinet and the leader from the perspective of the financial management board, Mr. Speaker, we need to achieve that mandate. It includes economic growth. What that's going to do, we'll have to

wait until the main estimates in June to find out. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 140-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES VOLUNTEERS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the opportunity to ask a second set of questions, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs looks a little bored today, so I thought I'd -- so I thought I'd ask him a question that springs out of the fantastic opportunity that we're celebrating here tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, the outstanding volunteer awards.

Does the Minister have any inklings or desire to create more opportunities to support our wonderful volunteers in this territory? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm always in support of volunteerism in the Northwest Territories. Having been a volunteer for 30 years on the fire department, I'm always committed to doing more for our volunteers within the communities. And I think one of them that I'm trying to fire back up for an example is our recognition for the firefighter program. It's been a little bit of a stalemate for a little bit but hopefully we'll get that thing going again, but -- so, yes, I'm always looking for something to do to recognize our volunteers in the territories. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have been a volunteer for many years before stepping into this House, and I'm sure the Minister knows as well, burnout is really real in our territory when it comes to volunteers. If you want to -- you want to get something done, you ask someone who's doing eight other things, Mr. Speaker. So I'm wondering is there anything we can do for the wider volunteer just pool of folks who are out there and interested in things to support them, to get training perhaps on how to be on a board? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that the school of community governments does have some programs for that. However, it's something that we can look into. Thank you.

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

Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

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QUESTION 141-20(1):
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE WAITLIST

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the amazing opportunity to ask another question to the government.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to return to the waitlist to the Minister of Health and Social Services. And as we all know that through information given that there's about 2,000 people on the waitlist, and I'm trying to figure out how people -- sorry, how the department deals with people knowing whether they're chronic and urgent people who need doctors or not. So in other words, how do they manage the list and try to make sure that people move forward on the list who are of urgent need? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Member, for the question. And after our back and forth on this question the last time, I did try to get more and more of the information that I would be able to provide to the Member. And so the list -- this list has been in place -- it sits within the -- like, the -- it's an electronic list. So people -- and it's monitored regularly. And the information that I can provide is that there -- if there's a need for a patient that, you know, has chronic illness and things like that, then they, you know, they may, you know, be able to be assigned a doctor sooner. As for how long people have been on this list, you know, those are details that I don't have and I -- you know, within the department, I think that'll take some time to be able to compile information like that. So that's what I have. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't expect the waitlist to be like the DMV where you go pull a little tag and you wait until they ring your number or whatever on the overhead board that says now serving A52, you know, Mr. Speaker. But that said, what type of communication is given to people who have, for example, chronic conditions who are sitting there waiting for that important relationship to build in order to buttress their health care journey? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, you know, I know that the -- like I mentioned in the House, like I mentioned to the Member, mentioned to you, Mr. Speaker, is that

the list is monitored. The questions that I have asked have come from questions that the Member has raised. You know, if there's more detailed information that the Member would like, you know, I would like to -- I would work with the Member to get that information and be able to provide the accurate information and the clear direction on how we communicate that to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've kind of given it now, have I not, if you think about it. Mr. Speaker, the Minister says the information -- sorry, the names on the list is being monitored, Mr. Speaker. And we all know that the waiting list could be between four and six years. Ironically, that's how long it takes to become a doctor so maybe some of these people could, you know, serve their needs.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister willing to find a way to make this list transparent so people know where they're sitting and waiting on this list because it seems like one of those endless, bottomless pits of questions, which is you send -- get on the list and you never hear back. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, I will commit to doing that and making sure that there is some kind of information that can go out to Members and to -- a communique on how this list is monitored. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Members, our time is up with oral questions.

Written questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 1-20(1):
CARBON TAX REVENUES AND REBATES

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Range Lake on February 9, 2024 regarding carbon tax revenues and rebates.

Net carbon tax revenues from the September 1, 2019 start to the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal. Year are \$12,686,000 after the non-large emitter carbon tax rebate for heating fuel, large emitter rebate, the carbon tax rebate for fuel used in electrical generation for community distribution, the Cost of Living Offset and administration costs are deducted from gross carbon tax revenue.

Total carbon tax rebates paid to resource sector large emitters are \$45,409,000 for the same period.

Total cost of living offset payments to Northwest Territories residents from 2019 to March 2023 are \$30,184,000.

At this time no carbon tax revenue has been shared with community governments through grants. The first community government carbon tax revenue sharing grant disbursements will happen in June 2024 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year and projected to total \$1.5 million. This amount will be dispersed to each community government consisting of a base amount equal 0.5 percent of the total plus an additional amount based on the community population.

After the carbon tax rebate for diesel heating fuel is implemented, the average Zone A household using diesel will save about \$308 annually in carbon tax. All households receive the same Cost of Living Offset, or COLO, amount regardless of heating fuel type. Taking into account the COLO and the fact that diesel is taxed at a higher rate than propane, the net carbon tax paid by the average Zone A household using diesel is about \$178 less than a similar household using propane.

The average Zone B households using diesel will save about \$604 annually in carbon tax. After considering COLO, the net carbon tax paid by the average Zone B household using diesel is \$350 less than a similar household using propane and \$431 less than a household using natural gas.

Zone C households use diesel for heating exclusively.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Sorry, folks, I'm going to go back to written questions. I missed something on my notes here, sorry about that. So written questions. Member from Range Lake.

Written Questions (reversion)

WRITTEN QUESTION 3-20(1): EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS POLICY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; you are efficient as ever.

Mr. Speaker, an estimated 2,200 Northwest Territories residents do not have access to any health benefits, do not have access to any benefits like those through employee or third-party insurance plans. The Minister of Health and Social Services has implemented changes to the Extended Health Benefits Policy

that will impose a low-income threshold on eligible benefits.

My questions are to the Minister of Health and Social Services:

1. Can the Minister explain the income assessment process to determine eligibility for all benefits, including exact income amounts in dollar values;.
2. Can the Minister explain the cost-sharing model for residents above the low-income threshold, including defined reasonable family maximums and a list of all eligible benefits;.
3. Can the Minister indicate how many Northwest Territories residents will no longer receive extended health benefits after September 1, 2024;
4. Can the Minister provide a regional breakdown of how many Northwest Territories residents will no longer receive extended health benefits after April 1, 2024; and,
5. Can the Minister provide the total reduction in expenditures anticipated from the changes to Extended Health Benefits after September 1, 2024?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Range Lake. Written questions. Member from Range Lake.

WRITTEN QUESTION 4-20(1): PRIVACY AGENCY NURSES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories health care system has seen a dramatic increase in the use of private agency nurses since the COVID1-19 pandemic. Many Northerners are concerned about the costs of agency nurses and their impact on health care staff recruitment and retention.

I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services:

1. Can the Minister provide a breakdown of the total costs for public agency nurses by fiscal year since 2019-2020;.
2. Can the Minister provide a breakdown of the total costs for private? Agency nurses based on expenditure categories, those being salaries, overtime, per diems, travel, accommodations, performance

bonuses, and any other form of remuneration;.

3. Can the Minister provide the total number of nursing staff positions in the public service that could be funded from an equivalent expenditure as on agency nurses;.
4. Can the Minister provide the total number of registered nurses recruited to the public service since 2019-2020; and,
5. Can the Minister provide the total number of registered nurses who have been terminated, retired, or otherwise left their employment since 2019-2020?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Written questions. Member from Range Lake.

WRITTEN QUESTION 5-20(1):
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 19th Assembly the Government of the Northwest Territories increased supports to communities and municipalities to reduce the municipal funding gap by \$5 million; however, the government has not made the analysis of the municipal funding gap publicly available. With the rates of inflation and rising costs of goods and services, how do we know that \$5 million has addressed the funding deficit?

