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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation

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Minister responsible for Homelessness
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Minister of Justice

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Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
Minister of Lands
Minister responsible for Youth

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Minister of Finance
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 8, 2023****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Ms. Weyallon Armstrong.

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Budget address. Minister of Finance.

Budget Address

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the final budget of the 19th Assembly. It provides a final opportunity to consolidate the work we have done during the 19th Assembly, set wheels in motion for the future, and ensure we end this Assembly in better financial shape than when we started.

In this budget, we show both responsiveness to the needs of the Northwest Territories and responsible fiscal management through a right-sized approach that recognizes needs and opportunities as well as our capacity to attain them.

This budget comes as we maintain stability across the Northwest Territories' economy during ongoing times of volatility and uncertainty. We successfully managed to avoid reductions to the public service or to the programs and services that public servants provide. We have not wavered in our strong focus on prioritizing work that will improve governance and sustainability and delivery of those programs and services over time, even in the face of a short- or medium-term crisis.

In this budget address, I will describe the expectations for the economy, the fiscal outlook as we move towards the next Assembly, and the actions we are proposing to strengthen the foundation for the future.

The Northwest Territories' economic indicators are positive, and our future should be bright.

This is a bold statement, but it needs to be said. The possibility for a prosperous future lies within our collective hands; not only those of

elected leaders but residents across the territory. It is time to refresh our economic perspective. Focusing on our myriad of economic challenges can become self-fulfilling inertia at best and an excuse for paralysis at worst. Instead, we can put emphasis on the economic opportunities around us and focus attention on what we can do to realize our potential. There will be geographic constraints and challenges that require support from other levels of government; but we should, at the least, ensure that nothing within our control remains a barrier.

We face our economic challenges because the alternative is unacceptable and not who we are. We had two years of public health shutdowns and just as the economy was rebounding, we were hit by devastating floods and rampant inflation. The example of residents facing the disaster of the recent floods is a clear demonstration that when the going gets tough, Northwest Territories' residents grab a bucket and start bailing.

Now we need to turn that determination, tenacity, hard work, and drive towards our collective future. The government can play a part to provide education, skills, health supports, and economic incentives, but the economy is not under the exclusive control of government.

The government should show timely responsiveness as well as responsible fiscal management to maintain stability for residents and communities. The government can also try to mitigate the impacts of economic disruption – and there are still notable signs of economic disruption.

We know that businesses in all sectors are struggling to find workers. This is a challenge for employers but an opportunity for prospective workers to take advantage of the market and join the workforce or add to their skills and increase their employability. We are proposing more resources in this budget to help residents obtain the education and work-related skills training to help them take advantage of work opportunities and to help businesses meet their labour market challenges.

We are also aware of and experiencing the impacts of inflation. This is leading to higher overall costs as well as pressure on wages, which will further add to cost pressures. In response, this budget proposes increased income support benefits and continuation of the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief Program. We are also continuing to increase local food production in the fishing industry and country food harvesting to help reduce dependency on distant markets.

Unemployment is at a record low. As for inflation, the signs are there that inflation in global consumer prices is beginning to moderate as rising interest rates slow investment and transportation bottlenecks get resolved. Spending on mineral exploration is increasing and as the international drive continues to achieve net-zero emissions, we will be ready with robust regulations and skills training to ensure that Northerners benefit from developing critical minerals deposits in an environmentally sustainable way.

The economy is an organic system, and no government can simply turn it on or off. However, governments can support the economy indirectly through economic initiative spending as well as more directly through capital spending and tax regimes, all of which we have done through the life of this government. As well, we have operated as a foundation of economic stability during what have been turbulent times. To continue to do so, we need to ensure the government has the fiscal capacity to provide timely responses to unexpected shocks. We have not only been responsive in emergencies; we have increased our ability to respond by improving our fiscal capacity.

Mr. Speaker, with the final budget of this Assembly, we can see the vision set out in the first budget coming together. Importantly, that vision was not a single event or moment in time. The 2023-24 budget continues with our goal of changing the focus towards a more all-of-government approach that more clearly shows the trade-offs in different public expenditures and priorities from a limited amount of revenue.

With the 2023-24 Capital Estimates approved last November we broke the cycle of an unrealistically large capital budget that then requires an even larger borrowing plan commitment. We right-sized our capital budget to align our capital plan with the economy's ability to build it. And We have chosen to take the time to build in a way that maximizes the project benefits for the Northwest Territories economy and positions the GNWT for a

successful fiscal transition to the 20th Legislative Assembly.

By providing more clarity on our anticipated capital spend, we have given more certainty to local businesses when bidding on projects, and this helps the GNWT to better maximize the local economic benefits of its project construction. We have also made changes to our procurement processes so that local businesses and communities can take better advantage of the business opportunities that government spending creates.

While I am encouraged when a plan starts coming together, we are not done. We have, through a more realistic approach to capital planning, provided the means for a more accurate borrowing plan and more transparency in how GNWT borrowing complies with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy. Last summer, we evaluated this policy and its requirement that at least half of GNWT capital investments is financed by the operating surplus to ensure that it is still effective in meeting our debt management principles. We have already started changes in the reporting on the future debt implications in this budget and, in short order, we will be revising and revisiting the Fiscal Responsibility Policy to help decision-makers better understand the implications of their budgetary choices.

These steps have restored balance to our overall fiscal situation and if we continue to adhere to this fiscal strategy, we are no longer projecting to be in danger of exceeding the federally-imposed borrowing limit.

We are projecting to finish 2022-23 with an operating surplus of \$40 million, lower than budgeted as we required more resources to deal with this year's flooding and wildfires.

The operating surplus for the 2023-24 Budget is projected to be \$178 million, after adjustments. This surplus is sufficient to comply with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy. Total revenues are forecast to reach \$2.5 billion, and the operating budget is \$2.2 billion. The 2023-24 total debt projection is \$1.5 billion, which leaves a comfortable \$311 million window below the \$1.8-billion borrowing limit.

Mr. Speaker, we raise revenues to fund government programs and services and to invest in infrastructure that is used to deliver programs and services to support the economy.

We have heard consistently over the three years of budget dialogues that there is narrow capacity for increasing taxes. In line with the goal of remaining responsive to the times, we do not want to use taxes in a way that could

reduce the incentive to grow and diversify the economy. Accordingly, we will live within our current means and stay the course on taxation by following the established practice of increasing property tax rates by inflation.

We will also be debating increasing carbon tax rates this session as required by Canada in their efforts to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions. The proposals in this budget to offset the carbon tax burden, such as increased cost of living offset amounts or spending that helps individuals and businesses reduce their carbon-based fuel consumption, are conditional on approving carbon tax rate increases. If, on April 1, 2023 we do not raise carbon taxes to \$65 a tonne of greenhouse gas emissions, the federal system will apply and carbon tax revenues generated in the territory will be distributed through federal programs.

Before I get to the main part of the budget where we traditionally focus on the new dollars that we are proposing to advance the priorities of this Assembly, I want to discuss what the overall \$2.2 billion, or \$49,000 per person, in spending is accomplishing.

The 2023-24 budget continues our goal of changing the focus to an all-of-government approach that more clearly shows the trade-offs in different public expenditures and priorities necessary with a limited amount of revenue.

I remain excited as the Government Renewal Initiative continues to create a culture change that prioritizes an evaluation mindset to ensure efficiency and responsiveness. We have a full inventory of programs and services that the GNWT delivers and are making considerable progress in identifying the priorities for the first evaluations. Substantive results are not ready to help with this year's budget but will start being produced in time for transition to the next Assembly.

The shift towards whole-of-government thinking can be seen in other work that has been achieved or is underway. For example, "Changing the Relationship" is the government's action plan in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ2S+ peoples. One of its core objectives is to rebuild trust in government by ensuring programs and services are responsive to the people they serve.

We are also following in the multi-departmental development of the Homelessness Strategy that will ensure that the dollars we attach to actions in the strategy provide the best value.

We are moving ahead with our thinking from the end user perspective of government programs and services so that people are better able to access GNWT programs and services how they want, where they want, and when they want. Our government's eServices program currently provides online access to 19 services in five different program areas. We are working diligently to increase our online offerings as quickly as possible while still ensuring that residents may be confident that their personal information and online transactions are protected.

We are well underway in implementing a host of recommendations arising out of the latest employee satisfaction survey. We are working to meet department-specific Indigenous hiring targets to ensure our workforce better represents the Northwest Territories' population. We are also following through on our other public service initiatives such as the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Plan, the Affirmative Action Policy Review, and Human Resource Plan to continue to strengthen our civil service in a way that supports our vision for the Northwest Territories.

Our public service continues to work on key pieces of legislation for more robust governance rules that support economic development, protect the environment, and safeguard public safety. We expect substantial progress on the Mineral Resources Act Regulations, the Builders Lien Act, the Fire Prevention Act, the Liquor Act, and the Public Lands Act in the next year.

Housing Northwest Territories is on a path to successfully complete its mandate commitments, such as increasing the public housing stock by 100 units and supporting the transition of individuals and families to homeownership. It is focused on partnerships and working to build local capacity while continuing to advance its multi-year capital plan delivery of over \$100 million involving 510 housing units across the Northwest Territories. Housing NWT continues to advance its renewal strategy, including receiving input from the Council of Leaders, to create a new mandate and implementing program and policy changes with a focus on helping those who need it most, as well as using formal and informal arrangements to improve relationships with Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, this \$2.2 billion operating budget proposes \$150 million in additional spending over the 2022-23 Budget. This amount includes \$62 million for expenditures in response to last spring's flooding that we expect to substantially

recover through federal disaster assistance programs. If we remove this major one-time adjustment, the total increase in spending remains a manageable 3.4 percent.

