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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 23, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Thank you. I'd like to thank Marc Casaway for the prayer this morning.

Ministers' statements. Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 18-20(1):
2024 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES**

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the athletes, coaches, and mission staff who are representing Team NT at the 2024 Arctic Winter Games in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Alaska from March 10 to 16, 2024. The Arctic Winter Games provide an opportunity for Team NT to engage and compete with other athletes from the circumpolar region. Not only are the games an athletic competition for athletes, it also provides an opportunity to promote cultural and social exchange among youth from all parts of the North. These games help with the development of sport in the NWT and the quality of life for youth through the leadership opportunities that are provided. These experiences also leave a lasting impact on host communities and the other groups that attend. In March, Team NT will be represented by approximately 350 participants including athletes, coaches, chaperones, and mission staff from 19 communities from every region of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Team NT's chef de missions who are leading the delegation: Ms. Rita Mercredi, who will be chef de mission; Mr. Damon Crossman and Ms. Lexie Letzing, who will be assistant chef de missions.

In addition to Team NT, the Government of the Northwest Territories is once again pleased to support the NWT Youth Ambassadors Program at these games. This program continues to offer

a wonderful volunteer experience for youth at major territorial, national, and international events, where they can develop life and job skills. A total of 12 youth volunteers are expected to participate in the NWT Youth Ambassador Program with the 2024 Arctic Winter Games Host Society. These volunteers are between the ages of 15 to 22 and come from various communities across the Northwest Territories.

As role models and leaders of tomorrow, I want to recognize our youth ambassadors for taking this opportunity to learn and grow by participating in this exciting volunteer experience.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Sport North Federation and all the territorial sport organizations who are responsible for selecting and managing their representative teams. They play a critical role in preparing Team NT at these games.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the many volunteers and sponsors who have selflessly offered their time and donations. Whether you are a coach, an organizer, or someone who provided meals, all of your contributions to Team NT are very much appreciated. I sincerely hope that all participants enjoy this truly wonderful experience. Good luck, play fair, and have fun. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 19-20(1):
NEW CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT
TOOLS**

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update on implementing the draft Northwest Territories' curriculum for junior kindergarten to Grade 12 students. As a mother of three school-aged children and one who values innovation and critical and creative thinking, this is an exciting time for our students. The British Columbia Curriculum is renowned for its high education

standards and is uniquely designed to offer students a balanced and informative approach to learning. It allows youth to learn through multiple pathways to encourage them to find their interests and learn various skills by exploring concepts practically rather than passively. Ultimately, it is designed to connect learning with the real world.

Introducing a new curriculum is no small task, and we have made significant progress. This year, we started trialing an adapted version of British Columbia's curriculum in Grades 4, 5, and 6, as well as in some Grade 9 classrooms. The new curriculum provides more opportunities for teachers to promote deeper learning. In this trialing stage, NWT teachers are encouraged to try aspects of the new curriculum, explore new teaching approaches with their students, and provide feedback to the department about what works and what could be improved. We are on track with our five key implementation areas, which include releasing a timeline for trialing and finalizing the curriculum in each grade. It includes determining Grade 12 graduation requirements and providing professional learning for teachers through in-person training workshops and online courses.

Mr. Speaker, we recently launched an online tool and forum for teachers trialing the adapted curriculum. This site allows teachers to discuss, network, submit questions, review materials, and find other helpful resources. We have also set up working groups of NWT teachers and subject matter experts for each school subject to ensure they fit our territory's context. We want to ensure Indigenous world views, knowledge, and perspectives are reflected in the curriculum. We are also publishing drafts for each subject online as they are ready, which anyone can review and provide feedback on.

Mr. Speaker, this fall, we started changing our student assessment tools and practices to align with the new curriculum. These include an interim report introducing students and families to a new marking system. This year, students in grades trialing the new curriculum will be assessed using the proficiency scale. Instead of seeing marks like 100 percent or A-plus on their report cards, students will receive a level on the scale and written comments that clearly explain how they are doing, areas they need to work on, and a plan for moving forward. When students receive a mark on their report card, like a percentage or a letter grade, there is often an emphasis on the mark itself and comparing it to others instead of focusing on how, or if, students are learning.