My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs:

1. Can the Minister provide the current value of the overall municipal funding gap for the Northwest Territories;
2. Can the Minister indicate the portion of the total funding gap caused by inflation;
3. Can the Minister breakdown the total value of the municipal funding gap by community;
4. Can the Minister provide a further breakdown by community of the funding provided under all three Municipal and Community Affairs funding streams, community public infrastructure, water and sewer, and operations and maintenance, compared to the analysis on community need; and,

5. Can the Minister provide an analysis on the updated community funding policies and how that will address the funding gaps identified government?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of the bills. Reports on standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for NWT Power Corp and Minister of Infrastructure.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 50-20(1):
INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING
\$250,000 (APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30,
2023)

TABLED DOCUMENT 51-20(1):
2022-2023 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
POWER CORPORATION AMENDED
CAPITAL BUDGET

TABLED DOCUMENT 52-20(1):
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY UNDER THE
TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS
GOODS ACT 2023

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents: Inter-Activity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 from April 1st to September 30th, 2023; 2022-2023 Northwest Territories Power Corporation Amended Capital Budget; and, Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure, Minister responsible for Power Corp, and Finance. Tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

TABLED DOCUMENT 53-20(1):
PACKAGE OF INFORMATION REGARDING
POLICIES ON 2SLGBTQIPA+ YOUTH IN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: A Package of Information regarding Policies on 2SLGBTQIPA+ Youth in the Northwest Territories, including a letter to the Northern Mosaic Network and a response to the Northern Mosaic Network. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Tabling of documents. Member from Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 54-20(1):
LETTER FROM TLICHO GOVERNMENT TO
LAND AND WATER BOARDS OF THE
MACKENZIE VALLEY ON WATERS
REGULATIONS INTERPRETATION

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a letter from the Tlicho government to Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley on Waters Regulations Interpretation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 55-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Colleagues, I hereby table the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Tabling of documents. Member from Range Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 56-20(1):
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR
BILL 3: CARBON TAX REPEAL ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the Statement of Consistency for Bill 3: Carbon Tax Repeal Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion.

Colleagues, we will take a brief break, and then we will move on to the rest of the agenda. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Member from the Deh Cho.

Motions

MOTION 20-20(1):
AFFIRMING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT,
CARRIED

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS access to safe and adequate housing is a fundamental human right essential for the overall well-being and dignity of individuals;

AND WHEREAS recognizing housing as a human right is consistent with international human rights principles and obligations, including those outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada has recognized the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right as affirmed in international law;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, second by the Member for Range Lake, that the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly acknowledge and affirm housing as a fundamental human right;

AND FURTHER, that the implementation of housing as a fundamental human right within the laws of the Northwest Territories and policies of the Government of the Northwest Territories be referred to Standing Committee on Social Development for further study.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I move this motion because the Government of the Northwest Territories -- I want the Government of the Northwest Territories to acknowledge that housing is a fundamental human right for residents of the Northwest Territories. This has been recognized by the United Nations, by several countries including Canada.

The Government of Canada amended the National Housing Strategy Act to recognize housing as a human right. In the preamble of the National Housing Strategy Act, it reads: Housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person. A national housing strategy would support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

Mr. Speaker, by acknowledging housing as a human right, it means that the GNWT acknowledges that housing is inherent to a person's dignity and well-being. According to the United Nations, acknowledging housing as a human right affirms that the government's housing policies recognizing that all people have the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity.

Recognizing housing as a human right means that the GNWT must evaluate the housing programs and policies to ensure that they are achieving what they are intended to do which is

serve those most in need, reduce homelessness, and increasing housing affordability, accessibility, and suitability.

Recognizing housing as a human right aligns yourself with international and national law which may open opportunities for collaboration.

It has been said in this House many times the NWT is in a housing crisis. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly knows there is a lack of housing options. Homes are in need of repair. They are unaffordable. They are inadequately maintained or unsuitable for the family size. Many homes are overcrowded. Many people in small communities couch surf.

Homelessness is a real problem, Mr. Speaker, and we need to do better. We need to recognize that housing is essential to a person's dignity, affirming housing as a human right -- affirming housing as a human right and work towards this realization. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: From the Deh Cho. To the motion. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in support of my honourable friend, the Member for Deh Cho's motion. I think what's significant about this is it's not just an affirmation to declare housing a priority or housing important but housing as a fundamental right of Northerners. And this is very significant because taking a rights-based approach to the issue of housing would give new clarity to how fundamental it is to our citizens and, in particular, to Indigenous peoples who have struggled with a lack of affordable, suitable, and adequate housing for a very long time. And this is a perennial issue that led to the creation of the housing forum and increased collaboration, not just with this government but with the federal government as well. And I hope that we will be able to use this motion as the springboard to look into how all of our policies as the Government of the Northwest Territories address housing and whether or not they're addressing it adequately because taking a rights-based approach is very different than a -- you know, a privileged-based approach, let's say; an approach that says, you know, if you meet the criteria you can afford this program, we'll subsidize your housing or social housing or a rental supplement or whatever it happens to be. But instead to say we need to give everyone a home, we need to ensure everyone is housed, and we cannot -- we cannot bear to see people who are unhoused, and I think this motion's very important to start our journey as the 20th Assembly towards meeting that priority that we've all set collectively and achieving a more equitable and prosperous future because housing, of course,

is not just for individuals. It's also for industry. It touches every aspect of what we -- of our communities, of our economy, and of our social fabric. So I'm very pleased to support this. And I thank my honourable friend for bringing it toward, and I will be voting to support this motion. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know that I've been advocating for housing for our constituents, and we know that we are in a housing crisis in the Northwest Territories. It's not just in Northwest Territories. It's across Canada we know we are in a really bad situation to provide more affordable housing and to increase housing stock, especially in small communities.

In small communities, we never heard of homelessness before, but lately we do have a lot of homelessness and we have warming shelter. Why do we have warming shelter in small communities? If we had more housing to give away to our constituents or for our -- or to provide for our constituents, there would be no need for warming shelter. And I know that there are some people in the small communities, they are against the warming shelter because it doesn't do anything to help to provide more housing. It creates more of a homelessness. That's what I've been hearing from people in small communities.

And we know that there's a lot of people on the waitlist as well. There's a lot of families. We have families of six, with six children that were on the waitlist recently, and there are -- and there are some people who have been on the waitlist for more than two years, and those are the ones that I've been advocating for and they're still on the waitlist. Even for single unit, we don't have enough unit to allocate to our constituents that really deserve. A lot of them just want their own place. Once -- I know that having no home does have an impact on mental health. It really does affect their mental health, and that's where we know that there's a lot of problems with addictions. And it does have an impact on the well-being of a child. And because of -- because there's not enough housing, a lot of our kids are in care. Some parents, they give up their children voluntarily to the system because there's no housing for them, no home for them. And those things have to stop. And for that reason, I really do support and I'm very grateful, thankful, to Deh Cho and to Range Lake, yes, to Range Lake, for bringing this motion forward that it is -- it is a fundamental human right. So thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to give support to this motion. As you know, yesterday I brought the issue up of housing and there were some questions I brought up. Again, the housing corporation is going on 52 years old. I mentioned the policies just don't work for the people here in the Northwest Territories. And, you know, I just want to just briefly touch on that. But at the same time, you know, we had 70 years of residential school, federal day school and, you know, I was kind of hoping that -- and I did mention this to Cabinet and some of the Ministers there as well, that we're going to have to start thinking outside the box because the money that we get from CMHC's just not there. You know, we got 14 more years left in this housing corporation mandate and -- but the thing is that, you know, for 70 years, you know, we've been in residential school, federal day school where, you know, Government of Canada wanted to take the Indian out of the child for at least 70 years. And here we are today, our institutions are full, our jails are full, our people are on the streets. We got homelessness. Housing's still a big issue, and it's one of this government's mandate for the next -- we got four top priorities. So anyway I think moving forward, though, we're going to have to start working together with Indigenous governments and really go after the Government of Canada now because Canada's going to have to take ownership of this problem we're having here today, and this government doesn't have the money. And we're going to have to come up with a plan for the next 70 years to deal with this issue because they're the one that created this problem. And it's up to us to work together to try and go and chase that money down from Ottawa. At the end of the day, they got to take ownership of that. So I do support this motion because of that.

