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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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(Yellowknife North)

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Ms. Katrina Nokleby

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(Frame Lake)

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Minister responsible for Youth

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, March 28, 2023****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Hon. Frederick Blake Jr., Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Mr. Edjericon, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, 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.): Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 341-19(2):
COLD WEATHER TESTING

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to strengthening connections with air transportation businesses and industries. Collaboration with worldwide aviation leaders is vital to the Yellowknife Airport's success and to the growth of our territory through its tourism and employment sectors.

As the primary aviation hub for the Northwest Territories, the Yellowknife Airport hosts a number of cold weather testing activities during the winter season. These activities offer significant benefits for the local economy, with the groups staying in Yellowknife for several weeks, sometimes months.

Cold weather testing increases revenue growth for Yellowknife Airport partners and local businesses like restaurants, hotels, vehicle rentals, and much more. It also allows us to diversify our winter tourism markets by developing new sector of business tourism.

Mr. Speaker, after hosting Korean Aerospace Industries in 2022, we secured two cold weather testing opportunities with Airbus for the 2023 winter season.

Airbus is currently conducting cold weather testing on two different aircrafts: the H160 helicopter and the CC295 Kingfisher – an aircraft used by Canadian Search and Rescue. The last group is expected to complete testing at the end of this month.

The partnership with Airbus has created an opportunity to host over 40 engineers, pilots, and support staff between January 6th and March 31st in Yellowknife, with logistics support from Summit Air and Deton Cho Logistics.

Mr. Speaker, cold weather testing with Airbus is one of the many successful partnerships between the Yellowknife Airport and aviation leaders, bringing innovation and economic opportunity to the North. We look forward to welcoming more cold weather testing opportunities and will continue to affirm our place as leader in this industry. Thank you,

Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Finance.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 342-19(2):
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND
SATISFACTION

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories, like many other public and private sector employers in Canada, wants to ensure that its employees enjoy a high level of engagement and satisfaction in their work. However, decreases in employee morale are being experienced across Canada in the public sector, and the Northwest Territories is no exception. The results of our own Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey, released last year, identified some areas for improvement, including notable disparities in scores between departments and agencies. In response to this, the Department of Finance supplied GNWT agencies and departments with individualized guides supporting them in interpreting the survey results and identifying areas of improvement.

To further address concerns raised in the survey and improve overall employee satisfaction, the Department of Finance has been working on a corporate Human

Resources Strategic Plan expected to be released in April.

The Human Resources Strategic Plan identifies four areas of priority:

- Diversity and Inclusion;
- Indigenous Representation and Indigenous Leadership;.
- Health, Safety and Wellness; and
- Competency Development,

each with their own overarching strategic goals and corresponding objectives.

Under the Human Resources Strategic Plan, each department and agency will develop an implementation plan and complete annual evaluation reporting. Finance will support departments and agencies as they customize their implementation plans to address their respective workforce needs and human resource challenges as identified in the Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey.

Mr. Speaker, the findings from the Survey have also identified some areas for overall improvement including employee morale, which was down 3.4 percent since the last survey in 2016. To address this, the Department of Finance has established an Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Interdepartmental Working Group. This working group will be informed by a targeted survey for employees, a departmental scan, a jurisdictional scan, and research on emerging and best practices. The objective of this working group is to develop an action plan that will provide concrete meaningful actions and resources for departments and agencies to address the needs of their workplaces.

Employees are the GNWT's greatest resource, Mr. Speaker, and I take their perspectives very seriously. I have initiated regular employee virtual town halls where the deputy minister of finance and I answer questions from GNWT employees and speak on issues and initiatives that impact them. These town halls have been a valuable opportunity for us to connect with public servants who are impacted by initiatives such as the Human Resource Strategic Plan and the action plan to improve employee satisfaction. The deputy minister and I have an upcoming town hall scheduled this spring.

Mr. Speaker, an engaged and satisfied workforce is critical to the success of the government. By listening to the needs of employees, the GNWT can better support them and set them up for success, contributing to a

government that delivers quality programs and services to residents. I look forward to seeing the good work that will come from these initiatives, from all departments, in the coming months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 343-19(2):
RENEWAL STRATEGY WRAP-UP**

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you some of the exciting things happening at Housing Northwest Territories that are a direct result of our renewal strategy. Since the initiation of the strategy, Housing NWT has worked with the Council of Leaders to revise and modernize its mandate and use this mandate to guide the review of our policies and programs. We are now in the process of implementing the changes coming up for review. Changes include the implementation and improvement of how Housing NWT works with local housing organizations, our critical partners in delivering all of our public housing programs. We have also improved and collaborated with Indigenous governments with agreements signed with the Tlicho government, Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, and Deline Got'ine government, and more agreements are expected. Additionally, we are putting in place a last-chance mechanism for engaging with Indigenous governments with a forum that will be co-chaired by Housing NWT and an Indigenous government. The Terms of Reference are now being finalized, and we do anticipate that the first Indigenous government co-chair for this forum will be the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT recognizes the importance of supporting each Indigenous government as they develop and implement their self-government agreements and determine how housing priorities are more in need in their communities. It is worth noting that Housing NWT is doing all of this work while managing a public housing expansion that has been unprecedented in recent decades.

Mr. Speaker, along with these accomplishments, I am proud to bring forward a number of new initiatives and improvements underway. My colleagues are aware, public housing applicants who have met the eligibility criteria undergo prioritization using a point rating system. An applicant is given a number of points for certain needs and this score helps to prioritize their ranking to access available housing in their communities. As part of Housing NWT's renewal strategy, the points system was updated and modernized so that it

lines up with Housing NWT's mandate and government priorities. This means that the point rating system now includes points for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness, or individuals who are in need of housing because they are living in an environment that is involving family violence. The new points system is being rolled out on April 1st of this year.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure our tenants' successes, we have recently worked with the literacy council to plain language the tenancy agreements as well as develop a tenant's handbook that outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the landlord and the tenant. We have also introduced a tenant success plan which outlines how local housing organizations should work with the clients to support them and giving them a chance at success.

Mr. Speaker, another small but new initiative is centered around access to credit. For some of our clients, their monthly rent is the only regular payment that are being make and the only opportunity they have to build a good credit rating. We are happy to announce a credit rating pilot program in two communities: Fort Resolution and Inuvik. Public housing tenants will have the opportunity to opt into the program which will only report positive credit rating.

Mr. Speaker, for our homeowners, along with the increase in thresholds for most programs, a focus on seniors and eliminating the co-pay for emergency repairs, we are introducing a pilot program in two communities that will allow for us to work with the local housing organizations in communities where there is no local supplier for construction materials. The local housing organization will provide access to material, such as heating and plumbing parts, things that we know homeowners need and that are hard to get in a timely manner in a small remote community.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the current highlights with much more exciting news expected to come in the coming weeks, including our new Energy Management Strategy and Blueprint.

Mr. Speaker, the housing needs in the territory are so great that sometimes it seems that the challenges are harder to accomplish. But what I have seen in my time as Minister is the willingness to work together to meet those challenges and to be courageous, to look with a critical eye at whether our efforts are being effective. No one government, no one organization, and no single solution alone will allow us to be successful. We need to work together to address the territory's housing

crisis. I would like to take this time to thank my colleagues on the other side who have supported me in this portfolio as well and implementing these changes as we go forward. I'd also like to thank the staff at Housing NWT for coming together and implementing these programs as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1479-19(2): INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT IN THE TALTSON HYDRO PROJECT

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak once again about the Taltson Hydro Expansion. As Thebacha MLA, I have particular interest in this project because Fort Smith is the closest community to the Taltson Dam.

Mr. Speaker, currently I do have some concerns about this project. I know that throughout this Assembly our government has been in consultations with various First Nations and Metis governments that are nearest to the Taltson Dam, as they should be. In fact, the Government of the Northwest Territories signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2021 with a number of nearby Indigenous groups, which is good. However, there is one missing component with that work. There is one First Nation that has reserve lands right beside the Taltson Dam, yet the government has not managed to get them to sign them on to the MOU, which is a major problem for advancing this project forward.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated many times in this House, I support this project and I do not want to see any roadblocks that may disrupt or delay this expansion. And I think that Cabinet wants that as well, which is why it is extremely important that the government continues to engage with this First Nation in question and get them onside with this project. If the government fails to do so, then they run the risk of potentially being brought to court and facing a possible injunction, which would most certainly delay this project for years.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure must not let that happen, so she needs to resolve this as soon as possible. And I will continue to do as much as I can in my role as the MLA for Thebacha to help would those efforts because I know that this project is in the best interests of Fort Smith as well as the entire NWT. I do not want to see this project halted at the 11th hour

caused by something that can be prevented today. Therefore, the government needs to continue to engage, particularly with this First Nation in question who has not yet signed on to the MOU for the Taltson Hydro Expansion. The government must be innovative and flexible with their consultations and they must get the support of all nearby First Nations and Metis governments if they ever want this expansion to happen. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1480-19(2):
DISASTER ASSISTANCE RELIEF OPTIONS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the events of last years' flood is fresh in the minds of those affected, and questions continue to be unanswered for some residents when it comes to future mitigation.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Hay River is situated along the shore of Great Slave Lake and the Hay River. The reality is that a portion of the residential, commercial, and industrial area is in a flood plain and will always be subject to potential flooding.

Mr. Speaker, this government talks flood mitigation but does not appear to understand that it is not reasonable to expect a one-size-fits-all approach for the various areas within the community.

Mr. Speaker, two locations that experienced significantly high-water levels is Paradise Valley, along with Lot 13 and 15 on Riverview Drive. Both locations saw water levels exceeding seven feet. Because of this, affected residents do understand that it is not realistic or practical to rebuild on the site as the costs would be too prohibitive while residents' safety would continue to be at risk each spring.

Mr. Speaker, post flood, this government committed to support those affected homeowners and businesses with disaster assistance options. One of the options that was discussed with residents was that of property acquisition, or buyback, which some residents consider as the only viable option for them. This option is allowed and set out in section 3.4.1 of the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements. This option, although available, is one this government refuses to use due to what they say will result in significant implications for communities, as well as residents, and that further policy work will need to be undertaken in consultation with

community governments prior to moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, the message being relayed to these residents has been mixed, unclear, contradictory, and unreasonable. Although many impacted by the flood are moving ahead with remediation in some form, we have those residents who are, and continue to be, at a loss on how to proceed as the only reasonable mitigation measure for them is property acquisition by this government, or something very similar, that would provide comparable assistance.

Mr. Speaker, to resolve this issue, the residents are looking for a face-to-face meeting with the Minister responsible for MACA, and I would recommend that he agree to such a meeting at the earliest.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1481-19(2):
ADVANCING INFRASTRUCTURE
PROJECTS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the cost of doing business in the North is expensive. There's no doubt about that reality. However, I often wonder if a lack of coordination from the government hinders our ability to support our communities in terms of infrastructure planning and management.

Spring is here, and I want to ensure we are positioning both government and industry to be successful in advancing important infrastructure projects during the upcoming construction season. The NWT has many unique operating environments and a short window in which to bring in materials. Yet the government's own processes do not always account for this reality. How many federal dollars have we missed because we do not position our projects to be shovel ready in an efficient manner? When the government does not issue RFPs early enough in the spring for summer work, industry is not able to move fast enough to staff up and bring materials in. This leaves the North behind on important projects, Mr. Speaker. Just look at the delays to our current infrastructure projects; delays that have left 500 million of federal funding unspent on the table. If we truly want to deal with our infrastructure deficit, better coordination and more forward thinking would help to get more projects underway and stimulate the flagging economy.

Mr. Speaker, whenever I look through the capital estimates, I note that there are usually

two to three projects in a community or region in various departments. And I ask, are the departments coordinating the supply of materials for all projects together and effectively; or, are these projects operating in silos and we're wasting our resources and duplicating efforts where we don't need to be? If we really want to see a successful north, with robust and reliable infrastructure, the government must take a more coordinated approach to better plan and sequence northern projects and retrofits. We must pool our efforts so we can better utilize our buying power, our transportation efforts, and our labour force towards building a stronger territory for us all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1482-19(2):
CARBON TAXATION

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in the House again in regards to Bill 60. Mr. Speaker, it's concerning in this House about the impacts of carbon tax in my riding. I continue to raise my concerns today.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 60 cannot go forward as proposed. The carbon tax is going to increase the cost of living in the Northwest Territories in my riding by 15 percent and 4 percent every year after.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing the federal government's dirty work. How are we going to tax people who have nothing to give, Mr. Speaker? Why are we putting our people at the highest place in the Arctic, we're being penalized because of where we live. We're the most impacted by climate change being taxed on climate change where this territory gives 0.05. The federal government should be paying us to clean their air, Mr. Speaker. You know, everything that's happening right now, we have -- we provide for our families, we hunt. We travel on the land. The cost of gas is going up in the communities, at \$2.75 a litre in some communities. And then if you don't get nothing to -- if you luck out, don't get any caribou or anything that's subsistence for how we're going to feed our families because you just wasted your gas and you get nothing. Putting pressure on families. On top of all this, the government expects us to pay more taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we pay more taxes already. We pay \$2 a kilowatt in small communities for power. The families can barely afford to buy food. We have the highest price of food index in the Northwest Territories. Over 50 percent of

the Nunakput residents are worried about having enough money to buy food and provide for their families, Mr. Speaker. We have to hunt, again to put food on the table. It's our culture, our way of life, hunting is our household. The pressure to provide food for our family and especially with the climate change and the ice is thinner in some parts of the territory in our riding. Our power bills continue to go up. And yet our houses, you know, that are provide in the communities, our housing, are paper-thin walls, cracks in doors and brings snow right through the homes, floors are so cold they have to put blankets down for -- and how energy efficient is that, Mr. Speaker?

People in our riding have very little employment opportunities. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, families earn average \$50,000 less than NWT family, almost 20 percent are on income assistance. Over 10 percent of our families make less than \$30,000. There's no offshore; the moratorium is still in place. The federal government takes away but doesn't give nothing back. The resource development is dragging on. There's no way to get ahead, Mr. Speaker. There's no way to pay the bills. Residents already have to -- and now that are going to be taxed more. Mr. Speaker, I oppose the carbon tax on Bill C-60 and we simply can't tax our people anymore when they don't have nothing to give. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1483-19(2):
REGIONAL STUDY OF LOCKHART ALL-
SEASON ROAD

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Earlier in this sitting, I tabled a copy of the February 3rd, 2023 letter where the federal minister of northern affairs approved a regional study under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act to look at the future of the area between Yellowknife and the Nunavut border. Unfortunately, the study, as it is currently formulated, will stop at the Nunavut border. However, caribou don't stop there and planning continues for an all-weather road that would destroy habitat and disrupt migrations of the Bathurst caribou herd.

A regional study is a good thing, especially if there is participant funding, a broad mandate that considers options and alternatives, and

work on how the results will actually be implemented and reported on. Unfortunately, someone forgot to tell the Department of Infrastructure that it should "down tools" during the regional study.

I raised the issue during the review of the Infrastructure 2023-2024 Main Estimates on March 8th, and it is business as usual there in terms of spending money that will disrupt the habitat of what's left of the Bathurst caribou herd.

Despite several attempts to get the Minister to clarify the status of the work on the so-called Slave Geological Province Road, or the Lockhart All-Season Road, I could not really get a straight answer.

On November 1st, 2022, during the review of the capital budget, I raised the issue of whether Cabinet would push ahead with an all-weather road while a regional study is underway. The Minister of Finance said that the work on the road was delayed, which would allow for the regional study to take place. Even the Government of Nunavut has just changed its position on the Nunavut Land Use Plan and is calling for permanent protection of caribou calving grounds and other key habitat by prohibiting development. Our government has no such position and continues to bulldoze ahead with a road that will have irreversible impacts. I will have questions for the Premier later today on whether this government intends to proceed with an all-weather road to Lockhart Lake and trigger a separate environmental assessment while a regional study under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act is in progress. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1484-19(2):
CARBON TAXATION

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, carbon tax has now become a word many people don't want to hear. However, as Members in this House, we have talked, listened to residents, and debated this topic for the past few months. I am in a situation now that I must decide on what's best for the residents in the Northwest Territories on how we move ahead with this.

The GNWT carbon tax is what we are paying now but heating fuel has been able to be excluded up until the new changes that are coming that being imposed upon by the federal government. They have decided they will no longer allow for GNWT as this goes against what they are trying to do - decrease carbon in

Canada. And now their schedules -- according to their schedules, we're increasing the carbon tax.

Those territories and provinces, whether they are under the federal backstop or have opted to create a carbon tax that will best meet their needs and fit the federal guidelines, we in the NWT have our own legislation and now we are at a point where we have to decide to agree to what GNWT Cabinet has decided for the NWT or decide to not support and therefore the federal backstop will kick in, and the tax will kick in.

Mr. Speaker, we as Regular Members ask for legislation to ensure that our residents have a regional COLO payment, to our residents, money for municipalities, businesses, and offset, as well as defined legislation that must come to this House to be decided if there are any changes in the future by all MLAs. Cabinet has agreed to regional COLO payments for the municipalities to get -- and they are also agreed to the COLO -- regional COLO payments in the municipalities but with legislation, you know, we are where we at.

The new carbon tax changes will take place April 1st, 2023, so we have to decide who we trust more that will take care of Northerners - GNWT or the federal government. Because if we vote down the GNWT tax, the federal carbon tax will take over and we will be still paying the tax. So I will have some questions for the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1485-19(2):
POPULATION DECLINE

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's face the facts. Last year the NWT's population dropped by over 200 people with over 900 people leaving the territory. Thankfully, this decline was offset by about 300 births and 400 newcomers. Last year this House passed a motion calling for a strategy to match Canada's population growth. Every Regular Member voted in support. In its response, the GNWT all but rejected this House's call for a coordinated robust plan to increase the NWT population. The GNWT pointed instead to its growing the NWT strategy, an ineffective and outdated strategy that failed to achieve its goals. Cabinet claims that population and labour challenges are nationwide. While that's true, this House needs to hear me when I say we are the only province

and territory to have fewer residents at the end of 2022, so a declining population is an NWT specific issue.

While there are existing efforts for infrastructure, post-secondary education supports, and supports aimed at seniors and elders, more needs to be done.

Recent employment surveys have shown that about half of Gen-Zs and Millennials plan on looking for a new job in 2023, and that they want better work-life balance and more career challenges. The North offers both, Mr. Speaker, as well as the best student financial assistance in the country. But who is telling our fellow Canadians about this?

Mr. Speaker, even our own residents are moving on to new opportunities. This is not only about attracting new residents; we need to focus on retaining the existing ones. Imagine our growth rate if we retained the 900 people who left last year. Cabinet's rejection of the motion also means they turned down the recommendation to analyze why Northerners are leaving our territory. There is some work on asking residents why they're leaving. The GNWT's recent Indigenous employment plans set targets for running exit interviews but the targets are low. For example, the NTHSSA is only aiming to complete exit interviews on 20 percent of departing employees this year. And there's no plan to ask residents why they are choosing to leave and to address those reasons.

A shrinking NWT isn't just an NWT issue; it's a Canadian one, Mr. Speaker. Hollowing out remote northern communities does not support reconciliation or the Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security goals. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1486-19(2):
COMMUNITY CARNIVALS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this year is the time of year when we celebrate spring and the arrival of spring and the animals and that kind of thing. This year we didn't have the Long John Jamboree, and it's something that, you know, we all bring our families out and enjoy a good time and that kind of thing. But this year in the Chief Drygeese territory, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation are planning their spring carnival from March 31st to April 2nd, 2023, in Dettah, and they're looking at, on Friday, they are looking at a fish

derby, many hand games, and a talent show. I think this is a good opportunity for the Premier and Cabinet to come out and try out their singing, jigging, and show some of the best dressed outfits. And on Saturday, we're also looking at a kiddie carnival, pond hockey, and outdoor events, sleigh pulling, log sawing, etcetera, and the same thing on Sunday. I'd like to encourage my colleagues and everybody in the Northwest Territories, especially people here in Yellowknife, to come out to Dettah this coming weekend to enjoy the carnival there.

Also in Lutselk'e, we're also planning to have a carnival there as well in April; the long weekend it looks like. And I just want to make sure that I got this right here.

On April 8th, Friday, 9th and 10th, again, in Lutselk'e, they're looking at opening ceremonies, outdoor games, activities, sled pulling, piggyback races, and all that good stuff that brings everybody out of their homes into the community after a long COVID. And so this is a good opportunity to celebrate as well. And they're also looking at, you know, a talent show, and that kind of thing in the community of Lutselk'e. So, again, if you're in the neighbourhood in Lutselk'e, come out and join us, and especially this weekend here in YKDFN. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1487-19(2):
SALE OF HOUSING UNITS

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is not only in Tlicho community but in other Indigenous communities as well. But in all four communities, Mr. Speaker, there are dozens of housing units that some families have lived in for decades. Many people consider these houses their forever homes and, in most cases, families have every intention to pass on these existing homes to younger family -- to younger family members to ensure they are housed into the future. However, Mr. Speaker, some families have told me that it came as a surprise to them when they discovered that they are not actually the owners of these homes - this is very true in many of the communities - but rather only renters to homes that are owned and maintained by Housing NWT. There are other families who know they are renters and have been long-time renters but they would like to become homeowners to the home they live in.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I have heard not only from the Tlicho region, but from all regions, that

Indigenous governments and organizations are ready and willing to step up and help repair many of these old housing units in our communities. The only thing is that these organizations do not wish to do this work unless the ownership of these homes are transferred away from Housing NWT. Yet, Mr. Speaker, it seems for some reason that Housing NWT is either resistant or hesitant, or both, in letting these housing units go. As I understand it, Housing NWT does not want to go down this route because they are scared of losing additional funding in operations and maintenance if they reduce their overall number of housing assets.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is an irrational and unreasonable fear for Housing NWT to have, and that it is also counter to their own strategy of increasing capacity and partnership with Indigenous government.

So which is it? Is Housing NWT going to hoard over all their aging housing units forever and continue charging the maximum rent -- can I seek unanimous consent to continue with my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

So is Housing NWT going to hoard over all their aging housing units forever and continue charging the maximum rent at prices that are not even worth the homes they are living in, or are they going to listen to their own words and disperse their old housing units to increase homeownership in the communities?

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the Government of the Northwest Territories work together with the Tlicho government and other Indigenous government and the federal government to sort this issue out. We need action on this sooner rather than later. I will have questions for the Minister of Housing. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1489-19(2):
UNIVERSAL FREE ACCESS TO
CONTRACEPTION

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret that women face a disproportionate amount of the child care burden in our society. They also, on average, earn less than men. And to pile onto the inequality, women pay a number of what are called "think taxes," Mr. Speaker. Those are costs on products and services that men do not. One example of this is that women shoulder the payment of birth control.

According to the Canadian Pediatric Society, timely access to effective contraception reduces the incidents of unintended pregnancy. Cost is a significant barrier to using contraception for youth in Canada. Many must pay out-of-pocket because they have no pharmaceutical insurance, their insurance does not cover the contraceptives they desire, or they wish to obtain contraceptives without their parents' knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends, to address these barriers and reduce the rate of unintended pregnancy, that there should be universal free access to contraceptives and, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what British Columbia is doing and starting this weekend. They will be providing all of those contraceptive measures for free in BC. All one has to do is get a prescription and bring it to their pharmacy, no cost. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of health about whether we can provide universal contraceptive access in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1489-19(2):
NAHANNI BUTTE NEW POST OFFICE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for most of us we have post offices located in our communities. However, some of the smaller communities in the Nahendeh riding, they do not. Four of the communities fall under the Fort Simpson's postal code. Nahanni Butte was one of those communities. Mail would get flown in from Fort Simpson to Nahanni Butte once a week, weather permitting. Once it arrives, somebody had to collect it from the airstrip and bring it to the band office where a staff person would sort it and get ready for residents to pick it.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the years, the community has seen an improved Canada Post service, but they have sometimes gone two or three weeks without receiving the mail. This was an issue, so they wanted to fix it. In December 2021, the band began working to establish a post office in Nahanni Butte. This involved several meetings with the Crown corporation so they could identify what changes were necessary to make the post office a reality. Once these changes occurred, it would mean securing a new postal code. One of the biggest things was to name every street and put numbers on every house. The residents provided ideas for what each road could be named, and council voted on the options. Once the names were chosen, they developed a sign

with both Dene Zhatie and English. The house numbers were designed by a local artist Destiny Ekotla depicting a beaver in front of Tthenaago, the sacred mountain which Nahanni Butte lies at the foot of. As Chief Steve Vital stated, these changes were improvement in the delivery of mail and emergency services in the community of 93 people.

Mr. Speaker, the shiny new signage went up in April, giving each home in the community its own mailing address that will make it easier for emergency services to respond to emergencies in Nahanni Butte. As well, it makes it easier for residents to fill out paperwork for things like driver's licenses, insurance, and utilities.

The new postal code took effect September 2022, with the post office outlet situated in the corner of the general store.

Mr. Speaker, each community member will have their own designated mailbox, keys, the post office will hire one full-time employee to manage the space and pick up the community's mail twice a week from a driver who already does a mail run from Fort Simpson to Fort Liard.

The community's postal code is X0E 2N0 code. They do have their own postal stamp as well. Just ask the Member from Frame Lake who received one of the first pieces of mail from the community. Trust me, I had to drop the mail off with my colleague from the health Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues to congratulate them for getting their own post office. Thank You, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be joined today by the NWT Seniors Society. Here in the gallery, I see Don Webb, the president from Fort Smith; Pat Burnstad from Hay River, who is the vice president; John Hazenberg, the treasurer from Yellowknife; Martina Norwegian, secretary from Fort Simpson; Elizabeth Kunnizzie, the director from Inuvik; John Norbert, who is also a director from Tsiigehtchic, and staff of the society Karen Willy, the executive director, and Myrna Matheson, the project coordinator. Thank you all for being here today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Pat Burnstad, the vice president the NWT Seniors Society, a constituent of mine and I would say a pillar of the community. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River North. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize Don Webb, president, constituent of Fort Smith, and all the board members that are attending today and their staff. I also would like to say that I recognize the NWT Seniors Society for all the work they do for all seniors in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to recognize Elizabeth Kunnizzie, a constituent of Inuvik Twin Lakes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my constituency assistant Arlene Hansen, who is here with me this week. I would also like to recognize Elizabeth Kunnizzie from Inuvik, and I knew Elizabeth growing up Aklavik. Quyananni.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also want to extend a welcome to the Northwest Territories Seniors Society but, in particular, John Hazenberg, treasurer, is also a resident of Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mary Jane Cazon, our translator for Dene Zhatie, and I thank her for all her hard work. Now, I am going to embarrass a few of the young people up sitting there. Ms. Pat Burnstad was actually my grade 10-11 typing teacher and she told me quit typing after that because my fingers were too big and couldn't do grade 12. So I thank her. So her sister got me in Foods 10

so I thank her for that. Mr. John Hazenberg is a former co-worker of mine in Fort Simpson, as well as Martina Norwegian who is very very much a volunteer in the community and I have known her for a long time from Fort Simpson. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Karen Willy, executive director of the NWT Seniors Society. Karen is a retired public servant and we couldn't let her stay retired very long and so now she serves as executive director, and we thank you very much for your service. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize Pat Burnstad who is from Hay River as well. Not one of my constituents I guess but R.J.'s so he'll probably let me borrow her here for a bit, so. And I haven't gotten in any trouble with her I don't think, but my colleague across. I would also like to recognize Martina Norwegian from Fort Simpson as well. And all the other members of the NWT Seniors Society. Welcome, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, le President. I want to recognize a couple of people, or a couple of groups in the gallery today. Rosella Stoesz served as my official agent way back in 2019 in the general election. And I also want to recognize the board and staff of the NWT Seniors Society. My wife served as the former executive director and passes on, I am sure, her best regards to you all. Thank you very much for being here. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Colleagues, I would also like to recognize John Norbert, an elder from Tsiigehtchic who sat on many boards in the community, whether it's a renewable resource council, the band council, the Tsiigehtchic Charter Community Council, designated Gwich'in organization - many boards. Thank you for all of the work that you do and same with all the elders for representing the elders throughout the territory. And if we have missed anyone in the gallery today,

welcome to the chamber. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery, mahsi cho.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 51-19(2): STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS REPORT ON INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC SERVICE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on Indigenous Representation in the Northwest Territories Public Service and commends it to the House.