We are recommending \$21 million be approved to address higher demand or higher costs for current programming that departments cannot manage from their existing budgets. This includes over \$10 million to support health services, mainly out of territory supported living for adult patients, chemotherapy drugs for health agencies, and the Stanton Territorial Hospital's intensive care unit. Other departments required more resources as well.

We are considering expenditure pressures faced by non-government organizations that deliver programs and services on our behalf. Budget 2023 changes our approach to funding non-governmental organizations, with a proposed \$738,000 dedicated to helping specific organizations address inflationary pressures. These include organizations helping health agencies, housing, and the Community Futures Program and Community Transfers Initiatives. We are also helping departments with the wording for multi-year agreements with some non-government organizations. These actions have been a long time coming, and we are going further with the establishment of an external advisory committee to better support non-government organizations.

New spending initiatives are \$42 million, of which \$10 million is supported by federal transfers.

A strong healthcare system is vital for healthy individuals and a robust community and economy.

For this reason, the Department of Health and Social Services receives the largest share of the annual operating budget and in this budget, we propose an additional \$30.9 million to strengthen our healthcare delivery.

Key to a successful healthcare system is the people who deliver the care. We are proposing to add \$9 million next year for actions to make it easier to recruit and retain frontline workers and to specifically address challenges in recruiting and keeping frontline registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians.

We are also seeking to improve healthcare sustainability with an additional \$1.2 million in this budget for personal support worker and licensed practical nurse training programs to meet expected labour force demands for home and community care and long-term care programs. This support will complement the \$8.6 million proposed to fund positions at the

Stanton Legacy Facility to provide for more extended care beds and support the new long-term care beds.

We propose to add \$11 million to the department's budget to transition from pandemic to endemic, including ongoing support for vaccinations and public health.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot claim to be responsible or responsive if we do not continue to seek ways to reduce the burden of socio-economic disadvantage or support residents experiencing mental health or addictions issues. Our investments directed to these vulnerable groups will help us achieve our goal of healthy people free from poverty and have the added benefit of reducing government expenditures over the long term by reducing residents' reliance on more expensive social programs.

We are proposing to invest almost \$5.2 million to improve the existing Income Assistance Program and create a new program tailored for seniors and persons with disabilities that will help them age in their own homes with dignity. With this initiative, we intend to adjust benefit levels using the northern market basket measures and make changes to refresh the existing income exemption levels and remove barriers for using the Income Assistance Program.

Improving community safety also responds to consistent concerns from communities on issues of safety and equality. With the support of our federal partners, we are including \$750,000 for a framework for enhancing victim services that will continue support to communities for person-centered victim services. With financial support from Canada under various agreements, we propose to add \$2.2 million to the Department of Justice's budget to strengthen access to justice services for residents. This new funding will improve access to the justice services, including: legal aid; Indigenous court work services; support for family members engaging with the family justice system; improvements to the family justice system; public legal education and information; and increase access to legal advice for survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence to support safety planning, making informed decisions, and to navigate the justice system and emergency protection order processes. Also included in the \$2.2 million is \$554,000 to further support community justice committees.

We are also proposing to establish a permanent coroner position and include 18 relief community coroner positions into the public service with \$273,000 to fund this initiative.

Efforts continue to fill the gaps in our territorial emergency response system to meet ongoing challenges in dealing with major emergencies and implement the recommendations of the Auditor General of Canada. With this budget, we are recommending an additional \$453,000 to enhance the emergency management organization support to community governments for emergency planning, preparedness and situational awareness, mitigation and prevention of territorial emergencies.

We also need to continue to reduce the risk to government information technology by upgrading technical equipment where necessary, and are proposing \$406,000 for the Tlicho Community Services Agency to upgrade its equipment so that it remains compatible with the rest of the GNWT information systems.

Mr. Speaker, with this budget's proposal for another \$833,000, the commitment to reduce the municipal funding gap by \$5 million by the end of this Assembly has been achieved. This will bring the total community contribution funding for operations and maintenance to almost \$55 million.

We are also including almost \$62 million in flood recovery assistance for the Town of Hay River and the Katl'odeeche First Nation Reserve for the next fiscal year. The majority of this funding is expected to be recovered from Canada under disaster and emergency assistance programs.

We have implemented the first steps toward more affordable licensed early learning and childcare programming in the territory, with the goal of reducing families' childcare costs to an average of \$10 a day by 2026. This initiative is supported through federal funding and with proposed funding of \$10.3 million in 2023-24, we are aiming to increase access to high quality, inclusive, affordable, early learning childcare spaces. The new investment will make childcare fees more affordable for families while providing early childhood educators with increased professional learning and post-secondary opportunities.

The Healthy Family Program provides contributions to 15 communities to improve their early childhood development programs with program resources, supplies and events. We are recommending a further \$250,000 in 2023-24 to expand the program to another community.

[Translation] to the federal government in the area [Translation ends]

We are proposing to improve our Student Funding Framework to allow for consistent and stable administrative support to small schools with \$368,000 in additional funding that will ensure a minimum level of administrative funding for our smaller schools. This increase will help ensure that teaching staff in small communities will be better able to focus on teaching students rather than administrative tasks.

Mr. Speaker, the Building Skills 4 Success in the Northwest Territories program focuses on delivering and developing essential skills training programs. Among its aims is to improve the availability of essential skills among the trades and for broader skills that are transferable and applicable in any workplace. This program is in partnership with the Northwest Territories Literacy Council and Aurora College. We are seeking to strengthen this program with an additional \$1.9 million, supported by the federal government.

We want to strengthen our support for Northwest Territories residents in their efforts to further their formal education after high school. This will not only increase their opportunities for high-paying jobs but improve the productivity of the Northwest Territories labour force. We are recommending a further \$1.5 million investment in the Student Financial Assistance Program to improve the financial stability of students to achieve their educational goals. The proposed funds include increasing the basic grant for northern Indigenous students to fully cover the average cost of tuition, books and supplies, and eliminate their 12-semester limit for the basic grant. In addition, we are proposing an increase to the basic grant for non-Indigenous students who were schooled in the territory to assist with 80 per cent of the average cost of tuition, books and supplies.

To foster growth and collaboration with Indigenous government partners and offer opportunities for GNWT staff to develop their careers, we are proposing \$323,000 in this budget to further our partnership in the Building Capacity in Indigenous Governments Program. Our employees will benefit from experience working in different places across the territory while Indigenous governments will benefit from building capacity and adding employment in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to look for ways that the territorial government can support the efforts of residents to build an economy that benefits Northerners.

We can help by making economic necessities more affordable. We know that the lack of affordable housing is a critical issue, creating

barriers to economic development and labour force participation, and puts pressure on other GNWT social programs. We are proposing an additional \$4 million for core Housing NWT programs that will be used to support home repairs, fuel tank replacements, home purchases, mobility modifications, preventative maintenance, and seniors aging in place.

We are also proposing a further \$1.83 million in this budget to fund 2022-25 Energy Action Plan efforts to guide the development of affordable, secure, and sustainable energy for transportation, heat and electricity in the Northwest Territories. We are proposing \$446,000 for meat safety regulations for locally produced, harvested and affordable food. Drafting regulations should be done by the summer, training is set to begin by winter, and full implementation, with application intake available and licenses being issued, is planned by the end of the fiscal year. This should help residents with affordable and sustainable food and support the local economy.

Budget 2023 proposes several measures to support mineral resource exploration and project development. First, we propose to further implement the Mineral Development Strategy with \$280,000 to enhance the Unlocking Our Potential brand that we are using to attract global attention in our world-class resource base and will permit us to extend the over-subscribed Prospector Training Program for another two years.

The Mining Incentive Program is another successful and oversubscribed GNWT initiative. This budget proposes to complete the increase promised in the mandate from \$1 million to \$1.5 million with a \$200,000 increase to encourage prospecting, exploration, and investment by helping reduce financial risk at the grassroots mineral exploration stage. Every mine starts with a staked claim, and this has been a supportive program for prospectors and exploration companies to attract and support early-stage and advanced exploration projects. Work is underway to implement the Mineral Resources Act through the development of regulations required for the Act to come into force. We are adding \$149,000 in 2023-24 to work towards their completion over the next two years. This will finalize the modernization of our regulatory environment for mineral rights governance within the existing framework for co-management of land, water and resources.

We continue to put forward initiatives to support economic diversification and other business opportunities. In partnership with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, \$50,000 is proposed to make a business case

for local cement production, which will do double duty by reducing the carbon footprint of the construction industry from transportation if cement can be produced locally.

Heritage centres keep track of the stories that make the Northwest Territories a special place with a deep history and are a valuable part for tourism industry offerings. We are proposing \$500,000 to support heritage centres across the territory with ongoing funding for grants for operations, maintenance, or capital upgrades to ensure that these centres remain viable.

As part of continued implementation of the overarching Tourism 2025 Strategy, we are proposing \$324,000 to provide the following:

- increased funds for small communities;
- investment in tourism infrastructure;
- business supports to develop and offer products and services to travellers;
- doubling the mentorship for businesses and youth in the tourism industry; and,
- partnering with communities to offer cultural experiences and better park programming.

We are also seeking an additional \$250,000 to give to the five regions so that they can develop regional marketing plans that complement larger marketing initiatives by Northwest Territories Tourism.

We are asking for a \$200,000 increase to the Film Rebate Program to improve the competitiveness of the Northwest Territories film industry, with a total annual rebate program of \$300,000. This program is designed to encourage content creation in the territory by rebating portions of local spending, hiring, and travel to and within the Northwest Territories for production crews.