The other thing I want to mention as well as we move forward, as land claims get settled here in the Northwest Territories, sooner or later we're going to have to start talking about Constitution, and that Constitution's going to have to be between the claimant groups here in the North and the Government of the Northwest Territories. And that's something that I just want to remind people of. But housing is a number one priority, and it's a housing crisis. So I do support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to express my support for this motion and also the following motion that's closely related about taking action to address housing as a human right.

So obviously this motion would bring us in line with legislation passed at the national level. In 2019, the federal government passed the National Housing Strategy Act, and that committed organizations and governments such as ours -- or asked us to reform our own housing laws, policies, and programs to align it with a human rights perspective. So I would be pleased for us to do that now. And I think it's fitting that recently this Assembly did decide that housing would be a top priority for this Assembly. And I just wanted to point out too that I think it's important to remember that making housing a priority is more than simply an issue of physically building roofs and sticking people under them. And I wanted to quote from Jesse Thistle who is a notable Indigenous expert in housing and homelessness in Canada. And he says -- he tries to give us some more perspective on what homelessness is from an Indigenous perspective.

Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Metis, and Inuit individuals, families, or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation rather it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous world views. These include individuals, families, and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities.

So that's a bit of a long quote but the point is that taking action to address housing and homelessness also involves addressing some of the underlying issues that lead to inadequate housing and homelessness and trying to understand what relationships and supports have been broken to take people to this point and how those can be restored.

And I think this motion also fits well with the principle of housing first which is that people need housing first and foremost before we can expect them to move forward in other aspects of their lives, whether that's furthering their education or getting back to work or taking care of their kids or trying to heal from addictions or whatever the issues are. All of those things become impossible if you don't have a home -- or to have a house -- adequate housing.

And if those reasons are not enough to convince people, I think it's important to also point out that there are financial reasons to make housing a human right and to address homelessness. Multiple studies have shown that it is cheaper to house and support people on their path to recovery than it is to just manage their homelessness through emergency responses, police callouts, hospital work, and ultimately jail. According to a study done at McGill University through a housing first approach, we can see reductions in the price of interventions from about \$20,000 per person to \$6,300 per person per year. So that's a 69 percent reduction in costs. And another study done in Alberta found that those who were housed through a housing first program between 2007 and 2013 experienced significant reductions in their use of the public systems. So that was 85 percent fewer days in jail, 64 percent fewer days spent in hospital, 60 percent fewer interactions with emergency medical services, 57 percent fewer interactions with police, and so on and so on. So simply put, continuing to try to manage homelessness costs a lot more than ending it. So for all these reasons, I will be wholeheartedly supporting this motion put forward by the Member for Deh Cho and Range Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion. I heard a number of concerns. I have visually seen the state of our buildings in the communities. You go to small communities, you really see the demand, demand seen in a number of ways. There's a young constituent of mine that was couch surfing for seven years and her reward and determination was seen by having her own home, compliments to the community's application to the federal Rapid Housing Program. So those are proven results, and I think moving forward as we enter into a new fiscal year, I would encourage the department and in government to stand behind developing the updated needs assessment, the business case, and go to Ottawa and sell it.

The community and this government, I think we all realize that, and I was quite surprised on my last mining Roundup attendance in Vancouver at later part of last month, here we have a mining company recognizing the need for housing on the approach that strong families, healthy families living in their own home, makes for a strong workforce. So it's even recognized by industry. And I thought to myself that's very complementary to the statements made by this one company to recognize -- outside of their corporate objectives to mining to recognize how

can we develop and make stronger communities. So they voluntarily helped to say we recognize. If there's anything else we can do to help, please let us know. So there's -- that's my recommendation. Put your words into action, develop the business case, and sell it. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members, to the motion. Member from Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Member from the Deh Cho and the Member for Range Lake for bringing this motion. It raises an important issue worthy of careful consideration by this House.

I don't think there is anyone in this Chamber who doesn't agree that we are in a housing crisis and that adequate, affordable, and suitable housing provides a foundation for people's well-being and quality of life. I am happy to see the interest of the Members in the House on the critical need for housing across the North, and the work of my colleagues is important and genuine. It comes from a good place, and this is a great start.

In my first remarks in the House back in December, I spoke about disparity and how homelessness in the Arctic and this shouldn't be thought of as an impossibility. My previous volunteer work as a member of the Inuvik Homeless Shelter Society grounded me and spurred me to advocate for those that are less fortunate and those that are homeless.

Mr. Speaker, we all agreed, as the 20th Legislative Assembly, that adequate, affordable, and suitable housing in the Northwest Territories is our number one priority. That priority will find its way into the mandate currently being developed based, in part, on the priority.

So this motion seeks to affirm housing as a human right. The right to housing is the subject of international treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These are international obligations that fall within the federal jurisdiction. As a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international human rights instruments, Canada has agreed to take appropriate steps towards the realization of the right to adequate housing.

At the federal level, in the National Housing Strategy Act, Canada has already legislated a right to adequate, affordable, and suitable housing as a fundamental human right. In section 4 in the National Housing Strategy Act

speaks to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, which is acknowledgement, first, that the right to housing has not been realized; and second, that it will take significant time and resources to move towards that state. This federal Act already applies throughout Canada.

And as my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh mentioned, the federal government is the only government in Canada with the fiscal capacity and resources needed to help realize a right to housing. Under the National Housing Strategy, the federal government has been make significant investments in housing across Canada to aid with the progressive realization of a right to adequate housing. The GNWT and Housing NWT are willing partners of the federal government in all efforts to address the housing crisis in the North. However, like other provincial and territorial jurisdictions in Canada, we want to ensure there is no confusion about the federal government's responsibility for providing funding toward meeting this international legal obligation. So today Cabinet will be abstaining from the vote; however, should this motion be carried I can commit that Housing NWT will participate in the standing committee's further study on this matter. Quyananni Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member, thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Does the mover wish to close the debate?

Okay, Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I was fine either way. There's another housing motion and I would have picked up on that one but that said, maybe I'll have less to say on the next motion. Mr. Speaker, as unlikely as it is, I'll try.

Mr. Speaker, we all know housing adequacy is a challenge in every single riding. I've been to Wrigley and I see families struggling with their opportunities. I've been to Aklavik, and I've seen people look for places to live. And they have to come to the larger centres struggling asking themselves where are -- you know, where can they live? The dignity of an individual's journey is their own but the fact is as a community, as a territory, it's our responsibility to share and help raise that dignity to ensure that -- to help ensure they're part of a working functional community and territory. It's our responsibility to ensure that we be part of the solution, a fundamental pillar that they have some type of adequate housing. And as challenging as it may be -- and it is challenging. Let us not pretend or glaze over

that trying to house some of the folks out there is easy. It is not. And I tip my hat to housing and many of the social organizations that relentlessly day after day after day, Mr. Speaker, work with people trying to get them into safe environments, try to create inclusion with them, and try to make sure that in some way in their own way they can be inclusive members providing some element and form in the fabric of society.