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations reviewed Indigenous representation in the Northwest Territories public service. Currently, Indigenous employees make up approximately thirty percent of the Government of the Northwest Territories public service while, at the same time, half of the NWT's population is Indigenous.

Finding ways to increase Indigenous representation in the GNWT public service is a priority the committee chose to work on during the 19th Assembly. The committee aimed to identify the systemic barriers to increasing Indigenous representation in the public service and review GNWT human resource practices and policies.

Committee's review began in 2020 but was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In June 2021, committee visited Inuvik; other planned community visits had to be put on hold. During 2022, committee held a virtual public hearing in Yellowknife and visited the communities of Thebacha-Fort Smith, Zhahti Kue-Fort Providence, Behchoko, K'atlodeeche-Hay River, and the K'atlodeeche First Nation. A plan to visit to Deline had to be cancelled and a virtual meeting was held instead.

Committee heard about a deep and longstanding disappointment with the GNWT as an employer and a viewpoint that the system is intended to keep Indigenous people out of the public service, evidencing a broken trust in the

GNWT. Yet, many also expressed a "now or never" hope for change.

To be clear, Members intend to improve the Affirmative Action Policy.

Committee asks that the government take a candid look at the recommendations presented here, recognize the reconciliatory intent, and implement the recommendations in relevant policies, including the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework and new initiatives such as the proposed Indigenous Employment Policy and Employment Equity Policy.

Proportions and numbers characterizing Indigenous employment in the GNWT are presented in Appendix 1: Indigenous employment statistics in the NWT public sector. A list of public meetings is shown in Appendix 2. And six written submissions are attached in Appendix 3.

Committee members thank everyone who took the time to meet with committee, in person and virtually, and made the effort to provide us with their thoughts in writing. Committee expresses gratitude for the warm welcome Members and staff received on Indigenous lands and in communities.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

The GNWT's Affirmative Action Policy, created in 1989, did not successfully increase Indigenous employment with the GNWT. The GNWT says on the public engagement site of the review of the Affirmative Action Policy:

"Despite being in force for over 30 years, it is unclear how much the policy has helped the Government of the Northwest Territories meet our objective of a competent public service that is representative of the population it serves."

The Affirmative Action Policy was a response to replace the Native Employment Policy of 1973. Following the division into Nunavut and the NWT, the GNWT reviewed human resource practices resulting in a centralized human resources division in 2005 while continuing to follow the 1989 Affirmative Action Policy.

The Affirmative Action Policy creates four designated groups:

- Indigenous Aboriginal Persons;
- Indigenous Non-Aboriginal Persons;
- Resident Disabled Persons; and,
- Resident Women.

Staffing priorities are granted according to the designated groups.

The use of the terms "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal" is confusing, and everyone appears to agree that clarity in the language is direly needed. Committee heard that most government employees do not know how to implement this policy uniformly to ensure accountability across government.

The Affirmative Action Policy indicates it "shall conform to the equality rights provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act and Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." The designated group for Priority 2 has been challenged in the past.

The GNWT will need to work to and ensure the Affirmative Action Policy and all related frameworks and guidelines will be reviewed and linked to the GNWT's effort to comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The review of the policy needs to align with other Cabinet policies, as suggested in recommendation 4 of the Special Committee on Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs Report.

The Affirmative Action Policy is a key mechanism to achieve reconciliation. It is about the livelihood and putting bread on the table. The current practice appears to many as conflicting. We put everyone to school and present it as a path to success, yet once it is about employment, the parameters change, and most are being turned down. It is difficult to comprehend and explain.

The GNWT's policy direction for Indigenous recruitment comes from the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework and the to-do list from the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Action Plan. Each GNWT department created a distinct "Indigenous Employment Plan," basically mirroring the GNWT's general plan with targets and actions tailored to each department.

Overall, the GNWT grew by 124 new employees in 2021-2022; three are Priority 1. The Indigenous share of GNWT employees reached an all-time low of 28.8 percent in 2021. Indigenous representation also declined in 15 communities. This information is from the GNWT 2021-2022 Public Service Annual Report, summarized in Appendix 1.

Witnesses explained they feel let down by the Union of Northern Workers and that more work to support Indigenous employees is needed. In particular, the union needs more Indigenous service officers and an improved and revamped grievance process to support Indigenous

employees better. Committee agrees that the Union of Northern Workers can do more to help increase Indigenous representation in the public service. Committee wants the GNWT to improve the way competitions are held, decentralize operations, create a fair and transparent appeal process, implement mechanisms to hold hiring managers accountable, set hiring targets, and be cautious of potential problems with limiting the definition of Indigenous.

I will now pass the reading on to the deputy chair, the Member for Thebacha. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Number 1,

1. Increase Indigenous Employment

It is important to confirm where the authority to establish the Affirmative Action Policy comes from. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms establishes that "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination" (Section 15(1)).

Section 15(2) provides the legal grounds for establishing the Affirmative Action Policy by enabling "any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability." The objective and intent of the Affirmative Action Policy are to increase the number of Indigenous persons who are disadvantaged and underrepresented in the public sector. Committee wants the Government of the Northwest Territories to improve the disadvantage and underrepresentation of Indigenous persons in the NWT by holding job competitions exclusively for Priority 1 candidates.

Recommendation 1: Committee recommends that the Affirmative Action Policy reflect its objective and intent and mitigate the disadvantage and underrepresentation of Indigenous persons in the NWT public sector by implementing a Priority 1-only competition.

Committee heard that decentralizing government jobs contributes to increasing Indigenous representation. This is partially due because most NWT's Indigenous population resides outside the capital city region. Therefore, more Indigenous persons would seek employment in the public sector if people

could stay in communities to work. The Government of the Northwest Territories should review the jobs at headquarters in Yellowknife, identify positions to be moved to the regions, and allow jobs to be relocated.

Recommendation 2: Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories identify which headquarters positions can be located to the regions, which jobs could be tagged as flexible and moved among a number of locations, and those that could be classified as remote working arrangements, aiming to allow Priority 1 employees to work in the community of residence.

2. Appeals Process

Committee received several comments from the public about the need of transparent appeals process when Indigenous candidates have not been hired. Residents noted that politics and political biases are often involved in hiring in small communities and recommend creating an independent review body for oversight and appeals.

Not being informed about one's rights when feeling treated unfairly breaks more than not only trust. Improvements need to be made toward a clear and public description of the appeal process. The right to appeal allows the appellant to bring forward their view on a decision, and an appeal can result in reversing a decision.

Committee heard that since 1967, over time, non-Indigenous employees have fine-tuned the governmental operation to put their own people into the government, leaving Indigenous persons out. Such loss of trust flags the urgent need to lay the groundwork for building confidence and assurance that Indigenous participation will increase in the public sector.

The Union of Northern Workers can also play a role in imparting trust in the public sector by looking after their employees with an Indigenous complaints process. Indigenous employees need to know they are protected.

Committee is concerned that the GNWT does not have enough independent oversight regarding hiring decisions. Committee also notes that current Indigenous staff and the diversity and inclusion unit are uniquely positioned to support Indigenous candidates as they navigate the hiring process. Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3: Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories establish one uniform, clear and

accessible appeal process for public service positions that:

- Establishes a mechanism empowering Priority 1 candidates with the ability and enough time to appeal a hiring decision before a job is offered to a non-Priority 1 candidate.
- Operates independently at arms-length from the government.
- That an appeal body that is representative of the Indigenous population with a minimum Indigenous membership of 50 percent.
- Clearly outlines how appeals can be requested and considered.
- Contains clear terms of reference for a fair and consistent appeal process.
- Ensures availability and accessibility of support by Indigenous staff of the diversity and inclusion unit to the Indigenous candidate.

I will now pass this on to the MLA for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER:

3. Minimum Representation in Public Service and Agencies

Beginning on April 1, 2023, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Lands will amalgamate into the new Department of Environment and Climate Change. With this change, four assistant deputy minister positions will be transferred from the existing departments. Additionally, to align with the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework, senior departmental management decided to create a new ADM position, which will be a regional position, intending to be an Indigenous pathway position that supports Indigenous people moving into senior management. As an act of reconciliation, committee recommends this new initiative by the Department of Environment and Climate Change should be expanded and replicated across all GNWT departments.

Similarly, committee considers it vital that, wherever and whenever possible, departments should consistently staff all regional supervisor positions with Indigenous employees. This will ensure that Indigenous employees have at least one secured pathway into senior

management positions within the public service.

Furthermore, committee is concerned and unsure whether the existing Affirmative Action Policy has been actively applied to public boards, such as the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, for example, or other arms-length boards and agencies. Therefore, to ensure that all NWT public boards and agencies have some degree of Indigenous representation, committee finds it necessary that all such organizations must establish a minimum level of Indigenous representation within the overall makeup of their board of directors.

Given this uncertainty about whether the Affirmative Action Policy has been actively applied to all NWT agencies, committee wants assurance that this is being done. Therefore, committee considers it essential to explicitly urge the government to direct all NWT agencies to apply the Affirmative Action Policy with all employee hiring decisions.

Recommendation 4: Committee recommends that the GNWT

- For the purpose of capacity building, make it a standard policy to ensure that an Indigenous person consistently occupies at least one assistant deputy minister position with all departments.
- Consistently staff all regional supervisor positions with Indigenous employees.
- Promotes and requires, where possible, that all public boards and agencies have a minimal level of Indigenous representation within the overall makeup of their board of directors. And,
- Requires, where possible, for agencies to invest in hiring Indigenous employees and follow the Affirmative Action Policy.

4. Attracting Indigenous Professionals to Return to the NWT

Committee heard that there is a general sentiment among many residents in the small communities and regional centres that there is a disconnection between the capital city and everywhere else when it comes to hiring Indigenous professionals into the public service. Many people said that the capital, as headquarters of human resources, must do a better job at outreach to the communities when

filling job vacancies. People living outside of Yellowknife told committee that the GNWT must make changes to its recruitment practices in attracting and hiring Indigenous professionals from the small communities and regional centres.

Therefore, committee recommends that the GNWT create and conduct an extensive outreach campaign that targets all NWT residents who are studying outside of the NWT and encourages them to work for the public service. Committee wants to see more incentives offered to students who return to the NWT. All hiring managers should be made aware of this outreach campaign.

Recommendation 5: Committee recommends that the GNWT attract Indigenous professionals with roots and relations in the NWT to take public service positions with the GNWT by

- Creating an outreach campaign targeting NWT residents studying outside of the NWT.
- Offering incentives to returning students. And,
- Requiring that hiring managers are aware of the campaign.

5. Hiring Practices and Job Competitions

Submissions and feedback to committee included recommendations for the GNWT to review hiring practices and job competitions. Committee heard that the application of equivalencies in competitions seems arbitrary. Applicants do not know when equivalencies are used in screening and interviews. When equivalencies are applied, there is no known formula for how they are applied. Committee understands applicants with equivalencies like Indigenous knowledge and experience in the NWT communities have inherent value to the GNWT regardless of which jobs are applied to.

Many residents requested more transparency of the competition process, including transparency during a competition. The interview process was also mentioned as intimidating and non-transparent. Practically speaking, the government has far to go to meet its goal of removing system barriers by establishing appropriate non-inflated education and experience requirements across all job descriptions.

Recommendation 6: Committee recommends that the GNWT and all departments:

- Update the job descriptions of all public service positions to ensure the inclusion of value statements which

affirms the importance of Indigenous knowledge and community experience.

- Update the "job information" section of all job descriptions to ensure that only plain language is used.
- Ensure that each "job information" section provides an equivalency formula that is publicly accessible and demonstrates concrete examples of what education equivalencies will be accepted in place of university education.
- Create a mechanism that requires offering qualifying Priority 1 candidates who participate in the competition and training path into the position before submitting the job to a non-priority candidate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will now ask to pass it to Member for Kam Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

6. Retention and Succession Planning

Committee heard that workforce development and succession planning needed to be more inclusive of Indigenous employees within the GNWT. The GNWT's Indigenous Employment Plans aim to "improve retention of Indigenous employees through professional development and career progression." Under the current model, the Department of Finance will create a succession planning guide for Indigenous employees, and each department will work with HR to develop an individual succession plan.

However, public comments addressed a need to share information about transfer assignments and promotions to ensure Indigenous employees and Indigenous applicants receive priority hiring in replacing outgoing employees. Also, committee received recommendations and comments that uniform succession planning must include position tracking and a clear structure for promotion with managerial experience opportunities for Indigenous employees.

Recommendation 7: Committee recommends that the GNWT commit to transparent retention practices by requiring all departments to:

- Develop and follow succession planning guidelines.

- Maintain and share internal position tracking.
- Track and share information about transfer assignments and/or promotions.
- Ensure that departmental succession planning is informed by employees' goals and expectations by connecting with development goals expressed by employees in the annual performance appraisals.
- Ensure that all Indigenous employees in senior management positions are well supported by their supervisors and are given training opportunities that are suited to the employees' interests and career goals.
- Create a mechanism to ensure Indigenous employees and applicants receive preferred and priority hiring when replacing outgoing employees leaving the public service.

7. Measuring Employer Performance and Improving Retention

Committee is concerned that the GNWT currently does not include exit interviews as an important source of information to inform Indigenous employee retention, succession, and workforce planning. For employees, an exit interview is an opportunity to offer suggestions and feedback in areas the employer needs to improve. For the employer, exit interviews help the organization learn why employees chose to leave and gain insight into the employees' experience during the time of employment.

Committee considered that exit interviews are good corporate practice. The structure and timing of exit interviews can be well adjusted to situations. The structure of these interviews can be open, for example, to allow the employee to speak about matters of choice. The timing can also be flexible and be of the employee's choice or held six or more months after the employee has left.

For the government to understand where improvements are needed, getting feedback from past employees is a most valuable source of information that should not be ignored. Committee recommends that the GNWT develops an exit interview process with Indigenous employees that is non-threatening and culturally safe.

Further, committee heard from witnesses that an increasing number of Indigenous persons have no desire or aspiration to be employed by

the GNWT. Similarly, committee also heard of a growing sentiment among Indigenous employees who are deciding they no longer want to work for the public service. The reasons for this are varied, but overall, witnesses said this is primarily because many Indigenous employees do not feel valued, supported, respected, or even trusted by some of their colleagues and/or supervisors.

Recommendation 8: Committee recommends that the GNWT:

- Requires all departments to conduct exit interviews with all Indigenous employees, including interns and summer students.
- Ensures exit interviews with Indigenous employees leaving a department are conducted by Indigenous staff of the Diversity and Inclusion Unit.
- Requires all Public Service Annual Reports include a section with an analysis of why Priority 1 employees are leaving the public service.

8. Incentives to Attract, Train and Retain Youth and Students

Committee heard loud and clear that -- oh, I am reading somebody else's part, Mr. Speaker. I would like to pass to the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh to complete reading this report. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: You're welcome to read that if you want. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8. Incentives to Attract, Train and Retain Youth and Students

Committee heard loud and clear that Indigenous youth are the future of the NWT. Incentives to attract, train, and retain Indigenous students by developing practicum and co-op placements within vacant GNWT positions, and transitioning students from Aurora College into GNWT jobs, are essential to increasing Indigenous representation and retention across the GNWT.

Committee heard about the need to track the number of Indigenous youths seeking public service employment under programs such as the Schools North Apprenticeship Program (SNAP), Summer Student Employment Program, and internships in all communities.

Committee believes that advertising youth development in small communities, recruiting Indigenous students, and allowing more time for students to apply for job postings, will help increase the number of Indigenous youths working in their home communities.

Recommendation 9: Committee recommends that the GNWT work towards increasing the participation of Indigenous students in all programs, grants, and contributions focused on youth, by:

- Advertising the availability for youth development and making it known in small communities.
- Creating recruitment campaigns in small communities so youth can participate in existing programs and apply for positions.
- Having an advocate for youth and students in each department.
- Creating and tracking hiring targets in all communities for Indigenous youth seeking public service employment under programs such as SNAP, summer students, and internships.

And further, that the Department of Finance re-structure the Summer Student Employment Program to:

- Allow a more extended period for students to apply; and,
- Require managers to hire Priority 1 summer students and deplete the Priority 1 candidate list before considering non-Priority 1 students, ensuring not to leave one Priority 1 student candidate without summer employment.

9. Ensuring Cultural Safety, Support, and Advocacy

Most submissions and comments outlined the need to support Indigenous employees in the workplace. Residents described this support as ideally coming out of a team approach with Indigenous individuals helping new employees feel safe in the work environment and assisting with career advancement.

The committee gave much thought to the recommendation for the GNWT to require each department to have one Indigenous employee support person. Committee also heard concerns about retaliation and the dysfunction of the appeals process. To avoid potentially targeting one designated employee in a department, committee looked to the existing

Diversity and Inclusion Unit and the recently created Indigenous patient advocates positions.

Committee heard from people in all regions about the need for more support to be made available for Indigenous employees in the public service. As a result, committee considered that a new position should be created that is dedicated solely to providing additional support and guidance to Indigenous employees to help them flourish in their jobs.

To accomplish this, committee suggests that the government use the newly created Indigenous patient advocate position within the Department of Health and Social Services as a template for establishing a new advocate position offered to Indigenous employees in the public service.

In addition, committee finds that the best avenue to provide additional support to Indigenous employees is to work with the existing Indigenous Employee Advisory Committee within the Diversity and Inclusion Unit under the Department of Finance. Supports offered should include counselling services, support for addictions, and all supports should use trauma-informed language and practices.

Recommendation 10: Committee recommends to the GNWT that all departments have in place support for Indigenous employees, and:

- Look to the Indigenous patient advocates positions implemented by the Department of Health and Social Services as a model of how to provide support.
- Work with the Indigenous Employee Advisory Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Unit to provide support.
- Offer pathways and leave to access counselling and addictions services.
- Apply trauma-informed language and practices as a norm.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pass this to my colleague for Yellowknife North, Mr. Rylund Johnson. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON:

10. Housing and Education as Determinants

Several witnesses mentioned housing and education as determining factors for potential and interested Indigenous employees choosing a public service career with the GNWT.

Housing - Housing is an issue because of the low to no vacancy rate in the regional centres and the Yellowknife rental housing market. Several witnesses commented on the difficulty of securing a residence as a critical barrier for Indigenous people to pursue jobs. Committee heard that when the Affirmative Action Policy started, many activities and programs supported individuals. The GNWT went out of its way to get people through the various process levels and supported and hired where possible. The GNWT also provided housing in cases.

This removal of the housing offer, combined with the decision to create market housing, means limiting the number of people who may apply, resulting in losing Indigenous employees in the applicant pool. Yellowknife is very costly. Witnesses noted many Indigenous members are struggling with paying their bills and that GNWT needs to go back and look at the old practices and how GNWT supported Indigenous staff. It was suggested that GNWT decide whether to hire Indigenous workers and make it happen.

Education - Education was mentioned as the other big barrier. Committee heard that education and employment are interconnected. Improving training opportunities for Indigenous candidates would remove the most significant barriers to increasing Indigenous employment. Small communities in particular are seen to be at a disadvantage compared with the capital city of Yellowknife, with many communities losing students to dropping.

Social passing is perceived as a distinct aspect hindering students from qualifying for government jobs. Committee heard of students who graduated from high school but would be shy to apply for jobs, thinking they do not know enough. Witnesses noted that GNWT oversees learning outcomes in education for kindergarten to grade 12 and pushes out grade 12 graduates at grade 8 or grade 9 level. Students are proud to graduate and then realize they don't qualify for a job with the government or post-secondary education.

Improving and increasing relationships between schools and potential GNWT employers was mentioned to committee as a potential pathway to contribute to raising public sector employment. For example, the "Take our Kids to Work Day" initiative held every November for grade 9 students could be extended to include other grades to ensure that

youth in every school gets to visit a GNWT workplace. Committee heard that attention needs to be given to developing opportunities that move Indigenous employees into jobs. The premise is that if practices and training take place after hiring Indigenous applicants, the training can be targeted to the employee's strengths.

Recommendation 11: Committee recommends that the GNWT include in its Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework:

- Support in finding housing at the new job site for Indigenous employees relocating to take a government position or move within government.
- Provide a moving allowance for Indigenous employees relocating to other communities.
- Offer education leave to help Indigenous employees to finish any education that was not completed before employment, with the guarantee to remain in the public service and at a minimum return to the same job level.
- Offer education leave to Indigenous employees to support their career goals and interests and help expand their opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations report on Indigenous Representation in the NWT Public Service. Members thank everyone who shared thoughts, opinions, and recommendations with committee. Committee looks forward to the government's response to these recommendations.

Recommendation 12: That the Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the GNWT responds to this report within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 51-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations report on Indigenous Representation in the Northwest Territories Public Service be received by the Assembly

and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 51-19(2) will be referred to Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1475-19(2):
TALTSON HYDRO

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the infrastructure Minister had talked about the Memorandum of Understanding with the Taltson Hydro Expansion and referenced all the members of that MOU. However, as I said in my statement, there was one nation who has not signed on to the MOU, which I'm concerned about. Can the Minister explain if she shares that same concern, yes or no, and why? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member is referencing Salt River First Nation who made the decision to withdraw from the MOU. The Salt River First Nation is an important party that we would like to engage with on a potential business partnership alongside with our other Indigenous partners. The steering committee memberships have kept a seat at the table under the MOU for Salt River First Nation if they wish to return. We also offered some briefing for the new leadership on this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this project is extremely important to the community of Fort Smith and all people of the NWT. Delays in this project could occur if there's no communication with this group. As the MLA for Thebacha, I would be very concerned if this happened. Does the Minister agree, yes or no? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, we have engaged with the Salt River First Nation and we will continue to engage with them going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, this project is probably one of the most important projects on green energy for the NWT. This is a major priority in reaching our emission targets for 2030. Therefore, as the MLA for Thebacha I've supported this project wholeheartedly so we must ensure that there are no roadblocks with the success of this project. Does the Minister agree with that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's two yeses. We agree that this is one of the most important green energy projects here in the Northwest Territories. It's a project for which we will continue to work hard to advance and is key to both our ability to both reduce emissions in the future as well as support resource development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this project could be a win-win situation for not only the residents of Fort Smith and the broader South Slave but for the whole NWT, thus we must ensure that communication occurs, and we must carry out our mandate items.

Will the Minister work with Cabinet to ensure that this project continues to be advanced and we will work with the First Nations that are most affected by this project, especially the one nation that has reserve lands bordering that dam. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I agree that this project could be a win-win for the residents of Fort Smith and the broader South Slave and all of the Northwest Territories. We continue to engage with our Indigenous partners and First Nations to try and advance a business partnership that makes sense for all the parties involved. When the time comes, we will also fulfill our consultation obligations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1476-19(2):
EMERGENCY FLOOD ASSISTANCE
PROPERTY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the flooding that happened in Hay River last year was devastating to many. We saw some people lose their homes, businesses, incomes. We've seen the impact on mental health, physical health, and quality of life. In each of these items -- each of these areas come with a cost financially, emotionally, physically, and mentally. And as well, Mr. Speaker, the building season in Hay River is short so it's very important that the Minister and his department connect with those parties that I mentioned in my statement because they need to get after their solutions to mitigate, you know, current and future damages.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the -- or does the Minister -- or will the Minister confirm does the federal government's disaster financial assistance arrangements allow for property acquisitions, and if so, what portion is federally funded? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal DFAA program allows for acquisitions of property through a buyout. Disaster assistance reimbursement is provided to all provincial and territorial governments, including the GNWT, based on a sliding scale. All jurisdictions are responsible to pay any costs over what is reimbursed by the federal government. Historically the GNWT has been reimbursed for its disaster costs between 70 to 85 percent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, has the Minister considered property acquisitions as a mitigation option for Hay River residents, and who would be responsible for purchasing the properties; would it be the GNWT or community government? In some of the areas we're talking about leased land and titled land. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT Disaster Assistance Policy does not have a provision for buyouts but there is existing provisions that achieve similar results. The decision on whether to rebuild in the same location or a different location is one that is made by the property owner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, has the Minister's department given consideration on how property acquisition costs would be calculated if we were to proceed with them? Would it be

based on fair market value or similar to what is currently being done under DAP. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With anticipated increase in climate change-driven disasters, the GNWT and other provincial-territorial governments are exploring buyout options but this approach has significant implications for communities and residents and further policy work will need to be undertaken in consultation with community governments in this approach. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's important that this government connect with the people that have been impacted because they're sitting back there, and they are dealing with Pathfinders and other people as well, who are doing a great job, but at the end of the day they want to be able to hear from the Minister, hear from, you know, deputy ministers as well.

So will the Minister commit to a face-to-face meeting with those residents of Paradise Valley and the Riverview drive property residents to hear concerns and solutions on how to move these files forward? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Municipal and Community Affairs staff have been and continue to communicate and meet with residents of Paradise Gardens and the Riverview Drive as assess their options. Given that the sensitivity and confidential nature of the financial consideration of these discussions with individuals, this is normally an operational matter that's better addressed by residents with Municipal and Community Affairs directly. However, in saying this, I've received a number of letters from residents in those two locations, and as well with numerous conversations with the MLA from Hay River North and Hay River South about the importance of me getting in there and having that opportunity to meet with them, so I will agree to meet with the individuals and with the Member -- both MLAs from Hay River North and Hay River South, and we're trying to do it mid April. So we will work with both MLAs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1477-19(2):
REGIONAL STUDY OF LOCKHART
ALL-SEASON ROAD

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Premier as I seem to

get different answers from different Ministers on whether this government intends to plow ahead with an all-weather road project during a regional study.