Mr. Speaker, our role in the stewardship of our environment is a paramount priority as is our effort to adapt to the effects of climate change.

When we make decisions, we want them to be grounded in good evidence. The GNWT is working with co-management partners to support recovery of the Bathurst and Bluenose East barren-ground caribou herds, which have experienced dramatic declines. We have increased population surveys for both herds to every two years, increased the number of collared caribou, and did an additional Bathurst survey in 2022. In budget 2023, we are proposing an additional \$1.14 million to monitor the population, protect important habitat, and manage predators through the traditional economy.

This budget proposes \$114,000 for an application-based grant program for installation of electric vehicle charging stations as part of our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The GNWT is working in collaboration with Natural Resources Canada to deliver the Northwest Territories Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program. This funding is dedicated to getting EV charging to multi-family buildings, on the street, and at work. Organizations can apply all year round on a first-come, first-served basis, for level 2 charging stations, and this funding proposal will support 72 chargers across the territory over the next two years.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this Assembly should be proud of the work we have done together. I am grateful for the help all Members of the Assembly, residents, businesses, community leaders, stakeholders, and all budget dialogue participants for their input in developing the GNWT budgets.

[Translation begins] We could not accomplish all that we have without the ongoing support of the federal government. I am proud of how we worked together with Canada to lessen the economic disruption to people's lives during the pandemic and deeply appreciate the federal support that was given to our government and Northwest Territories residents. We have taken what we learned about collaboration during this time to improve our partnership with Canada on our priorities such as enhancing the Slave Geological corridor, expanding the Taltson hydro project and building the Mackenzie Valley Highway. [translation ends]

We are stronger working together than alone. We have made strides in working with Indigenous governments to make sure that our priorities mesh with their priorities and we hope to continue to strengthen these relationships. We will continue to work with Canada on our shared priorities, such as healthcare.

There is momentum that attaches to the end of an Assembly. We want to use that momentum to continue the positive shift in the way we do business. We have been responsive not only to crisis but to input from residents across the Northwest Territories. I am confident that we are at the crest of change towards a culture of continuous improvement and a right-sized approach to our fiscal capacity. The implementation of four-year business planning and the changes in how we budget for capital investments have dramatically helped improve our fiscal situation. The forward movement happening in the Government Renewal Initiative will carry this momentum into the next Assembly to ensure that the GNWT provides

even more value for the dollars it spends on programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, this final budget of the 19th Assembly continues to build on our mandate priorities, and I am confident will leave the next Assembly with a fiscally-sustainable framework on which to build. In addition to structural governance changes are the choices we made for investments in communities, healthcare, healthcare workers, early childhood, skills training and in support of economic growth. Our legacy is derived from all of these changes and choices that will provide returns for the benefit of the people of the Northwest Territories for generations to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, we will resume after a short recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. I will continue. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1304-19(2): PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CARBON TAX

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this House, I spoke many times about the cost of living in the riding of Nunakput and the Beaufort Delta. Our fuel, our home heating fuel, cost of propane, power, all these have gone up. Many of the NWT residents, especially the people in my riding, could barely make ends meet right now, Mr. Speaker. In the NWT, we pay double or triple than our counterparts in southern Canada to survive, yet the federal government wants to tax us more on the carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax system from the federal government is going to increase cost of living for Northerners. The carbon tax is unfair to families, businesses, and communities. Small communities, especially in the Beaufort Delta, Mr. Speaker, and Nunakput riding, are going to suffer even more paying high cost of living, an extra 14 to 15 percent. The Nunakput riding already has the highest cost of living. We have some of the lowest household income. We also have no resource development, little opportunity to work to earn money, and now we're going to be having to pay more on the federal carbon tax. Unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

What is the GNWT doing about this? Is the GNWT going to protect the residents of the Northwest Territories and stand up for us to the

federal government and let them do their dirty work? It has to be done. Not while I'm here, Mr. Speaker. I cannot support the carbon tax bill coming forward as a whole. We're setting ourselves up to fail. Let the federal government do their federal backstop and let them do the dirty work, Mr. Speaker.

Programs and services underfunded, limited budgets are given. There is no commitment from this government to protect our residents, especially when residents in the High Arctic will be the most impacted on implementation of this new tax if it's accepted in this House. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the finance minister when I'm done. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1305-19(2):
HOUSING DATA COLLECTION

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of housing responded to questions on data collection on the homeless population. One of her responses was astonishing and disappointing. She explained that the department does not, quote, "currently have systematic collection of data on this population to allow us to track the population over time. Not only does this make it difficult for me to tell you how many NWT residents are impacted at any point, but it also means that I do not have data on how long individuals remain homeless and what kind of housing solutions they move into."

Data is important, Mr. Speaker. It improves people's lives, informs decision-making, shows trends, allows us to respond to challenges before they evolve into a crisis, alerts us if we need to pivot, gains trust in stakeholders, and provides strong arguments for funding. In short, Mr. Speaker, data allows our strategies to actually be strategic.

While the government says it's committed to evidence-based decision-making, that appears to not be the practice at housing. It is infuriating that this is how now delivering a homelessness strategy without a baseline and clear understanding of how they are serving, who they are serving, and why.

Good data collection and analytics are a proven form of homelessness prevention. Successful homelessness strategies use data to identify people at risk of homelessness and provide support before it happens. Using this data proactively has significant bottom line impacts within the justice system, child and family services, shelters, and healthcare. But we need

to know who is experiencing homelessness and why. What interventions worked, and where are people falling through the gaps. Without effective integrated data collection, we won't know the answers to these questions and be able to respond strategically.

But housing data isn't only about homelessness data. Housing NWT collects public housing tenant information based on community, income, rent calculations, arrears, but the most personal information is the breakdown of tenants by age. Mr. Speaker, this, again, doesn't clearly answer who is living in public housing and what is going on. Why do people have arrears? Are rents unpaid because of pest infestations, broken appliances, snowdrifts in the living room? Have arrears been accumulated by primary leaseholders who aren't the working partner, by seasonal workers, by women, by elders who carry a debt that is not their own?

Mr. Speaker, good data can help this government determine how to address housing. Without a baseline, we won't know if the solutions are performing and without comprehensive data, we won't know if the strategy and policy changes are simply forcing a new segment of our population into homelessness. These questions aren't just about infrastructure, income thresholds, and numbers on a waitlist. Housing is about people and to understand people, you need to understand their why. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1306-19(2):
INDIGENOUS HUNTING RIGHTS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on June 23rd the federal government completed its second reading of Bill C-21 which would make certain consequential amendments with respect to firearms. Currently the bill is under review by the federal standing committee on public safety and national security.

Following Bill C-21's second reading, there was a clear public outcry from coast to coast about the negative impacts of this bill on the way of life for Indigenous people many of who are subsistence hunters. The purpose of this bill was to improve public safety and yet the people most affected are the Indigenous people who use rifles and other hunting weapons to provide for their families and communities.

Mr. Speaker, in the NWT we are very aware of the importance of hunting. Hunting puts food on

the table for families. It provides healthy, wild, and nutrient-rich meat for children and elders. It is a staple, a necessity. Simply put, Indigenous people cannot live without hunting. When the Minister first provided me with the GNWT's position on this bill, I felt it wasn't strong enough. While the federal government has recently made promising amendments to the bill that improve its impacts on Indigenous hunters, the GNWT can still do more. The GNWT should make it very clear to the federal government that no government, at any time, should be contemplating the prohibition of firearms that Indigenous people use for sustenance. The GNWT must push the federal government to come to the Northwest Territories to talk to Indigenous hunters. They must engage with the people whose way of life and livelihoods are being impacted by the changes they are proposing.

One of the 19th Assembly's priorities is to advance UNDRIP therefore the GNWT can, and should, do more to protect the rights of Indigenous people to hunt and continue their way of life. Here is a chance to show the Indigenous people of this territory that the GNWT supports their way of life and will fight for their rights on the national stage. And I finished on time today, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1307-19(2):
PUBLIC LANDS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm going to revisit an issue that I've been bringing up since the start of the 19th Assembly, which still has not been addressed yet. That issue is the land lease fees for people who own cabins on lands in the NWT. I've done several statements on this issue, and I've asked the Minister of Lands many questions, but I don't seem to get any clear answers. The Minister and his department have had plenty of time to work on the Public Lands Act throughout this Assembly so hopefully we can advance this whole issue into a new positive direction for the people of the NWT.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I've invited the Minister of Lands to come to Fort Smith to have a public meeting to discuss this whole issue with my constituents and explain to them the changes with this policy and all related fee increases. I've invited the Minister several times, but he's not been able to actually set a date and follow through with it. The Minister

tells me that he's visited Fort Smith six times throughout this term, but I can honestly say that I have not seen him in Fort Smith that many times over the last three and a half years. So I hope the Minister will honour his commitment and come to Fort Smith for a public meeting to discuss cabin leases before the end of the 19th Assembly.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, there's still confusion and concern with many of my constituents about the issue of land lease fees and how these changes will impact their finances into the future or how their existing lease contracts may be affected or contradicted given these new rules coming into effect in 2018.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, I believe the Minister of Lands knows in his heart that the new rent minimum for cabin lease costs have gone up too quickly for regular people to handle. For someone to get up 83 times in the previous Assembly to talk and question about this issue, I have to believe the Minister shares at least some of the concerns that I have about this issue. I understand that lease rent and fees have not increased in 20 years but have some foresight and consider the impact this has on average people. In this day and age, with the record level of inflation and the cost of living, many people are living pay cheque to pay cheque. So these high cabin lease rent increases are creating a significant, unforeseen issues with people across the NWT, and I hope the Minister can see that. I will have questions for the Minister of Lands later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1308-19(2):
SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORUM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I attended a socio-economic forum on December 5th, 2022 put on by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment as part of its work to review socio-economic agreements. The GNWT has six such agreements in place covering large resource development projects. These negotiated arrangements provide for commitments around employment, training, contracting, monitoring, northern preferences, and more in unenforceable agreements which are apparently the main tool for benefit retention. These agreements could become legal requirements for larger mining projects that anticipate spending \$75 million and create more than 250 person-years of employment over five years.