Without housing, Mr. Speaker, without appropriate housing, we all know about the employment's struggle that they suffer with. We've heard from other Members such as mental health illness challenges. We know it doesn't necessarily create disabilities in and itself, but without housing it has the creation and power to have an overwhelming effect on those through stress do get types of disabilities, and those who have physical disabilities, Mr. Speaker, it adds even more weight. The journey is individual as I said, but as the community we must work as an integrated partner in trying to be a solution to these things.

Now, imagine this, Mr. Speaker, if we could all get out of our comfort zone for just a bare moment, could we imagine day to day one of our selves going through this individual's struggle? I bring that challenge to myself daily. Imagine what it's like when someone brings forward a concern to me. What is it like walking in their shoes? What is it like trying to find someone to feed their kids? What is it like -- I try to imagine. And then to be truthful, I struggle to fully imagine the stress that many of these people go through. I can try, but the fact is the burden shouldn't be their own.

The vulnerable people who go through this, Mr. Speaker, I know it's not a daily stress, it's probably an hour-by-hour stress about where am I going to be next? Not feeling welcome, Mr. Speaker; that shouldn't be the policy of the land. That's why this motion is very important by saying let's turn it around and make it the policy of the land to ensure we provide adequate housing.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to stress that the mover, the Member from Deh Cho, and the seconder, the Member from Range Lake, have my support and the community support of Yellowknife Centre because I think this is a journey we often forget that it's easy to say they'll figure it out on their own but maybe they're not as equipped as they are -- as we wish they could be, but that said we are part of the territory and a community, and it's our responsibility to join arm in arm when they need help. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The question has been called. Does the mover wish to conclude the debate?

MRS. YAKELEYA: Yes, and I want a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Deh Cho. Question has been called and the Member from the Deh Cho has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): 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 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.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Members, the results are 11 in favour, zero opposed, and 7 abstentions. The motion is passed.

---Carried

Motions. Member from the Deh Cho.

MOTION 21-20(1):
TAKING ACTION TO ADDRESS HOUSING
AS A HUMAN RIGHT,
CARRIED

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS Housing Northwest Territories has acknowledged the rate of core housing need in the Northwest Territories is significantly higher than the national rate;

AND WHEREAS core housing need in the Northwest Territories has been persistently high and has increased over time;

AND WHEREAS the lack of homes in the Northwest Territories that are suitable, adequate, or affordable contributes to the high

number of homeless people in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS homelessness is a growing challenge facing all Northwest Territories communities;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous residential school survivors and people affected by the child welfare system are grossly over-represented in the homeless population;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous people represent nearly 92 percent of homeless people in the capital city;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, second by the Member for Range Lake, that the Government of the Northwest Territories acknowledge housing as a human right by amending the Housing Northwest Territories Act to enshrine the right to housing in legislation;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish the Northwest Territories Housing Forum in legislation to provide recommendations and advice to the Minister;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories leverage the Northwest Territories Housing Forum to improve access to federal funding and implement culturally appropriate housing solutions in collaboration with Indigenous governments;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories collaborate with the Northwest Territories Housing Forum to bring homes out of core need within the earliest timeframe;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government establish a territorial housing advocate in legislation to review and evaluate the outcomes of the Housing Northwest Territories Act;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Deh Cho. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, this motion calls on the Government of the Northwest Territories to take action on housing as a human right. The motion asks the GNWT to elevate the role of Indigenous partners into the legislation. It also creates a position that is

dedicated to evaluating the outcomes of Housing NWT in legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that Housing NWT undertook a review of policies and programs in June of 2023, and this review led to a number of actions, including increasing collaboration and initiatives with Indigenous governments, improved client services and service delivery through local housing associations. It also states the department will create a comprehensive list of amendments to Housing NWT Act to be introduced in the 20th Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories states that NWT Housing Forum is part of the commitment to strengthen relationships with Indigenous governments. This motion proposes to elevate the NWT Housing Forum into legislation. It also provides the NWT Housing Forum the authority to provide recommendations and advice to the Minister. This is similar to the role of the National Housing Council under the National Housing Strategy Act. The motion also creates a territorial housing advocate in legislation. This is, again, modelled after the federal legislation. The purpose of a housing advocate is to review and evaluate the policies and programs of Housing NWT.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT has reviewed and updated their policies and programs. Now we need to evaluate whether these programs and policies are doing what they're intended to do. A territorial housing advocate provides an oversight role to ask the hard questions like:

- Are the policies designed to reduce homelessness actually reducing homelessness?
- Are the programs designed to increase housing affordability actually making housing more affordable?

These are the questions we want to be asking ourselves, which is why a housing advocate should be established in legislation.

This motion asks the government to recognize housing as a human right and to take action in legislation to improve the dignity and well-being of our residents. It speaks to our shared priorities as the 20th Assembly. And I will call on my colleagues to support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support this motion as well. I think the motion we just spoke to is a

more general one about this Assembly, about the committees of this Assembly, about us working as one to realize housing is a rights-based approach to housing while this one is specifically aligned to government policies and programs and makes some very meaningful recommendations for reform to our housing legislation and operations that I think will bear good fruit in ensuring that housing is, in fact, a human right in the Northwest Territories. I look forward to the government's response. I think we'll get clarity on how far they're willing to move on this. But I think these are practical solutions that build on what's already been established that give statutory authority to ad hoc bodies that are currently operating and will give much needed clarity to this fundamental issue of housing in the Northwest Territories. I'm very pleased to support it, and I thank the Member for bringing this forward. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I echo and support the comments from my colleagues. I won't reiterate other than to say thank you. Nationally, it's a priority. Territorially, it's a priority. In my own region, certainly I've heard it loud and clear. In my riding and in my region, it's a priority, and it has been for a long time, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's work with our Indigenous governments. Let's go shoulder to shoulder. Let's get the funding, and let's find a solution to this problem once and for all. Thank you.

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

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to add on to the previous gentleman there from Inuvik Boot Lake here to share a solution. So in the community of Tulita, the applicant to the Rapid Fund Program was the hamlet, so they got X amount of dollars. They built the main access road. They put up the power poles. The site area was surveyed to allow for 31 properties. Of the 31 properties, the subdivision was built. The pads, the driveways, cable, power, and as you know I think the drop where the power pole is in the neighbourhood of \$8,000. So all said and done, you've got eight units there, and you've got a surveyed piece of property to allow for another -- 31 less eight is 23. So you got 23 lots sitting there. The main road is done. The only thing that you have to do now or the developer, whether it's our government or the department, is to build a driveway and the pad. So essential to the need for housing, here you got part of the solution with the development of the subdivision that's