So, can the Premier tell us whether it is the intention of this government to submit land use permit and water license applications for the Lockhart All-Season Road that will undoubtedly trigger an environmental assessment while a regional study is underway. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct that to the Minister of Infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker..

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government's mandate includes commitments to increasing resource exploration and development as well as making infrastructure investments, including the Slave Geological Province Corridor. The advancement of this project is a priority by which the entire 19th Legislative Assembly, and I will commit to continue to advance this project. It's our government's intent to continue advancing the planning, the design, as well as the regulatory work for the first phase of the Slave Geological Province Corridor, the Lockhart All-Season Road while recent -- while the recently announced regional strategic environmental assessment is coordinated and conducted by Canada. The federal minister's decision clearly respects that existing projects can and will continue to advance through this robust environmental assessment and regulatory process while the RSEA is undertaken. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President, I want to thank the Minister for that. Of course I didn't agree with the 19 priorities identified by this Assembly, and I think it is probably safe to say that not everybody in this room would agree with every one of them as well. But I think some of the issues of the timing of the work with the so-called Slave Geological Province Road is a requirement to spend the money by a certain point in time. There has been a lot of slippage in this work and I don't see why the funding arrangement could not be changed to allow for more time or even reallocation of this money to something else like the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

So, can the Premier tell us what the restrictions are for the federal funding for the Slave Geological Province Road and whether a request to extended timelines or reallocate the funds has been made. Mahsi Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A \$40 million cost sharing agreement for the environmental review of the Lockhart All-Season Road and planning for the remainder of the Slave Geological Province Corridor to the Nunavut border was established under the 2019 Transport Canada's National Trade Corridors Fund.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement includes a current agreement end date of March 31st, 2025; however, the GNWT is currently working with Transport Canada to amend this agreement to end at March 31st, 2028, which will align with the end of the current National Trade Corridors Fund program. This funding is specific to the advancement of the Slave Geological Province Corridor Project and cannot be reallocated. Again, this is a priority of the Assembly that we all set at 19th Legislative Assembly, and I will continue to advance this project, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister. Of course, I am not opposed to collecting data but triggering an environmental assessment while a regional study is going on? That's ridiculous. I am concerned that this government seems to think that it's a good idea to have a regional study as requested by the Tlicho government yet push ahead with a road at the same time that will have irreversible impacts on caribou. So can the Premier tell us what is the point of doing a regional study if a separate environmental assessment is triggered for the Lockhart All-Season Road? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is better suited for the Minister of ENR. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the regional study and potential EA for the Lockhart All-Season Road has two different purposes. The regional study is intended to look at the impacts and benefits of the multiple activities in the region and make recommendations for decision-makers to consider. A regional study will not replace land use planning or environmental assessment process, but it can inform those processes and improve their efficiencies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister. It seems like it's a real hot potato over there. No one wants to answer the questions. But, of course, we ask questions; we don't actually sometimes get answers. But this government has not done enough to protect and serve caribou. We called out Alaska for allowing development in the camping grounds of the porcupine caribou herd, but we didn't do the same for a gold mine in the calving grounds of the Bathurst caribou herd on the Nunavut side. So can the Premier tell us why we failed to protect the Canadaing grounds of the Bathurst caribou herd, we fail to identify and protecting habitat on our side of the boundary, and continue to bull doze ahead with a road that will have irreversible impacts. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to actually read my notes here. So you'll get a longwinded answer here. Mr. Speaker, ENR has worked closely with Indigenous governments and other co-management partners to protect key habitats for the Bathurst herd. The collaborative development Bathurst caribou range plan supports habitat conservation areas of important caribou habitat, as well as using the mobile caribou conservation measures commonly known as MCCM in the core Bathurst area. ENR provides funding and support to Indigenous governments to identify important Bathurst caribou habitat, which will be used to help inform habitat protection. ENR participates in environmental assessments and land use planning process in the NWT and Nunavut to minimize the effect of development across the range of shared herds. ENR works with the mountain provincial diamonds to file the use of the mobile caribou conservation measures in the field and working with blue STAR gold in Nunavut to assess the effectiveness of MCCMs at their site. Mr. Speaker, ENR is also working with Rio Tinto exploration and Tlicho government to mitigate impact to the caribou from their aerial geophysical exploration projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1478-19(2):
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS -
CONTRACTING

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. Can the Minister tell us how the department is ensuring their RFPs are advised early enough in the new fiscal year to get work done during the upcoming short building season. How is industry being engaged in this conversation. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department are doing -- we're doing infrastructure in different ways to be able to help reduce some of the carryovers working with the contractors to ensure that we get our tenders and our information out so that we can have timely projects happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always really frustrating to ask how things are being done to then just get an answer that they're being done. So I'm just going to leave it at that. But that's quite an odd answer. Can the Minister explain if projects are looked at as a whole both within her department and across the entire GNWT to see if there are savings to be had by planning these projects together. These could include maximizing their buying power by ordering bulk materials or sharing labour and transportation costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, we are looking at different ways of doing this. For example, enhancing some of our project tracking tools, enhancing some of our project management with best practices. We are staggering out some of our projects in future years where possible, working with our Department of Finance as well to look at our procurement, find historical data. Mr. Speaker, I could go on. I will not other than to say, yes, we are doing that. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that the myths's department is doing something. Can the Minister advise if her department is examining the cost benefit of prepurchasing and shipping materials in ahead of time for future projects. So not only looking to maximize benefits by sharing between projects, but also being foreplanning, or preplanning proactive to see whether or not materials could be brought in at a time that the winter roads are in place or the barging is happening so that they're ready to go once the grounds thaws and work can be done. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, throughout the fiscal process, we do our capital plans in the fall so that contracts can be in place in time for summer barging as well as our ice road seasons. Before we can lose a half a year on any projects is at a minimum. We cannot enter into negotiations, RPFs, contracts until our infrastructure acquisition plan is approved every fall. We face capacity issues as well, Mr. Speaker. A number of our contractors that are available to do the work as well, they have same issues on trying to source material and finding workers as well. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain how often she consults with stakeholders who enter the RFP process? I want to make sure that we're actually giving our contractors time to meet the needs of the contract. If that contract doesn't come out until April, they have missed the window for winter roads and, you know, knowing how the barging goes, I doubt private industry wants to rely on that. So can the Minister explain how often is she actually meeting with industry stakeholders about RFPs. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it all depends. I mean, we meet with contractors if and where possible. We have staff that continue to have dialogue with -- we as leaders in this government have meetings with Indigenous leaders, and we talk about some of the projects that advancing into the regions. So we do have discussions. And, you know, if the contractors have issues, they contact the department, and if they need to, they will -- we will have those discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1479-19(2):
POPULATION GROWTH

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of finance today. Mr. Speaker, in the GNWT's response to last year's motion to match Canada's population growth, Cabinet said part of its population growth strategy is to retain residents that the NWT already has. How is the GNWT working to identify why NWT residents are actually leaving the territory so that they can specifically address what these reasons are. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly am also following the statistics that we get quite regularly on updates about population change. Mr. Speaker, I just want to note one interesting fact is we've actually seen an increase in international net migration into the territory. The birth rate, as I think the -- that was reported yesterday tends to remain fairly stable. So there are some interesting things to draw, and I do want to assure folks we certainly do keep an eye on that as well. As far as what we're doing to -- what we're doing to keep people aware of what's happening and why this is a good place to be, I can speak from the perspective of finance, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of efforts being made in the Department of Finance to demonstrate why it's a good employer, which is certainly the biggest -- one of the biggest employers here in the Northwest Territories. And looking also, again, as an employer at whether we can be doing more to look at why people do leave the Northwest Territories. And a lot of that work does happen right now at the three mines. Thief tried to do exit interviews to look at. And, Mr. Speaker, in short, there's such a myriad of reasons, it becomes difficult to target just one, other than to tie it to look at what it is overall in the territories that does make this such a great place to be, and that is a lot of the work we do in this House to try to continue programs and services that are available to residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the Minister will commit to investigating what can be done here a little bit farther. There are avenues and I think easy accessible avenues where more exit interviews can be done for GNWT employees. I think that there is more that can be done to give other residents who don't work for the government feedback on why they're leaving. And another interesting category that I find is people who are saying I've decided that I plan to leave within the next X number of years. One such example is someone who reach out to me and said we've decided we're leaving within the next five years; we're done. But we're giving ourselves a little bit of time. It would be interesting to know what is compelling these people to leave the territory. Is there something that would actually just change their mines and get them to stay, and if so, can we pull out those themes and address those things specifically. So is the Minister willing to look at territorial wide exit interviews. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as it is, there's

actually a requirement or an expectation for the Department of Finance for GNWT employees to institute an exit interview process. That's part of the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework. We are expected to undertake that work and to have that ready to go in 2023-2024. So in that sense, that much of a commitment I can certainly make. And, Mr. Speaker, I know when there was some of these news articles came out the other day, I had an opportunity to speak with the other department, ITI that I'm responsible for. And looking there too all whether we could perhaps work with the business community at why there may be changes, why people might be selling businesses, or looking to leave. So I don't disagree. I'm not sure how far of a commitment I can give to the Member here on the floor other than to say that there is some discussion happening right now with the departments, different departments at what we can be doing to reaching out to various parties and stakeholders in the community and certainly would be happy to hear those stories directly as we are figuring out what other routes and avenues we can take directly to reach out and to find out what more we can do to keep residents here and attract new ones. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure right about now it's 5:17 in Toronto and someone is driving home, wishing that they weren't spending an hour and a half on the road and wishing they knew where to go and be there was opportunities for them to get wherever they needed to be in five minutes. And so I'm wondering if the Minister of finance is interested in putting together a targeted marketing plan to let fellow Canadians know what wonderful things the Northwest Territories has to offer and what opportunities they can come up here and take advantage of right away. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was a fairly intensive marketing campaign between 2010 and 2014 called come make our mark. It did have some successes. It certainly had a high number of inquiries. It had a high number of positive responses from business communities who said they were aware of the campaign that they had people coordinate -- coming to them because of that campaign. But it was a very expensive campaign to run, Mr. Speaker. And I don't necessarily know just how many more folks on the ground we actually have as a result of it. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly -- I'm not saying no, but I do think there's some more looking that needs to be done at what was done before, did it have the impacts we wanted it to before we necessarily commit to another

marketing campaign. That said, Mr. Speaker, the days of social media certainly have evolved. So I do hope that there's some room here where we can give a better response, a more positive response to that question in the coming -- in the coming time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do remember that campaign. I remember it being based on different people in the territory who were from different regions across Canada, and their faces were plastered in their home town, and it was so and so moved to the Northwest Territories kind of thing. So can you -- is my memory of that campaign come make your mark in the territory just like your friend from our home community did. But I don't move somewhere or have an idea of moving somewhere. And I've been here a long time, I'll admit that. But it's because I love the North. And you don't generally decide to up root your entire family because Jim or Bob or so and so lives there. It's something else is attracting you there that talks to you and what that place has to offer for you. And so I think that there's room for us to really sell all of the Northwest Territories has to offer, especially with some of the changes that have happened in the territory and also some of the things that have been here for absolutely ever that we want to be able to share with the world. But my last question for the Minister, Mr. Speaker, is when people visit an NWT tourism booth -- and I believe that there was an NWT tourism event here in Yellowknife, but right before the pandemic that we all got to go to, and there was a three day experience; there was a beautiful massive I think 20-foot booth that people could go and really experience the northern lights. It was a very interactive experience, and it's exciting. And then you'd walk up to a human resources booth, and it's generally an eight by eight booth -- sorry, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't really sell it. It's got two people standing there, and if you want to ask questions, you can. So will the GNWT really take after tourism NWT and create some exciting booths that actually sell the territory when they go to these events. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm thrilled that NWT tourism is getting a great shout out, Mr. Speaker. They do have some pretty incredible materials. Mr. Speaker, ITI and ECE work together in terms of immigration. So as far as trying to attract people here -- and that certainly is being from an international for immigration perspective, but that, I think, can

influence what we're doing nationally within Canada as well. So let me take that away. I -- again, I've also seen updated materials from NWT tourism. I think think are, in fact, award winning materials on a national scale of what they have. Let me take that away. Again, as I said, I think we have responded already last year to the motion that was there. There was no lack of awareness of the need to grow our population, the labour market shortages across the board have made that real, and if there's an opportunity to perhaps share some of the materials we already have in a better way, then I expect that they'll be some appetite to do that if that can be easily done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

QUESTION 1480-19(2):
CARBON TAX

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so we all know now that come April 1st we're going to have carbon tax, whether it's GNWT or the feds. So I guess my question is is, you know, knowing that we never know what's the outcome of anything, and so what would be the implications, you know, if we did not have that carbon tax for April 1st? Like, how would that impact our businesses? Like, the things that we asked for as Regular Members, you know, like we have in our carbon tax, how would that affects the Northwest Territories by having the federal back stop? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister responsible for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if we don't have the opportunity to maintain the system we are proposing, what we're likely to lose is this: Firstly right now we're proposing a three tiered regional system. So the communities that are facing the highest costs will get the most rebate. And what we've calculated is that the average household will, in fact, arguably be get more back in a rebate through the carbon -- or the cost of living offset than what they will actually be paying. That includes with -- an indirect tax, and the indirect carbon tax is the amount that we've calculated based on statistics Canada's supply use to show us what it is that industries are paying, built that in so that consumers have that power to offset when businesses have to raise their prices. So the consumer retains the ability to offset that. We would also be losing what we propose is a ten percent cost sharing with communities, Mr. Speaker, which right now is not something that we would -- that we

are -- that we expect would come in if the federal back stop comes in. The challenge here, Mr. Speaker, I don't know necessarily what the federal government would do. I had an opportunity to speak with Minister Guilbeault. They were asking when we would be passing our tax, not coming to sort of rescue and not certainly making any commitments to me, but expecting that we pass this tax. And I hope -- certainly hope we do again so that, again, residents in the most vulnerable communities have that high est COLO payment so that communities get 10 percent sharing of our revenue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I guess, again, like, to my Member's statement, you know, this is a hard decision, and it's something that we all have to sit here and make, what's best for the Northwest Territories. So I guess more of a comment, I thanks the Minister, and I'll just leave it at that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Taken as a comment. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 1481-19(2):
COMMUNITY CARNIVALS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long session. We're coming to the end of the session here now, and through the next few days we're going to be really busy here. And through committee work, we've been busy as he will. Earlier, I had mentioned that we're having our, you know, annual carnival in our community of Dettah and N'dilo and Lutselk'e as well, and the invitation is basically for everybody. But I'm just thinking as well in Fort Resolution this coming weekend there are also the Fort Resolution Metis government is also hosting a dog racer, and they're going to be one dog, three dog, and there's going to be a rookie race of four dogs three miles, and trapper race, six dogs, one veteran, one rookie, and. So -- and if anybody that is in the neighbourhood, please join us in Fort Resolution this coming weekend, and watch out for these dogs on the road and have some good time. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. No questions for anyone. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 1482-19(2):
FREE CONTRACEPTION

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support MLA Cleveland's ongoing efforts to make sure we increase our population, but I don't want to do that on the backs of unplanned

pregnancies, Mr. Speaker, and especially, I think, unplanned teen pregnancies are a reality in the North, and we all know that they have long-term consequences, and people, you know, may not have access to the contraception to make their own choices. And so my question seeing now that BC has provided universal contraception, is this something that the Minister of health supports. 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. Mr. Speaker, I certainly support BC doing this. However, the NWT has only less than one percent of BC's population, and so it would be difficult for us to roll out a universal contraception program right here right now. But there's an election coming up. So it could be an election issue.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think what would be helpful in making it an election issue is just a few facts. And so whenever we talk about extended benefits in this territory, it's extremely complicated as the Minister's well aware. We've got Metis benefits, we got NIHB benefits, we got GNWT benefits, and we got a new extended benefits program rolling out as we speak. So I'm wondering if the Minister could take back and perhaps do an analysis of what this would actually cost and who presently do not have access to some sort of contraception coverage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can tell now -- tell you now about the inventory is that adult and youth residents of the NWT who are eligible for non-insured health benefits as well as the people who are eligible for Metis health benefits have access to contraceptives at no cost. There may be other residents who receive employee benefits or other third party insurance who may also have access to no cost contraceptives. The Member may recall last fall that we -- because we were concerned about the proliferation of syphilis throughout the NWT, installed 200 free condom dispensers throughout the NWT. So those are also available to the public to meet their needs. Now, a person in a small community, a woman in a small community who wants an oral contraceptive could get that from the community health nurse as an interim measure until the doctor comes to visit. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 1483-19(2):
SALE OF HOUSING UNITS

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the housing Minister consider transferring ownership of all housing units in the Tlicho region and other regions as well that are owned by housing NWT to the long-term tenants? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for asking the question. This is an opportunity for our current tenants that are occupying our public housing units. We do have a homeownership program here in the Northwest Territories that recognizes our long-term tenants as well. And through that program, we have a three to five year forgivable loan program that we have established. To date, we had 40 interested applicants, and we've approved 20 of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of these houses are old, like, they're from 60s, 70. I just want to ask the Minister what are they using to determine to sell to transfer those units. Is it assessed value, or fair market value. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the sale of these units, we do consider the age and condition of these units as well too. We do get into the communities and we complete housing assessment as well. Some of these units do require improvements, and we do provide that opportunity as well too the tenants that we would -- we would look at repairs and renovations prior to transfer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm if housing NWT is afraid to let go of or sell any of its assets, such as its aging housing stock because the department is department is afraid to lose any operations and maintenance funding. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, this is not an issue within housing. This has not been brought up. We do have a hundred unit roll out that has -- that is now -- we see construction in the smaller communities right now. We have been working very strongly as well with the Indigenous governments throughout the Northwest Territories

addressing the housing knees as well. My drive within the portfolio is to get rid of the communities that were built in the 1970s and look for clients that are able to maintain and operate their own units as well with whatever supports that we are able to provide. I welcome all those applications coming forward, and look forward to tenants that are wanting to have the units transferred and become homeowners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, there are a lot of housing from the 60s and 70s that are being -- that are being renovated at this time. Instead of doing that, what the Minister should be doing is focusing on building more houses. So with that, Mr. Speaker, it appears that housing NWT has some competing interest here. On the one hand, they claim they want to increase homeownership across the NWT, and they want to create partnership with Indigenous governments, but they are also afraid to receive a reduction in O and M funding and are therefore hesitant to sell, to sell off any of their existing aging housing stock. Can the Minister clarify what housing NWT priorities are. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Housing has been working very strongly with the Indigenous governments throughout the territory. We were able to acquire distinction-based funding. We do have working tables with specific Indigenous groups and governments throughout the Northwest Territories that welcome us to be working with them hand-in-hand. And also housing is not afraid of the declining CMHC funding is there. The opportunity oh out there for us to get new builds on the ground. We're looking for strategic new innovative ideas. We are working at the local housing authority level as well too with the smaller communities. And we do have strong representation at that level. We just finished our strategic renewal that invites all opinions, ideas that we have taken throughout the Northwest Territories to work more strongly with our tenants and is to work more strongly with our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Oh sorry, Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item four

on the order paper, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item four. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today we have a group of visitors from the Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We have Vivian Silverio-Chua who is the president of the association; Denise Bowen, the executive director; Anna Tumchewics, who is one of my constituents and she's the lead on the Nursing Profession Act; and Jan Inman, director of professional conduct. Thank you for coming.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Cora Lenore who is a band member with Liidlii Kue in Fort Simpson. Thank you for being here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Jan Inman and Denise Bowen. Both were my past nursing instructors, so they got to teach me all my good skills but now I'm fighting on this end. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions.

Colleagues, we will return after a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 898-19(2):
2022-23 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HYDRO CORPORATION AMENDED
CAPITAL BUDGET

TABLED DOCUMENT 899-19(2):
2022-23 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
POWER CORPORATION AMENDED
CAPITAL BUDGET

TABLED DOCUMENT 900-19(2):
2022-23 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HYDRO CORPORATION AMENDED
CAPITAL BUDGET

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: 2022-2023 Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation Amended Capital Budget; 2022-2023 Northwest Territories Power Corporation Amended Capital Budget; and, 2023-2024 Corporate Plan Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation and Northwest Territories Power Corporation. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 901-19(2):
CBC NEWS ARTICLE DATED MARCH 28,
2023 TITLED "NUNAVUT FLIPS STANCE ON
CARIBOU PROTECTION AGAIN, NOW
SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT BAN ON
CALVING GROUNDS"

TABLED DOCUMENT 902-19(2):
NUNAVUT PLANNING COMMISSION,
NOTICE OF EXTENSION OF TIME FOR
FINAL WRITTEN COMMENTS AND NEXT
STEPS FOR THE 2021 DRAFT NUNAVUT
LAND USE PLAN – APPENDIX 1, TEMPLATE
FOR RESPONSE/COMMENTS TO ANY
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following two documents: March 28th, 2023, CBC News story, "Nunavut flips stance on caribou protection again, now supports development ban on calving grounds; and, February 24th, 2023, Government of Nunavut Response to Final Written Submissions on the Nunavut Land Use Plan. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Member for Hay River South.

TABLED DOCUMENT 903-19(2):
GUIDELINES FOR THE DISASTER
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
ARRANGEMENTS, PUBLIC SAFETY
CANADA

TABLED DOCUMENT 904-19(2):
PUBLIC SAFETY CANADA, DISASTER
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ARRANGEMENTS
INTERPRETATION BULLETIN NUMBER 8,
DATE: JULY 2017, INNOVATIVE RECOVERY
SOLUTIONS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the following two documents: Guidelines for the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements, Public Safety Canada; and, Public Safety Canada, DFAA Interpretation Bulletin Number 8, dated July 2017, Innovative Recovery Solutions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member for Hay River South.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 78-19(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE
HOUSE TO MAY 23, 2023

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 30th, 2023, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that when this House adjourns on Thursday, March 30th, 2023, it shall be adjourned until Thursday, May 25th, 2023;

And furthermore, that at any time prior to May 25th, 2023, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, or at a time later than the scheduled resumption of the House, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Notices of motion. Member for Thebacha.

MOTION 79-19(2):
EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE TO CLERK,
TIM MERCER, FOR DEDICATED AND
EXEMPLARY SERVICE

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March the 30th, 2023, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, second by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that the Legislative Assembly express its sincere

gratitude to Mr. Mercer for his dedicated and exemplary service to this House;

And further, that the Legislative Assembly designate Mr. Tim Mercer as an honorary officer of the Legislative Assembly with an entree to the Chamber and a seat at the table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Notices of motion. Motions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Motions

MOTION 77-19(2):
REVIEW OF TERRITORIAL LAND LEASE
POLICY AND PROCEDURES,
CARRIED

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, WHEREAS the Territorial Land-Lease Only Policy states that the policy will be in effect in all areas where land, resources, and self-government agreements and treaty land entitlements have not been settled;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous governments have settled land, resources, and self-government agreements with rights to harvest and establish camps;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous people using a cabin for rights-based purposes should be exempt from lease payments for those rights-based cabins and camps;

AND WHEREAS the collection of arrears for rights-based cabins in leases by the Government of the Northwest Territories from Indigenous peoples should be considered an infringement of Indigenous rights;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous leaseholders should be allowed to surrender their leases if they choose so without extra costs or removal of any structures associated with their camps or cabins;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous people should be able to enter into a lease agreement at no cost, if they choose;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories management of unauthorized occupants should not impact Indigenous rights.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, second by the Honourable Member for Yellowknife North, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to forgive and pause the collection of current and

new lease payments and fees of all Indigenous cabin leaseholders immediately;

AND FURTHER, the Government of the Northwest Territories complete a review of cabin and recreational leases to ensure that there is no infringement of Indigenous rights through the collection of taxes and fees;

AND FURTHERMORE, the Government of the Northwest Territories develop more consistent land use policies that are representative of completed land, resources, and self-government agreements and ongoing land, resources, and self-government negotiations;

AND FURTHERMORE, the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I moved this motion for the following reason, and the most important reason I see to ensure is that our policies and legislation are consistent with final agreements, provisions, as well as the spirit and intent of those agreements. Those agreements I speak of, colleagues, were actually -- we are actually signatories to those agreements.

Mr. Speaker, an example of what I'm referring to is in my region. We have the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, an agreement that is constitutionally-protected, an agreement that provides for certain rights to Inuvialuit to access and establish camps as part of exercising their right to harvest, an agreement that we as the GNWT signed.

Some of the relevant provisions from the IFA include -- and I will be reading legislation because that's what we do in this House -- under section 14, wildlife harvesting and management,

Section 14.(6): This agreement provides the Inuvialuit with certain harvesting rights to wildlife in the Western Arctic region. The exercise of Inuvialuit rights to harvest is subject to laws of general application respecting public safety and conservation.

Then, in section 14.(23), the provision of subsection 12.(36), 12.(37), and 12.(38), and (40) apply with such modifications as the circumstances require to harvest of wildlife under this section.

Mr. Speaker, when we read these documents, like the land claim, we have to jump around to

understand and clearly interpret what is being said in other sections. So let's skip to the section that's being referenced.

In this section, it talks about the national park on the North Slope but let's remember 14.(23) said that in the section of that -- this applies to the section 14 that I just read, and then this section speaks to the Inuvialuit settlement region and historical harvesting areas.

12.(36): the right to harvest game includes the right to use present and traditional methods of harvesting and the right to possess and use all equipment reasonably needed to exercise that right subject to international agreements with Canada, is a party to the laws of general application respecting public safety and conservation.

12.(37): Subject to subsection (38), the right to harvest game includes the right to travel and establish camps as necessary to exercise that right.

12.(39): The Inuvialuit not need to obtain permits, licenses, or other authorizations to harvest game but may be required to show proof of status as Inuvialuit beneficiaries where, for the purpose of conservation, permits, licenses, or other authorizations are required by appropriate Ministers or on the recommendation of the Wildlife Management Advisory Council or the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. The Inuvialuit should have the right to receive such permits, licenses, or other authorizations from the local authority at no cost.

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement specifically states that the Inuvialuit need not pay fees to exercise their right to harvest, colleagues, including their rights to establish camps. We can't and should not be passing legislation or regulations that are inconsistent with final agreements and treaty rights.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak to the devolution agreement for lands and resources in the NWT. This devolution agreement is the father of our lands agreement as we did not have lands in the GNWT until devolution.

And in that agreement, the paramouncy 2.(4): Nothing in this agreement shall be construed so as to prevent an Act of Parliament from prevailing over territorial legislation to the extent of any conflict between them. It speaks to Aboriginal rights and interests. It also has a section where it states conflict with land claim agreements or self-government agreements.