The socio-economic forum was attended by about 50 participants. There was a very narrow cross-section of stakeholders, mainly ITI staff, mining industry representatives, and a few Indigenous government staff. I raised the issue of more inclusive participation in this event many times over more than two years. For example, on February 26th, 2020, the Premier, on behalf of the ITI minister said, in this House, "we will engage with all applicable stakeholders in this work."

Despite my repeated attempts, no one from the Northwest Territories Association of Communities, Status of Women Council of the NWT, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, the Northern Territories Federation of Labour, or even Aurora College, was invited. ITI hired a facilitator from Victoria, British Columbia for the event. It is not clear why DPRA, who prepared an extensive review report on the Socio-economic Agreement Program, did not make the presentation on their own; rather, we got ITI providing its interpretation. And that full report, only released quietly after the event, clearly shows that our approach to socio-economic agreements has failed to maximize benefits.

Small groups were formed to answer a set of questions, predetermined by ITI, that had little resemblance to the research undertaken and the opportunities to improve benefit retention. In my view, this event was poorly designed and organized with a narrow cross-section of stakeholders, workshop materials were not made available until shortly before the meeting, and the full report only released after the event.

The next steps are not very clear, Mr. Speaker. Will there be any public engagement on this work to improve benefit retention, a mandate item for this government? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1309-19(2):
AFTERCARE FACILITIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about addictions, we are talking about individuals who are primarily Indigenous, marginalized, and have been traumatized by residential schools and the 60s Scoop.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to substance abuse, we have mainstream programming available, along with access to on the land programs and treatment centres, albeit the treatment centres are in southern Canada. Yesterday I spoke about the need for detox

beds. Today I will focus on the need for aftercare and transitional housing supports.

Except for warehousing individuals in day and night shelters, there is no dedicated transitional sober/recovery housing for clients upon their return from treatment. Mr. Speaker, for those that are fortunate enough to access some form of detox help, and actually make it to a treatment centre or on the land program, it is leaving that facility and returning home that many find difficult. They arrive home and there is no one to meet them, no one offering up support, and no encouragement to stay the course. It is a substantive gap in the system. It is a recipe for failure and is chronically repetitive.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus on how we can move forward and support those that are returning from treatment. How can we close that gap and provide these individuals with the tools that will give them a chance at life and the opportunity to reconnect with family and friends?

Mr. Speaker, what is missing is the brick and mortar component that would provide beds and a safe place for the client to receive the wraparound services needed to integrate oneself back into the community upon returning home.

Mr. Speaker, there is infrastructure that is sitting empty or being underutilized that can and should be used for addiction recovery. The infrastructure I am talking about are the correctional centres in both Hay River and Fort Smith, the old Hay River medical clinic, and the Katl'odeeche First Nation's building, which was once a treatment centre, and a number of empty federal houses scattered throughout.

We also have, in partnership with NGOs, private parties, both of whom are interested and poised to set up aftercare facilities but who find the commitment, financial support, and longevity offered up by this government inadequate. These options are real and available to us but for some reason we refuse to consider them and move them forward. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need to identify and utilize the resources we have and, in the best interest of the residents who need the service, repurpose them. This may include retraining staff to meet the new demands. Anything less is a failure on our part. Thank you.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1310-19(2):
HOUSING

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret that the NWT is experiencing a housing crisis. Furthermore, it's nothing new. Our residents, particularly Indigenous people, have been struggling to find safe and affordable homes for decades with little progress made by this past government. Last year, the GNWT received \$60 million to help solve the housing crisis. At the time, the Honourable Premier described this investment as a drop in the bucket. I agree entirely, considering the federal government has taken steps to double its total rate of new homes construction over the next ten years. In the North, our costs are higher, our communities are greater needs, and homeownership is out of reach for so very many. Housing NWT is slow to respond to requests for housing from First Nations leaders and its programs will remain basically unchanged. We need to stop doing the same thing and expecting a different result. This government needs a new approach to housing investment that makes First Nations equal partners in delivering new homes for NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, in December of last year, the Dene Nation noted that the GNWT had spent \$30 million of federal funding towards fixing up public housing without any engagement or collaboration with First Nations. Furthermore, the Dene Nation passed a resolution calling for an immediate discussion with Dene leaders to reallocate the remaining federal housing funds to First Nation governments. The Premier is aware of this resolution as she received correspondence from the Dene Nation on December 19th, 2022; a letter I will table later today.

I've said it again, and I'll say it again. First Nations are in the best position to understand the housing needs in their communities and ought to be the ones making decisions around public housing dollars. It is time the GNWT took the message to heart and work with Dene leadership to solve the housing crisis in a collaborative and holistic fashion. Nothing for us without us is something that I've heard from the Premier say in the past. Now I'm asking that she lives up to those words and act immediately to consult and collaborate with the First Nations and make real progress on the housing crisis before the end of this term. Mr. Speaker, I will have some questions for the Deputy Premier at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1311-19(2):
ADDICTIONS

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [Translation] I will be speaking about addictions with alcohol and drugs and how that is affecting our people in the communities. I will speak on this. [Translation ends] We all know that addiction is plaguing NWT communities. Addictions to drugs and alcohol is affecting all communities in the Northwest Territories. Addiction hurts everyone. It rips families apart, traumatizes children, and impacts the whole community. In this House, we have spoke many times about the need for treatment, a culturally appropriate addiction treatment centre.

We know that in the NWT we have some of the highest rates in the country for consumption of alcohol and use of crack cocaine. The NWT has a higher rate of heavy drinkers than the national average, and Indigenous people have a higher rate than non-Indigenous. Mr. Speaker, we know that people are dying in our communities because of drug use, and death from drug use is increasing.

Mr. Speaker, crack cocaine is destroying the life of our people, especially the young people who are our future. We have many young people in small communities addicted to crack cocaine. Mr. Speaker, this is not good, and we cannot turn a blind eye to this crisis. I can tell you there are a lot of users, especially in small communities.

A news conference was just held in Hay River on January 24th, 2023, to address the alarming surge of drug poisoning deaths in Hay River. Our territory has witnessed an increase in suicide and now drug-related death. The coroner's report showed that alcohol and drugs were a factor in 50 percent or more of all accidental death in the NWT.

We know that Indigenous people are healing from intergenerational trauma. Families in the NWT are healing from the impact of colonization and residential school. We also know, Mr. Speaker, in order to support recovery, people need to have culturally relevant healing programs, yet, Mr. Speaker, if an Indigenous person in the NWT wanted to admit themselves into an Indigenous-focused addiction treatment centre, this is not a cost the government will incur. The GNWT does not have an agreement to work with any addiction treatment facility that provide culturally relevant

program for Indigenous clients. Mr. Speaker, this is not acceptable. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1312-19(2):
NURSE LICENSING

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know we're at a nursing shortage and the competition to get nurses is getting stricter and stricter. But one of the things that should not be a barrier to hiring more nurses is a backlog process to get nurses from some other jurisdictions licensed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to walk you through a timeline of a nurse who recently moved to the Northwest Territories, started applying for jobs, took a couple months to get through the interview process and get a contract in hand. Then once they took that contract, they went and applied to the Registered Nursing Association of Northwest Territories and Nunavut to get licensed. At this point, you have to -- if you're coming from another province, you have to get that registered nursing association to send your proof of license over. And as an example, Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, that process is taking about two months right now, for Ontario just to send the form to the Northwest Territories. Then the registered nurses association here, once they have the actual form, will approve you. But, Mr. Speaker, quite a few things can go wrong in this process. Say, if you started this process in the fall of 2022, for example, and the calendar year has passed to 2023, you are forced to then reapply in 2023 to make sure you have a 2023 license. So you're kind of in this limbo of hoping you get that license for 2022. And say, if you, for example, forgot to renew your license in the other jurisdiction because you thought maybe you were going to have a license in this jurisdiction by then, you might be in the position of a nurse who has been in the territory for six months, who is licensed, who has a job offer, and who cannot start work.

And, Mr. Speaker, the process I just described was for a licensed nurse coming from Canada. The process for an international nurse is even more burdensome and is an even more questionable timeline. Most recently, the Canadian nursing association has asked Premiers all across Canada to fast track their licensing. The Ontario Premier, BC, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia, have all given direction to fast track nursing license

applications, especially for foreign nurses. We saw this, trying to get nurses who are fleeing the Ukraine. We have not taken that step.

In regards to the jurisdiction, what's happening is it seems other resident nurses associations are backlogged and they're not getting the forms out quick enough. But I think the Minister of health is overdue to have a meeting with our registered nursing association and discuss some solutions on how we can make sure that getting this paperwork done is not a barrier to hiring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1313-19(2):
NAHENDEH ATHLETES AT 2023 ARCTIC
WINTER GAMES

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Arctic Winter Games were held in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo from January 29th to February 4th. We witnessed approximately 2,100 participants, coaches, admission staff, and officials from eight contingencies attend these games.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to have three athletes, two coaches, and one youth ambassador from the Nahendeh riding represent the Team NWT at these games. We had three athletes from Fort Simpson, Mariah Tanche Hannah, who skated in the juvenile category. She skated personal best times in all four distances and was part of the juvenile girls gold ulu relay team. I'd like to thank Mariah's mom Joseanne Kenny who travelled to the games to support her daughter and stepped up and volunteered as a place judge for the competition.