already been done. So to me, that's progress. So let's not stop there. How can this government encourage another application for the Rapid Housing Program and build another eight more units? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too wish to lend my voice to say thank you and express my appreciation and sincere admiration to the mover and the seconder on this motion. The fact is we need to show courage on this issue. It is an unsurmountable one in its own way, but we should not be afraid to stare it down and say we're going to tackle it. Mr. Speaker, I hope the Cabinet will do the honourable thing and recognize these rights; and furthermore, I hope the Cabinet realizes that ultimately our Indigenous partners may be certainly the gateway or onramp for opportunity here. Seeing them around the territory that they can access funding that for some reason either we can't, or we make too complicated but yet they can be way more nimble and have the accessibility to types of funding that can help. In my particular riding of downtown Yellowknife, that's Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Speaker, we all know it well, of course -- I'm sure we're happy to travel through it every day, but one of the challenges we see from the community from, you know, the business, from the neighbourhood, and even visitors, they see the challenges of people who are homeless and they're coming here because they don't have housing solutions in their region. And when you talk to some of those folks, I mean they'll identify -- most of them see somewhere outside of Yellowknife is their home, and they wish they could be there given the opportunities, and those are the opportunities they're lacking. So whether we have a housing -- once we recognize this as the journey we're willing to take by right, then we'll start asking ourselves how do we put housing, you know, whether it's in Lutselk'e, whether it's in Deline, it doesn't really matter. We have to start and build momentum and support. And I think the real opportunity to this challenge is get quickly into partnership with our Indigenous governments and use their strength, their ability, their wisdoms, and certainly their skills to get this done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion. I've made a couple of statements on housing, how bad that it's needed in each of the communities,

especially my riding. We have houses in Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic that are some 50 years old and still being used. There's some houses that are boarded up that the energy -- the energy efficient can utilize those homes and use some of our companies within our region, make energy efficient homes. In Aklavik alone, we have some 100 homes. We can't build 100 homes for the community of Aklavik so we have to be more realistic and use other alternatives like energy efficiency and just get onboard with the local Indigenous governments, try -- I'm sure they have some answers. They want to fix the problem that the government imposed on them, and I'm sure they have solutions. We just have to involve them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion as well. Wherever we go in the Northwest Territories, housing is a priority for everyone in the small communities. And every -- you know, when we think about it, every government that comes along, they try to make housing a priority but fails to make any real meaningful changes. And we need to start thinking about the housing differently, you know, because small communities are different from larger regional centre. And to make -- to improve the housing situation, there is always a policy review. Like, why are we coming up with these reviews all the time when we're not going to make any changes? You know, the government fail the people in many ways by not producing good results. So I know that we cannot do this alone, and we do need to partner with the Indigenous government and other stakeholders in small communities to make meaningful changes, especially with housing, changing the policy to accommodate the people in the small communities. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief on this one. I just wanted to thank the Member for Deh Cho for bringing this forward. I really appreciate her work, and the Member for Range Lake for seconding the motion.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to support this. This is absolutely an important issue to me, and I definitely know it's an important issue to the people of Frame Lake.

I made a statement about this earlier in session about the need for a prioritization -- or sorry, our

need to prioritize this, our need to put money behind it to ensure that the priority is reflected in our actions, and so the motion runs exactly along the lines of how I felt about this issue so it'll be very easy for me to support this. I won't repeat what I already said in the House but, again, I just wanted to thank the Members for bringing it forward. Very happy to support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be supporting this motion. In the last two years I've been advocating housing is a big issue in our riding and throughout the Northwest Territories, and to this day I still got a family member in Lutselk'e that are taking out 16 buckets of raw sewage from the bathtub. The only reason why is because they -- the homeowner is falling through the cracks of the policies of the Government of the Northwest Territories. So the other thing is that I also am going to be proposing to the housing corporation -- or Housing NWT is that, through partnerships with Indigenous governments in my riding, is to put together a proposal to CIRNAC in partnership with housing, like I said, but we need SEED money to help with the inspections and put the proposal together. So I got to start thinking outside the box to deal with housing in my riding so this is one avenue I'm going to do it. But overall, I'll be supporting this motion to help address the housing crisis here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I wish to thank the Member for Deh Cho and the Member for Range Lake for bringing this motion. Like the previous motion, it raises important considerations.

First, I note that the motion calls for amendments to the Housing Northwest Territories Act as an action item related to the strategic renewal of Housing NWT. During the 19th Assembly, Housing NWT committed to pursuing a substantive review of the Housing Northwest Territories Act. I am happy to confirm that remains the intention of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I also appreciate and agree with the emphasis that this motion places on the importance of the NWT Housing Forum, which is another product of the strategic renewal of Housing NWT.

The NWT Housing Forum was established in early 2023 as a multilateral forum for cooperation and collaboration between Housing NWT and Indigenous governments on housing. Mr. Speaker, the NWT Housing Forum has already played a key role in the policy and program review that was conducted jointly with Housing NWT between 2021 and 2023 during the 19th Assembly. The NWT Housing Forum continues to meet to promote cooperation and collaboration between Housing NWT and Indigenous governments on housing. In fact, it met again just yesterday. It is already doing some of the things that this motion calls for. However, it is important to note that the NWT Housing Forum is not the GNWT's to direct. It is co-led by Housing NWT and the Indigenous government and its mandate involves more than providing Housing NWT with feedback. Participation in the NWT Housing Forum is voluntary and flexible, and I note it may not lend itself to a legislated approach. Of course, any changes to the structure or foundation of the NWT Housing Forum would need to be considered carefully in conjunction with the Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories that jointly established it.

Mr. Speaker, as this motion contains recommendations to the government, Cabinet will be abstaining to carefully consider the recommendations called for in this motion. We look forward to reviewing the recommendations and providing a full response within 120 days. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has been called, and the Member from Deh Cho has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): 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 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.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: The votes, 11 for, zero against, and 7 abstentions. The motion has been carried.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 6:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4,
2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, to be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 6 is deemed to have been read for the first time and is ready for second reading.

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

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 3:
CARBON TAX REPEAL ACT,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 3, Carbon Tax Repeal Act, be read a second time.

This bill amends the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act by removing existing taxation measures for the carbon tax and the definition of natural gas while enabling the Minister to provide grants for emissions reduction projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no matter where you stand on the debate over carbon pricing, it has become clear

that the Northwest Territories carbon pricing regime is leaving Northerners in the cold.

Several years after its introduction, the GNWT still cannot clearly state how successful its price on carbon has been at reducing emissions while their rebate system has not kept up with the increased in cost of living. In a previous Assembly, the Standing Committee on Government Operations clearly warned the government that their rebate strategy was inadequate and raised doubts regarding whether or not the GNWT could clearly grasp the impact that their carbon pricing regime would have on Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, the committee at the time raised a number of key concerns. It was missing too much information from the department, its concern regarding cost of living, the struggle to understand the effects on Northerners, the prioritization of large scale mining over small businesses and consumers, the lack of understandings on how emissions will be measured, and serious consultations with -- serious issues with how consultations were performed with not only the standing committee but members of the public. And this is all extending from previous issues that were raised by the standing committee of the 18th Legislative Assembly, of which I was a Member, that raised similar concerns at the time. So both times that this legislation has been brought forward in this House it has not had the endorsement of the standing committee, of its oversight committee, which is significant because the role of the standing committee is to improve bills. Both times the passage of the legislation has been contentious to say the least. It has passed. But it was not unanimous. It was by no means unanimous and not just drawn on straight ideological lines. This is not a matter of left versus right or conservative versus progressive of carbon tax versus the economy is stupid. You know, this is a much broader issue where individuals on both the -- who are very concerned with the future of the climate are unhappy with our carbon tax regime and people who are concerned about affordability are unhappy with it. And they say you know, good public policy that results in compromise leaves everyone unhappy. But when it's this significant, I think we need to ask ourselves is it really working? And for me, the fundamental question is, is carbon pricing as designed, this made-in-the North system, reducing emissions? I've asked that question, and the answer is we can't tell you because we don't know. And it is a complicated question. There's many factors that affect the reduction of emissions, but we should be able to have some idea of how this pricing is working to meet its intended public policy.