2.(36): In the event of an inconsistency or conflict between this agreement and a

settlement agreement or a self-government agreement or a land claim agreement within the meaning of the section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982, the settlement agreement, self-government agreement, or land claim agreement shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency or conflict.

How much more clearer does this need to be for GNWT to recognize these rights already exist and apply? Why are we not following the final agreements and the devolution agreement; both agreements we have signed. Surely the people of the Northwest Territories and the Indigenous people of the NWT expect the government to follow and uphold them. I do, as an MLA elected to this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of fees being charged to Indigenous people to access lands and establish camps that they've been using for thousands of years is just plain wrong.

I understand the importance of land management. I understand the importance of knowing what is happening on public lands. What I don't understand or accept is why we are purposely going against negotiated and finalized agreement provisions. If people want to enter into leases, that is totally up to them. I'm not against leases. I'm against charging Indigenous people fees for those leases. In my view, if an Indigenous person wants to enter into a lease, that's totally fine, but it should be at no cost as per our agreement with Indigenous people.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a time for GNWT to try and renegotiate rights that have already been done.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ask ourselves when we are dealing with things of these nature, where are we going with this and when is this going to stop? While lease fees may seem like not a big issue, in fact it is. There's a larger question that we need to ask ourselves. Do we continue to go against final agreements and treaty to collect fees from Indigenous people? Do we continue to send Indigenous people to collection and threaten them with legal action for exercising their Indigenous rights? Why such a heavy hand, Mr. Speaker? Is charging of fees and going against agreement that we as government made as part of the definition of what GNWT thinks reconciliation is with Indigenous people? I think one way of starting on the road to reconciliation, a basic and easy way, is to simply follow these existing agreements, get rid of these fees for leases for Indigenous people. They were here long before us and have negotiated agreements and are in process of negotiating agreements within the spirit and intent of peace and friendship. We

have to honour those agreements and treaty rights. This must apply across the North.

Mr. Speaker, whether this is just growing pains of devolution, and maybe it was unintentional, but it's time for us to fix this. And I hope my colleagues from across the floor hear me and have heard what I've had to say, and if not, and if they wish to discuss this further, I welcome all discussions and debate on this topic.

I also hope that Cabinet will ensure that if and when regulations for the Lands Act come before them to ensure that they are using the UNDRIP lens and ensure that they do not go against any current agreements and Aboriginal land rights.

I also ask for a recorded vote, and I ask you all to support this motion, and let's stop chipping away at Indigenous rights and start by stop charging fees for leases to Indigenous people of the North for exercising their right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to second this motion. I've spoken to this issue a number of times in this House. Presently, right now, if you own a million-dollar home on the Ingraham Trail, you pay the exact same fees and you are under the exact same rules as a multigenerational cabin in the Inuvialuit settlement region. Mr. Speaker, land seizures is the same thing, and they clearly are not the same conversation. We need to separate those out. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of ways we can treat rights-based cabins. There is a number of creative solutions, and it's going to depend probably on the Indigenous government and the Indigenous person in question. One simple solution may be fee simple title for that harvester. Another case may be a new type of Indigenous tenure. I would suggest a 99-year lease with nominal fees and perhaps it could be transferred only to the Indigenous government itself or a fellow rights holder. Mr. Speaker, perhaps we have to go identify these leases and simply give them to the Indigenous government in that region so that it's no longer a public lands issue.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps some of these cabins should have been included in the initial final agreements in the first place. But here we are 40 years later after settling a land claim and this issue is still not resolved, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, until that issue is resolved, until there is an agreement between those Indigenous governments and the GNWT how to approach these leases, we should not be

charging fees and we should not be taking these people to collections.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Lands knows this all too well. He knows there are people who entered into leases and then their Indigenous government has told them not to pay those fees. They have told them they do not have to pay those fees, and then we ruin their credit because they are listening to what they believe is their Indigenous right and what is their Indigenous right, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Lands take a bare floor -- bare minimum view of what the current right to occupy land is. They say it does not include a right to permanent structures. Mr. Speaker, we have multigenerational trappers and harvesters who have permanent structures on public land. That is their right. We have to accept that. We have to move beyond this bare minimum approach to Indigenous rights. And the first step is pausing those fees and pausing those collections and resolving this issue once and for all, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I want to thank the Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes. I want to thank her Indigenous government for bringing this up. And I encourage the Department of Lands and the GNWT to listen and provide a solution to this. There is creative ways that we can make sure we are not ruining the credit of our Indigenous harvesters and trappers, and we are not putting them in the same bundle of rights in the same categories as settlers who want leases. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's worthy to stand up today to support my colleagues from Inuvik Twin Lakes and Yellowknife North. And while I don't speak a lot about lands in this House here, and I'm thankful that they do, I do speak a lot about people and at the end of the day this comes down to people.

In the history of Canada, Mr. Speaker, we've often expected that Indigenous groups and Indigenous governments routinely need to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to see that their rights are respected and upheld. This is a costly, lengthy, and exhausting litigation process that is not fair to the people of Canada who are Indigenous people to this country and have their land settlement agreements that have already been worked on, have already been agreed upon, and have already spent decades and decades working on those agreements.

It is often the Supreme Court of Canada who, at the end of the day, needs to step in and then force Canadian jurisdictions to uphold and respect the intent of these treaties and these land settlement agreements. And this motion calls on the GNWT to pause the collection of current and new lease payments and fees for all Indigenous cabin leaseholders and to review their policies and procedures to ensure this government is upholding the words, efforts, and commitments that were made under these land settlement agreements.

I'm asking the GNWT to do what my colleague is asking and to recognize what is being asked ultimately by this motion and the Canadian precedents and expectation that Indigenous people constantly travel to the Supreme Court of Canada to see their rights and agreements upheld. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the mover and the seconder for bringing this motion forward. And I'm casting my mind back to the 18th Assembly when we dealt with the Public Land Act. And how this got started was we, of course, through devolution, GNWT inherited some federal land, at least the administration of it, and of course it had had its Commissioner's lands already. What the Minister of Lands of the day told us was that they were going to bring forward a bill to basically try to combine some aspects of the administration of those two pieces of legislation, to make it more consistent. But, poof, about a year later a Public Land Act arrived on our desk that wasn't just a kind of, you know, integrated some aspects. It basically was a repeal of the other two pieces of legislation and replaced. It's still not in force. But the preparation and development of that bill, there was very little public engagement around it and zero involvement from the Indigenous governments. And that's the root of this problem, Mr. Speaker, is the way that that bill was drafted. There was zero involvement with the Indigenous governments where this can and should have been fixed right from the start. Committee identified this because I just quickly scanned the SCEDE report on Bill 46. Committee identified this as a problem. We told the Minister that this was a problem. We tried to fix it. Indigenous governments identified it as a problem. But they wouldn't fix the bill. So this is the root of the problem, was it was not a co-drafted piece of legislation. Our government refused to incorporate the pre-existing rights that were already entrenched in land rights agreements. They refused to recognize and put

that into the bill in the first place, or we wouldn't be here talking about this.

So I'm fine trying to fix this through the regulations, but the problem is with the law itself, Mr. Speaker, and that could and should have been fixed in the last Assembly, and that's why we're here still talking about it. So I want to make sure that this Cabinet actually fixes the problem with the legislation, not just the regulations. And if we had adopted the proper kind of UNDRIP lens that we're about to probably do maybe later in the life of this Assembly, that would prevent this from happening again, and we will also have the legislative development protocol with the Indigenous governments as a result of the Intergovernmental Council work. So this is a holdover problem from the last Assembly. It can and we did try to fix it in the last Assembly. The Cabinet of the day would not allow it to happen, and that's why we're in this mess right now. So I'm -- I'm really -- oh, I'm going to be curious to see what the response from this Cabinet is on this problem. And they need to fix the legislation, not just try to do it in regulations. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the mover and the seconder for bringing this forward. I think, as an Aboriginal born and raised in Tuktoyaktuk, I think it's pretty shameful on what's happening to any Aboriginal person across this territory, having to pay to be on our own land. And I always like to say we were here first. This government was formed in 1967 and at that time, we've been already here 40 years. And now we're having to have to pay to be on our own land as an Aboriginal person across our territory. I'd build a cabin anywhere I want and let them try to stop me in regards to that. The Inuvialuit land administration, we take care of our own in regards to -- in our land claim group and in our land, and we have 7(1)(a) lands that's allocated to the people of Tuk that we have them and the same thing with all across in my riding. I really think that Cabinet should try to work together to get this sorted out and why charge Aboriginal people fees to be on our own land? It's shameful in my -- the way I see it. And I think we should try to work together to get this resolved before this -- we're done sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a former chief of the Salt River First Nation and was there for 14 years, I fully support this motion because I feel very strongly that the land claims settlements that are in place prevail over any other -- any other law, as the mover has explained in her explanation. And I firmly believe that this is the only way that we are going to go ahead with reconciliation, and I think that the government has an opportunity to make that right. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this motion, and I'm very happy that our non-Indigenous colleagues on this side of the House are also supporting our rights issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I -- as a former chief as well for the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, I also support this motion. Prior to 1990, the Dene-Metis claim, the GNWT wasn't really at the table. They weren't part of that process. But when it fell apart in Dettah in the fall of 1990 that gave way to the creation of other claims in the North, the Gwich'in, Sahtu -- Gwich'in. And prior to that, though, my colleague from Inuvik had talked about this motion. And their claim goes back even further. And those claims that are spirit and intent, you know, when we make -- like, when the treaty was made. You know, they had the chief and the Crown shaking hands. And that's the spirit and intent that we talk about, the treaties. And, again, we got to be careful too here is that, you know, this government, ever since they got devolution, they -- devolution was essentially the GNWT land claim agreement leading to provincial government. They want to become a province. And it's concerning. And my colleague also talked about this could be a challenge in the Supreme Court of Canada. And at the end of the day, these claims will prevail. And we have treaties. That's how this whole thing derived at. Don't forget this government here is born in 1967. You know, they weren't around when the treaties were made, and so we got to remember that. And so this motion here, I support this motion wholeheartedly as well. It's -- it hits home. In my riding, I mentioned this morning, that we have people that are being taxed and cabins and, you know, fees were outrageous now, and it went from Canada to the GNWT and the rates just continue to go up, administration fees have gone up and so on. Like, I mean, I get calls from elders a few months back on this. So, Mr. Speaker, I will support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Lands is currently undertaking a broad review of the land management regime with regards to the traditional use of camps and cabins on public land. We're engaging with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations across the NWT to look at an appropriate regime for camps and cabins that are used to support Aboriginal harvesting rights. Lease fees for such camps and cabins on leases are part of that broader discussion. This may be resolved through engagement and collaboration with Indigenous government partners, which is in process. I'm committed to complete this work and anticipate that discussions with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations will result in new approaches to the the management of rights-based cabins and camps that meet the interests of Indigenous governments and the GNWT. I will continue to work with my colleagues, work with my Cabinet colleagues to further consideration and prepare a response to this motion concerning shorter- and longer-term solutions collaboratively developed with the GNWT departments and Indigenous governments and organizations. Mr. Speaker, because of this, Cabinet will be abstaining from this vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. I'll allow the mover to close off debate. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleagues, and I hear the Minister. But, again, I just want to repeat I'm glad that they're working on all of this, and the motion is there to stop the fees and pause the fees so we have no more Indigenous people going to collections while you figure this out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Member has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The

Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave.

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Hay River North.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 11 in favour, zero opposed, seven abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 77: NURSING PROFESSION ACT

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 77, Nursing Profession Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

BILL 78: WASTE REDUCTION AND RESOURCE RECOVERY ACT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 78, Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Justice.

BILL 79: AN ACT TO AMEND THE JUDICATURE ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 79, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 86: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2022-2023

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 86, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023 to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 87: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2022-2023

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present to the House Bill 87, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) No. 3, 2022-2023, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 88: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Three times a charm. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present to the House Bill 88, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2023-2024, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 86: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2022-2023 CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 86, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I am going to be voting against this supplementary appropriation. It contains a \$27.75 million settlement on the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link.

The original cost of this project, as we learned yesterday, Mr. Speaker, was \$81.3 million. It has now ballooned to \$194 million. That's more than twice the original cost estimate. And I think part of the problem, Mr. Speaker, is that this was done as a P3, and P3s lead to these kind of unexpected, unanticipated, conclusions. And this isn't the first time we've had to have supplementary appropriations brought forward to this House to settle these really complicated arrangements and deals.

So I oppose this, and I think that in approving this supplementary appropriation, it really kind of rewards poor project management. If there had been any effort on the part of the Department of Finance to try to absorb some of these costs internally, find other areas of efficiencies and so on, I might be a little bit more generous in this. But I'm just not prepared to allow this expenditure of money for a project that can and probably should have been done differently. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be voting against this supplementary appropriation. Mahsi.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, P3s have a purpose, and I've always said that in this House. They're -- you know, you're not using capital dollars to advance something in small communities or regional centres, and hopefully not always in the capital. I am -- I don't like what happened. That was inherited by another -- they inherited this with another government. And, you know, governments have to inherit bad files sometimes. I've inherited a lot of bad files when I was at Salt River. And I will be voting for the supplementary for that reason because I'm very much about making sure that we move forward with this government in an economic way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the

principle of the bill. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when we were looking at this bill and also talked about it, you know, we -- you know, in my riding, I've been here for just over a year, and I put forward ideas about how we could try to work to improve the lives of our people in our communities. I talked about winter road. I talked about housing, infrastructure. Again, you know, when I sat here yesterday listening to adding all these sups in terms of increasing these budgets and everything else, no problem. You know, it's like, we've been, you know, bang every time these guys want money in all these other departments, they come back to us and ask us for more money. And it's just back and forth, you know, not a problem. But when I have stuff -- I asked stuff for my riding, and I've been asking, and the train left the station. I even told the Premier, throw some luggage on there, you know, a couple million dollars for a winter road for my riding. Nothing. Housing infrastructure in terms of inspecting all the homes in my riding, nothing. So here we are again, nothing. So now you're asking for my support, you know. And on sups like this, I can't support this motion. And I'm going to vote against it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do have issues with this as well too because we've been advocating -- we've been talking here in the House since I got on, about housing. We have housing crisis in small communities. We need a lot of housing. And improving the health care system in the small communities. We have a lot of aging infrastructure as well, especially in Tlicho region. And I advocated, and my previous MLA too, advocated for a new school in Tlicho region, and we have issues with youth suicide. So with all this, I don't think I'm going to support this bill as well myself. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 86 has had second reading.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 87:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2022-2023,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 87, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) No. 3, 2022-2023, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 87 has had second reading.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 88:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 88, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2023-2024, be read for the second time.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 88 has had second reading.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23, 29, 60, 66, 67, 68, 73, and 76, Committee Report 42, 47, and 48-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681, 694, and 813-19(2).

Colleagues, by the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 813-19(2), Committee Report 42-19(2), Committee Report 48-19(2), Bill 60, Bill 66, Bill 67, Bill 73, and Bill 76. Mahsi. Oh sorry, can I do that list over again, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Go ahead.

MR. O'REILLY: I'm losing my mind here. I'll retract that, Madam Chair.

Committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 813-19(2), Committee Report 42-19(2), Committee Report 48-19(2), Bill 66, Bill 67, Bill 73, and Bill 76. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Does committee agree? Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee also wishes to consider Bill 60.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to resume consideration of Tabled Document 813-19(2), Main Estimates 2023-2024. Does the Minister of Finance wish to make a statement?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, when I attend federal-provincial-territorial meetings of Ministers, I am proud to tell colleagues from across Canada that we are in fact a perpetual minority government. I am proud of this fact because I can also say that we have always passed not only the operations budget every year but also, separately and additionally, a capital budget. These budgets may not pass unanimously but they pass through a consensus process of review, information exchange, and discussion. And when I describe the kind of expectations we entrust on MLAs to receive and hold confidential government information about departmental business plans and draft budgets, Ministers from other jurisdictions are surprised; and they are even more surprised when I describe the repeated negotiations that we undertake in order to pass these budgets. Madam Chair, I am proud of this system. It is only as successful and as strong as the efforts we all put in through active participation in the many briefings and reviews. We are here today because of the efforts that have been put into this process with respect to Budget 2023-2024.

Madam Chair, I realize that every Member here was elected to represent and work towards the betterment of the territory and its people. Our shared priorities are not only reflected in the mandate; they can also arise throughout the course of the Legislative Assembly or may find particular need or attention at different times. The consensus process of budget reviews and negotiations allows us all to have a timely role to respond to new, enhanced, or highlighted areas of need.

I want to extend a sincere thank you to the work of Regular Members to review the main estimates and provide their perspectives for improvements to the budget. A special thank you to the chairperson and deputy chairperson of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight for their involvement and responsibility in carrying out budget negotiations. Madam Chair, they have ably and represented Regular Members and without their work, the outcome today would not be the same.

We have agreed to enhance Budget 2023 with \$4.775 million in additional funding for several priorities. And I am committing to bringing these additional initiatives forward in a supplementary estimates document in the May-June Session.

Homelessness

Housing Northwest Territories is prepared to bring forward its Homelessness Strategy. To support the actions under this strategy, I am

committing to including \$2 million in additional funding in 2023-2024. Housing NWT will use this one-time funding for application-based grants with special priority given to shelter service initiatives. I look forward to Housing NWT's comprehensive funding requests that will come forward as part of the next business cycle. I note that our shared goal for these funds is to see them expended by organizations or communities who are actively working in this space and who are well placed to ensure their effective and timely use.

Mental Wellness and Aftercare

I listened to the Members' concerns about mental wellness and supporting the standing committee's request for increased funding for detox and aftercare services in response to the Auditor General's report. And I commit to including \$500,000 in additional ongoing funding for a suicide prevention fund to be provided to Indigenous governments. I note in particular the recent publication of the Moving Forward and Healing Together Suicide Prevention Strategy by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, and I expect that funding to support the implementation of this strategy will be available through this enhanced funding.

Youth, Sport and Recreation

Excellent aftercare programs can play an important role in supporting the mental wellness of an entire family in addition to the programs' ability to support child and youth education. Participation in sport and recreation benefits all ages in many ways and plays a tremendous role in the development of youth into healthy adults. We are committing an additional \$500,000 in ongoing funding to support youth involvement in sport, recreation and youth development initiatives across the territory.

I note that we again have a shared goal to see this funding be application-based to ensure that individuals, families and community organizations are able to apply for these funds and ensure they are spent efficiently in support of those who need them.

Sustainable Living

Madam Chair, we understand the importance of sustainable living programs to communities and if the \$1.1 million already budgeted for the Community Harvester Assistance Program, or CHAP, is insufficient, we need to address that. Minister Thompson has asked the Department of Environment and Climate Change to review the program's funding, being mindful of the \$1.6 million in funding for complementary programs like Local Wildlife Committees, Take a Kid

Trapping, Hunter Education, Country Foods, Trapper Mentorship, Harvester Disaster Compensation Assistance, and the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program.

In support of this program review, we commit to adding \$1 million in ongoing funding to increase Sustainable Living programs.

Support for Entrepreneur and Economic Development

Members have made clear their support for the Support for Entrepreneur and Economic Development, or SEED, program, and we support their suggestion to earmark more SEED funding for the arts sector with a commitment to add \$375,000 in one-time SEED funding, bringing the total for arts-specific SEED funding to \$575,000 in 2023-2024.

Programs under SEED are currently under review and future funding requests will be part of the regular business planning process.

Emergency Response

The GNWT, through the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, remains committed to working with communities to determine community capacity for ground ambulance and emergency response services and to reviewing what the GNWT provides in support of these services. In hearing the concerns of Regular Members, I commit to providing \$400,000 in additional funding for communities to seek opportunities for training and to purchase equipment to improve their capacity to support ground ambulance services in the Northwest Territories in 2023-2024.

After a review of this program and the needs of communities is complete, future funding decisions can then be made through the usual annual business planning cycle.

Non-government Organizations Inflationary Increases

Madam Chair, no one is more aware of the inflationary pressures on government programs and services than I am, and I was especially supportive in the 2023-2024 Budget of taking into consideration these inflationary and other expenditure pressures as faced by non-government organizations that deliver programs and services on our behalf. We changed our approach in next year's budget by allowing departments to seek additional funding for inflationary impacts to non-governmental organizations through the forced growth process and, as a result, have proposed \$738,000 dedicated to helping organizations address inflationary pressures. These include

organizations who are helping health agencies, housing, and the Community Futures Program and Community Transfer Initiatives.

We are also helping departments with the wording for multi-year agreements with some of these non-government organizations. I confirm that those changes in process in allowing departments to seek forced growth for inflation on behalf of their program delivery partner organizations, and to sign multi-year agreements, will continue.

As stated in the budget, we are going further in changes in how we work with the non-government organizations by establishing an external advisory committee to better support non-government organizations.

Northwest Territories Power Corporation Board Composition

Madam Chair, an options paper is currently under development by Executive and Indigenous Affairs that proposes to amend the composition of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation Board of Directors. This will include an examination of the implications of appointing a board of independent professionals. This options paper will be provided to standing committee by the May-June 2023 session. Madam Chair, as I noted earlier, the changes highlighted here will be implemented through a supplementary appropriation in the May-June sitting.

And that concludes my remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor for general comments on the Minister's statement. Do any Members have any general comments before we begin the departmental summaries. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't have any prepared comments; I've got scribbled notes. I'm going to do my best to cover a number of areas. And I guess I just want to start by saying we don't really do a very good job explaining to the public what happens in this place. And I keep making that point again and again. And we always tend to think that we're the center of the universe in here but lots of other things are going on outside in people's normal lives, you know, picking up kids, arranging care for an elder or whatever. And in any event, there's a lot of things that happen behind the scenes. A lot of things. And I think we need to try to find a better way to explain what we actually do here. But we start discussions on the budget, the main estimates, back in September of the year before they come forward. And so there's an opportunity to

sit down, try to work and discuss with Ministers what they are proposing to do in their departments, the spending that takes place, and try to negotiate back and forth. Then we get the main estimates that are, you know, given to us in late December. You know, we work with our staff to better understand what changes have taken place from the business plans that we got in September. And then we, you know, try to sit down and begin a series of negotiations of changes that the Regular MLAs would like to see in the budget and in the main estimates. And, you know, sometimes it's a bit of a challenge even for us to agree amongst ourselves on this side of the House as to what the priorities should be and what we should be trying to achieve. But, you know, we do have a common and shared objective of trying to ensure that whatever additions are made to the budget are in the interests of all of our residents.

And as Regular MLAs, we cannot force things to be added to the budget. We can cut things, but we cannot force things to be added. So that means we have to actually sit down and work and negotiate with our colleagues on the other side of the House, and that's through the Minister of Finance and her staff.

And I do want to say that, you know, based on my experience in the last Assembly, that was a very difficult process in the last Assembly and I don't think that the Regular MLAs achieved as much as they perhaps could or should have. But in this Assembly, I think it's a different working relationship with Cabinet. It's a better working relationship, and I'm proud to say that. And I think we have a good working relationship with most of the Ministers, all of the Ministers. Sometimes it goes up, sometimes it goes down, but we generally have a pretty good working relationship. And we actually have a Cabinet in this Assembly that is interested in trying to work with the Regular MLAs.

So I do want to sincerely thank the Minister of Finance and her staff for the process that we did go through. And I can tell you it is exhausting. But it is productive. And I think we've seen the results here today, where the Regular MLAs, we've worked with Cabinet to increase the spending in the budget by \$4.77 million. It's not a huge amount, but I think it is a reflection of shared priorities amongst us all. Things like housing, things like sports and recreation, investment in youth, helping communities with emergency, you know, response, making sure that people can get out on the land in the interest of food security. These are important improvements to the budget and we should never lose sight of that. It's not a huge amount, and it's incremental, but

these are significant changes that have been made to the budget.

I do want to talk a little bit about some of the additions that have been made and -- because I think we want to ensure that everybody's on the same page. We are probably still going to be a little bit of a negotiating back and forth and exactly how some of these expenditures get down, and we will have an opportunity to review this in more detail when the supplementary appropriation comes forward in May-June.

So on the issue of homelessness investment, you know, I think the \$2 million needs to be thought of as an initial investment. And it's going to take a lot more to address homelessness in a more comprehensive manner, and we'll see the strategy soon. Hopefully, the public will see that as well. And it's going to require a lot more investment. There needs to be some recognition of the specific needs for youth and housing. We heard some of that from the Standing Committee on Social Development. So we want to make sure that this is just seen as the initial investment and that pilot projects, proposals, are eligible for this funding and that NGOs and Indigenous governments can also apply for this funding.

In terms of mental wellness and aftercare, the funding is really aimed at suicide prevention, as the Minister noted, and we want to make sure, again, that proposals are eligible for funding, that it's -- and we understand that the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is -- they have a strategy and they will probably be first in the queue and we commend that work. We want to make sure that the funds are available and will continue to be available through time for other communities and regions that want to do this very important work as well.

Sustainable living programs, I think we're good with increasing this. And as I said, this is really in terms of building greater food security for all of our communities. And we probably will look forward to working with our Cabinet colleagues to ensure that that money's invested wisely and in the best possible ways through the supplementary appropriation.

On the SEED funding, this is one-time funding so it's going to be up to future Assemblies and Regular MLAs on this side of the House to continue to push investment in the arts. And I think that also requires the funding that's made available to the arts. I think it needs to all -- and this is my personal opinion, need to all flow through a revamped and independent NWT arts council. So that's my own opinion. But we do need I think to increase our support for the arts. This is a small effort to try to do that.

In terms of emergency assistance, this is sort of one-time funding as the Minister mentioned, but we still have not dealt with the difficult and thorny issue of Crown-based ambulance services, particularly in smaller communities. I know the staff at the health centres are not allowed to leave. They cannot -- so it's up to the community and families to bring their people to the health centre for treatment, and that just leaves smaller communities in a very difficult situation. So we need a systemic fix to the issue of ground ambulance services in all of our communities.

On the issue of inflationary increases to NGOs, I believe the Minister has said that all departments will -- are encouraged to request forced growth and can make submissions to the financial management board. I think our view is that all departments should be required to conduct a forced growth review and make a submission to the financial management board, even if it's for zero dollars. Then at least you can see that each of the departments has actually considered the inflationary pressures that are put on NGOs. Right now, some NGOs got an increase, some didn't. Some departments got increases, some didn't. And it's really hard to interpret what happened. So I would encourage the Minister of Finance to require all departments to make submissions for forced growth in the future.

And in terms of multi-year funding, I hope that includes the provision for inflationary increases and the agreements themselves on sport and youth -- and I'm going to run out of time, Madam Chair. I think we have some interesting ideas about better supporting youth with some tours and visiting to their community with mentors. But we also want to make sure that regional sports events are supported, that there's the ability of individuals and families to access funding.