Mr. Speaker, focusing on student learning will allow for more meaningful conversations about

student progress. The scale views learning as an ongoing rather than signaling that learning is done once you receive a certain grade. The three key elements of this new curriculum design are:

- The content, what students know;
- Competencies, what students can do; and,
- Big ideas, so what students understand.

Mr. Speaker, this curriculum aspires to prepare students for the future by centering the learner with flexible learning focused on literacy and numeracy while supporting deeper learning through concept-based and competency-driven approaches. Our economic foundation relies on a solid education, and I am happy that students across the territory have the opportunity to benefit from this new, more modern way of learning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 20-20(1): WEAVING OUR WISDOM

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, last week the Department of Health and Social Services hosted the second ever Weaving our Wisdom gathering for which 350 leaders, elders, and knowledge-holders from across the Northwest Territories came together to celebrate and share Indigenous community-driven wellness knowledge. The gathering featured inspiring guest speakers, workshops, facilitated discussions on important topics such as:

- Frameworks for total health optimization;
- The impact of colonization and systemic racism on Indigenous people's health;
- Practical strategies to heal the wounds of intergenerational trauma;
- Indigenous models for suicide prevention;
- Climate change's impacts on wellness;
- New ideas to develop trauma healing programs for families; and finally,

- Innovation around the future of Indigenous health, community wellness, and land-based healing.

The gathering showcased the resilience of Indigenous peoples spotlighting their interconnected knowledge systems that have been sustained and developed across generations. Community wellness participants explored the gathering's themes of:

- Culture and care;
- Self-recognition and healing;
- Community care and wellness; and,
- Land-based healing.

In addition to the main agenda, three specialized programs were crafted for participants who identified as Indigenous youth, Indigenous men, and elders. The Indigenous Youth Wellness Program encouraged youth to develop skills and access resources and teachings that will help them take control of their wellness. The Indigenous Men's Wellness Program began a conversation which effectively lays out the issues northern Indigenous men face in accessing health care, wellness programming, and healing. The Indigenous Elders' Wellness Program uncovered ways to better honour elders so that they can be happy, healthy, and living well in their communities.

The priorities for the Indigenous health and wellness identified through this gathering, and through in-depth public engagements in all 33 NWT communities, will form the foundation for the community wellness initiatives and northern wellness agreement with Indigenous Services Canada. The identified priorities will inform the future work of our health and social services system and will also assist a whole-of-government understanding of how the determinants of wellness such as housing, climate change, poverty, early childhood development, education, and self-determination can impact Indigenous people.

Mr. Speaker, to help achieve these goals for the health and well-being of Indigenous people in the Northwest Territories, the Government of the Northwest Territories must innovate and design systems directly addressing long-standing systemic racism.

I want to thank the Indigenous women and their teams who hosted and organized the Weaving our Wisdom gathering, for their work in leading this important system assessment and in aiding the development of anti-racism initiatives.

Much of the heavy lifting was done by the community, culture and innovation division and the cultural safety and anti-racism division of the Department of Health and Social Services, who work at the forefront of equity, cultural safety, and anti-racism. They are primarily staffed with Indigenous employees and people of colour and are located not only in Yellowknife but also in Inuvik, Norman Wells, Fort Good Hope, Fort Simpson, and Fort Smith.

I encourage everyone listening today to check out some of the videos, and images from this wonderful event will be on my Facebook page. It truly was a week to remember.

Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to share the profound impact of attending the feast and drum dance at the end of the Weaving our Wisdom gathering. Witnessing the vibrance and the unity of over 350 wellness leaders, elders, and knowledge-holders from across the Northwest Territories was a powerful and prideful experience for me. I think for everyone in attendance. The celebration not only showcased the resilience of Indigenous people but also highlighted the interconnected knowledge system that has sustained us across generations. It was inspiring to see so many individuals come together to celebrate and to share Indigenous wellness, weaving traditional practices into our health care system. This gathering has not only set the foundation for future initiatives, but it also reinforced the importance of cultural engagement in pursuit of a holistic health for NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, later today at the appropriate time I will recognize this outstanding team for their incredible work on the planning and organization of this amazing gathering. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of health and social services. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 93-20(1): ARTS FUNDING

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am a proud supporter of the arts. I was thrilled to take the Member for Kam Lake and the Member for Frame Lake to the Bloody Valentine Burlesque last weekend. This weekend, I encourage all Members to attend the Black in History art exhibition this Saturday from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Yellowknife Racquet Club. Inemesit Graham's portraits are a celebration of black leaders, thinkers, authors,

activists, and poets throughout world history celebrating Black History Month. Admission is free.

Additionally, the Black Advocacy Coalition upNorth, BACupNorth, is having their Black History Month gala tomorrow night that celebrates black music and culture, and I believe tickets are still available.

Mr. Speaker, on the topic of boosting NWT arts, I was also heartened to see that the department of ECE recently restructured arts funding grants towards a visionary purpose - the building up of or strengthening of existing arts organizations throughout the territory. I hope this vision helps propel artists into new markets and new venues when they want to grow and expand. It appears that ECE's vision will allow organizations to scale up and capacity-build to get more federal dollars. A new arts officer position has been created to assist across our regions if I understand correctly.

Mr. Speaker, this is great news because, indeed, the more our arts organizations can apply, the more they will get.

Mr. Speaker, this works really well for large organizations like the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre or Western Arctic Moving Pictures; however, for small or medium organizations this is a brave new world. Mr. Speaker, I have heard concerns in the arts community that this brave new vision has not been properly communicated to them. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 94-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FOREST FIRE
EVACUEE REIMBURSEMENT

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, after several constituency meetings across my riding of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, I rise to share that I views and experience with last year's wildfire season. They are still feeling the impacts of the evacuation and have a lot to say about how differently things could have been. I also want to recognize the hard work of many constituents put in to ensure that their friends and neighbours were all taken care of.

I have many people come to me during my constituency meeting with a list of receipts and expenses, hundreds and then thousands of dollars as expenses, and they don't know if they will ever get their money back. With inflation driving up the cost of living, I feel it very

important to reimburse my constituents who have stepped up to spend a fortune just so they could get to safety.

I want to point out that we have a Language Act but little to none of the vital communication regarding the wildfire evacuation were available to Indigenous people in their languages. This is an absolute breach of the government's responsibilities. Many of our elders did not know what was going on. There is not how we treat our elders, and this is not how we respect local Indigenous culture.

It was very -- it is also very difficult to know where our community members were ending up as they flew south. I saw a lot of social media looking for their family and friends worried that they could be missing. How could any of us feel -- sorry, feel if our mothers and grandfathers were missing in places they may have never been before?

And then there are the supply chain disruptions. Yellowknife is the most important supply hub for food for distribution across the North. The evacuation put the supply chain into chaos. I know my people were not -- I know my people were not the only ones affected by this situation. We need to plan ahead and prepare better so that our supply chains can withstand major disruption caused by this kind of disaster.

I could go on, but finally, I want to mention that this is -- the evacuation affected the communication that stayed in place while I know Fort Resolution, YKDFN, and Lutselk'e incurred a lot of cost preparing these communities for the fire. It took on a lot of evacuees, and they haven't seen any compensation. We need to ensure that every community gets the right compensation for the work they did to protect themselves and their neighbours. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 95-20(1):
FORT GOOD HOPE ARENA COMPLETION

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today is on the progress or future plans to complete the Fort Good Hope municipal arena complex. Mr. Speaker, construction renovations, as I understand, stopped a number of years ago on this facility. Residents are left in suspense, families, parents, leaders, on the future continued construction plans.

Mr. Speaker, sports and recreation facilities are essential in our small communities. These activities contribute to releasing the talents of our youth leading by examples to healthy living, expanding and participating at territorial and national tournaments, meeting and interacting with other students from other cultures. This collaboration certainly brought into the youth capacity.