The public policy goal of carbon pricing is not to provide rebates to Northerners. That's a choice, a policy choice, that's been made to ensure that the cost of living is not unduly burdened and we drive people out of the Northwest Territories. But I think if you talk to Northerners, and we all have because we only recently were talking to them to get the seats we have in this House today, they will tell you that these costs are becoming increasingly unaffordable. And it's not just the carbon tax. Of course it's the high cost of fuel. It's the high cost of food. It's the high cost of rents. It's the high cost of mortgages. Everything's going up across the board. And we are simply not meeting the needs of Northerners, which is creating incentives for them to leave.

So when we look at our carbon pricing regime, we have to ask what are we doing with this? And I think what we've heard through successive -- through this finance Minister, the previous finance Minister as well, that this has been forced on the Northwest Territories. No one wants this but we have to do it, so we're going to build our own system to shield Northerners from the costs. Yet we see our sister territory Nunavut, and our friends in Yukon as well, they allow the federal government to collect the tax, administer the tax to the federal backstop, and still control their own rebate systems. So what this bill proposes to do is exactly that. It's to put the -- it's to cut out the middleman and put the responsibility back in the hands of the people who imposed this carbon tax regime on the Northwest Territories in the first place.

And there are good reasons to consider -- to consider the federal system if folks are concerned that a repeal of our system would lead to catastrophic consequences. Under the federal backstop, 90 percent of revenues collected by the federal government are returned to individuals through rebate cheques. The federal rebate covers the direct carbon costs for 80 percent of households in this country. Approximately 70 percent of households receive more in tax rebates than they receive -- than they pay in carbon taxes, and the remaining 10 percent of that tax, the 90 percent that goes to individuals, 10 percent goes to fund efficiency projects for small businesses, schools, and hospitals in each province and territory. This -- those -- that's just an example of what it looks like on the tin.

Now, what I think we'll be able to have more of a bespoke system that meets northern needs, that's why this bill was drafted expressly to leave the rebate system alone, and I know that some -- there are some critics of that. There are critics of the rebate system. But I think we can work on that as an Assembly together to fine

tune it. But this bill represents a reset point where, again, we can put -- we can cut out the middleman, we can put the authority back in the hands of the federal government, of the Prime Minister, and he can defend this pricing system and work with our government to make it work for Northerners. I don't think if there's a change at the national level and this tax is repealed, I don't think there's anyone in this Chamber who is going to insist that we maintain our own. And to me, that doesn't speak as something that was created by Northerners for Northerners to meet northern priorities. That sounds like something that's been imposed on us. And if that's the way we feel about it, let's give it -- let's make the person responsible for it while we continue to direct the flow of revenue back into the rebate -- into the rebate programs that we've worked carefully to develop over the years. I believe this is possible. I don't believe we have such a poor relationship with the federal government that they will close the door on that initiative, and we won't be able to have those discussions.

I want to be clear, though, for those looking for an end to carbon pricing in the Northwest Territories, this bill will not achieve that. There's no -- because as soon as our tax goes, we'll be noncompliant with the federal legislation and the backstop will apply. There's no escaping carbon pricing, nor should there be. There should be a price on pollution. We live in a world that is irreconcilably affected by a changing climate. We just -- two-thirds of the Northwest Territories became climate refugees last summer. Our ice roads are unreliable. Like the mighty Mackenzie River is no longer reliable.

Our forest fire seasons are -- have become catastrophic. It's not just here. It's in other places as well. But this is evidence of a changing climate, a climate that demands action. So I want to be clear in my support for this legislation and bringing it forward it is not a rebuke of putting a price on pollution. But we have to put a price on pollution where it's not just a tax on people living in the Northwest Territories, where there's alternatives for low carbon options, low carbon fuels, low carbon technologies, that can allow Northerners to escape the tax and invest in something that can help -- that can help fight climate change. That's what we want. The technology's not -- just not there yet. And what this will have the effect is making sure people don't live here. And I don't think that's the goal. I don't think that's the goal of carbon tax. I know it's not the goal of carbon tax. It's to innovate. It's to create an environment where we can -- we can protect our climate and -- and, you know, do our part as individuals, as consumers.

So I would like to see us build something that works better, but I don't think we can continue on by continuing to demand exemptions as a government by having finance Ministers who consistently -- who insist that they'll repeal it if it's struck down at the federal level. That's not clear policy. It's confusing. It's muddled. We're not sure if we're supporting climate change. We're not sure if we're anti-carbon tax. We're just in this mushy middle. But we're one of only three jurisdictions that has their own system. Everyone else uses the federal backstop with either a -- the federal rebate program or their own rebate program. So, again, this bill is to provide policy clarity to the public, to our national partners, to our international partners, about who is responsible for carbon pricing and how we're going to administer it locally in the Northwest Territories.

And I want to be clear that I do -- I respect the work that my honourable colleague has done, the Minister of Finance, and I want her to be able to continue that work in partnership with Ottawa. But we need to give them the responsibility. We need to pass this legislation, hand the reins back to Ottawa so if there are changes in the future to the tax, whether it's repealed at the national level, whether there's a change to home heating fuel rebates, we're not waiting months for these things to happen, or we're not bringing back, you know, emergency debates to immediately strike it down. We can do this in a way that if there's changes at the national level, we're not mirroring them anymore. They just happen, and we just control the flow of the rebates. I think that's a much more neatly tied together system, and it clearly puts the responsibility back where it belongs with the federal government. And I call on this House to support this bill. Thank you very much

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this process of technology, my laptop died just before so I'm going to go with the roughest of notes with the most genuine of hearts. It's true; I always speak from my heart.

So, Mr. Speaker, regardless of the issue, I wish to speak to one theme I hope is true is the fact that when I do speak for an issue, I do care about it and -- in the sense of that the impact this has on Northerners is -- and the choices we make. Now, keep in mind the last Assembly barely passed its own mechanism to manage its own carbon tax processes and, frankly, I don't think they did enough time and enough soul searching to examine what's the best method for Northerners.

Now, it's not easy for me to say let's give it back to the feds to manage. I mean, I was here during devolution when all we talked about is making sure those people in Ottawa stop making choices for us; let us make our own choices. But, I mean, it's true on this particular one why would we carry the burden of the federal government system on this particular one?

I think, as my honourable colleague, who I appreciate initiating this -- the bill, the process, and conversation at the very least, has it right. I mean, if we cannot manage these things by knowing what they're doing, why are we doing them? And I mean, it's significantly stressful and I struggle with trying to figure out that if we don't know if it's having any positive impact, then I mean we have to question why are we doing these things? And then furthermore why are we shifting the burden on our citizens.

Now, I also agree the fact that there -- you know, there may be the slightest or thinnest or modest of veils that we don't know what's going to happen next. And that's not a defence of doing nothing. As a matter of fact, that's almost the worst defence of status quo, just because we do it this way we should continue with this way. But as the hallmark of asking what's relevant, why are so many jurisdictions choosing to use the federal system versus go with your own ways, the Northwest Territories is doing it.

I'm not convinced we're doing it better. I'm not convinced we can be as nimble with these types of responses and problems that we see across Canada. I'm convinced that the federal government still doesn't recognize our unique challenges. Yes, they've come part way in all fairness. I should tip my hat to that. But we must keep the advantage of working with them, and I think that they will find a way to work with us if we choose. So, Mr. Speaker, without the broadness of my finer detailed notes as my computer is just barely on now, I'll just leave it at that. But what's key to this, ultimately it's second reading, Mr. Speaker, is this gives the chance for this bill to go to committee to have the forthright and honest discussion. We will all have constituents that come to our door and say we think this is a good idea, then we'll walk out the next door and somebody will say no, this is the worst idea. But getting it to committee allows the committee to do the detailed analysis, the time, talk to people, talk to Northerners, talk to the mining industry, the construction industry, talk to all people to find out the impacts on how they feel on this one and what we can do. But most importantly, in that context, is what can we do better for them.