And lastly, on the NTPC board, this issue of public governance is a holdover from the last Assembly and needs to be resolved within the lifetime of this Assembly. So we very much look forward to getting that options paper, and I think there needs to be some public engagement around that as well.

But those are my comments, Madam Chair. Again, I reiterate my thanks to the Minister and her staff for working collaboratively with us to get some improvements for all of our residents. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I too want to commend my colleague on the

other side for her work and effort to work with us as Regular Members and with our chair and yourself to come to some sort of a solution here to feel like we were actually heard in what we want versus just being told no, there's not enough money, which I think becomes really frustrating on our side when we do see inefficiencies and such in the government to then be told that small amounts of money are not available to us for very important things that we know can be effectual, then to watch and see government waste on the other side. So I do appreciate that I think this Minister has really listened to us. And while I think I would like to have seen more, I know that there's only so much that actually can be done with our budget. So a little bit is better than nothing, Madam Chair. So I just wanted to say a few things around some of the concessions we got and that was, first of all, with the homelessness money. I want to make sure that that isn't money that just goes into a government sort of glut or black hole of administrative costs and actually find that money making its way into NGOs' hands as well as Indigenous governments' hands where I always feel that that is more effectively spent and managed.

And further to that, I do see more of a consideration through the four years of our term to putting more money into the hands of our NGOs and our partners, and I do thank the Minister and the government for that because I've said numerous times in this House that NGOs, Indigenous governments, communities governments, will make their money go much further, and the indirect benefits of having that money spent in the communities by those people are immeasurable and really can't be caught in any sort of budget spreadsheets. So I think it's something that we all need to keep in mind as we prepare budgets that for every dollar spent there could be six returning; we just don't see that as a line item.

I think another issue that is a big problem with the government, and I hope I see -- I'm seeing changes is the gatekeeping of these funds that we've asked for. So it's one thing to put all the money in but then if not -- the money isn't spent, great, you know, it's not doing anything. And I know there has been money left on the table for various funding pots that people can apply on. And it's always hard because people will apply, and then their project will fall through, and then that money sits in the budget looking like it didn't get spent even there was an intent to spend it. However, I think some of that speaks a bit to, like, flexibility of application processes, of reporting processes. And I've heard the government numerous times, particularly around suicide prevention, say that it's not onerous, it's one page, that kind of thing. But it's

a perception. So, and I heard a lot from this Premier when I was in Cabinet that perception is reality. And if they have the idea that, you know, it is something that they have to do and hurdles to jump through, they just won't do it. And it's not a matter of it being the easiest thing in the world to be done from a government perspective but if you're not getting people even coming to the table to have the conversation or look for the money, it's pointless, it's futile. So I think, too, especially when that money is federal money, I don't understand why our government wouldn't be more flexible in allowing people to access it. It's not their money and therefore we should be trying to get it out the door as quickly as possible. That being said, I do know that there are restrictions and measures put in place by the federal government around how money can be spent but then I think that's on Cabinet and Ministers to then go in and advocate for us properly with the federal government, to tell them that this doesn't work for us. And, really, I think that's an area where we could have a lot of improvement, especially as I hear the false flag of this is federal government process that's holding this money up.

So I just wanted to say that I do actually, though, despite that, see improvement in this area, and I hope that that will continue through and it will definitely be something that I would be pushing for in the conversation for the next Assembly, whether I'm here or not, but making sure that people are actually looking at the intent of programs and not the black and white A, B, C, D, E of the program, and this is how it has to be to be done. Let's be flexible, let's be creative. We're small, we should stop burdening ourselves with this, you know, crazy bureaucracy of hurdles and hoops. Instead we should be able to get our money out quicker and faster because there's less of us. So, yeah, I just want to say I think overall I agree with my colleague that, you know, there is a perception that this has been a very contentious Assembly and I mean, it has been, but I think if anybody wants to look around at the last year or two, there has been huge improvements. I've heard my colleague say numerous times that having been here in the last Assembly that this one is more productive, that this one is more collaborative, that we are working together, and -- though I can only speak for this side of the House, but I see that. And I see all of us putting aside our personal wants at times to support each other and our colleagues and that gives me hope. And it gives me hope that the Minister of Finance has listened to that and been receptive, so. That's my thoughts on it. I hope we continue down this path of change and that we don't see everything reverting back and that the Cabinet and government follows through on the promises that have been made

to our side of the House. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further comments before we begin the departmental summaries? Seeing none, thank you. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: No, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we have previously deferred the matter of consideration of departmental summaries. Members, we will begin the departmental summary for the Legislative Assembly so please turn to page 5 of your Tabled Document.

Legislative Assembly, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates \$27,655,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the department summary for Education, Culture and Employment on page 29.

Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$382,280,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for the environment and climate change on page 73. environment and natural resource -- oh, environment and climate change, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$124,309,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for executive and Indigenous affairs on page 119.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$21,994,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for finance on page 149.

Finance, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$337,534,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Health and Social Services on page 181.

Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates \$610,276,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will continue with the departmental summary for Industry, Tourism and Investment on page 221.

Industry, Tourism and Investment, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$61,476,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now continue with the departmental summary for Infrastructure on page 251.

Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$309,335,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Justice on page 293.

Justice, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$145,613,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Municipal and Community Affairs on page 331.

Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$185,681,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will now continue with the

departmental summary for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation on page 373. Please note the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is an information item and will not be voted on.

Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 813-19(2)? Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 394-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED
DOCUMENT 813-19(2): MAIN ESTIMATES
2023-2024,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 813-19(2), Main Estimates 2023-2024, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 813-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Tabled Document 813-19(2) will be recorded as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Committee, we've agreed to consider Committee Report 42-1(2), Report on Bill 66: An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act.

I will go to the chair of the special committee on government operations -- sorry, the Standing Committee on Government Operations for any opening comments. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 3rd, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

Committee sought feedback on Bill 66, and from that feedback committee was able to amend three clauses to make the bill more functional. The amendments made a clause-by-clause review reflect a resolution advocated by a nonprofit organization and to address transparency concerning deadlines and decisions to approved purchases.

The committee presented its report on the bill to the Legislative Assembly on February 27th, 2023. I would like to thank committee for its work on the review of Bill 66. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 42-19(2). Do any Members have general comments? Seeing none. Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 42-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 42-19(2), Report on Bill 66: An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act.

Committee, we've agreed to consider Committee Report 48-19(2), Report on Bill 68: An Act to Amend the Child Day Care Act. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development for any opening comments. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Child Day Care Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 3rd, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

In its review, committee was disappointed to find that the scope of Bill 68 was narrow. That narrow scope made it challenging to propose any full-scale amendments.

It was important to the committee to hear from the public on this bill because the committee is alive to the fact that day care legislation affects families in a real way across the Northwest Territories.

The committee received nine written submissions and six verbal presentations on Bill 68. The recommendations that the committee formulated were in response to a clear lack of trust and confidence in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

The committee heard from child care operators. The committee's recommendations also address complaints, appeals, retaliation, and privacy considerations that were brought up by child care operators.

Finally, the committee made recommendations that urge the department to innovate ways to improve the act and the current reality of day care in the Northwest Territories.

I'd like to thank committee for its work on the review of Bill 68, and I would also like to thank the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for its willingness to work with us on amendments to improve this bill. Madam Chair, I'd also like to thank the members of the public that came to committee on a regular basis over the course of this Assembly to talk about child care on numerous occasions. It was very much needed input and an input that we continue to encourage from the public. Individual Members, Madam Chair, may have additional comments at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 48-19(2). Do any Members have general comments? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, without reiterating everything that my colleague said, I also found this to be a very frustrating and disappointing bill to work on. I do also appreciate, though, that there has been the back and forth with the department and to try and come to some sort of a solution here. But I can't help be left feeling like this is yet again another instance of where a federal program or a federal idea, federal funding, is being pushed on us without proper advocacy from the government to the federal government to understand that it just doesn't work for us here. And there's been a real sense of division created through this bill between parents and providers, between day cares and day home providers, between the department and the providers. And as such, the minimal effects of this bill, or really what's going to be done by this bill in the limited scope, was not worth the damage, I feel, that it's created here. All I hear daily is of people looking for child care spaces. And then I hear there's supposed to be more coming and this is all going to be great, and it's going to help. And yet daily people are telling me about day homes that are closing or how, you know, as soon as they get pregnant, they need to start looking for someplace to put their child and such. And then I hear not only from providers of day homes but also the day care association itself that this doesn't work for them. So then I have to wonder when the department

is making statements that everyone's on board and everybody is good and it's going to really have this great effect, but yet all the people executing the work are telling me that's not the case. I find myself in a terrible position of having to figure out who's telling me the truth and given my history in this House, I think I know who is. So my concern here is by passing this legislation in which -- there's even things around complaint processes that, you know, have nothing to do with the federal funding in which this bill was put through under or that was sort of the impetus for it. So when I see that the department is looking to establish a quasi-judicial type system that allows a GNWT employee at a director level to be making decisions about people's livelihoods, I feel it's a very gross overstep of government reach. And I also look at it like when I look at who the providers are, it's women. There's many women of colour. With allegations of that coming from the department as well, that there's been specific targeting of people. You know, I just have to look and question why we're even talking about this bill at this point. Yeah, so I think I'll wrap it up there. But I feel that this has been a, I would say, a complete failure of a legislative process. And, yeah, I'm disappointed with it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other general comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't want to speak too long about this but I think part of the issue here was we were one of the last jurisdictions to negotiate an agreement with the federal government, and when it was signed, I think it was in December of last year, and of course one of the objectives of the federal government was to try to reduce fees for parents, try to institute basically some program of \$10 a day child care across the country. And given the timing of the agreement when it was finally signed and the need to get these caps or try to meet the federal objective, it led to I think some poor communications and sense of service providers being told what they could do.

So on the one hand, they're being told that they could not raise revenues. And then the next step was to actually try to improve the situation for staff and the training certification, the pay grid for them. And those are all good and noble things but if you're an operator, all you can think about is gee, now I'm going to have pay my workers more. So they're being squeezed at both ends in terms of the revenue and then being told that you're going to have to spend more money and there's no consistent or even clear messaging that support for the service providers is actually going to be increased in

any way to try to compensate for being squeezed at both ends. And I think there was a communications failure. And I think some of it's related to the timing of this but some of it -- now we're in a very difficult situation of trying to do everything at once, and the bill that came forward to committee is very limited in scope. As the chair said in his -- maybe not even the right way to try to rebuild some trust and confidence amongst operators and between operators and the department.

I do want to commend the department and staff for working very hard to try to rebuild some of that working relationship and trust and confidence. And I know that they continue to do that work. But it's a very difficult situation for parents, families, and the providers when there doesn't seem to be a lot of certainty for where this is all going. So I think we really need to improve communications. They probably need to devote more resources in terms of staff within ECE to this function as well and work more collaboratively with the service providers, and I think some of the recommendations are really aimed at trying to address those bigger issues and concerns that are -- go well beyond the scope of the bill. Thanks, Madam Chair.

And I -- sorry, I do want to thank the committee for all their hard work in trying to find ways to address the concerns and issues that were being raised, even if you couldn't -- if they couldn't -- they didn't have the ability to address it through legislative change, the recommendations I think try to find some creative ways to address some of these issues and come up with some solutions collaboratively with the department and the Minister. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further general comments? Seeing no further comments, Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, do you want me to wait until the motion's distributed to my colleague.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes, just give him a minute. All right. Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 395-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – RESTORING
RELATIONSHIP AND TRUST WITH EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SECTOR,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this

committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories

1. Form an advisory group, including representation from all parties;
2. Review the 2030 Early Learning and Child Care Strategy on the inclusion of child care operators in goals and visions;
3. Establish and share a Northwest Territories vision and mission of the early learning and child care sector, including principles and explaining where the federal child care agreements fit, requiring five-year reviews to check if the Northwest Territories is fulfilling its vision;
4. Conduct an independent review of the rollout of the early learning and child care agreement;
5. Conduct an independent review of the Child Day care Act; and,
6. Address the crisis of confidence by reconciling with the Northwest Territories early learning child care sector and starting with improving communication by increasing responsiveness to clients and establishing client service standards and committing to explaining processes to the public before implementation providing plain language materials and designating communication channels for operators to access early childhood education specialists and information.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 396-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – CLARIFYING
THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment improve and provide

clarity on how a person may complain about an organization's service to the public by

1. Providing guidance material for the complaints process to support parents and staff; and,
2. Developing a policy on the complaints process.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This was what I was referring to in my earlier opening comments. And just that I think that if there is going to be an establishment of some sort of a complaints process and, like I said, would give the staff within the department a lot of sort of control and influence over people's lives, that there has to be some sort of mechanism in place or process in place that everybody can refer to that outlines the investigative process. If we ever were to look at, like, the way that accidents are investigated under health and safety plans, there's a very clear way that you go about doing an investigation and I would assume it's the same in an HR or other type of process. So rather than it being some arbitrary thing in the Act that just gives some random power, the department must figure out a way to ensure that everybody's aware of that process ahead of actually having anything occur that would then start the process happening. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 397-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT –
COMPETENCY IN THE COMPLAINTS
PROCESS,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories

1. Provide investigative training to all staff involved in the complaints and appeals processes;
2. Make this training obligatory for all staff involved; and,
3. Build competence by ensuring that investigations are not vexatious and are appropriately carried out.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 398-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – COMPLAINTS
AND RETALIATION,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories ensures that administrative decisions are reasonable by considering the outcome of decisions and the process to come to the decisions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 399-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – REVIEW OF
APPEALS PROCESS,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review the appeals process in the Child Day care Act.

A. In the short-term with the view to

1. Identify and make improvements to make sure that the Act clearly outlines out appeals can be requested and considered; and,
2. Clarify how complaints and appeal processes are distinguished in the Act; and,
3. Recommend how administrative decisions are made fairly, consistently, and in accordance with the legislation.

And,

B. In the long-term, with the view to

1. Fully review the appeals section;
2. Include comparison with other jurisdictions; and,
3. Result on a modernized appeals section.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been all. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 400-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – COST OF
CHILD CARE,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories include in its vision of a sustainable child care system information on the following:

- How to support the early learning and child care sector in its transition;

- How to embrace NWT realities without disadvantaging any of the existing parts of the child care sector;
- Considerations for licensing and supporting that proportion of the child care sector constituted by for-profit day homes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 401-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – NEEDS OF
SECTOR,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories recognize that the actions started under the federal agreement have initiated systems change in the Northwest Territories early learning and child care sector and require immediate action by the Government of the Northwest Territories to reduce the volatility that may unfold;

And further, identify shortfalls in funding targets outside of the federal agreement focused on Northwest Territories needs including, but not limited to,

1. Capital and operating funding allocations;
2. Incentive loans for new buildings and retrofits;
3. Campaign action attracting potential child care educators;
4. Bonus for child care certificate completions; and,
5. Strategies to support professional development for ELCC workers to allow training out impacting existing work schedules.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order -- oh, Member for -- or to the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, just sort of reiterating what I said before. I think this motion is really key for the government in order to ensure that we don't lose any more spaces. I know that there has been talk about new spaces being created. But those were all in the works before this issue around the child care funding and the subsequent changes. You know, I do think that there is an opportunity for this relationship to be repaired. However, it is going to take, I think, the will of the department and the Minister to want to recognize that regardless of how they feel about for-profit operators and such, and who deserves this funding, they have created and set in motion a wave of closures that, you know, is not going to be stopped at this point if nothing is specifically done. So I don't think can wait on anything further. And I think that there really needs to be proactive action now to fix the problem versus waiting and seeing what happens, because it'll take a lot more to create new spaces again once they're gone than to save the ones we have already. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I didn't get my hand up fast enough there. No, I wanted to speak to this one because this is definitely one of the most important recommendations as far as what we heard from child care providers across the territory. One of the biggest concerns, especially from not for profit organizations, is their ability to keep operating when we have, in previous legislation, set a limit to what that cost increase can be for what they are charging parents on an annual basis, and then we are coming in and we are setting a wage grid that will show, or dictate rather, what the workers that work in these operations need to be paid. And so the concern there is what if all of a sudden insurance goes through the roof, which it has, how do they turn around and pay for that? What if all of a sudden a child care operation loses a boiler? This is something that can absolutely happen. There are unexpected expenses that come up and how do people keep their doors open when they don't have a mechanism to charge for these shortfalls. And so understanding how people are going to keep the doors open when their costs -- sorry, for when what they are charging is dictated by the government but then also what they are paying out is dictated by the government. And so this is a huge concern.

That second piece there, incentive loans for new buildings and retrofits, when we look at lessons learned from Quebec, when they introduced their very heavily government-subsidized child care, one of the things that they saw was all of a sudden way more people were accessing child care and all of a sudden, there was way more demand than spaces for child care. That is exactly what we are seeing in the Northwest Territories right now. And one of the key things that lessons learned have said out of Quebec are build as many new spaces and not for profits as you can right off the bat in order to meet that demand. And our infrastructure funding in the territory is not enough to actually build the new spaces that this government intends to build across the territory.

Sorry, Madam Chair, the last thing that I just quickly wanted to say is that that last piece of allow training without impacting existing work schedules, if all of a sudden people need to close their day homes in order to do training, we will have another huge problem on our hands. So the government, I can't stress enough, this is a very important recommendation and I look forward to hearing a response. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 402-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT – CONSULTING
ON REGULATIONS AS AN OPPORTUNITY,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories view the obligation to consult on regulations as an opportunity for innovation, inclusiveness, flexibility, and reconciliation, and be open to considering detailed feedback. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I don't think I can tell you how many times in the last Assembly we tried to get into legislation some obligations for Ministers, Cabinets, department, whatever, to actually consult in the development of regulations. So this is a really significant concession that committee negotiated with the Minister, and I'm just not sure that people really realize how significant this is. You know, we do this with Indigenous governments now, and we're required to do it, but to get this for a sector, this is really good. And to get it actually in legislation, not just practice, because I think this government's made some improvement in its practices but it's still kind of hit and miss about what they go out for, the quality of the so-called "what we heard" reports go from atrocious to pretty good sometimes. But lots of need for better reports on what we heard. But this is a very significant concession, and I want to thank the Minister because I know he was on this side of the House for pushing for some of this in the last Assembly, and this is really good. And I think we need to do more of this in the future. But also think of the public. And I keep planting those seeds with my friends on the other side. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. No, I would also like to extend a huge amount of gratitude to the Minister and his department on this one, this one, and as far as paying credit where credit is due and being able to say some nice things to the other side of the House, especially when we pick on them every day.

We did the same type of amendment in Bill 40, the Medical Professions Act from social development in conjunction with the Minister of Health and Social Services and her staff, and that is where this amendment and, really, the implementation of it in a lot of our work has come from. And so I want to first thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for agreeing to that. And then also thank the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and his staff for following us down that road and implementing that. Hopefully we'll see that in more legislation going forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 403-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT –INCREASING
CHILD CARE PLACES,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee urges the Government of the Northwest Territories to

1. Be innovative and identify options for increasing child day care spots at no or little cost including, but not limited to, changing the ratio of educators to children under two years of age by reducing the age of the infant category to children under 18 months of age. This would create additional spaces for children 18 months and older.
2. Completing negotiations with Housing Northwest Territories to allow licensed day care -- sorry, licensed child care to operate in public housing;.
3. Creating subgroups or sublicenses to allow child care centres, school-based child care, and child care offered in homes to offer licensed spaces;.
4. Create substitute lists or licensing to backfill so that if one educator gets sick, not all six kids must stay home;.
5. Create additional lists or licensing to enable before and after school day care , including evening care so that educators who have time can take additional hours.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I first want to start by thanking -- thanking some of the constituents in my riding that do run day homes who actually were the source for some of these suggestions, particularly which really struck me was, you know, making the change of the age limit. That one being very critical to my constituents. But also the one that really struck me that I hadn't thought about was the substitution list, which the day home providers are saying that basically because they know that they're sick day will then result in, you know, six other people or potentially parents having to stay home from work if they were to choose the day, that they often find themselves

working when sick or, you know, finding themselves at the end of burnout because they don't have the opportunity to take the time when they need it. And so I think there's some really easy low hanging fruit, as everyone likes to call it, in this recommendation that could easily be done that would create a bit more of sort of a network or community for day home providers.

I grew up living next door to a day home provider and the amount of work and effort that this woman put in for the children in her care, there is no way she was making a profit off of it. If anything, she was providing Christmases to children that didn't have it otherwise.

So having visited some of my constituents' homes, I recognize the absolute level of dedication and effort that they've put in to creating these amazing spaces for their clients and their children. And there's some very -- but yet they're not treated in the sense of another type of an industry where they would be given the respect, I think, that others would have or even just sort of the supports, like I said, to be able to go and network and find -- they're not people that are showing up at the Chamber of Mines -- or sorry, the Chamber of Commerce meetings and such. So, really, I think the onus is on the government and the department to help them figure out how to network and support each other and, you know, if someone is at a lower level, they can pick up slack in another area and vice versa, giving people a break when they need it.

Another really key piece was when this all came out, one of the things that I wanted to see was to see grandparents being paid to take care of their children, to see the unusual day care sort of -- or child care situations of the North recognized in the legislation because we so often have situations where parents are, you know -- or grandparents or such are stepping in, aunties or uncles or a sister might take care of her children and her sister's children at the same time because she is already staying home, and I think that needs to be recognized, and I think that needs to be compensated for, particularly as this bill really -- or this \$10 a day day care is really more for Yellowknife and regional centres. So that's a way I feel to make it more equitable to small community members to access this federal funding and to get some sort of relief when it comes to their own child care needs because just because they don't fit into the stereotypical day care or day home in Canada. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 404-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 48-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON BILL 68: AN ACT TO AMEND
THE CHILD DAY CARE ACT –RESPONSE
TO RECOMMENDATIONS,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained within this report within 120 days.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 48-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 48-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Bill 68: An Act to Amend the Child Day Care Act.

Members, we will take a recess.

---SHORT RECESS

Committee, we've agreed to consider Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act. I will ask the Minister of Finance to introduce the bill.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am here to present Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act.

This bill addresses amendments to update the Northwest Territories carbon tax rate schedule

to meet the revised federal carbon pricing benchmarks from April 1, 2023 to April 1, 2030.

The sole purpose of Bill 60 is to keep the Northwest Territories carbon tax rates in compliance with the federal government's carbon pricing commitments, including not returning the carbon tax revenues into the economy in a way that negates the carbon price signal.

Passage of Bill 60 is a singular choice: Either we keep control of the carbon tax legislation or Canada applies its system. By passing Bill 60 the GNWT retains flexibility to design a made-in-the-North solution that reflects Northern priorities and circumstances. That flexibility allows the GNWT to continue to adapt its rebate programs in response to feedback from the public and from discussions within the Legislative Assembly.

I cannot stress enough the advantage of keeping the Northwest Territories carbon tax system so that we can have the flexibility to collectively make changes on the use of carbon tax revenues. Already, we have improved the Cost of Living Offset design because of the concerns highlighted by Regular Members.

Under the proposed regional Cost of Living Offset, residents who live in higher cost of living areas would receive a higher Cost of Living Offset payment. With our own carbon tax system, we have the flexibility as a Legislative Assembly to further refine the Cost of Living Offset as or when needed.

We have listened to Members' concerns about the implications for community governments and are proposing to provide an annual revenue-sharing grant to community governments in an amount calculated annually at 10 percent of net carbon tax revenues to help in their efforts to adapt to climate change, reduce reliance on fossil fuel, and support overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

We are providing large emitters with an offset that does not run counter to the federal criteria but offers a customized, more flexible treatment of carbon tax for northern mining operations at different times in their lifecycle. This will allow key NWT industry to remain viable and competitive; both by maintaining certainty for existing operations and by ensuring prospective new entrants have some mitigation against otherwise overall higher costs of exploration and development in the North.

We have heard the concerns that the GNWT is not doing anything to support businesses and other organizations. Different businesses face a variety of different impacts and options in

relation to fossil fuel use, ranging from those who will see minimal impacts to others who will be impacted and may have an incentive to make significant capital investments in order to change their manner of operating.

Accounting for such variety fairly through some form of publicly funded grant or credit would be very difficult. Instead, we are tying support business by returning carbon tax revenues to residents through the Cost of Living Offset that includes an amount for indirect carbon tax increases; in other words, for the expected increases in costs consumers will see if businesses pass their costs on.

We are also continuing existing GNWT grant programs to help businesses reduce carbon-based fuel consumption. Similarly, non-government organizations pay varying amounts of carbon tax depending on their activities and support to offset the carbon tax would be better addressed through other grant and contribution programs that recognize the overall needs of individual organizations or activities but which are not tied to the carbon tax.

I recognize that Members have also requested to put the enhancements we are proposing for residents in high-cost regions and the revenue sharing for communities into the legislation. In order for that to have been possible, the bill as drafted after the November public hearing would have had to include that as part of its scope. The rules do not permit me to change the substance of the bill to that extent at this stage. However, the proposed regional Cost of Living Offset would be in regulations, and I propose to investigate how to put the revenue sharing for communities element of this revised approach into the regulations rather than policy in order to give greater emphasis on the importance of our consensus-based approach.

I do ask, Madam Chair, that we pass Bill 60 so that we retain both the responsibility and the flexibility to adhere to the federally-imposed carbon pricing system in a way that meets the needs of the Northwest Territories. That concludes my remarks. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, please, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, on your left is Kelly Bluck who is director of fiscal policy. And on your right is Bill MacKay, the deputy minister of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now turn to the chair of Standing Committee on Government Operations, the committee that reviewed the bill for any opening comments on Bill 60. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 1st, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. Committee held a public technical briefing from the Minister of Finance and department officials on November 25th, 2022. Following that, the committee sought public feedback on Bill 60.

Committee heard serious concerns from the public about the carbon tax approach. Committee presented a report with five recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on March 1st, 2023. Those recommendations were moved as motions in Committee of the Whole on March 8th, 2023, and all motions were carried.

I would like to thank committee for its work on review of Bill 60. Individual Members may have additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 60. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the cost of living in Nunakput is outrageous and, you know, the Bill 60, we're going down the road that we're unable to use subs to get our backlog, I guess, in funding to try to provide service. You know, our heating fuel and gas prices across the North over the last year, heating fuel and diesel and gasoline, all gone up in Nunakput. Heating fuel has gone up 25 percent, averaging \$2.46 a litre. Diesel fuel, is up 24 percent, averaging \$2.75 a litre. Gasoline is average up 12 percent at the pump, averaging \$2.37 a litre.