Mr. Speaker, these facilities play an active role and are the backbone of our social fabric in the communities. You can particularly understand that in the smaller communities, in particular the ones that I serve, are limited access to the outside world by an all-season road plays a huge role in supporting what we have and currently have, which are limitations, but nevertheless are broadening our horizons by gathering at these facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And later I will have questions for the appropriate Minister. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 96-20(1):
VOLUNTEERS IN SPORTS RECOGNITIONS

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker [Translation unavailable]. Youth needs a positive outlook in their lives. A sportsplex is where kids socialize. It's a place to burn off steam. They learn to challenge themselves, to work as a team, learn new skills, have friendly competition and, most importantly, to have fun. These are life skills. We know the wins and losses kids have on the ice or on the court are the wins and losses that prepare them for life. And none of this would be possible, Mr. Speaker, without the volunteers.

I want to take the time to acknowledge the amazing volunteers that are stepping forward in our communities to support children and youth. There are staffs from both Chief Jimmy Bruneau School and Elizabeth MacKenzie Elementary School, staff from the local RCMP detachment, and recreation department in Behchoko. Now there are parents stepping forward to also volunteer. I want to acknowledge these people, to thank them for their time.

Mr. Speaker, from 2007 to 2016, there were no sports facility in Behchoko. For almost ten years, the children and youth had no place where they could play sports and be active. However, Mr. Speaker, some of these kids who didn't have a sportsplex are now giving back to the youth. The recreation department is run by youth. They are all youth under 30 years of age. These young adults are taking the lead. They

have lots of energy, and they are giving back to the youth with programs and activities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the RCMP. We know the RCMP have difficult jobs. They see all of the challenges and struggles in our community that we don't. They have hard jobs, and yet they show up at the sportsplex to volunteer their time with kids. Not only are they supporting them to be active but they are also building healthy relationships with the kids so our children and youth know the RCMP are here to protect us and to serve us. I want to thank them for their dedication to our community. Mr. Speaker, can I have a unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, we all know time is precious. It is people like this that give their time that truly makes a difference in the world. Mr. Speaker, it takes a community to raise a child, and it is volunteers like this that make our community a better place to live. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 97-20(1):
DAYCARE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had a federal Minister here to celebrate the NWT achieving an average cost of \$10-a-day child care. Unfortunately, this drive to lower fees has pushed this sector to the brink, especially in regional centres of the NWT such as Yellowknife and Inuvik.

The feds and the GNWT seem to have gone about this backwards based on a poor understanding of the struggles and challenges within the child care sector. By treating staff wages and organizational viability as an afterthought, it implies that the problem that we're trying to solve is that these daycares are gouging parents so we just have to force them to charge less. But this couldn't be further from the truth. Our child care providers are usually non-profits or else small family-based day homes. It doesn't matter how affordable spaces are, if the spaces don't exist.

What we hear from child care providers, which have formed a joint advocacy organization called the Early Childhood Association in response to these threats, is that the number one concern is attracting and retaining staff. Staff are paid significantly less than comparable positions in our communities in early childhood learning, whether that's in the

schools or in the government, and those providers that have been trying to increase staff wages are now being penalized and losing money, and they're faced with the choice of either shutting down or renouncing all government funding.

Now we're seeing in other provinces revolving closures of daycares, providers walking away from the funding, and parents suffering the consequences with even higher fees than ever. Now, GNWT has responded to some of these challenges by saying okay, we'll give you top-ups for staff wages but now we have to dictate how much you can pay each of your staff. So we're increasingly trying to micromanage these operations and saying well, we've worked out the finances for each provider to ensure, don't worry, you're going to be financially viable and sustainable. We just haven't shared those numbers with them yet. So providers could be forgiven for wondering well, why doesn't ECE just take over these programs if they're the ones that know best? Why don't they just show the sector how these programs can be run so cheaply and efficiently according to the GNWT's formulas that haven't been shared with us yet? Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So at the root of this problem is that we've negotiated an agreement with the federal government in a rush based on incomplete numbers and not to mention that it doesn't take inflation into account, we're locked into this \$10 a day, because it's a round number, but we have a limited pool of money from the feds that is not enough to spread around to keep daycares afloat. So I understand that a new agreement's being negotiated with the feds, so I see this as an opportunity to fully include the Early Childhood Association --