So in that service to the people of the North, I'll be supporting this bill, and I encourage all my colleagues to give it the opportunity for a full and a robust discussion with Northerners by giving it to committee so that we can have that honest consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid I cannot support sending this bill to committee because I believe this bill could not accomplish the goals or solve any of the concerns that Members in this House and members of the public have been raising about the carbon tax. I fear that by sending it to committee, far from creating policy clarity we will be causing even greater confusion and chaos amongst the general public, community governments, and industry stakeholders about what is happening with the carbon tax, and that this could cause more harm than good.

The first problem is that the title of the bill is the Carbon Tax Repeal Act, so people could be forgiven for thinking that the carbon tax will be repealed and therefore they won't have to pay the carbon tax anymore. But this is not true. The carbon tax will continue to exist until the federal government cancels it. The GNWT cannot change how much people in the NWT are charged for the carbon tax. So let me just repeat that for clarity. This bill cannot change anything around how much carbon tax people in our communities have to pay. All that this bill can change is who collects the tax. It will mean that Ottawa collects our money instead of the GNWT.

I have not heard any of my constituents asking for this change. And for the life of me, I cannot understand why we would go to all this trouble, spend the resources and the time of Members and staff, so that we could have less control over the same carbon tax.

Now if committee wants to examine aspects of our system around rebates or offsets that need to be changed, they are free to do that without this bill, without handing the power over tax collection to Ottawa. If committee wants to examine how we might ensure that our carbon tax would disappear in the event that the federal government eliminated the carbon tax requirement, they are free to do that without this bill. I myself would certainly support stopping any net carbon tax revenues from going into the general revenues of this government. I would want to ensure that they are spent rather on renewable energy projects to mitigate climate change. But this bill takes us in the opposite direction from that. We would not have any net

revenues left to go toward renewable energy alternatives in the NWT.

This could also cause particular financial uncertainty for the mining industry because the NWT has taken a significantly different approach in how we apply the carbon tax and rebates to industry versus the federal government's backstop. Mining operations in the NWT have made their financial decisions and plans based on the existing NWT approach, and I don't see the point in pulling the rug out from under them at this point, or even speculating about changing things at this point. I haven't actually heard anyone calling for our system of carbon tax on large industrial emitters to be studied again or overhauled. I have heard Members saying that they want to provide an environmental certainty for industry, and this does the opposite of that.

So what I've heard from movers of this bill is that for the most part they want to keep the status quo system of offset payments in our system for large emitters. They just want the federal government to administer the same system that we already have instead of the GNWT. The problem is that as soon as we repeal our carbon tax, the federal government is in control. And they don't have to agree to administer the system we already have. We would have to plead with them. We would have to spend significant time and resources and political capital to try and convince them to bring us back to where we already are now. And there's a real risk that they would say no. And that's not about poor relationship between our government and the federal Ministers or our Ministers and the federal Ministers. It's about the fact that the federal government officials have finite time for us. And of all the things that we need to be talking to them about, negotiating with them about, I don't think this should be high up on the list.

So due to the risk of confusion and uncertainty and wasting of our political capital, I do not support us going any further down this path that this bill would lead us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Colleagues, by the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House.

To the motion. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that this is going to second reading. It's important to note that, you know, we have committees that do important work. I think, you know, in this case I

think there's enough information required, no matter what your opinion is or what -- how if you think that, you know, the bill is appropriate, if you think that the existing system is working better, I know there are concerns. I have concerns whether or not how it's going to affect the mineral industry. The mineral industry right now, as my colleague has said, has based their operations on the existing large emitter program. Is the fed's system better than that; will that make a difference? I know there are pieces of the new bill that are addressing that but are they enough? So I think, in my opinion, given this is going to second reading, I support it going to second reading, I support it going to committee, I support getting more information on this, to hearing it out, and to allow the committee to do its work so when it comes to third reading I can make a decision that I feel is an informed decision and a right decision.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly I appreciate the concerns raised by the Member for Yellowknife North. She spoke well to them and I think summarized well the concerns associated with moving forward with the bill as it is. Certainly the biggest one that I have is the uncertainty it could create. We certainly don't have certainty as to what would happen after the bill moves forward, and that is a concern that I share.

I also think the Member for Yellowknife North made it clear that we are not in a position to be repealing the carbon tax in the sense that citizens will not be paying carbon tax even if this bill moved forward. So we do need to be clear about that. And I think citizens need to understand that clearly, that we are not in the position to do that. This is a federal tax whether if the -- if the NWT repeals our tax, the federal tax will remain, and they will be taxed the same.

However, I do note that many issues with the existing act were raised the last time it was reviewed and not addressed when it was passed. So an opportunity for further investigation could lead to ideas for improvement that could either be applied to this act or to a subsequent one if this act were to be defeated. Furthermore, review of the bill by committee will allow for a fulsome investigation into its merits or the lack thereof.

So I want to be clear I am similar to the Member for Boot Lake. I am supportive of sending the bill to second reading for further investigation. I want to be clear that that is not necessarily an expression of support for the bill itself at this time. My hope is through investigation we can address uncertainties, possibly develop ideas

as to how we can address the existing shortcomings of the current program and come forward with conclusive recommendations. So I am supportive of moving the bill to committee, investigating it. I think that we can come forward -- I hope that we can come forward with conclusive recommendations about it. And depending on the conclusions of the committee and my own personal conclusions which would stem from the investigation of the committee, I will make a decision on the bill at a later time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Frame Lake. To the motion. Member from Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start out -- I don't want any suspense in this, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Premier and Cabinet, we'll be abstaining on this motion, but I want to speak to some reasons for why -- or on this bill rather.

Mr. Speaker, committee reviewed the approach to carbon tax that was being proposed by the Government of the Northwest Territories back in the previous Assembly and the Assembly before that, so 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024. Three times this matter has gone to committee for review. It's gone out to the public. It's gone to stakeholders. It's gone to other levels of government. Mr. Speaker, if committee wants to do that again, we're not going to stand in their way. That is the purview of committee. And I do want to say very clearly that that's certainly -- we want to respect and demonstrate a respect for that choice but just keeping in mind that folks have had a chance to speak to the issues around carbon taxing, carbon pricing, and here we are yet again. And, Mr. Speaker, I would implore colleagues that we not lose time, energy, staff resources, and miss an opportunity to talk truly and meaningfully about energy alternatives, and to talk about how we're going to get the Northwest Territories off diesel, how we're going to turn ourselves into a place where there's green mining opportunities, where there was an opportunity to be part of a green economy value chain, and that we ensure that we're putting our time and efforts into those conversations which will make a difference in terms of GHG reductions which will make a difference in terms of cost of living and which will make a difference in what the future of the Northwest Territories might look like. But, Mr. Speaker, again I anticipate, and certainly based on some of the comments that we're hearing, this is likely to go back for review yet again. As such, I do want to set up some of what the concerns might be from the part of the Government of the Northwest Territories given that it is, of course, a system that does now sit with the GNWT to administer how this federal carbon tax is applied here. And, really,

Mr. Speaker, it comes down to one of creating uncertainty and that with this current act, it is certain to create uncertainty.