Peyton Bennett is a juvenile skater who was called up to skate in the junior category where another skater was injured. Peyton did a great job and had skated personal best every time she stepped on the ice. She also won a gold ulu as a member of the relay team.

Brittany Kendo was a junior badminton player. She gained experience every time she stepped onto the court. This will help her as she prepares to play at the Canada Games in a few weeks. Her parents Lucy Ann and Kevin travelled to the games to support their daughter.

I can tell you their hard work, determination, and dedication to their sport was very inspiring. I know that they were very proud of their accomplishments, true to the slogan for the

games, "Time to Shine." These three athletes did exactly that.

Like athletes, youth ambassador representative had a great time being part of the volunteers at these games. What I seen was Elizabeth Nelson, from Fort Liard, always ready to go and take on the task assigned to her by the host society and leaders. I know in speaking with her she had an amazing time and will encourage others to sign up for future events.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I'd like to thank Madison Philling and Val Deneron who were the male coaches for Team NWT speed skating, and their continued support for our youth in the region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we're joined today by Captain Jason Brinson of the Salvation Army in Yellowknife, where they provide invaluable services to the vulnerable population in food hampers all the way through to withdrawal management and sheltering. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to recognize Kam Lake resident Karen Patterson Wiley who has joined us in the gallery today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to budget address, day 1 of 7. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1316-19(2): PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CARBON TAX

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we talked earlier in regards to the potential carbon tax coming forward to the communities of Nunakput and across our territory. Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister doing to ensure that the carbon tax does not increase the cost of living in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so, again, the carbon tax is not a tax of the making of the Government of the Northwest Territories. It is a federal tax. But by trying to maintain our own system to it, we're well placed -- or better placed, in my view, to be responsive to the needs of individual communities, including those of the residents in Nunakput. So what the Department of Finance has done is calculate what we would anticipate both the direct and indirect costs of the federal carbon tax would be and we've divided up based on three zones of the Northwest Territories - high fuel use, medium fuel use, and low fuel use. Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok are all in a high-use area and, on that basis, they would be receiving an amount per individual that we calculate to be a coverage of the expected both indirect and direct costs of the fuel tax.

Residents of Tuktoyaktuk would be in the second zone. They'd be receiving an amount under the zone B allowance, which we would expect should, again, fully cover the costs of -- or the average costs for those residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That really -- I'm really happy that they're looking at this. This is the first time we heard on this side of the House you're going in the zone system. And I'm really thinking that if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, what's the Minister doing to ensure that the carbon tax does not further increase the cost of living, especially the residents in the communities in the High Arctic who are already paying the highest cost of living and the highest tax brackets right now, and we have no way of employment because our government has no projects going on in the smaller communities. So it's a lot tougher to get work. So what is this Minister doing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure what the question is with respect to the carbon tax. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, in regards to seeking out opportunities to find alternative fuel sources and energy sources, that is certainly always an effort that is being made, certainly led by my colleagues over in Infrastructure, under the energy initiatives, and that is something for which there is additional funding in this budget.

With respect to finding better alternatives for employment, that too, again, is a priority of the government and certainly is something that money departments are working on in order to see increases in small community employment. There's funding, again, in this budget in regards

to regional tourism strategies. I know I've worked with some of the mayors from the Member's riding around tourism and cruise ships. So there's certainly always those efforts. But as far as the carbon tax is concerned, Mr. Speaker, again, we do want to look right now under the zone C, or the high fuel use. It's really -- there's only five communities, and three of them are from Nunakput. So recognizing that they're under those high cost pressures, and it would be our intention to make sure that they're not seeing a disproportionate impact from it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I'm hearing is there's no commitment from this government to protect residents, especially the residents in the High Arctic, with the most impacted of this implementation of this tax going into our communities. Mr. Speaker, we live it. You live it too. We live in -- there's no jobs, nothing available for the communities that our people are needing, needing work, but we're still paying it. Either there's no work or not, we're still paying that tax. There's 33 communities across this territory, Mr. Speaker, that need help. It's not only the big -- the cities and the towns. It's the communities that need the help the most where they have nothing going on.

Is this Minister going to, and this government going to protect us, in regards to letting the federal government take their dirty work and let us manage it for them? That's a shame. We should be working with them -- let them take the federal backstop -- our territorial government should take the federal backstop like the Yukon did and that Nunavut government did and make a stand for their people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the federal backstop is not going to be providing individualized COLA payments -- or individual payments based upon communities in the Northwest Territories. More likely than not, and I can't say for sure because I don't know what they're going to do. I certainly had no control over the fact that they decided to change their program to remove the fact that they're being a connection to the pricing signal, remove the exemption for heating fuel. That was entirely a federal decision. If we put ourselves into that, into their system, we have even less control over what happens with the revenues that are generated from Northwest Territories residents. What we've done, Mr. Speaker, is try to find a way to look carefully at every one of our communities, take in the division of those 33 communities, looked at their average costs from carbon tax, estimated what the costs would be now under the new federal system,

and design a program where the individual and average cost to each resident can be met using a zone system, which was an idea brought forward by my colleagues on the other side. I'm happy to have it, especially with respect to the High Arctic communities. So the zone system of providing COLA payments back to them will indeed address that very issue. Mr. Speaker, Nunavut is not going to be -- they're going to also have to phase out their system. Mr. Speaker, Yukon sees everyone getting the same. If you're outside Whitehorse, you get an extra 10 percent. That won't meet the needs of the residents in Nunakput if we give them an extra 10 percent. It can be much more nuanced under our system, Mr. Speaker. And I'd be happy to review every single one of the average payments per all 33 communities with any Member of the House or provide that charting to this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen that detail, the detail that the Minister is saying. And she's the one that brought it up. I think that what we should be doing is in regards to -- shouldn't be looking for handouts. We're really good at that. This is -- we're resource rich and cash poor. There's no jobs. There's nothing going on in the territory. We're beggars in our own land. The federal government should step up and assist us and work with us on a federal backstop and not letting us do their dirty work, Mr. Speaker. 14 percent we're already paying in our ridings, in your riding, Mr. Speaker. Why? Why? We're the ones that -- we're being penalized because we live where we live. And in Oh Canada, the True North Strong and Free, that's what it should be. They should be paying us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I've had multiple opportunities, publicly, in terms of briefings with the Members from standing committee as well in correspondence that I had marked as not being confidential, detailing the outline. I am happy to table the approach here and will do so this session. Mr. Speaker, let me take up the argument and actually quote myself and things that I have said. Specifically, it's this: The federal government recognizes that small countries and developing countries are having to pay carbon tax even though they didn't have the benefits of industrialization at the same time as other countries did using fossil fuels.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is in that situation on behalf of Canada. We didn't have the opportunity to industrialize and grow our

economy at the same time as the rest of Canada did when fossil fuel use was still actively happening and allowing opportunities for economies to grow on the backs of GHG emissions. That is not the way of things and we're the ones paying the price on carbon tax, paying the price with climate change now.

I agree completely with what's being said. But, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to relinquish control of those revenues that are being paid by residents of the Northwest Territories. I want to find a system that best meets the needs of the Northwest Territories residents, takes a nuanced approach to each community, tries to find a way so that there is as little impact to those who are least able to pay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 1317-19(2):
SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORUM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

I outlined some concerns with the recent socio-economic forum held in December. I received several commitments that this would be an inclusive event. Those promises were not kept. How can we get everyone on board to improve benefit retention when the Minister continues to exclude key players like Aurora College, NGOs, and the NWT Association of Communities. Can the Minister explain why the participants included only GNWT staff, the mining industry, and a few Indigenous government staff at this so-called "forum?" Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this work arises from the mandate document that is published on the GNWT's website, specifically under the priority commitment to adopt a benefit retention approach to economic development, a commitment that was agreed to on behalf of the Assembly, and then the mandate document that was determined thereafter where it says, host a socio-economic forum with representatives from the mining industry, Indigenous governments, and the GNWT, to identify ways to work together to increase the socio-economic benefits from resource development.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we went further than that, though, and did in fact invite, and have involved since day one, the Native Women's Association and have certainly encouraged participation from all Members of this Cabinet, which certainly includes input from other departments, including ECE. And so, Mr. Speaker, you know, again -- and on top of that, Mr. Speaker, one last thing. This work has been going on since 2017. The Mineral Resources Act has been under contemplation since 2017. Nothing is lost. Any input in that process speaking to socio-economic agreements is not lost. And any opportunity that other organizations may want to contact my office, to contact ITI, have been met with and welcomed and will continue to be welcomed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. You can't call it a forum when you purposefully exclude some parties; I just don't get it. But there was a very large, and no doubt expensive, report commissioned on socio-economic agreements and was released only after this event with no public fanfare. It clearly shows that our current approach is failing to secure and retain benefits.

So can the Minister explain why that report was not -- or why the people that did the report didn't present it at the forum; why it was only released after the event; and why there's been no news release or even notice on the release of this work? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I'm allowed to pick which question I'm going to answer, Mr. Speaker, but let me see how many of them I can get through in a reasonable amount of time.

There is a fairly detailed report, Mr. Speaker. It's extensive, it's lengthy, and it certainly is being produced in the context again of a massive project under the Mineral Resources Act to develop regulations that will apply to that entire act under multiple streams, including socio-economic agreements, which right now, Mr. Speaker, are not policy-based. They're one by one. That's not how we want to do this going forward. We want this to be not only policy-based but actually in regulations, to provide guidance to everyone, to make them more public, and to make it more clear exactly what's at stake.