This is going to have a rippling effect, Madam Chair, in regards to food pricing across the North and especially in my riding because I always said, you know, my riding, it's almost we're penalized because of where we live. Price of food is going up. We can't afford to buy food. Nunakput has the highest food price index in the NWT. Enough money -- we don't have

enough money for food. We worry about our food for our families and our relatives. The people in Nunakput are worried about having to pay for food. Almost half of the residents in Nunakput are worried to do that because they don't have enough money for food all the time, or often. We have to hunt, hunt to eat. 67 percent of households in Nunakput eat country food half the time or more. Our power prices. Our power prices continue to go up across the Northwest Territories. The cost of power in Nunakput is almost the highest rates in the NWT. For example, Sachs Harbour pays \$2.02 and \$0.30 a kilowatt. You know, our housing situation, I always worry, is insufficient housing is poorly and leaking energy. Residents pay for poorly built public housing that are 40-year-old plus. Housing NWT renovations in 2023 addressed only approximately eight percent of the housing needs in the region. Housing NWT will never renovate units fast enough to keep up with the housing issues and problems that we do have. Thirty percent of Nunakput houses are overcrowded. Inflation across Canada is at an all-time high, and in the NWT it's higher; higher than Canada by seven percent. Our household income in communities, Nunakput has the highest cost of living, the difference in the NWT is 18 percent of people in Nunakput are considered to live low incomes. Nunakput is over \$50,000 below average for family income in the NWT but the price of all the goods and services in our region is the highest. Over ten percent of families in Nunakput live less than with \$30,000 a year. 344 people in Nunakput live on income assistance. That's 17 percent. And there's little employment opportunities in my riding. Over 20 percent of people in Nunakput are unemployed.

Impact on Nunakput communities on Bill 60, the estimated total household carbon tax burden for Nunakput is average \$899 for 2023-2024. And if this goes, it's 17 percent and 4 percent every year after. People in Nunakput already can barely put food on the table, find employment to earn income, to pay for heat, their power and their housing. How can we tax people that have nothing; nothing to give? Small communities can't afford the carbon tax, Madam Chair. Residents shouldn't be penalized for where we live. The GNWT is not providing enough offsets. Cost of living offset to step up is the right direction. Some people are still struggling. My elders, the single parents, the widows, the low-income residents are struggling, and us down here we don't see it because you never lived it.

Ottawa and the GNWT isn't doing our Beaufort Delta any favours. Ottawa is squeezing us financially with this tax while it imposes a moratorium and blocks resource development

in my riding, and we're doing the federal government's dirty work. We should let it go to the backstop, federal backstop, then we're not painted with that brush. The GNWT has to step up. If Ottawa insists on our tax, it should impose a tax throughout the backstop. The GNWT isn't taking a meaningful control. If it has anything to do with the North, it should be paid for cleaning the air because we're at 0.05 of our carbon in the territory and across the country.

Madam Chair, the bill will impact all residents of NWT, especially those in the small communities in the High Arctic who already have the highest cost of living. Madam Chair, I oppose Bill 60. And I encourage anyone who's concerned about the raising the cost of living to impact Bill 60 to contact their MLA, like I asked.

You know, for myself, whoever supports this bill, we should almost be ashamed of ourself. The pressure you're putting on people across the territory in the small communities, it's unbearable. I see it every day when I'm home in my communities, people are struggling. And like I said before, there's no sups to bail us out for the communities.

You know, control -- I'd rather have Canada in control of this made-in-the-North. I worry. Us as Regular Members have the -- we could put this down and let the federal backstop take place. Ten percent of climate fossil fuel and diesel. We have nothing else to do use but diesel in the far north. There's no choice. Can't use sunlight; we're dark six to eight months of the year. And, you know, it's a worry -- it's really worrisome because I see families struggle and go without. And I think sometimes, you know, some of this carbon tax, I think our government worries more about the mines than our people that we represent that's why we're here. These people have no sups to help them at home and can go somewhere for money because everybody's tapped out and can't lend because they're in trouble themselves because the high impact of what we pay.

The people I represent can't afford to live in regards to where we're at and, again, we're penalized because of where we live. This Bill C-60, I don't want to go down this road. I'm in full support of killing the bill, and we're in a position where us as Regular Members could do that but, you know, some of them want to support this bill and made-in-the North, us having control. We can't control what we have already in regards to the spending and sups that we're going through. How could you take this on now? Another burden for the Minister. Let it go to the federal backstop. Let the federal government do their own work and let them do their dirty work.

I'm really -- it's really upsetting in regards to I've been worrying about this. In regards to this bill coming forward, all I could say is I did my best in regards to to try to kill the bill. And I hope these -- my colleagues on this side of the House, all Members support us in regards to killing the bill and let the federal government do their own work. And it would be a lot better because at the end of the day, what happens in this House we all got to wear it, and we'll be painted with that brush that we supported Bill 60.

And, Madam Chair, I just, you know, once this vote comes through, I want a recorded vote when the vote comes down because this is going to effect everything in the months to come. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Any other general comments? Has the committee agreed that -- oh, Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, there's been lots of discussion on the carbon tax, whether we should let it go and let it go back to the feds. And, you know -- so when I look at it, I guess I ask myself, you know, when it comes to the residents of the NWT where many are really considered vulnerable, is the carbon tax just? The simple answer is no. Like, we're reliant here in the NWT on fossil fuels and we -- and, you know, the cost of transportation, the cost of everything, is just that much higher. And for some reason the feds don't see it. But the reality is that the legitimacy of the federal carbon tax was upheld in the Supreme Court. So it's there and it's law. Whether or not the bill gets voted down or not, the tax stays. One way or the other it stays, unfortunately. And if the bill is voted down, the federal backstop of course will kick in but from what I gather, and in doing some research, is that we're just going to end up in the same spot. We're going to see that -- you know, we're going to see the feds maybe do the collection but they're going to give us the money back and say, here, you guys deal with it. And that's what's going to happen. And so we're just going around in a circle.

So by keeping -- I guess the other thing is is that by keeping the authority to manage the funds, we can -- you know, we can -- I would hope that this government would look at putting more funds into the smaller isolated communities up north where the costs are that much higher. In the south, we're lucky. Like, our cost of fuel and power and all that is a lot cheaper, and I would like to see, you know, more of the money go into the North and help the people who actually need the help.

Can we trust the federal government to look after our best interests? I don't think so. You know, we've got this carbon tax in place for the Northwest Territories and what have they done about it? Nothing. You know, and like my colleague said that there's very -- you know, there's -- the amount of emissions is very, very, very little here. And that's an issue.

Can we trust those on the other side to do the best? I would hope so. Because if they can't do a good job for the people of the Northwest Territories, at least us on this side have an opportunity to make change. We can change people out if we want. So I think that's important to note.

The other thing is, is that if we maintain authority over the carbon tax, there's been talk about embedding it into -- embedding the use of it into legislation on the use of -- well, what we're going to use it for into legislation like they do in the Yukon. And something like that wouldn't happen this year but it's something that we could ensure that, you know, we put it in legislation and that the money is going to where it belongs, and that's the people that are really, really having trouble.

So when I looked at this whole thing, I looked at the legality of it. I looked at what the feds would do. I look at what we're doing with it. You know, I've talked to people back home as well. And for me, you know, I'm going to support the bill because I have faith in this government more than I have in the federal government. And I'm hoping that, you know, by my support, and if the bill passes, that the Members on the other side will actually listen to what we have to say and make sure that people are looked after. And we got to focus on, you know, the cost of living. We've got to put pressure on the federal government to realize -- make them realize that the cost of living in the Northwest Territories is high. Life in the Northwest Territories is hard. And we need support. The problem is is we've only got one MP here. So they -- you know, so the NWT probably is not really on their radar. So who would I rather having looking after it? I would say this government. And that's exactly why, you know, I will support this bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I remember coming into the Assembly here February 10th, 2022, and when I was asked to put my name forward to run for MLA, in my riding they talked about the high cost of living. And we take a look at the community of Lutselk'e alone, you know, we have problems with the internet service that's just down the

road. It costs a lot of money just to fly there and the cost of living in that community is high already as it is. And right now a lot of my friends are talking that, you know, where does this end? Like, the high cost of living in the North is here. Friends of mine are saying well, I'm thinking about moving south now because they can't afford to continue to live here. And then in regards to this carbon tax, you know, and there's no guarantees. You know, if it's going to be set at a certain rate and percentage on an annual basis, right now as it is, you know, it's not -- this fossil fuel thing is not going to go away overnight. It's going to be 20, 30 years before we have something to replace it. And that's reality living here in the Northwest Territories. And, for example, just to convert -- if we were to go to propane or natural gas in a home, we could probably spend about \$50,000 just in my riding. My community alone, there's 540 homes. That's just to convert. \$27 million just to get off fossil fuel. But where's the Government of Canada in this whole thing? You know, to me that hits home.

And right now as it is, while that's happening, you know, when people go out in the bush to get some wood, they already got to buy wood. The cost of just to getting that wood is expensive. And I know for sure in Lutselk'e they talk about, you know, winter road to help reduce cost of living and anything that we could do to do that. And I know in Dettah and N'dilo here, we're just on the highway systems. But just because we're right next to the city of Yellowknife, we're still feeling the impacts of the high cost of living. You know, fuel prices of oil has gone up. Power's gone up. Last year this time, after the session was ended, the power rates in my communities in Fort Resolution and also in Fort Smith went up 20 percent over the next two years. And good thing it was repealed and was brought back, you know, and -- but now when you go back online, you take a look at the website where the regulatory board is for the power, regulators here in the Northwest Territories, again NTPC went back and made an application to increase those power rates again. So it's getting to the point now where it's getting out of hand. The cost of living here in the Northwest Territories is just too high. It doesn't matter how you look at it. It doesn't matter where you live. It's impacting everybody here in the Northwest Territories. And if you were to take that \$891 million just to do all 33 communities, that's what it's going to convert all those homes in the Northwest Territories. I just threw that out there as a number. We're not ready yet. It's going to be a long time yet before -- you know, Canada's going to step in to really try to help us and, in the meantime, we got to pay our share. But I really feel bad for the elders, the people in the communities, the

single mothers, you know, the people that are just getting by from paycheque to paycheque. And now they're going -- on April 1st, they're going to be paying a lot more for the cost of fuel at the pumps. When you order fuel at their homes, again it's -- where does it end? And this morning, you know, when I -- when I heard that, you know, this -- we had that discussion in the committee, and I know my colleagues over here said who do you trust? Like, right now, you know, we had time, you know, we had a lot of time to really try to get this thing sorted out and organized and, you know, really, this is not a made-in-the North solution. We never really consulted with all the people in the Mackenzie Valley yet. A lot of people are still phoning me. They're sending me messages, emails, saying that don't support it. And I had to think about it. And I've been trying to figure a way to look at this and I'm trying -- I was kind of hoping that we really look at the Yukon model and Nunavut model and -- but no, it didn't happen. And now we're in the 11th hour here, we're forced to make a decision that's really going to impact our people in our communities. And, you know, again, this morning I was asked who do you trust?

At the end of the day, you know, when I -- when I look at the budget, we had, what, \$2.2 billion, we're -- our debt limit's, what, 1.6; we're not very far off from \$1.8 billion. You know, the economy in the Northwest Territories are not doing well right now. The mining industry's not there. The royalties are -- payments are not coming. Again, it's -- we're in a really tough situation now. And when Nunavut was here in 1999, when we parted ways, we had 3300 employees. Now we got 6600 with contractors and all that. So we got a lot to think about. And the next government, they're going to have to make some tough decisions. And, you know, it's really concerning for me now to talk about this but at the end of the day, you know -- and it's part of the mandate, you know, they was going to look at in 2019 to 2023, they talked about trying to help reduce the cost of living and the power rates and everything else. But it seems like we're not -- we're not following our own words. We say we all come together, we put that document together and all of a sudden, you know, we put that aside, and we're continuing to look at increasing the cost of living here in the Northwest Territories. It just bothers me.

And I asked for simple things for my riding. Simple things. I asked for a winter road. Nothing. I asked for money for inspections of the homes in my community. Nothing. I asked for homeownership repairs in my community. Nothing. And I had to make some tough

decisions here about whether or not I should support the budget.

Last year there was nothing in there. \$3.4 million to fix up public housing. This year housing corporation is taking money, that \$60 million CIRNAC money, to fix up public housing but yet in my communities we really need homeownership repairs. So I'm really torn here. But at the end of the day, you know, who do we trust? And from what I could see and what the -- the way, how we were treated in my community, and I go back over the years, yes, we got a little bit here and there, and that's it. But this is not consensus government. If we had a chance, we should all work together. But we're not. It doesn't seem that way. You know, we play one off each another. People that sign on to devolution are treated different from the ones that didn't sign on to it.

So it really is disturbing for me to say that, you know, are you going to support this and trust the GNWT. That's a tough one.

So, Madam Chair, I agree with my colleague Jackie Jacobson that, you know, we really need to think about the people in our communities. That's who put us here. This is the public government. And when we do this kind of thing, it sends the wrong messages. It doesn't matter if I -- if I support this, the GNWT's going to do it. If I don't, it's going to be the federal government. But at the end of the day, who do we trust?

You know, these guys here have been around since 1967 and since devolution, they got their own land claim. So at this point in time, Madam Chair, I'm going to vote against the budget on Bill 60. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Deh Cho

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. When the carbon tax came into effect -- I'm not sure what year it was, but I think it was after industry was well established, all the mines were already in place. So anything there may have been grandfathered. The tax was set up to -- well, supposedly to penalize the large emitters, large industries. But what we've seen since, from that time, that's not what was actually happening because we got some numbers back from our research in our committee meetings that the large emitters were getting 72 percent of their dollars back and that kind of, like, defeats the whole purpose of what the carbon tax was all about. It's befuddling. Like, why did they -- why did they bother with it to begin with because the people that are actually getting hurt are the little people up in the Northwest Territories, think they did that brush, you know, with the territories and the

provinces without really considering the implications to the Northwest Territories, and to the three northern territories. The large emitters are really winning in this instance, and we're not. Even though they dangle the rebates in front of people -- I think the last numbers I think I got was like \$546 per person per year. That's just chump change, you know. Even I would put out a press release to -- you know, to tell my residents not to accept it. That's not enough to cover their bills.

A couple years ago the diesel, it was over a dollar. Now when I go to fill up my tank, I'm over \$2, not as much as the residents up in Nunakput but we're still over \$2. Now we've got this escalating sliding scale that we're looking at where it's going to increase every year, the carbon tax. And I don't think the diesel fuel will ever go down, neither will our power bills. And also it truly affects the trucking industry which delivers all our groceries and goods. So we don't know where we're really going.

This carbon tax is really hurting us. The emitters are the ones that are gaining. Large emitters are gaining, and our government has never ever said, hey -- never cried foul. And I don't understand why they didn't cry foul in that regard. There was no fairness, the large emitters getting their money back, yet the little guys are getting the full brunt of the tax. There's no fairness in that. Our government should have been yelling, kicking, and screaming in parliament. You needed to go there. You're saying, well we just only got one Member of Parliament. Well, you would have had many more voices if you were down there busting down those doors in parliament, and you got seven Cabinet Ministers and seven voices and that's not what's been happening.

We need to send a message to the federal government that we don't agree with the carbon tax and by us not accepting to move ahead with the carbon tax should be sending that message to them that we don't accept any increases to the carbon tax. That's a big message. You know, when you send that message and we all -- we're all together in this, that's a loud voice to tell them that we do not agree with this carbon tax, especially on our residents up in the northern parts of Canada where the cost of living is higher than any place in the south. Having said that, Madam Chair, I will not be supporting the carbon tax as is. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Right from the beginning, I took the stand that I was going to vote against the carbon tax on Bill 60 because we had written submissions from

the NWT Chamber of Commerce, you know, NWT Metis Nation. I've heard from at least six other Indigenous government leaders who are very much against the carbon tax, the NWT Seniors Society, and mostly all the residents of the NWT are against the carbon tax no matter where they live. It doesn't matter if they're from the Arctic or they're from the South Slave. All costs have gone up overall and there's a snowball effect. And there are some people who cannot -- who decide what they're going to eat for supper, it's either going to be wieners or steak because they don't have that choice, and it's going to get worse because the way things are going after the pandemic -- the pandemic was a big one too. And the -- also I'm very -- I'm very concerned about the small business community. You know, we pay too much, and we don't have the -- we don't have them numbers for the -- to survive in most -- in the regional centres and the small communities. It's not only in the small communities. And I'm sure it's like that here even in the capital. The cost of everything has doubled or tripled in some cases.

And therefore, because of all these submissions -- and I listen to the people of the NWT, and small business, the Indigenous organizations, and especially the seniors of the NWT. And because of that, I stick to what I've decided at the very beginning, and I'm not going to waiver on this one, I will be voting against Bill 60. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any further general comments on Bill 60? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I did prepare a Member's statement but I'll do it for this. This is the right time to do it.

Madam Chair, we say that this is a consensus government, and this is not how the consensus government should be operating. The consensus government that I know in my region, they work together. They collaborate; they consult, you know, on issues that might have an impact that -- you know, on its citizens. So I don't see this as a consensus government. And, yes, being an Indigenous person, you know, like, since 1763 we never -- like, I mean, we know what the government did to us, to our people, due to assimilations. They took everything from us. They took our land. They took all the resources. And they push us aside. They put us in a reserve. In the North it's a settlement. So I do have a really serious issues with trust. Should I trust them, or should I trust the federal government? And that's a lot -- that's not just me. That's the view of a lot of

Indigenous people, Indigenous government, Indigenous organizations, or people that are trying to settle their land claims. So there is a lot of trust issues, and I do have trust issues too as well. So I agree with what my colleagues are saying. We do have -- they're in the small communities and especially if you live in the small communities, you will understand what we're talking about. Even the senior bureaucrats, if they live in the small communities they would understand where we're coming from. There is a lot of struggles in small communities due to -- there's lack -- like my colleague said in -- from Nunakput, you know, we don't have a lot of jobs. And that's a struggle in many of small communities, in my region as well. You seen the 2018 status report. Everything that's -- you know, like, we have a lot of people on income support. We have high rates -- our -- well, not -- we have people, young people having -- we have low rates of academic success. Our education is low. There's lots of social issues, social injustices. It's all addressed. We have people on income support. Like, we have -- I don't know what you want to say in this, but there's a lot of social issues. It's right there, it's in the stats. It's in the statistics. I don't think I should be talking about it more, but I do have lots of elders in my communities due to all those houses, just like my colleague mentioned, that were built in the '60s and '70s, well, a lot of those elders that are living in those units or some of them, even that recently built because it was poorly built, a lot of those houses elders are paying \$500 for power bills.

And a lot of these elders, who are already struggling, are garnishing -- you know, the government is garnishing their pension and other -- even their income tax. So they're doing all these things that how can anybody live? It's already -- they are already struggling to make ends meet. And, you know, like, especially in my region too as well, because a lot of my people they come to Yellowknife to access services that are denied in my region. You know, and they go shopping. Everything is in Yellowknife. And now that the all-season road is opened in Whati, now those people are travelling more, you know. So it is expensive for gasoline. It is expensive. So even with the higher fuel price, you know, I know that the Minister -- there's a fuel subsidy but the income threshold is low as well. So a lot of those people who are recently retired, you know, they don't qualify for any of these program that is in place. And that's a hardship on many of these people.

And now that -- I'm just wondering, like, with the climate change and the mine, that has a -- that has a major impact on our traditional way of living. And not only that, with the restriction

that's placed on caribou and the mobile zone, our residents, they have to travel long distance to go hunting and it's once a year. We used to hunt before in spring, before the restriction, and fall time. Now it's in winter. And we have -- and then it's really sad because Whati and Gameti and Wekweeti -- Wekweeti they have to travel a long ways to go hunting for caribou. In Behchoko too as well. And the gas, it is expensive, especially in the small communities like that. And there is a lot of caribou in their background, and they have to travel to across. Like, they have to go to Whati and come this way and to go towards the mine to go hunting. So that has a major impact on my people as well. They have to travel further. And the mobile zone is keep moving, you know, and so it's becoming -- it's becoming more difficult to provide for our family, especially with traditional food, especially with caribou that has sustained our people for thousands of years. And we've been here for many years. And it's because of that, because they're going hunting in tundra, the weather is unpredictable. And we had some issues.

We had two hunters; we had one resulted in fatal, one resulted in -- got stranded due to blizzard. So rescue team came in. So all these things have to be considered. And it's not -- it's -- I feel for my people. You know, and it's not right what we're doing here because it's hard -- people are already struggling as it is trying to maintain their livelihood. And now with all the hunting gear and going to tundra, a lot of them are coming back with -- maybe with no caribou, you know. And then there are some family with, you know -- and the wear and tear on their hunting equipment. So it is -- it is difficult for my people to go hunting. Yes, it would be nice if we were living somewhere else, like maybe in Delta where they can go hunting, you know. But we don't have that pleasure. We don't have that. We too much restrictions. And there's a lot of roadblocks for our -- for my people to go hunting.

And so this carbon tax that's in place, it's something that I really have to consider because I have to think about the people, and I have to think about the community government, sports, recreation, when I am making decisions because the climate change is -- I know it's going to have an impact because the Gameti and Wekweeti, they rely on the winter road, and this year it's a short operation, even for Wekweeti, so. And then -- so I have to think about those people when I am making these decisions. And it is difficult.

And then right now I have trust issues. It's something that -- it's not just now. It's something that has been happened to us for many years.

So with that in mind, I think when this carbon tax -- if we have to vote, I think I am voting against it because I have to think about my people. I would like to see -- what I would like to see is that more support going to the people, not to the mines, not to mining industry, all those, you know, like, company that makes more money off our -- from our land. You know, they're taking all the resources; we know that. So I have to really think about my people when I am making this decision. So I will support -- I will not vote for this carbon tax. And I guess we just leave it up to them now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Frame Lake

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So just to be really clear, I do support a carbon tax as part of an approach to deal with the climate crisis but I firmly reject Cabinet's inflexible and unfair approach with this bill. And I want to kind of spend a minute -- a few minutes to kind of recount how we got here because this is not about a made-in-the North solution. This is a made by Cabinet solution. That needs to be really clear.

So, you know, Cabinet went off. They started to talk to the federal government about how to rejig the carbon tax. They didn't even bother to tell us that they were doing that. We had no input whatsoever as Regular MLAs. And then in September, they even submitted a proposal. They wouldn't share it with us until months later. Months later. And they just wouldn't listen to us. They wouldn't work with us. So, you know, Cabinet promised robust public communications around this bill and the carbon tax. It didn't happen. People in the public still don't know what this is all about and what's going to happen.

It took months for us to get the letters that went back and forth, even though we asked several times. The large emitters are treated favourably and the rest of businesses, NGOs, community governments are not. It's an unfair approach. And who did they talk to in developing this carbon tax? Only the large emitters. And we got that on record. That's the only parties they talked to in developing this. Didn't bother to talk to the public, other businesses, NGOs. No, just went to the large emitters. They also got an exemption for methane. That's not environmentally friendly. And it's just not a good move in my view.

I even suggested language that could be inserted in the bill right up -- even before it was brought to us about how to increase accountability, transparency, make public reporting a requirement. They wouldn't do it. Wouldn't put it into the bill. You know, I think

what we really need here is a legislated approach as they have in the Yukon. And now -- so that's where -- how we got to at least this point. And then when I looked at the response to the committee report, basically Cabinet rejected all of the recommendations. All of them. That's the fastest reply I've ever seen to a committee report. It's also the most dismissive and condescending response I've ever seen in my seven years as an MLA. Something as simple as writing to the prime minister to say that we need to work together to find energy choices for our communities, for households, they wouldn't do it. They wouldn't even write to the prime minister to do that.

The second recommendation about get -- you know, dealing with net metering and removing caps on green energy. Said no, it's outside of the scope of the bill; we're not going to do it. But they are kind of actually doing it anyways. They just don't understand the link between energy choices and reducing the impacts of the carbon tax. But the default was let's just reject that because it comes from those Regular MLAs.

Third recommendation, oh well, we're going to offer some money to the community governments; \$1.88 million is what they say it will be, not the \$2.2 million that the community governments are asking for. And that \$2.2 million come from using the Yukon approach. They've offered \$1.88 million. But then the Minister said today we can't do that in the regulations; we can't do revenue sharing through the regulations because of the way the bill was drafted. Well, what kind of bill was this when you can't do revenue sharing through the bill itself and you can't do it then through the regulations. That's a lousy bill, quite frankly, Madam Chair.

The fourth recommendation that, a legislated approach. They said no, we're not going to do that; we should have done this earlier and oh, we can do the money to the community governments through the main estimates. Well, this government or this Cabinet may follow through on that. What about the next Cabinet? I'll guarantee that the MLAs on this side are going to have to fight for that year after year after year until you get it legislated. That's why it needs to be in the bill.

So, Madam Chair, I want to move over on now to what we've ended up with here, quite frankly, is a train wreck. A train wreck of a bill. This is the most divisive issue that I think this House has ever had to deal with. I want to commend the Members on this side for stepping up and actually talking about this, this very important issue and each and every one of us, I'm sure, by the end of this will get up and talk about this.

This is the most important debate we've had in this Assembly. But what we've ended up with is a train wreck because Cabinet would not work with Regular MLAs. And I blew the whistle on this right at the very beginning. I said please do not bring forward a bill that just switches out the schedule. Think very carefully about this and work with us. They wouldn't do it.

So do I trust this Cabinet or the next Cabinet to follow through? You know, actions speak a lot louder than words, Madam Chair.

So we've ended up with this train wreck. And what was a path forward, and we could have changed, as the Minister said, if we talked about the -- if they had done this, we could have maybe done this earlier. I said withdraw the bill. Why can't you withdraw the bill. When the Minister came to the public hearing, the first question I had for her was would you consider withdrawing the bill and trying to work together? Wouldn't do it. That's why we got a train wreck, and we're here today.

So, you know, I asked for a new approach. I tabled a modelled bill based on the Yukon approach. That was a squandered opportunity, Madam Chair. I asked the finance minister to meet, to talk about this. Didn't happen. We could have worked together and avoided this train wreck but we didn't because I think of the stubbornness on the Cabinet's side. I'm still interested, though, in trying to work together on this. And Cabinet well knows my position on this. I've wrote on editorial. I've talked about this ad nauseam. We need a legislated approach to deal with the revenue sharing and management of the impacts on our communities and to make sure the money is actually targeted, reported publicly, and that it's transparent and accountable, and perhaps we can still do that. The Minister talked about perhaps looking at how to get revenue sharing through the regulations. The only way you're going to be able to do that is to change the legislation itself. And if they -- if Cabinet's willing to reopen it, let's actually get it right.

So, Madam Chair, this is not a made-in-the North approach. This is a made-by-Cabinet approach. Cabinet wants to retain all the flexibility, all the control, all the authority, and maybe bring forward something in the annual appropriations, maybe bring forward something in regulations in terms of the cost of living offset. But that's -- boy, that's a lot of trust to place in a Cabinet that, in my opinion, has not worked with us since day one on this. And that is a repetition of what happened in the last Assembly. And I blew the whistle on this. I tried to get Cabinet, the Minister, to work with us right from the very beginning and it didn't happen.