Right now revenue that is paid -- tax revenue that is paid by residents and by businesses in the Northwest Territories comes to this House for its approval in terms of what happens to it. What those revenues -- what happens to those revenues, how they are expended by the Government of the Northwest Territories, gets approved here by way of the appropriations that are approved on the floor of the House. If revenues that are generated in the Northwest Territories go to Ottawa, they are approved through Ottawa. It might be, it might be, that after many years the federal government will come back and say don't worry that you were a little late to the party, Yukon and Nunavut signed up back in 2018-2019 to be part of having their own systems, others did not. And so when the last round of changes came out of Ottawa, other jurisdictions wound up under the federal backstop. Now, it might be that we're allowed to come in and create our own system. But at that point, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to create our own system and have our own manner of organizing what we do with these revenues and these funds, that's exactly what we do right now. So that's the best case but of course the worst case is that we have this backstop applied. And if the backstop does get applied, Mr. Speaker, our concern then of course becomes that we are subject to the political impacts that influence Ottawa which may not, and certainly in my experience are not, the same as the political impacts and desires of the people of the Northwest Territories. That focus comes here.

So, Mr. Speaker, we would certainly wind up in a situation where the large emitters program may be at risk. That's already been spoken to. It's a system that we've set up to reflect the realities of the mining industry here. It impacts the diamond mines, and it's going to certainly impact diamond mines that are heading towards reclamation and closure. They likely would no longer be able to get into the federal system. Those that remain, that go into the federal -- the base system, that changes where those revenues go because they're no longer going to be paying taxes. They're in a carbon pricing and trade system. Without that, the amount of revenue that's generated that goes into the fuel charge portion of carbon tax doesn't go back to residents. So the total amount they're withdrawing to pay back residents with carbon offset payments goes down.

Mr. Speaker, and what other gains then would there be? Well, again, this concern that residents aren't getting enough back. Residents

on our expectation are getting enough back to ensure that they are getting, in general and on average, more than they're paying in carbon tax. This doesn't fix the cost of living in the Northwest Territories. We know the cost of living is high but, again, that's a different conversation, and it's one that we should spend time having.

And as for -- Mr. Speaker, so with that, I don't want to belabour the point any further again. I've made the point many, many times in this House. If it's revenue generated in the North, it should be revenue that stays in this House and we should be given the opportunity to deal with it. It gives us that opportunity -- it gives us that opportunity if we maintain the tax here. We give it back to Ottawa, whether they let us negotiate with them, whatever those negotiations might be or whether they simply oppose their backstop, we're handing back control over something.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to set up that conversation. We're going to be abstaining on behalf of Cabinet. If committee wants to go back and do this, certainly that is in their purview and they have that opportunity, and the department and the government will certainly participate in whatever way is available to us. Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in -- oh, Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my friend from Yellowknife Centre was just saying it's a shame the government is so pessimistic about our ability to successfully navigate the national fabric of relationships that allow us to be successful at leveraging funding to realize a future for the Northwest Territories. But I digress.

Mr. Speaker, this is a new government. This will be -- this is a new committee. These are new Members. And one thing I heard loud and clear on the campaign trail is that carbon tax, not just high cost of living, not high cost of groceries, not high cost of fuel -- of course, everyone feels the pinch -- but this specific policy was something that my constituents wanted reviewed. So when Members suggest that this is a waste of time and resources, I say anything we do for our constituents is never a waste of time. If our constituents want us to look at something and when we gave priority speeches in this Chamber, more people spoke of the need to deal with the carbon tax, many of them on that side of the House now, Mr. Speaker, than they

did about the public inquiry or third-party review into a wildfire. That sounds like an important issue for this Assembly to tackle.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe in zero risk. I've been very clear on the public record about that. Maybe we don't get our rebate system honoured. Maybe we have to deal with the federal backstop or maybe the Prime Minister will listen to the Premier's eloquent words about the need for an exemption and we won't pay carbon tax anymore. Maybe. But we don't know until we do something. And I got elected to do things.

Mr. Speaker, if we are stuck with a backstop, the concern that the revenues will be lost, well, 90 percent of those revenues will come back under the backstop. 10 percent will go to renewable energy programs. Right now zero percent of them go to renewable energy programs. The government funds AEA, the Arctic Energy Alliance. They fund these programs. But they don't specifically use the revenues to do that. It's not a revenue neutral system.

Mr. Speaker, I am sympathetic, of course, to the mining industry. We need to support them. But that industry continues to work in Nunavut and in Yukon even though they pay the full federal backstop and they use the OBPS system. So it doesn't -- it hasn't slowed down investment there. In fact, they have more exploration going on in both of those jurisdictions than we do in the Northwest Territories. So it can't be that bad. But we don't know if we don't take a risk.

Mr. Speaker, from now until 2027-2028, the carbon tax will raise \$71 million in net revenue for the GNWT. \$71 million. And that's not money that's going to go back to people in rebates. That's \$71 million of general revenue for the GNWT. The federal system will not do that. All the money goes back to people or it goes back to hospitals, communities, businesses. So we have to ask yourself, how are we going to deal -- is that the right way to use that money? Should it be just going into general revenues, or should it be earmarked for projects? Should there be a commitment that every dollar raised not in a revolving fund -- I don't think we need to be that prescriptive but just say if we raise \$71 million in net revenue, we're giving it all to the Arctic Energy Alliance for energy efficient programs or to the power corporation which currently spends 1 percent of its total infrastructure investments in renewables. One percent of our power corporation. So maybe the \$71 million we are getting from carbon tax should go to the power corporation to invest in renewables and decarbonize our power system. These are

important questions that we need to ask, and this bill is a vehicle to ask those questions.

I agree with my colleagues, it should be studied. It should be studied not just for the sake of good public policy decisions but because our constituents have asked us to look at it. They've asked us to study it, and we're here for them, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, why can't we do both? The minister has eloquently put that she has her reservations about this, and I respect what she's been through. The trauma of a carbon tax debate is not fun. I've been through it myself. And I don't -- I don't want to do it again but it must be had.

Now, we can do both though. We can study this bill. We can study the best system for the Northwest Territories, and we can invest in renewables. We can get our communities off diesel. We can do both. We can chew gum and walk at the same time, Mr. Speaker. I firmly believe that. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude the debate on this, but I will also call for a recorded vote and I look forward to my colleagues supporting this bill. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Range Lake. The Member 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 Tu Nédhé-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. SPEAKER: For those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Nunakput.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote, 10 in favour, 1 opposed, 7 abstention. The motion is carried. Bill 6 has been read a second time and is referred to standing committee of the Assembly for further consideration.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Minister for Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 6:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4,
2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I hope I'm reading the right thing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, be read for a second -- Mr. Speaker, I'm reading the wrong -- let me try this again I think.

I'm on third reading. Unless somebody else thought I was on second reading or third reading -- okay, let me start this all again. Nothing has happened. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, be read for the second time.

And this bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 6 -- this is Bill 6, not Bill 3, has been read a second time. And read a second time, that's right.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1), Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Minister's statement 24-20(1), with the Member from the Sahtu in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Inuvik Boot Lake Member.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? Members in favour, raise your hands. Okay, done. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of Committee of the Whole, Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Secunder, please. I'll give it to Inuvik Twin Lakes. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion has been carried, and the report of Committee of the Whole has been concurred with.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 6:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4,
2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes that Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has asked for a recorded vote. For those all 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 Nedhé-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 Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please stand. Abstentions, please stand.

18 for those in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 6 has had its third reading.

---Carried

Thank you. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, February 29th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 62-20(1): Consultation with Members of the Legislative Assembly on Policies and Strategies
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion

16. Motions

- Motion 22-20(1): Extended Adjournment of the House to May 23, 2024
- Motion 23-20(1): Call to Uphold Human Rights in Gaza

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

- Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season
- Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation
- Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a day Child Care in the NWT
- Minister's Statement 24-20(1): Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention

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, February 29th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