Mr. Speaker, that lengthy detailed background piece of work was not included initially. It was clear from the participants that they wanted to see it, that they were prepared to go through it, and that's why it was released after. And there's certainly since that time been now almost two months of opportunity for folks to respond back and to speak to the details therein.

As for fanfare, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me there's been a lot of mention and a lot of opportunity for people to be aware of the work of the socio-economic review. I am not -- I'm certain and confident that those interested have had an opportunity to make their interests known. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, before we continue, two-part questions are acceptable but maybe not four or five. Just for the future. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I accept that, and of course I'm a little bit excited but, you know, it's question period. I don't actually expect to get answers. But aside from that recent one-hour public discussion with Alternatives North on socio-economic agreements at the invitation of the organization -- and ITI wouldn't actually allow the event to be recorded -- I'm not aware of any public engagement on this massive report that the department commissioned.

So can the Minister tell us whether there will be any public engagement on the socio-economic agreement program review in the report? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, at this point overall public awareness and opportunity for engagement with ITI broadly, and at different stages of the development of the Mineral Resources Act and its regulations, started back in 2017, back with the development of the Mineral Resources Act, back with understanding what the public's general desire and wishes were for that piece of legislation. There was a fulsome consultative process at that time. None of that is lost. All of that has filtered back now into the process of developing the regulations. And in the regulation process, where it's into the weeds and into the specifics, there have been invitational opportunities and targeted opportunities with public reporting in the usual fashion. There's the open portal websites where people can provide their information. And there have been these opportunities for the targeted forums for those wishing for more specific opportunity. There's actually been two meetings with Alternatives North. I had the opportunity to sit with them as well as the department sat down with them thereafter. And now, Mr. Speaker, we're trying desperately to get to a point, Mr. Speaker, where some decisions can get made and drafting can get done so that this work can actually get underway and be delivered upon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final short supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I'm well on record as to the systemic issues with ITI's approach on public engagement on the mining regulations, and this has been repeated again with this disconnected socio-economic program review. The command control model for public engagement and regulatory capture are alive and well in this department, as proven again by this event.

So can the Minister tell us what she is doing to ensure public participation in the development of resource management legislation and regulations and the decision-making itself? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, there has actually been quite a lot of public engagement in the last six years, quite a lot of feedback provided, not the least of which even includes the dialogue within this House. That is not lost. There's always public servants listening to everything that's said here. There's public servants that attend every public briefing in standing committee. There's been public servants involved in this work, again, since 2017, getting a very solid and thorough understanding. And now the work has gone through a process of co-development with Indigenous governments who also have gone out and done their own work to engage with their residents and those that they represent.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly make it my practice to try very hard never to turn down any ask for a meeting, any ask for an opportunity to submit letters or comments. And there's been open portals on all the various pieces of the Mineral Resources Act regulations as they've gone along. I'll continue with that process, Mr. Speaker. I'm always happy to receive things, whether through that formal process or through a less formal process, as are members of the staff and officials at ITI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

QUESTION 1318-19(2):
LAND LEASE FEES AND REVENUES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have not asked this question in about a year. So I hope the Minister will have a different answer for me.

Has the Minister found a way to reduce the 460 percent increase in minimum land lease rent

costs for territorial land leaseholders? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister responsible for Lands.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Member for the question. I can tell you right now -- she's probably not going to like the answer, but I'm going to tell you what it is. As we developed the regulations, lease costs are part of that process. It's been taking us longer because we're going through a new process called working through the intergovernmental council land and resource management legislation development process. So we need to be working with our Indigenous governments, and we're going back and forth. Lease fees -- and I can tell you right now, lease fees were the top issue that were identified in the public engagement on the Public Land Act, and the department will seek public review on proposed regulations once they are developed.

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to sharing this information with committee, and I'm looking forward to their comments as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Lands has previously stated that the government only increased lease rent fees was to create more revenue for the government. Well, can the Minister share with us how much more revenue the Government of the Northwest Territories has made since these fees were increased compared to the revenues before that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 18th Assembly, this may have been said. I can guarantee you I have not said that; it wasn't part of what I believe. And as the Member said, I asked 83 questions - 72 times I stood up in this House to ask these questions, so. So just so everybody's aware, lease rental reviews are conducted every five years, depending on the start date of the lease. Since the lease increase in 2018, the Department of Lands lease revenue has increased by approximately \$1.034 million. This does not include the 2022-2023 fiscal year and the COVID relief when we did that for that year, for the COVID relief there. And, again, some of this revenue is with new increases with new leases. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister recommit to visit Fort Smith for a public meeting to discuss the issue of land lease rent fees and all related issues before the end of the 19th Assembly?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'll commit that. I've already committed to the Member. We'll get in there to have a meeting before the 19th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: At least I got one yes from him. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister give me a date for when he will visit Fort Smith for the public meeting? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't make that commitment here today; I don't have my calendar. I don't have what the Member's calendar is. But our staff -- my staff and her staff can work together, and I'll work with the Member to get this done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 1319-19(2):
REGISTERED NURSES LICENSING
PROCESS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that there are a number of solutions to make sure that the nursing licensing process runs smoothly. Ontario is exploring as of right nursing licenses for any other Canadian nurse. A number of provinces have issued ministerial directives with timelines in them. Perhaps some sort of temporary license while the whole process goes through is possible. Or, you know, perhaps it's as simple as accepting a less kind of formal version of the paperwork so we can make sure that these processes are running timely. I don't know exactly what the solution is, but I have to believe this is a solvable problem.

So my question for the Minister of health is she willing to work with the Registered Nursing Association of the NWT and Nunavut and make sure we have a clear and efficient process to get these licenses processed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. So the licensing of nurses of all kinds is handled by the Registered Nurses Association of the NWT and Nunavut. So they're the ones who process the registration application. And the application does require proof of credentials, prior work sites, hours worked, and so on and so forth. That means that often they have to apply to the licensing authority where they were previously employed for paperwork. And as the

Member said in his statement, in the case of Ontario it took a couple of months to get that lined up. So I don't know how the registered nurses association can speed up the process. It's something I can ask them about but they have the ultimate authority. And it's the authority we want them to have to ensure that nurses that we welcome in the NWT are qualified to work here. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think there's a bit of a -- I appreciate the Minister saying that. And, you know, I think there's a bit of a -- first step is a meeting to kind of figure out if they recognize any processes they could speed up on their end. I recognize a lot of this is in other provinces' nursing associations hands. But it seems to me if this is just going to be the reality accepted, then some sort of larger step is needed. And whether that is legislating timelines, ultimately we do have control, whether that's a ministerial directive. I do believe that, you know, if they're not willing to make sure their process is running smoothly, the Minister has to look at other options. So I guess I'll just confirm the Minister's commitment that she will meet with -- or her staff will meet with the registered nursing association and see if there's anything that can be done in the short-term to speed up this process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly willing to make that commitment to meet with the nurses association and see if there is anything that we can assist them to do to speed up the licensing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 1320-19(2):
HOUSING STRATEGIC DATA COLLECTION
AND ANALYSIS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first ask some questions to the housing minister in regards to data collection as a whole for the organization.

Right off the top, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the Minister will commit to changing the current data collection practices of Housing NWT and commit to strategic data collection and analysis? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. I'm always looking for different ways

of doing things within this portfolio as well too, and this has been discussed already. And answer to her question is yes. This is a focus of the strategic renewal that is currently underway. As an example, we are working with data with the Indigenous governments, looking at their distinction-based funding and how they are going to be spending it. Whether they want to have those discussions with us or not, it takes a whole of a government, and also the community governments as well too, to address the housing needs. But in order to identify them, we need to be working together in order to collect that data information. That's the first approach. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that yes. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister is working with ISSS to determine best practices and available systems for data collection, management, analysis, and use. If not, will the Minister commit to working with ISSS to determine a solution for integrated data collection management and use? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I hope the Member is going to be quite happy. This is going to be her second yes. Housing is already working with ISSS to complete necessary system changes. With the renewal and program changes, we are working on a number of areas. We are looking at also including a -- creating a data dashboard that will make the data collect more easily, accessible for the decision-makers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the Minister as well. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that data sharing increases the risk of exposure as well as potential for bias. But there are existing frameworks that work to reduce this bias. The First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession assert that First Nations have control over the data collection process. This is also known as OCAP and is the framework that protects Indigenous sovereignty as well as people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. In addition to those concerns, experiencing homelessness, or the broad structural factors that impact housing, is a traumatic experience. So will the housing minister commit to trauma informed data collection through frameworks like OCAP? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, housing is aware of the potential impacts and risks of data collection, both for Indigenous people and the public. As part of the renewal strategy, housing is aiming to take a

trauma-informed approach, not just to data collection but to client service as well too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Why stop at three, let's try for a fourth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the Minister did inform us that housing is intending to create a data dashboard with the information that they collect, and I want to thank the Minister for that. The Minister might remember that the Department of Finance also has their open data portal that was recently released. And I'm wondering if the Minister of Housing will commit to ensuring that collected housing data is, where appropriate, updated on the GNWT's open data portal as well so that we have a consolidated solution for GNWT data for the residents of the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we collect information and create this data collection, I will update the Members as well. I just want to be careful on how this information is going to be distributed and how the files are going to be handled. I will follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 1321-19(2):
HOUSING CRISIS IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I had mentioned that we're in a housing crisis here in the Northwest Territories. I'm not really sure whether or not the Indigenous governments here in the Northwest Territories know that the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Housing Corporation are making application to CIRNAC to apply for grant money, to take that money and then reinvest it in fixing up public housing, when they're supposed to be using that money to be dealing with the housing crisis here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, as my statement earlier today, I rise to request that the Honourable Premier engage in meeting with the Dene Nation and its member First Nations to ensure the remaining federal investment dollars in public housing is used exclusively to support safe and affordable housing in our communities. Will the Premier take action? Mr. Speaker, this question will be to the Deputy Premier. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Deputy Premier.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by saying the homeless strategy is a priority of this government. As a result, it's being led by the Premier. So meeting the Northwest Territories needs is bigger than any single government or organization. It's critical that we take coordinated interdepartmental approach and work in partnership with Indigenous governments and the Government of Canada, as well as community governments and other stakeholders. Mr. Speaker, Premier's not here today so I would hate to commit her to meeting with Indigenous groups but I will bring it up to her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to call the Guinness Book of Records because I heard too many yes's today.