I guess a couple of other points: I know that this is very complicated stuff. I want to commend Members on our side for taking a lot of time to discuss and debate this internally about what we were going to do. And I respect everybody's position on this, even if we may not all agree. But there are no guarantees. There's no guarantees from Cabinet. There's no guarantees from the federal government. But I still think that we need to find ways to work together and develop a better plan, a better approach, but it has to be legislated. There cannot be the room for discretion on Cabinet because just look where we ended up in this train wreck.

So I think the last thing I want to say that this is probably the most important test for us as Regular MLAs in trying to stand up to and actually work with Cabinet. And I guess we'll see where this goes, Madam Chair. But I thought a lot about this, I spent a lot of time and energy, I brought forward concrete solutions. But every time I've done that, Cabinet has ignored them. And that's really a sad statement, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. First I want to thank the committee that did all of the work on this bill because I do sit on two other committees that are quite busy; I didn't delve into it quite the same way they did, and really looked to that report to inform me as I have struggled with this bill and my position on it.

When I look at the choice in front of us, I realize we really just don't have much of a choice. We're either going to -- you know, as everybody has said, we're either going to look to the federal legislation if we defeat the bill here today and not -- then the GNWT obviously would not be in compliance with the federal requirements and we would then fall under their tax. So whether we go ahead as stated and pass this bill or defeat this bill, either way residents of the Northwest Territories will be paying this tax.

And what I hear -- and I know it's one item in the Minister's statements but the comment of some -- there will be minimal impacts to some. And I feel that that's just a totally wrong statement. There is nobody in this territory that is not going to feel the ramifications of this tax, whether or not you are a consumer or a purchaser. You could be in public housing, it doesn't matter. You will in some way bear the burden and pay the costs of this tax as businesses, governments, etcetera, pass it along to others. So I understand and -- I think I

don't really even need to state it. I am a strong supporter of our resource extraction sector. That has been something I have stated from before I ever sat in this House and something that I believe is truly in need of support. And I do recognize that the Minister's approach to Bill 60 will allow for some of the industry that we currently have in the territory, our future industry, to have better circumstances and perhaps then that would be the make it or break it decision point for some of these projects to go forward. Specifically, Bill 60 does provide favourable treatment for smaller mines, newer mines, and mines that are closing; basically the situation we're at for every single one of our potential projects or current projects. We don't have any mines that are strongly in full production that will go for the next decade. So I recognize that. And I have heard from some industry stakeholders on the benefits but have to say, actually, Madam Chair, nobody contacted me from industry other than a few things that were forwarded on to me by third parties. But that being said, that does somewhat I think speak in some manners about where industry may be at in their own lobbying efforts as they're -- as their own sort of impetus to work on our government dwindles, as they look to other jurisdictions that are a lot more favourable for their sector.

I think we're already in quite a desperate spot when it comes to our mining and resource sector industry anyway; however, I do recognize the value of maintaining that control and flexibility in how we impose the tax. But when I look at the benefits to industry and where industry is at currently, I don't know how much that offsets the cost to everybody else in this territory. Residents can't afford this tax. I've heard it from any colleagues. I've heard it from people messaging me. Whether or not the public fully understands the ramifications of whether we say yes or no to Bill 60, the perception is out there that this is hurtful to us as -- and for us as my colleague said, we have a responsibility to listen to the residents that are contacting us, and that is something that I'm hearing. They're strapped for cash. Our current inflation rate is at 7.2 percent, and wages have not kept up with that. The housing stock, as mentioned, is quite old. It's not energy efficient, and we don't have that alternative energy source so therefore we all will be forced to absorb these higher costs. And when I look at the offsets that are being proposed by Bill 60, the cost of living offset is a step in the right direction and would provide all residents with -- my riding anyway, with \$450 to \$500 a year to offset their tax. But those amounts are based on average increased costs for average households. So that means some households, especially those with higher costs or fewer

people, like myself -- I'm a single person, I'm going to struggle, because I'm only going to get one COLO in this situation. So anybody that is a single parent, empty nesters, elders, low income residents, that are not in public housing, we are all going to feel the effects of being one person or few people in a household.

Another piece that I'm really concerned about, and I know is going to have a massive indirect impact when the carbon tax is imposed, is on the NGO sector. It's already a strapped sector for cash that is really constantly operating on the margins, if not in deficits. The GNWT has not provided -- my understanding has not provided any offsets to NGOs for increased carbon tax costs. So even if you just look at that from, like, an optics perspective, we're going to sit here and hand the richest people, the industry, the richest industry in our territory, help. And I understand why. I know how economics work. But then we're not going to turn around and help the people that we're relying on to take care of people because our own social services can't take care of it. I come back to the shelter workers as an example of that. GNWT employees are not going to face these problems. But when you're paying somebody \$20 an hour to do shelter work, which is really the responsibility of this Cabinet and this government, you know, to then turn around and say they don't get to have any sort of offset to help, they're going to lay off people; they're going to cut staffing; they're going to cut training; they're going to cut wages. I also want to support my colleagues.

Our remote communities are the most impacted by climate change and the rising cost of living. I've seen this. I've travelled into these communities in my past life and in my current. And my colleagues from small communities are very concerned about the rising carbon tax. We've heard my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh speak at length about the high and rising fuel costs of his constituents, and my colleague from Nunakput talking about people struggling to put food on their table and choose between heating their homes and feeding their kids. So while this bill has some benefits for industry -- and I can't say enough how much I do support industry, and I know that personally this is not going to be a popular decision, and -- and I'm -- you know what, I have to say I'm -- it bothers me that I'm in this position. It didn't need to be this way. And so now I have to make a decision, do I listen to residents of this territory or do I listen to industry of this territory? And to me, they're not opposing each other. However, we've now pitted them against each other, yet again making the mining industry in this weird dichotomy between social issues and taking care of our residents, and

industry. And I do blame the government for creating this back and forth or this adversarial relationship there. It's the same thing I heard when we talked about agriculture supports. People saying well, it's agriculture or it's mining. These are not two polar opposite things. And then the same thing here I say supporting our residents does not mean not supporting our industry and vice versa. So I do have a lot of reservations here but likely will be voting in solidarity with my colleagues. And I really think that what needs to happen here or what I hope to see happening by the defeat of Bill 60 is that this is a very strong message to the federal government. My colleague has made waves on the federal stage. So if the federal government or the argument from the Cabinet's side is that the federal government is not going to take care of us anyway, they ignore us, we're not important, well then maybe this is a chance for us to take a stand and say, hey, you've made promises on the backs of people in this territory that are already struggling, that are already in third world conditions, and now you want them to pay so that you can sit in Ottawa and act like you are some eco-warrior saving the earth to make your supporters and your campaign donors look good and green wash yourself for the next election? No. I say it's time for us to stand up and -- it comes back to trust, and when I look at it from a purely Great Slave resident perspective, we don't -- either way, I get the same thing; they get the same thing, whether it be the feds, whether it be Cabinet. So I say let's use this time now to show Ottawa that we need to have them pay attention to us. And if that hasn't happened and this is the excuse, then that is on Cabinet. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I think it's worthwhile to actually start with identifying what is carbon tax. And so carbon tax, according to the federal government, is carbon pricing, about recognizing the cost of pollution, and accounting for those costs on daily decisions. Do I agree with the way that the federal government sees that rolling out in the territory? Absolutely not.

The government also says that -- the government sets a price that emitters must pay for each ton of greenhouse gas emissions that they emit. So what that, in turn, means is that they charge on fossil fuels and for regular everyday residents like ourselves and that there's a performance-based system that's input on to industry. So this is what the federal government has decided, is that they are going to do a carbon tax. But that's not what we're

sitting here talking about today. That's already been decided. The federal government has already decided on a carbon tax. That was a decision made in 2018 that was debated at length in this House during the 18th Assembly. The whole notion of carbon tax here in the territory is something that I like to call a northern double jeopardy. And I mean, I've said that before in the House, that here in the territory we're charged a premium with high rate increases for our energy through NTPC for using their expensive aging infrastructure and then we turn around and we're charged by the federal government through carbon tax for using the energy monopoly that is limited by this government -- we are limited, sorry, for our ability to use alternative energies by this government because our deputy ministers sit on the board of NTPC. And so this government, really, at the end of the day is limiting our ability to use alternative energies so that we can actually accomplish the goals of the carbon tax of the federal government. But this is not what we are talking about today.

Carbon tax is here. Carbon tax is already in the entire country. We are not debating whether or not we are imposing the carbon tax in Canada or in the Northwest Territories. What we are talking about here today and what we are deciding on is who is going to administer that tax here in the territory. We are deciding if we are going to support Bill 60 and have the GNWT administer that tax, or if we are going to reject Bill 60, in which case on April 1st, which I believe is Saturday, the federal government will have to administer a backstop in the territory in order to take on the role of administering that tax here in the territory. So whether or not a carbon tax will exist in the territory is not what we are talking about here today. It's coming. It's here. It's increasing.

So I just wanted to be very, very clear on that. I also, as we're talking about the fact that carbon tax is here and is already been here and was debated already in the 18th Assembly, I went and pulled the report from the Standing Committee on Government Operations from the 18th Assembly, which was the report on the carbon tax bills, because at that point there was two separate bills that were reviewed, and I wanted to share some of that with committee because I think it's worthwhile.

The section is called lack of meaningful engagement with committee. GNWT -- sorry, raise -- sorry, the committee raised concerns that the GNWT's approach did not set out options for public debate. The proposed 75 percent direct rebate for large emitters was too high. There was no rebate or special measures

for small businesses, and the policy objectives of the carbon tax were not clearly articulated.

The report goes on to say, the committee again wrote to the government advising that it does not support the proposal.

Later on in the report, it says committee also expressed its concern that there was no indication from government as to whether or not the carbon tax legislation would mandate public reporting to enable transparency, increased public awareness of how the tax revenue is being used, and measure the impact of the carbon tax on emissions in the NWT.

Later on, the report also says that the carbon pricing in the Northwest Territories was negotiated with the federal government leaving little room for input from Regular Members once that process had commenced.

Madam Chair, it sounds to me like history is repeating itself because we're sitting here staring at a bill that has not changed at all other than the schedules in the bill.

Later on in the report, under challenges in comparing options, which is talking about comparing the options from the GNWT, which is -- or versus the option that is the federal backstop, the report says committee found it challenging to assess the salient differences between the two approaches. While finance provided ample material regarding the GNWT's proposed approach, the key features of the federal backstop were more difficult to ascertain. We're still in that situation today. I literally said in my words in supporting the bill to move to second reading, that I wanted to support it because I wanted to learn what the federal government had to offer. I'm no farther ahead but I can't fault the Cabinet Minister for that here in this room. The federal government also has an obligation to be transparent with the Northwest Territories and they have not done that, and they need to be held accountable for that and wear some of that themselves.

So as I said here, Madam Chair, history has repeated itself, and the changes that this committee in the 18th Assembly wanted to see were outside of the scope of the bill. The changes that our committee wanted to see, which we proposed five recommendations, and the two that I think were the most important in order to be able to give a lot of people on this side of the House a little bit more comfort, I will say, was recommendation 3, which was revenue sharing, and recommendation 4, which is putting a lot of revenue sharing information and reporting into law, into legislation. But, again, that was out of scope of the bill and unable to be pushed forward because -- and I

think it's worth noting here for the public, as soon as a bill is tabled and nothing can be added to it that is not within scope. And I'm noting that I'm running out of time. So I want to move along. But I think that this is very important to say because I think that I'm very disappointed in the bill that was brought forward by finance because it shows me that they did not go back to what was done already in the 18th Assembly. And the reports that are tabled in this House come from information from our stakeholders, from our residents, that are given to our committees. They're not reports that we make up on our own time. They're actual words that are elevated in this House from the constituents that we all serve. And so to have a government turn around and table a bill that has blatantly ignored previous recommendations is incredibly frustrating. So what we have in front of us here today is a no win situation because we cannot change the scope of the bill by legislating -- by legislating the revenue sharing, and that is something that we absolutely want to see.

So now where we are is we have Bill 60 which has a lot of things that I think are so important. It has regional -- regional cost of living offsets. So what that means is we were able to negotiate that places where the costs are more expensive, like for example, Ulukhaktok, will receive a higher cost of living offset than somewhere like Yellowknife. And I think that that is so important because it is -- as we've heard from our colleagues here today, it is far more expensive for someone to live in Paulatuk or Ulukhaktok than it is to live in Yellowknife. That is so important.

In addition, we have -- within Bill 60 -- or sorry, not within Bill 60, but through negotiations with the Minister, been able to negotiate revenue sharing with community governments. This is also so important because if there is no revenue sharing with community governments, you better believe that they're going to turn around if there are a taxed-based communities and pass that on to residents. If they're a nontax-based community, they're going to turn around and they are going to take those dollars needed out of programs and services. That's a huge concern of mine from social development because we have heard that the first thing to go is recreation -- or sorry, is recreation programming. Without recreation programming, we run huge risks to our suicide prevention initiatives and also what people are saying that they need to create and build healthy families and stable housing. Recreation was huge, and NWTAC said that is the first thing to go in nontax-based communities. So I think that's very, very important and it is definitely related to this.

My other concern is that the other option if we vote down Bill 60, we're left with the federal backstop. From what we know about federal backstops, it is either going to be a blanket cost of living, or they're going to turn around and send it right back to the GNWT. So we're no farther ahead. And Madam Chair, I have 30 seconds left, and I have many more pages that I wanted to be able to talk about today. But what I think I want to say is wherever this debate ends today, this cannot be the end of this conversation and a new bill needs to be drafted for the people of the Northwest Territories that needs to put revenue sharing into law and that requires carbon tax revenues be shared with households, businesses, community governments, Indigenous governments, and NGOs, and that reporting on carbon tax needs to be done in a meaningful way and that meaningful energy alternative advances need to be made in this territory. Thank you. And thank you for the extra ten seconds.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to start with some -- I think in hindsight, I believe both the Minister and committee would have done this differently, and I think there's some lessons to be learned here. You know, it's unfortunate that, you know, that the Minister and probably quite a few of the staff and a lot of the MLAs weren't allowed -- around for the last carbon tax but if you were ever introducing legislation on any topic, go look if there's an old committee report about it because these committee reports make the same recommendations every single time and there is -- there's stacks of them that go unresponded, and then the issue comes up and, you know, in an Assembly or two later and the same recommendations get made. And I thank MLA Cleveland for pointing out that the last committee made the same recommendations that this committee made.

Madam Chair, I do want to thank the Minister for addressing the regional cost of living offset payment. That was a concern that we heard, that it wasn't fair to give a person in Yellowknife the same amount of money as a person in Nunakput, and they should be getting more. So I do think that's a good step.

Secondly, I just -- I think there's a lesson to be learned in replying to all committee motions, to be very careful about the responses. There's actually I think a bit of a disconnect in what I've heard the Minister say since and what was in the response to the committee motion.

In the response to, you know, regulating some sort of revenue sharing that was tabled by the

Minister, it says burdensome and overcomplicated that doesn't allow the flexibility. And it seems to be this insistence by the Department of Finance that we're going to give back exactly revenue neutral and we're going to track what the community governments, you know, get and make it exactly the same every year. And that's not how I view the commitment here of approximately 10 percent. I view this as a political compromise that we came to. There's about \$12 million in the GNWT in net revenue here that we're using for all the programs and services that everyone in this House talks to about every single day, and we're going to give about 10 percent of our share, approximately \$1.8 million, to community governments because they do just as important work. And ultimately, Madam Chair, I am supportive of the carbon tax as is because of that money for community governments. I fought hard to get that included, and I want the Minister to go back and find a way to -- if it can't be in legislation, put it in regulation, and if it can't be in regulation, put it in a policy. We have community government funding policies. Peg it at 10 percent, and it has to increase annually with each of the carbon taxes. And there's clearly a lack of trust between us and the federal government and us and the Cabinet. And it's kind of who do you trust more. And I do trust the Cabinet more. But I take the Minister's word that she's going to find a way to make sure that we continue to share revenue with our community governments out of the carbon tax just as we are introducing one of the largest taxes in decades on our own citizens to fund our programs and services via the federal government's carbon tax. So they need their cut. And ultimately when I look at the regional cost of living offset that we had negotiated, our made-in-the North large emitter program, and the 10 percent net revenue sharing with community governments, those three reasons make me trust Cabinet just a little more than I trust passing this all back to a federal government that I don't particularly like, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Members. Is committee agreed that there are no further general comments? Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The committee has agreed to proceed to a clause-by-clause review of Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. I will call the clauses individually. Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

Clause 1, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 2, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 3, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 4, does committee agree? The appendix of the bill, does -- oh, does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 405-19(2):
BILL 60: AN ACT TO AMEND THE
PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CARBON
TAX – DELETE AND REPLACE THE
APPENDIX.
DEFEATED

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Présidente. I move that appendix of Bill 60 be deleted and the following be substituted. Madam Chair, the motion has been -- well, it's being distributed. It shows an appendix with a schedule that is identical to that in the bill except that the carbon tax rate for all types of fuel that aren't otherwise exempt is set at zero. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't really have any notes because I'm totally exhausted. But I just -- you know, committee -- at least our side is, we've had lots of discussion and debate about this bill over the last number of months, and we had to kind of carefully consider where we wanted to register objections and concerns with the bill. And so, you know, we thought about this a lot, and I think we saw a part of that even earlier today here where this side of the House didn't really want the bill called, period. Cabinet had to call this bill forward. So, you know, we could have had a vote and tried to prevent discussion of the bill on our side. We didn't do that. We did go into Committee of the Whole. We just concluded the discussion, you know, the opening remarks, and I want to commend everybody for -- particularly this side of the House and I guess the Minister for commenting on the bill. And, you know, we could have -- this side of the House could have tried to shut down the -- even the clause-by-clause discussion debate vote on the bill itself. We thought that that probably wasn't a good place to end up

either. So, you know, one of the problems is if Bill 60 is voted down, it's -- the federal backstop will inevitably be brought into force. How soon and so on, I guess is probably some point for discussion. And if Bill 60 was voted down, there still would be an existing NWT carbon tax because of the legislation that was passed in the 18th Assembly. So we could be in a position, as early as Saturday I guess somebody said, April 1st, where there would still be an NWT carbon tax in place and then the federal backstop might kick in as well. So, you know, people could end up paying double carbon tax on their fuel.

Now, you know, the feds they might say well, gee, the GNWT, they kept their carbon tax in at this rate; we really only need to increase it this incremental rate. That could be an outcome but we're not sure. So, you know, we thought long and careful about how to try to deal with this situation in a more elegant way to try to deal with the NWT carbon tax that people would still have to pay without maybe bringing forward an emergency bill of some sort to repeal that legislation if Bill 60 was to be defeated. That's what we really have before us here is a -- perhaps a more eloquent solution in that what's -- it proposes is to basically delete all of the figures that are in the appendix and the schedule that set out increasing carbon tax rates over time as required by the federal government -- and I actually support that. So why would a guy like me who supports a carbon tax actually want to zero this out? Well, I want to work with Cabinet. I want to work with the federal government to actually bring forward a legislated approach to rebates, credits, cost of living, offsets, and a better plan than what Cabinet's brought forward. And I characterize that as a made-by-Cabinet approach. It's not a made-in-the North approach and nobody should be fooled by that.

So what this really does is zero out what's in the schedule before us and make it so that there would no longer be an NWT carbon tax. The federal government can still decide and will probably decide to implement the backstop, and I don't know I think we need to find a way to work together to come up with a better approach. And I think this provides some breathing time, some space to do that, which we kind of squandered that opportunity, unfortunately, earlier, but that's what this is really about, is creating some time and space for us to develop a better approach, hopefully with the federal government and hopefully with this side of the House this time around. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Question has been called -- oh, MLA -- or Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Chair, I would request a recorded vote.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Sorry, Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I don't want to speak at length. I know it's been a long day for everyone but just in light of the comments made, Madam Chair, I do think it appropriate if I just address at least briefly some of what was said. I don't rehash the proposals in Bill 60 -- that are connected to Bill 60.

Fundamentally, Madam Chair, I want my colleagues on the other side to know that I've heard them and, frankly, I'm sorry that we are where we are. I'm live to the role of accountability of a Minister and I'm live to the fact that folks are very frustrated with where we are, so. I can't change the federal carbon tax. I can't go back in time to when we had our public hearing in the fall. That would have been the occasion to change the drafting of the bill. I am now stuck with the scope of the bill. That's why I can't put some of the proposed changes into this legislation. We're passed that point unfortunately. Did I underestimate, perhaps, the concerns that would be raised, that they would want to see them in legislation? Yes. Do I wish I had done that? Certainly not. I would like to be able to put the revenue sharing into the legislation or even into regulations but I right now don't likely have that legal authority. Again, owing to our understanding of where we were at in the fall, and that really at the end of the day rests with me. So I do want Members to know that I now hear that that's where they wanted that, and it's unfortunate that we are here now because I can't put it in. But I certainly want to continue to try to look for ways between now and May-June to see if something can be added, if something can be drafted, if there's some way that we could put it in a way that people are more comfortable in seeing the compromises that they have fought for seen reflected in the legislation, and that includes the regional system. That was an MLA suggestion, and it's a good one. They were right to take us away from the averaging and to move us into a situation of regionalization. It benefits the most vulnerable communities, and it allows us to say that the communities who are paying the most and facing the highest costs are likely to in fact say greater COLO repayments than what they are to see of increased costs. Also -- and similarly, the revenue sharing with municipalities, again, Members were -- I think

Members stated it quite frankly, the numeric approach of what are the increased costs to communities is not the way they wanted to approach revenue sharing. So not only did we change and say we'll do revenue sharing; we changed again and said, yeah, we'll double what we were proposing to 10 percent of the net revenue. So these are changes that came from MLAs. They were proposed by MLAs. I can't put them in the legislation, as I mentioned, and that timing and those issues could have been dealt with differently. There's really no way around that. So, again, I want Members to know that I'm hearing that. I'm hearing their frustration and, again, I'm regretful that we're at the point we're at because I do, as I've said earlier today, think we have actually a very good functioning consensus system. I do actually think we have good opportunities to have discussions. And it is quite regretful, frankly, that a challenge and a situation, not of the Northwest Territories making, has led us to this level of divide. I find that tragic because it's actually not the way we normally do get along here. And so it is unfortunate to me that out of all the issues, a federal tax is what is dividing us this way.

Madam Chair, I do want to speak briefly to the comments that were made repeatedly about the committee's recommendations. And I, again, also appreciate the comments about looking back on past recommendations before drafting future legislation. Given where we were sitting here today, I would think a lot of Ministers have heard that comment quite clearly. As for the recommendations on this piece of legislation, we had 120 days to respond. We opted to respond sooner because of where we were in the timing. So it was certainly not meant ever to be in any way dismissive of our committee's recommendations but an effort to continue forward knowing where we already were in this process with April 1st looming. So I certainly -- it wouldn't be the first time that something in writing wasn't conveyed with perhaps the same sensitivity as what it could be done otherwise. There's not been any lack of desire or effort to talk to the federal government, not only this government, but with many governments. And yet here we are. And here are every other jurisdiction in Canada. And the other recommendations, some of them, again, they actually were agreed to, and I'll just take an example as being the intermittent renewable cap. Madam Chair, we noted that a solution to that is needed. And I want to repeat that. We know it's needed. It's just not going to find its way in through the carbon tax bill. But, you know, let's not stop having that conversation because it can be had; it just doesn't necessarily get had at Bill 60. So and with respect to federal, you know -- federal discussions, Madam Chair, there -- I do still

hope that we can keep control over how this tax is garnered and administered and rebated. And if we do, the next thing I think we should be doing is going to the federal government to say what energy alternatives will you help us support? How will we get off of fossil fuels that everyone pays less carbon tax in the Northwest Territories. And, Madam Chair, that is a discussion that should be had in a consensus way. I can certainly -- I know we are coming up against our own election year. But, again, as I say, I hadn't been through this process here tonight, and through the entirety of what carbon tax has turned into, if there's anything that I can commit to in the next few months is to try to make that process of going and saying what energy alternatives are there and what federal funds are there to achieve them, one that we can come to in a more consensus fashion. I certainly would want to do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. Oh, yeah, okay. Sorry. Go back to the mover for closing. Member for Frame Lake

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm going to try to choose my words carefully because I did hear some conciliatory words from the Minister of Finance. But I worked really, really hard to try to not end up where we did. And I'm really, really disappointed. You know, and with all due respect, this is not the way consensus government is supposed to work, and this is not the way that most of the work in this Assembly's actually gotten done. So that is -- that in itself is actually quite tragic, that it's been this divisive. And I really want the Minister and her department to think really carefully about what the lessons were from this and to really reach out and work with us moving forward. And I think I've heard the Minister say she's prepared to do that. You know, the 120 days, I asked the Minister to speed this up, get us a response as soon as you can. And then when I saw that response, Madam Chair, as I said, I've seen a lot of responses in my seven years, this is one of the most condescending, dismissive responses I've ever seen. That really hurts me. That hurts me a lot, because that's not the way this is supposed to work.

Okay, I think I've heard that the Minister's willing to look at revenue sharing. I don't think you can do it in regulations because the bill is drafted, the legislation is -- the way it's put together, there is no provision for revenue sharing. There's no provision for revenue sharing. You can't do it in regulations. So you're going to

need to amend the bill. But when you reopen up that bill, I want you to work with us because we've got ideas. I tried to bring some of that forward before. It was rejected, but I want you to reach out and actually work with us this time. And that includes ideas about transparency, accountability, reporting, not just revenue sharing. But that is a big part of it. And I think we really need to try to find a way to treat all of our businesses, NGOs, and community governments fairer than what happened the first time around with this bill where you only talked to the large emitters. That's just not a way that our government should do business, period. So as much as you want to -- I want you to work with us, you also need to work with the public and not just the large emitters. So I don't know. I don't want to say anything that's going to get me in trouble, Madam Chair. So I think I'm going to stop there. But I think I've heard the Minister say some conciliatory words. That's good. But I really, really want her to work us with this time. And I want to get legislation passed before the end of this Assembly, and if that means bringing forward a bill in May-June, she's got to do it. But you've got to work with us this time around, not like what you did with this bill, not like what happened in the 18th Assembly when I blew the whistle on the train wreck. It wasn't heated. That's why we're here. So -- okay. I've heard the conciliatory words from the Minister. I'm prepared to work together to get this done before the end of this Assembly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. A recorded vote has been requested. All those in favour, please stand.

This is for the motion to amend the -- to zero out the -- the motion is to zero out, like, the amendments, to zero out the costs. Thank you so all those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Kam Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Thebacha.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The results of the recorded vote are: One in favour, 11 opposed, four abstentions. The motion is defeated. So to the appendix of the bill, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does committee agree that Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. The committee has agreed that Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses. And Members we're just going to take a five minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

Committee, we've agreed to consider Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act. I will ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to introduce the bill.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act.