Mr. Speaker, in her capacity as the Minister in Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, how has the Premier engaged with First Nations, and the Dene Nation in particular, on the \$60 million into housing because what happens is that they're taking that money to deal with their own housing crisis, but they're fixing up public housing. But yet in our communities, we're suffering. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to note that the Premier and Cabinet have been meeting in several discussions with people like Council of Leaders, bilateral meetings. So, I mean, we are meeting with the Indigenous groups. I also do want to note, Mr. Speaker, that Housing NWT works as well with Indigenous governments to be able to facilitate conversations about housing priorities and to have conversations about how to support each other because, Mr. Speaker, I think that's very important. You know, as we look at this housing strategy, we as a government as a whole need to start looking at some actions. And I think that breaking down barriers between government departments is probably a first step. That's why we have the first draft of the homeless strategy which will be released to standing committee. And I think standing committee will be very happy to know that -- and the public during this session because it takes a whole of a government approach, and I can't stress that importance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Deputy Premier, for your responses. Mr. Speaker, clearly the Dene leaders do not feel that any engagement on housing investment has been sufficient based on the resolution passed on December 13th

and 15th here in Yellowknife. And has the Premier reviewed this resolution and taken steps to address the issues with her departments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the Premier is up to in terms of conversation with Indigenous groups. She is the Premier and responsible for Executive and Indigenous Affairs so I would hate to step on her toes to say that she has or has not met with any Indigenous groups specifically. However, Mr. Speaker, I do want to note that the Council of Leaders has a working group specifically on homelessness. So I think -- and housing. So I think that's a really good step in terms of having that collaboration with Indigenous groups, specifically the Council of Leaders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Housing NWT has taken steps to review the department internal workings, but I'm speaking to the relationship between the GNWT and First Nations. Will the Premier direct the remaining \$30 million to be allocated to First Nation governments and honour her government's obligation to Indigenous people as equal and sovereign government?

Mr. Speaker, as well, you know, when the Premier in her mandate letter had said that they were looking at building new relationships with Indigenous governments and -- but when they go ahead and make application to CIRNAC without talking to them is concerning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member's speaking specifically to \$30 million which is public housing repair. And, again, I just can't sit here and speak on behalf of Premier to commit this \$30 million to Indigenous groups. So I just do want to note, though, Mr. Speaker, that we are looking for further discussion with Indigenous groups in the next -- you know, after we're done session, we've got meetings lined up, bilateral meetings, with a variety of Indigenous groups. So I'm hoping that through that discussion, Mr. Speaker, that we can have more continued collaboration, more continued support, more continued dialogue. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1322-19(2):
BILL C-21 STATUS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice.

Can the Minister please give us an update on where Bill C-21 is at federally and what he thinks is the next step that the federal government will be taking? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister responsible for Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do my best to stay up to date with our own legislative agenda so I can't give too many specifics about it. But Bill C-21 was introduced, and it is now with the committee. So committee is undergoing a review. I believe it was in November, there was a government amendment to the bill which added a significant number of firearms to the list of prohibited firearms, and that has since been withdrawn. So that's where we are with the bill. The committee stage is continuing. And I expect that there will likely be movement in the next few weeks on this bill. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. And I also do want to thank the Minister for a stronger response back to the government after we first spoke about the initial GNWT position.

Can the Minister then speak, does the GNWT anticipate having to submit any more information to this committee or have any further interaction or ability to input to the committee before any other decisions are made? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So last week I spoke to the federal Minister, Minister Mendicino. He is the Minister of public safety, and he is the lead on this bill. And I did my best to explain the context of the Northwest Territories, the history of the Northwest Territories. And he was fresh off a trip to the Yukon where he heard the same things, and he had been hearing the same things from Nunavut. So I know that he got the message. And I wrote a letter back to him thanking him for pulling that amendment and inviting him to come to the territory and engage with the people of the territory. I tried to hit that home during our conversation that the federal government needs to talk to the people on the ground. So I'm doing my best to get him or his department up here to have those conversations. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm really glad to hear that the Minister has invited the federal government to come, and I hope that that will -- he will continue to apply

some pressure there and not just allow us to be sloughed off as often sometimes seems to be the case with the feds.

Can the Minister commit that not only pushing for that federal government meeting but to then actively engage our side of the House in ensuring that our constituents and people in our ridings are having the opportunity to meet with the Minister should they come to the territory? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do what I can, but sometimes we learn about federal engagement after it happens. So it's hard for me to commit to doing that. But this is an issue that is close to the heart of many people in the Northwest Territories. So despite the fact that it is a federal bill, we are on top of it and we are paying attention, and I will continue to share information with the Members and I will continue to advocate for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to ensuring that the federal government knows that the GNWT will not stand for any of the guns to be added back to the C-21 bill? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the primary issue that we ran into was with the amendments to the bill. The initial Bill C-21, it spoke to handguns, making efforts to reduce family violence with red and yellow flag laws, and things like that. The amendments are what introduced a number of rifles that were not prohibited previously. So we don't even know in the territory how many of these rifles are out there. We've made some estimates but there could be thousands of rifles in the territory that were affected by that bill. One model is the SKS. That seems to be the most popular one. And so just that alone is one gun that we don't want to see prohibited. I can't say the same for all of the other rifles on there. But we are doing our best to ensure that any rifles that are used for hunting by Indigenous people and Northerners don't make it back on that list. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

QUESTION 1323-19(2):
ESTABLISHING ADDICTIONS AFTERCARE
FACILITIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we were talking about detox and aftercare recovery, we are

talking about the difference between life and death for some. This reality may not resonate with those that have no ties with the people in communities, but for us that are born and raised here we have family and friends throughout the NWT, and some of them are looking for our help. That is why this issue is so important.

Mr. Speaker, on the department of health's website, it states that the establishment of transitional sober/recovery housing for individuals returning from addictions treatment is a priority for the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have been here for over three years, and I do not see any such initiatives in Hay River or, for that matter, in any regional centres or small communities. Will the Minister of health tell me when her department will deliver on this priority for the community of Hay River, regional centres, and small communities, because that priority appears to only be government rhetoric. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. I don't think there is a family in the whole of Canada that has not had some experience with addictions and the chaos that it causes, and I'm no exception.

With respect to the transitional housing initiative, we issued an expression of interest in December of 2021, so just over a year ago, to ask community organizations if they would like to develop a model for transitional housing for people coming from treatment centres. We got four communities that were interested, including Fort Good Hope, Inuvik, and Yellowknife. We also had some interest from Hay River from the committee for persons with disabilities. They have not yet delivered their service delivery model to us, but we expect it shortly. We have received it from the other places, and so the job now is to do the analysis and put the requests for funding into the business plan cycle. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad to hear that there's some movement there, and I'd like to see it happen a little faster, though.

Mr. Speaker, this government is no doubt the leader when it comes to inefficiency which is apparent by the number of public housing units and other buildings sitting empty or being unutilized. Mr. Speaker, what discussion has this Minister of health had with her colleagues around the use of, or repurposing empty or

underutilized infrastructure for detox, aftercare treatment, and transitional sober recovery housing? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member raises a good point. We've had a couple of programs close recently that occupied the Territorial Treatment Centre in Yellowknife and the Trailcross Treatment Centre in Fort Smith. So we are aware that there is some surplus infrastructure. I think the process is to first of all identify the programming we want in the surplus infrastructure and then see whether it's appropriate for use. Some of the infrastructure that the Member has mentioned is very old and would not be up to code whereas other buildings would be ready for occupancy in short order. So I think that trying to reuse what we already have makes a lot of sense. It would certainly speed along the delivery of the service compared to trying to build from scratch. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, it's good to hear that, you know, government is looking at it. And, you know, unfortunately, you know, I don't think the movement is fast enough because people are, you know, dying around us.

Mr. Speaker, this government is using and taking advantage of NGOs as a form of cheap labour to deliver health-related services for the department.

Mr. Speaker, as this government is clearly reliant on NGOs to administer and provide some of its healthcare services around addiction support and recovery, I then ask the Minister if increased compensation and multiyear agreements with NGOs performing health-related services are being considered, and if not, why not? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. I have to say that I personally, and the department as well, recognizes the need for stability and support in the NGO sector and the value of the services they provide to our communities. So we are certainly open to looking first at more compensation and secondly multiyear agreements. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, talk is cheap so I'm kind of hoping that I actually see some money hit the floor at some point, and sooner than later.

Mr. Speaker, no detox beds and no aftercare facilities. Without those two components, we

can only expect more people to die, and those deaths will be on us. Mr. Speaker, with the federal government offering up additional healthcare funding for the NWT, will the Minister of health confirm that there will be a shift in her department's assessment when it comes to address the front and back end of treatment which are detox and aftercare beds or facilities in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we had a good go-around yesterday on detox so I'm not going to go back there.