The purpose of Bill 66 is to address issues that can be resolved through administrative and operational amendments without changing the overall intent of the Act. Bill 66 clarifies and modernizes certain definitions. It also gives the director of assessment greater authority in respect of first assessment orders, corrections to the rolls, and carrying out supplementary assessments. The bill updates provisions related to municipal boards of revision, the territorial boards of revision and the assessment appeal tribunal to extend terms of appointment, adjust decision-making timelines, allow for sole adjudication in certain circumstances and change the title of

"secretary" to "registrar." The bill also gives municipal employees the ability to purchase property at public auction with the approval of the municipal council. In addition to these amendments, this bill makes several housekeeping amendments to gender-neutralize language and fix non-substantive grammatical errors in the Act.

During the Standing Committee on Government Operations review of the bill, the Department worked with committee staff and the Department of Justice on three additional amendments to the bill. The Department is appreciative of the time committee took in reviewing the bill and proposing amendments. This concludes my opening remarks. I look forward to hearing comments from Members and answering any questions the Members may have on the bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. On my left is Jennifer Young, director of corporate affairs. On my -- close to me on the right is Laurie Fife, director of community governance. And in the far right is Christina Duffy, director of legislation, legislative division. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 66. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, received second reading on November 3rd, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. Committee engaged with stakeholders and the public in its review of the bill. Committee held a public review on the bill on January 23rd, 2023, and received two written submissions.

Committee was able to use that feedback to seek amendments that take transparency into consideration. Committee was pleased to work with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs on these amendments.

On February 13th, 2023, the standing committee completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill where it passed a motion to report Bill 66 as amended to the Legislative Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

I would like to thank committee and the Minister and the staff for their work on review of Bill 66. Individual Members may have additional comments or questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 66. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Kind of seems like a lifetime ago but I actually served on city council in Yellowknife in 1997 to 2006, and I remember being at probably more than one conventions of the Northwest Territories Association of Communities where motions were passed, asking for changes to this piece of legislation. And so, you know, fast forward to what -- I can't even do the math anymore -- 20 years later, almost 20 years later, 25 years, whatever, and some of those changes are in this bill. And so I want to commend the department for getting around to those changes. And I -- you know, I think this Minister has found a way to light fires within his department, not literally, even though he's got that responsibility as well, but figuratively. And so I want to commend him for getting some legislation out of MACA, which we just didn't seem to be able to do in the 18th Assembly. And, you know, the Minister sat on this side of the House. So he well knows some of the concerns and issues that were raised in the House about the lack of anything ever happening at MACA. So that's good. But when are we going to get round two on path? When is that going to come? And, like, it probably is not going to happen in the lifetime of this Assembly, but what can we do to get that set up and ready for the next Assembly so that they're not sitting around twiddling their thumbs and waiting for MACA to do a little more and hoping that they get a Minister that's able to light the figurative fires. So where is phase two, and what can we do to get that going in the lifetime of this Assembly? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. So it will be in the 20th Assembly. We've already started doing the work. We've gone through legal. So we've done that work. Once we've done that, we're going to take that information to the MTAs, and then we will also be sharing that information with the Indigenous

governments. So we are starting the work now, and by the time the 20th Assembly rolls in, we will have a good foundation moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So I'm going to push this a little bit further. So can the Minister commit to get a legislative proposal for phase two to the Regular MLAs before the end of the life of this Assembly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, thank you. Most likely we won't be able to. There's still a lot of work that we got to do before we get to that point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't want to prolong this. I guess I would urge the Minister and the staff to try to find a way to get that done before the end of this Assembly. You know, legislative proposal, it doesn't have to be super detailed. Just tell us what you want to do in phase two and start talking to people now about it. So if you can do it before the end of the Assembly, please do it. Thanks, Madam Chair. That's all I got.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further general comments? Oh, Minister, did you want to respond?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes. So I'd just like to clarify why we're not -- paused so we can get there. We have to find a lawyer that's an expert in this area. That's the challenge is to find somebody to do that right now. So if we find somebody and we're able to do, then we can get it going. But I'm being very realistic and response with this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further general comments? Seeing none, can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. I will call the clauses in groups of five. Clause 1 to 5, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 6 to 10, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clauses 11 to 15, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clauses 16 to 20, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clauses 21 to 25, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clauses 26 to 28, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does committee agree that Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 66, An Act to Amend the property assessment and taxation act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms -- oh, Minister.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, I'd like to thank the staff and the justice department staff that helped us work on this. I'd like to thank committee for the work, and we were able to enhance the bill that we presented with their recommendations. So I'd like to thank everybody for their hard work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are you using the same witnesses, or are you swapping them out for the next --

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We're switching two and bringing one in.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Committee, we've agreed to consider Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act. I will

ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to introduce the bill.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act. The purpose of Bill 67 is to improve regulatory functions by creating a more authoritative plan review process that includes a formal avenue of appeal for plan review decisions. The bill also includes an exclusion of liability clause which protects statutory actors for actions or omissions done in good faith in the course of their duties.

In addition to these substantive amendments, this bill makes several housekeeping amendments to gender-neutralize language and fix non-substantive grammatical errors in the Act.

During the Standing Committee on Government Operations review of the bill, the Department worked with committee staff and the Department of Justice on three additional amendments to the bill. The Department is appreciative of the time committee took in reviewing the bill and proposing amendments.

The Department recognizes that Bill 67 does not address the need for a building standards framework in the Northwest Territories. While the Department anticipates proceeding with building standards legislation in the 20th Legislative Assembly, further research and engagement with industry stakeholders and community governments will be needed as part of advancing that work. That concludes my opening remarks and I look forward to hearing comments from Members and answering any questions the Members may have on the bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, I do, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Sorry, Madam Chair. On my left is Jennifer Young, director of corporate affairs. To my right close to me is Justin Hazenberg, director of public safety. On my far right is Ian Rennie, a drafter for the Department of Justice. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Welcome. I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Government

Operations, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 67. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 3rd, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

Bill 67 proposes changes to the Fire Prevention Act, which has not been reviewed since it was first passed in 1988. The committee sought public feedback on this legislation. During its review, the committee heard that clarity and certainty was needed with respect to the timelines of the appeal board process. The committee also heard concerns regarding the composition of the board. At the clause-by-clause review of Bill 67 on February 13, 2023, the committee was pleased to pass three motions to strengthen the bill that addressed concerns committee heard from stakeholders.

I would like to thank committee for its work on the review of Bill 67. I'd also like to thank the Minister and staff for their work on the Fire Prevention Act, and I look forward to comprehensive building standards legislation one day. Thank you, Madam Chair. Individual Members may have additional comments.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 67. Are there any general comments? Seeing none, does committee agree that there are no general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page one of the bill. I will call the clauses in groups of five.

Clause 1 to 5, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 6 to 10, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 11 to 15, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 16 to 20, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 21, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does the committee agree that Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you committee. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses -- oh, sorry, Minister.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I'd like to thank committee for all their hard work and the staff for being able to enhance and making this bill that much more, and we look forward to the building standards as the chairperson said in the next Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Committee, we've agreed to consider Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 4. I will ask the sponsor of the bill, the Member for Thebacha, to introduce the bill.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am pleased to speak to Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 4. This bill would adjust the indemnities and allowances listed in parts 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule C, annually using the average change in the consumer price index over the past five years.

Currently, indemnities and allowances for Members of the Legislative Assembly are adjusted each year on April 1st based on the CPI for the previous calendar year. If the status quo is maintained, MLA indemnities and allowances will increase by 6.8 percent on April 1 of this year. However, if Bill 73 passes and a five-year rolling average is used as the basis for

the adjustment, that would reduce the adjustment from 6.8 percent to 3.02 percent. This method is used in Manitoba and smooths out temporary spikes in inflation like we are seeing now. That concludes my remarks on Bill 73. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

MS. MARTSELOS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness into the Chamber.

Member, will you please introduce your witnesses?

MS. MARTSELOS: On my left is Tim Mercer, clerk of the Legislative Assembly. On my right is Christina Duffy, legislative division, Department of Justice.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 73. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't want to repeat some of the comments I made at second reading. But I just want to ask this happened in the last Legislative Assembly where the new bunch of MLAs were kind of marched off a plank metaphorically and agreed to a two-year freeze in their salary. But in doing that, it was only later that we found that the freeze actually impacted the -- and I'm not going to get all of this right. But I think it impacted the staff in the Legislative Assembly itself. So I want to just get a really good understandings of whether this proposal in anyway impact the remuneration for any of the employees, whether they're management or not, at the Legislative Assembly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you. No, it will not.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay. How come it did last time? Is it crafted differently this time? What's the difference here, and -- thanks, Madam la Presidente.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I will have the clerk explain.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you.

MR. MERCER: Thank you, Madam Chair. The legislation in the 18th Assembly actually didn't affect remuneration for Legislative Assembly staff, management or otherwise. The Government of the Northwest Territories at the time, these two things were happening concurrently, the Government of the Northwest Territories at the time had frozen the annual increments for senior management staff and excluded employees, and the vast majority of the employees in the Legislative Assembly are excluded employees. So when that action was taken, the ledge employees were affected. But that happens distinctly from the legislation that was adopted, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, no, okay. I appreciate that explanation. So it was really outside of the legislation. That was something that the Department of Finance of the day decided to do. So okay, I accept that. And thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further general comments on Bill 73? Oh, yes, Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there is actually an independent commission to review Members' compensation and benefits. It is required to be established under the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. It's appointed with individuals who are independent, neutral, and knowledgeable according to the legislation, and that commission is supposed to review and make recommendations about Members' compensation. That's because nobody wants politicians deciding what they get paid. This bill is to adjust the indemnities and allowances for Members. So despite the fact that this Act contains a requirement to have a commission to determine our -- or to make recommendations that, you know, hopefully we accept about indemnities, we are going ahead and adjusting them -- proposing to adjust them on our own. I think that's concerning in and of itself. So I just want to point that out so people are aware that we are taking a strange approach. And I admit that these are strange times with inflation what it is, but I'm not sure if -- I just want the public to be aware that this is the situation. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other general comments under -- on Bill 73? Does committee agree that there are no further general comments? Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. Clause 1, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for -- that's -- that's clause 2. Oh, okay, sorry. Clause 1, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 2, does committee agree? Member for Hay River South.

COMMITTEE MOTION 406-19(2):
BILL 73: AN ACT TO AMEND THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL ACT, NO. 4 – AMEND CLAUSE 2,
DEFEATED

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 2 of Bill 73 be amended by adding the following after proposed subclause 21(1)(1.1) notwithstanding subsection (1), the amount set out in parts 1, 2, and 3 in Schedule C shall not be adjusted on April 1st, 2023. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Basically what this amendment does is to freeze the wages or freeze the indemnity for this year until 2024, and there would be no increase. And I guess the reason that I brought the amendment forward is that you just -- you know, not too many minutes ago, we talked about how hard it is for people to survive in the Northwest Territories because of wages and the cost of living. And, you know, we've got to, you know, walk the talk as well. And, you know, as a politician, when I decided to, you know, to put my name forward, it wasn't about the money; it was about doing something for the people and being able to lead and being able to, you know, show them that, you know, why we are here and that's to stand beside them during good times and during tough times. And right now times are tough. So I would like to see -- again, I would like to see the wages -- or the indemnities stay the same, remain the same. And if this amendment does get -- you know, if it gets voted down, what I would be doing, I guess, with any increase, is probably -- what I would be doing is donating it back to -- or to the

ski club in Hay River, the portion of the increase because, you know, we talk about NGOs and how they're suffering. So I think that it would only be the wise move for me. And I would encourage other MLAs to do the same. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I want to start by saying that I have the greatest respect for my colleague from Hay River South, and I do believe that he brings forward this motion with, you know, integrity and the greatest, you know, intention of trying to show leadership and do the right thing. And I do commend him for doing that. And I appreciate all the work that he does for his constituents and so on. But I respectfully disagree. I think there are others that will use this as a reason to say -- I think it feeds into a narrative that, you know, politicians are paid too much, work too little, and are really expendable. And I think others believe that honestly. And we probably all have constituents like that. So I don't want to feed into that narrative, quite frankly. I think we all work very hard here. And, you know, I'm probably not the only MLA that is not doing this for the money because if I wanted more money, I would have gone back to my old job. So I -- but I don't want to feed into that narrative. And we did this in the last Assembly. I think it was the wrong thing to do as well. And in retrospect I don't think I would have done it.

And I think it's also a very delicate time for our government, you know, now that we're into negotiations with Union of Northern Workers, and I think that this bill in general and this amendment will be seen by some as interfering with the collective bargaining process. So for those reasons, Madam Chair -- well, and my colleague across the aisle, the Member for Hay River North, also said that, you know, it's a no winner for politicians. Whatever we decide to try to reopen discussion or debate around their own salary and remuneration, and I don't think we should be doing this, period. But -- and I'll be voting against whatever the outcome is unless my next amendment passes. But in any event, yeah, I want to commend my colleague for bringing this forward, and I think -- I do respect what he does, all the work that he does for his constituents. But I think that this does play into others' narratives around politicians not being very useful or helpful. So I won't be supporting the motion. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also can't support this motion. I

do also want to recognize I understand the intent of the Member. If I wasn't into the last government, I would have stood by this Member from Hay River and agreed with him. However, I was in the last government, Madam Chair, and in the last government, people were struggling financially as well. We have heard all day today about how expensive it is in the Northwest Territories, and that hasn't changed in the last couple of years. It's been expensive here for a long time. It's getting more expensive, but it was expensive here. I know, I lived here a long time. Madam Chair, the last government we were trying to recognize the impact of -- and our government doesn't have money. We're a small government. We also recognize that. We tried to address the cost of living and things by voting against any increase and that did not go -- the public did not appreciate that. It was misconstrued as bad intentions for negotiations.

And now, Madam Chair, we're in the same exact position at the end of this government where we recognize that inflation is high. So I can't support the major increase. But we also recognize we're in negotiations, and I can't go back to making the mistake we made in the last government by saying zero. So, Madam Chair, I have to find a balance within that. So I don't be supporting this motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And earlier I said that, you know, we have an independent commission to deal with our remuneration because nobody wants politicians deciding how much they're going to make. But -- as my own Industry, Tourism and Investment, I see what inflation is these days, and even though this bill is not proposing that we have an increase according to inflation this year, I think that in solidarity with the people who are struggling financially, that I am going to support this motion. And I will say I am supporting this as MLA. This is not a position of the government. So this is not like the last term where I believe it was the Government House Leader who brought forward the motion. This is a Member who's bringing this forward because of the -- I believe because of these outstanding times we're living in with inflation. So I will be supporting this. I expect it of my MLA, and I am my own MLA. And I suppose I have to donate my -- the increase as well if it goes through. So I'll be doing that too. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes. Madam Chair, my comment has not changed from a couple weeks ago. I was born and raised here. We have seen and still continue to see the struggles our people are going through every day especially in small communities. And I said before that this is not about us. This is about the people we serve in our region. And as an MLA, we are a public servant. And we are here to serve, you know, the public in the NWT. And that whatever the public is getting under the UNW collective agreement, that's what we should be getting as well. So for this, I stand with my colleague Rocky Simpson on this motion that I do not support it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I mean, I feel this is, again, just a really, like, no win type situation. The intention of this bill to begin with was to smooth out this bizarre CPI high, you know, number that we currently see and this is sort of an artificial one and isn't expected to continue on like that and it now has somehow involved into some conversation about what we should be doing to sacrifice ourselves as MLAs to show solidarity to our constituents. And to me that really sort of wreaks of virtue signalling. We make \$114,000 a year base salary. If I went to go work for the GNWT with the qualifications and the experiences that we have, and all of my colleagues have, we would make 50 grand at least a year more in the GNWT. A director in the GNWT makes \$190,000 a year. I am a single person. When I look at other people that are making this comments about that they can go without this, they are all in dual income households.

And I think that this is something that I have noticed time and again in this Assembly and in the general where we put income thresholds, where we put, you know cost of living offsets, all of that, it penalizes single people. And I'm not saying that we as an Assembly and ourselves -- you know, we are distinct and unique and different than the general population, but are we going to sit here and talk about not penalizing seniors and elders and things and then, you know, when I look around and see that others who have other sources of income coming in, some people still have businesses. And all we're asking for is the cost of living raise that we were already promised that an independent commission agrees with, and we are saying that we will smooth out this weird CPI bump to not take advantage of it. So I think if anything, that actually shows, that piece of it, is what's showing that we have knowledge and understanding and awareness

of what the people of the territory are dealing with. I don't think by saying, you know, we're going to, you know, not take this increase, that we're really going to have that much impact. Like, I feel already for the amount of time that I put in for 114K a year, I'm not making very much per hour. I work constantly all the time and I have to laugh when people say to me oh, I'm sorry I've called you outside of work hours. I'm like, I don't have work hours. I'll leave here tonight and I will spend the next two hours after I get home talking to people online and hearing their concerns.

So at the end of the day, people can call me what they want; they can call me greedy, they can call me anything. They can say I'm out for myself. I've read it all online, all the things about myself. However, at the end of the day engineers are not by their act allowed to devalue their work by discounting the price of it. So by telling MLAs that we shouldn't be getting raises, we don't deserve these things when we've been killing ourselves for four years during a pandemic, I think it's disingenuous, and it's devaluing the work that MLAs do, and we will continue to get the quality of people that we have seen in the past if we don't value MLAs properly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. To the motion. Oh, I forgot to go look over this way sometimes. Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. I am speaking as the MLA for the Nahendeh here and not the Government of the Northwest Territories. So in the last Assembly, my colleague from Frame Lake talked about what happened to us where we said we'll do two years of zero and then move on from that, the message was wrong. We -- it said that, you know, the negotiations, we're going to go this way. And we shouldn't be sending that message. I also don't agree with the fact that if we deal with the cost of living which, you know, my colleague from Hay River North says, you know, there was independent commission, they said that inflation -- well, if you look at inflation, we're at seven point whatever it is. That in my books could not be something that I could live with. But I thought that when we had this conversation and we looked at the various options available to us to do the model that we are presenting here is a good balance between what was proposed and the -- or the Member for Hay River South's motion. Again, I appreciate the Member's comments and his ability to bring forth this. Again, though, I look at it; it's about the work we do. The Member from Great Slave talks about we work 24 hours every day. I get phone calls at two, 4 o'clock in the

morning. It's just the way life is. You know, we signed up for this. If we wanted more money, we'd go out and do another job. But that -- I understood that when I became an MLA, I knew what my salary is going to be. I knew where I was going to do it because we all do it for the one reason and one reason only. It's the residents of the Northwest Territories. I can sit here and say every one of you have had those calls late at night and got out of bed and started working. And that there I say this, we may not always agree, but the work that everybody does in this House, to me, speaks volumes when I can see texts or emails saying -- getting an email saying at 3 o'clock in the morning saying hey, you got to do something, or you send a text at 2 o'clock in the morning and a Minister responds to you at 2:05. So people are working hard, and I think this is a good balance between what the independent commission decided and where we are. So I appreciate the Member's bringing forth the motion, but I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. Oh, Member, before the bill, I'll give you closing remarks. Member.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to, you know, acknowledge the, you know, the comments I heard from the Members. You know, and I respect, you know, that they -- the comments, I respect the decisions that each make. You know, we're all here, I think, to do the best we can for the residents of the Northwest Territories. And if we all thought the same, we probably wouldn't be doing a good job. So I'm glad that we have diverse views, and that's what makes it work. And for this vote, I'd like a recorded vote as well, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. A recorded vote has been requested. So all those in favour of the motion Rocky's put forward to amend, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Deh Cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those abstaining, please stand.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The results of the recorded vote are: Four in favour, 11 opposed, one abstention. The motion is defeated.

Clause 2, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 3, does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 407-19(2):
BILL 73: AN ACT TO AMEND THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL ACT, NO. 4 – AMEND CLAUSE 3,
DEFEATED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that Clause 3 of Bill 73 be amended by deleting "on assent" and substituting "on September 4, 2023". Merci, Madame la Presidente.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

Members, we are going to take a short -- a break. Due to the -- what we're discussing here is our salaries, we have to reset for the live streaming, and we want to make sure that we continue the broadcasting. So it has to take about 15 minutes to reset because it ends at a certain period, and we don't want to end up discussing this not broadcasting. So I'm going to take a break so that we have time to do this.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will continue on with the motion. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just love this place. Here we are, at -- what time is

this? It's 9:30 talking about salaries for MLAs. I just gotta love this place.

Okay, I think there is a problem with this, where MLAs are talking about their own salaries, period, any time. I just think it's a no winner.

So what this motion would actually do is, and I should have -- let me take a step back. I am okay with going with a five-year rolling average. I think that it probably will even out some of the bumps and so on, but I just don't think that we should you be doing it and applying it to ourselves. It should apply to the next Assembly and that's what the effect of this motion is, is that it would change the implementation date for the five-year rolling average from I guess Thursday of week, when the Commissioner would come in and provide assent to the bills, it would change it on Friday to September the 4th. So come into effect in the next Assembly. And that's generally what we do when we consider our, you know, remuneration or things like that. We don't want it to impact our own remuneration in any way, so. And I think that's a principle. Look, and I recognize in doing this that MLAs will receive a 6.8 percent increase as of April 1st. We don't give that to ourselves; that's already in the legislation. So it's not like we're giving ourselves an increase. That's what the legislation already says. But I do think it is a problem when MLAs start to tinker and change their own salaries while they're sitting, and I think that's a no-no. And so that's why I brought this forward, Madam Chair. I don't think it's going to pass but I guess I'm a pretty principled guy and I am going to bring it forward and make everybody stand so I am going to ask for a recorded vote. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. A recorded vote has been requested. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Deh Cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Hay River North. The

Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The results of the recorded vote are three in favour, eight opposed, four abstentions. The motion is defeated.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 3, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does committee agree that Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative and Executive Council Act, No. 4, is now ready for third reading.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative and Executive Council Act, No. 4?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I will ask the sponsor of the bill, the Member for Thebacha to introduce the bill.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to appear today on Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

The amendments proposed in this Act are in response to Motion 70-19(2). Members passed that motion on November 3rd, 2023.

Madam Chair, this bill amends the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act to establish a commission within two years of the 2023 general election. Normally a commission would not be required until after the 2027 general election. However after this House rejected the recommendations from the most recent commission, it was decided to require a commission after the 2023 general election.

The Act requires a commission to be set up every second Assembly. If passed, commissions will now be created after the 2023 and 2031 general elections.

Madam Chair, the legislation already required a commission to be created within the first two years of an Assembly. The Act was left this way as part of the transition report and we recommended to the next Assembly to create the commission earlier within the first 18 months.

Bill 76 also expands the size of the commission. The commission has been three people - a current or retired judge and two public members. Members were concerned this did not provide enough room for a broader range of views on the commission.

If passed, Bill 76 expands the members from three to five people.

Bill 76 also changes who can serve as chairperson of the commission. The Act currently provides that a current or retired judge of the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories chair the commission. Given limited judicial resources, this can be a challenge. Bill 76 allows for a current or sitting judge but also allows for an appointment of a person who is qualified to serve as a judge. This means a lawyer with more than ten years' experience will be eligible to serve as chair. This ensures that the commission has legal knowledge at their disposal. This is important as the commission's recommendations could ultimately affect someone's constitutionally-protected voting rights.

Finally, in recognition of concerns raised by members in the public about riding names, Bill 76 has geographic and place names as to what the commission needs to consider when electoral boundaries and names of ridings.

Finally, the bill makes minor amendments to modernize language used in the Act. This includes moving to gender-neutral language. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member, would you like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member, would you please introduce your witnesses.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. On my left is Glen Rutland, our deputy clerk. And on my right is Christine Duffy, legislative counsel.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Welcome. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 76. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, one of the reasons that I decided to pause my -- want to change the name of the riding of Great Slave was the idea or the understanding that this would be included in this next go around with the Electoral Boundaries Commission and, you know, it was definitely something that they had touched upon in the last go but not really given the importance that it was needed and really the consideration. So I am really pleased to see -- I don't know what section it is, six there, clause 6, that we will be looking to have that scope included with this work. I think it is super important for us to stop -- to decolonize places around the Northwest Territories and that includes ourselves here in the Assembly. If I should be back to represent this riding in the 20th, I would be happy to have it have a different name. And as always, I am grateful to see changes where we are no longer sticking to the binary language and moving to more inclusive. So thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other further general comments on Bill 76? Does committee agree that are no further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Can we proceed to a clause by clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

Clause 1, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 2, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 3, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 4, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 5, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): And clause 6, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does committee agree that Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member, and thank you to the witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

What is the wish of committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Gee, I'm kinda forgetful, Madam Chair. Can -- sorry, I would like to ask the Chair to -- I move to ask -- I move that the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): There is 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.

MR. SPEAKER: May I please have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been very busy and has been considering Tabled Document 813-19(2), Committee Report 42-19(2), Committee Report 48-19(2), Bill 60, Bill 66, Bill 67, Bill 73, and Bill 76, and I would like to report progress with 11 motions carried, and that Committee Report 42-19(2) and Committee Report 48-19(2) are concluded, and that Bills 60, 66, 67, 73, and 76 are ready

for third reading, and that consideration of Tabled Document 813-19(2) is concluded and that the House concur in those estimates. And that an appropriation bill be based thereon and be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. You finished early tonight; I was expecting midnight, but. Do we have a seconder? Member for Yellowknife South. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 61:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE OMBUD ACT,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act, be read for the third time. And Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The Member is requesting a recorded vote. Order. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput.

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Hay River North.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 11 in favour, zero opposed, seven abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 61 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

BILL 63:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES ACT,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Official Languages Act, be read for the third time. And Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

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

The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 63 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 86:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2022-2023,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 86, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023, Be read for a third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Tu Nedhe Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please rise.

The results of the recorded vote: 15 in favour, three opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 86 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 87:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2022-2023,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 87, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh.

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

The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 87 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 88:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 88, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2023-2024, be read for the third time. And Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member

for Hay River North. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh.

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

The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 88 has had third reading.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 29th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 1343-19(2), Impacts of COVID-19 on Education
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 80, Dental Hygienists Profession Statute Amendment Act
- Bill 81, An Act to Amend the Education Act, No. 2
- Bill 82, Legal Profession Act
- Bill 83, Liquor Act
- Bill 84, An Act to Amend the Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation Act
- Bill 85, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3
- Bill 77, Nursing Profession Act
- Bill 78, Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Act
- Bill 79, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
- Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
- Committee Report 47-19(2), Report on Homelessness Prevention: Supporting Pathways to Housing NWT Residents
- Committee Report 49-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the 2021-22 Review of the Official Languages Act
- Committee Report 50-19(2), Standing Committee on the Social Development Report on Strengthening Community Supports, Lifting Youth Voices: Recommendations on Suicide Prevention
- 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

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum products and Carbon Tax Act
- Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act
- Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act
- Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 4
- Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 29th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. Enjoy the rest of your evening.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