In terms of new federal funding, I'm very interested to see what the details are and how that money can be spent to the benefit of residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 1324-19(2):
INDIGENOUS-BASED ADDICTIONS
SERVICES

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the GNWT have a partnership with an Indigenous-based addiction treatment facility for NWT residents? When will the GNWT have an Indigenous-based addiction healing treatment facility accessible to NWT residents? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month, the Department of Health and Social Services asked for Indigenous addictions-based treatment facilities to provide proposals for Indigenous treatment for NWT residents -- or addictions treatment with an Indigenous lens for NWT residents. That competition, or that request for proposal closed on Friday. And it's my understanding that procurement shared services are now evaluating those proposals. The goal that the department set out with was to have the new service provider in place by April 1st. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Can the Minister explain the referral process for NWT residents to go for treatment; how long does the referral process take?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is really a two-part process. The first part is that the individual who

wants treatment needs to be assessed by a healthcare practitioner or counsellor as understanding what's involved in treatment, ready for treatment, preferences for treatment, where they would like to go and so on. That is part one. Part two is then sending the referral to the addictions treatment centre, and then they do or don't have beds available, they put the person on the waiting list. There are a number of variables depending on the size and capacity of the treatment centre. But in general, the whole process from beginning to end takes an average of three weeks. So that means it can take less time, but I'm also aware that it's taken more. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: If an NWT resident wanted to refer themselves into treatment without a case worker assigned to them, will the GNWT cover this cost? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. The issue of self-referral is a little bit problematic because it doesn't give the counsellor or other support workers the ability to continue connecting with that person before treatment, after treatment, and making sure that they are accessing the resources that are available to them. We have contracts at this point with five facilities. So if people use our referral process to one of those five centres, then the costs are covered. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If an Indigenous NWT resident wants to attend an Indigenous addiction treatment facility, will the GNWT cover that cost? Is this covered by our treaty rights? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if an NWT resident is referred to one of the treatment centres that we currently have contracts with, we will pay the full amount of the treatment cost, and we expect to add an Indigenous specific offering to the treatment centre list by the beginning of April. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 1325-19(2):
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a second round of questions for the Minister of Housing NWT, specific this time to the homelessness strategy.

Mr. Speaker, last year the OAG audited public housing in the Yukon. The OAG found that the Yukon Housing Corporation did not have complete, timely, and relevant information to manage programs and benefits. Three of the nine recommendations coming out of Yukon's audit were on data collection and analysis. Has the Minister been briefed on the results of the Yukon audit and on how those lessons could be applied here in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to the Member, thank you for the question as well too. I have not been briefed on the audit for the Yukon. But the department does keep an eye on other jurisdictions as well too, and looking at how we can improve and do things better within the portfolio as well too and making those changes. But in the Housing Renewal Strategy, it specifically notes that we need to improve our data collection and measurement so we can decide what is working, what isn't working. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it would be of great value, I think, to look at what the Yukon's audit read, and I think that it would also be of great value to look at our 2008 audit that the OAG did on our own Housing Corporation here because a lot of those recommendations are still quite relevant today.

Mr. Speaker, if this audit was repeated in the NWT, I believe the OAG would have similar findings on the lack of information at Housing NWT. One major recommendation was that the Yukon Housing Corporation set up performance indicators, including short-term and long-term targets and outcome measures at the program level. Will the upcoming homelessness strategy include short-term and long-term targets and outcome measures at the program level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member as well too because I know this is a document that has been a long time waiting for this government to see. I can confirm today that the focus is on data collection and the measurement as well. But I do look forward to sharing this document with the Members and with the public very soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have long been awaiting this document and have yet to see a draft on that

and very much welcome it at the committee level.

Another recommendation was for the Yukon Housing Corporation to develop and implement a program evaluation framework. We heard in the Minister's remarks yesterday that we don't have a systematic data collection. So will the upcoming homelessness strategy include a plan for systematic data collection and program evaluation framework? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I can confirm once again that we would be looking at data collection and the measurement of what works and doesn't work. I just look forward to sharing that document with Members. It should be available, I want to say February 28th was the date that I was provided with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another key outcome from Yukon's housing audit was to improve interdepartmental collaboration. Yukon Housing Corporation and Yukon's Department of Health and Social Services have committed to signing a multiyear MOU, including coordinating their approach to information management. This is also something I have frequently spoken about to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and Minister of Justice who is also responsible for integrated service delivery. We know so much of our program delivery in this territory is siloed and desperately requires integration.

So will the upcoming homelessness strategy include a plan for Housing NWT and the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as Education, Culture and Employment, to coordinate information management? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can confirm that the homelessness strategy is an all-of-government approach. I have been working with my colleagues, Department of health, Justice, and really looking at how we could strategize with this homelessness strategy. And I know that it's a priority of this government as well too. I know the Members have been waiting for quite some time for this. I don't want to put too much information out there until the Members are able to actually receive the document and do a review of the document. I did provide a date of February 28th. And I hope that's sufficient. I myself would like to see this homelessness strategy reviewed and tabled by the end of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 1326-19(2):
NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS FOR
ADDICTIONS SERVICES

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is reference to the last questions. Does NIHB cover the cost if someone from the NWT goes to another facility besides the five facilities identified?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have an answer to that question. I'll have to take it on notice.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Oral questions. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 1327-19(2):
INDIGENOUS-BASED ADDICTIONS
SERVICES COMMITMENT FROM MINISTER

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to providing Indigenous-based culturally --

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Monfwi, the Minister took it on notice so it's got to be on another topic.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to providing Indigenous-based cultural relevant addiction treatment for any Indigenous NWT residents who request it? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just to be really clear, we have contracts with five addictions-based facility treatments in BC, Alberta, and Ontario. If people are seeking facility-based treatment, they should connect with their community counselling program and get a referral to one of those places. That's the start of the process. And once they're referred to the place, they go on to that place's waiting list, and they are then accepted when a bed is available. And using the method I've just described, the treatment is fully paid for. Thank you.

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

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 813-19(2):
2023-2024 MAIN ESTIMATES

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: 2023-2024 Main Estimates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 814-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 1178-19(2): GRADE LEVEL
OUTCOMES AND DATA FOR NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES STUDENTS

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 1178-19(2): Grade Level Outcomes and Data for Northwest Territories Students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Kam Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 815-19(2):
EMAIL FROM OFFICE OF MINISTER
RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING NWT
REGARDING DEMOGRAPHICS OF PUBLIC
HOUSING

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table an email I received February 7th, 2023, from the Office of the Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories regarding demographics of public housing tenants. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 816-19(2):
2022 MINERAL RESOURCES ACT
REGULATIONS TARGETED ENGAGEMENT
SURVEYS FOR PROSPECTING LICENSE
HOLDERS

TABLED DOCUMENT 817-19(2):
MINERAL RESOURCES ACT
IMPLEMENTATION ENGAGEMENT
TRACKING LOG, NOVEMBER 25, 2022

TABLED DOCUMENT 818-19(2):
LETTER DATED JANUARY 13, 2023 FROM
KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA, TO MINISTERS OF
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES, INDUSTRY TOURISM AND
INVESTMENT, AND LANDS REGARDING
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following three documents: 2022 Mineral Resources Act Regulations Targeted Engagement Surveys for Prospecting License Holders; the second one, Mineral Resources Act Implementation Engagement Tracking Log dated November 25th, 2022; the last one, Mr. Speaker, a letter from Kevin O'Reilly, MLA, on Public Participation in Resource Management to the Ministers of Environment and Natural Resources; Industry, Tourism and Investment; and Lands, dated January 13th, 2023. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

TABLED DOCUMENT 819-19(2):
DENE NATION LETTER TO PREMIER
DATED DECEMBER 19, 2022 REGARDING
HOUSING CRISIS

TABLED DOCUMENT 820-19(2):
CBC ARTICLE ENTITLED "NWT TO SEE
\$60M IN FEDERAL HOUSING DOLLARS,
ALLOCATION TO BE DETERMINED"

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table two documents: One is the Dene Nation letter to the Premier dated December 19th, 2022, regarding Housing Crisis; and number two is, CBC Article, "NWT to see \$60 million in federal housing dollars, allocation to be determined."

Mr. Speaker, I got a third document here that was just given to us today in regards to the budget. If I could, I'd like to add it as my third document. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. You could table it, but we'll have to review it.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bills 23 and 29, Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 694-19(2), Tabled Document 813-19(2), with Member for Deh Cho in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I move that the chair rise and report progress.

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Mahsi.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: May I please have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 23, Bill 29, Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 694-19(2), and Tabled Document 813-19(2), and would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Do we have a seconder? Member for Hay River North. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, February 9th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Budget Address
3. Ministers' Statements
4. Members' Statements
5. Returns to Oral Questions

- Oral Question 1188-19(2), Memorandum of Understanding with the Canadian Red Cross

- Oral Question 1326-19(2), NIHB Covered Areas

6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 2 of 7)
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
16. Tabling of Documents
17. Notices of Motion
18. Motions
19. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
20. First Reading of Bills
21. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3
22. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
 - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
 - Bill 62, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act
 - Committee Report 39-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on the Prevention and Management of Contaminated Sites
 - Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's Report on Suicide

- Tabled Document 681-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-19(2): Report on the Child and Family Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth and Families: An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together
- Tabled Document 694-19(2), Northwest Territories Coroner Service 2021-2022 Early Release of Data
- Tabled Document 813-19(2), Main Estimates

23. Report of Committee of the Whole

24. Third Reading of Bills

25. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 9th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