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife North, your time is up. Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 98-20(1):
HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have residents within our communities who want nothing but to better their lives for themselves and their families. I am referring to residents of our communities who want to return back to school in hopes of finding a secure career path for their immediate future. Their hopes and dreams are soon diminished upon returning to their home communities to find that they do not have a home to go to.

Mr. Speaker, I was contacted by a constituent from my riding who stated that she wanted to go back to school for this very reason. Before leaving her community with her family of four, she was assured by the local housing authority that her housing unit would be available once she finishes school. Today she is on a lengthy waiting list and sharing a home with a family of five. In total, there are nine people staying in the home.

Mr. Speaker, completing an accredited course should be a time of celebration, not one where you start to worry about how you are going to house your family. This young lady has informed me that the local housing authority and Housing NWT should revisit their policies and procedures into how housing units are allocated. Mr. Speaker, this disappointed young lady stated that there are small families living in units where bigger families can be better accommodated. The allocation of housing units needs to be strategized where the size of the family is considered. I know this is a problem in every community, and if the department can get feedback from the community members on where and how some of these ongoing issues might be resolved then that is a good start.

Mr. Speaker, I will always refer back to when we were strong and independent before Housing NWT intervened and tried to make our lives better. Today this is a national crisis, and the residents of 33 communities want to be involved in how Housing NWT should accommodate its residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 99-20(1):
LICENSED GAMING

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing Northerners love, it's a good bingo. Gaming has been part of northern culture since the earliest times and continues to be enjoyed in communities large and small. Whether it's bingo, hand games Chase the Ace, or a simple 50/50, we all love playing games and the chance at winning prizes. Gaming brings our communities together. Unfortunately, though, we are preventing this industry from seeing its full potential. When Northerners want an occasional stop at a casino, they have to wait until they take a trip down south.

Mr. Speaker, licensed gaming is a big industry and is encouraged across the country. Casinos, VLTs, and online betting are billion-dollar opportunities. Gaming creates wealth for communities, enhances tourism, and is a major

source of prosperity for many Indigenous governments and communities in Canada. It's a shame that our own policies and legislation are only scratching the surface of what a real gaming industry could look like in the NWT. We need to cut the red tape and regulations that hold us back from joining the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, close your eyes and imagine the vast revenue opportunities made possible by expanding our small but incredibly popular gambling and gaming industries. Imagine a hotel and resort sitting on the shores of the big lakes raking in cold hard cash from eager tourists enriching the coffers of Indigenous and public governments. We could transform our economy with an open mind and a willingness to embrace this important industry. The industry and opportunity are there, Mr. Speaker. We just need the reforms and willingness from the Minister responsible to chart a safe path forward to a fruitful gaming industry in the Northwest Territories. Let's not shy away from this cornerstone of our northern culture and instead find a way to work with Indigenous governments to make new economic opportunities out of these traditions. We are always seeking new ways to generate revenue and increase our tourism product, so let's get to work modernizing our Acts and regulations and encourage private enterprise by opening up the gaming industry in the Northwest Territories for Northerners and tourists from all over the world. A thriving gaming industry can only enhance our status as a world class destination for tourists and solve much needed revenue challenges for this government. I look forward to asking the Minister responsible later on how we can partner with Indigenous governments to finally the Northwest Territories' gaming industry a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 100-20(1):
NON-PROFIT SECTOR

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago, I asked the Premier questions about the recommendations of the strengthening the non-profit and charitable sector external advisory committee final report. The Premier's office provided a reply by e-mail, and I would like to highlight that reply and respond to it on the record. The reply reads as follows:

Currently work is underway to strengthen the non-profit and charitable sectors in the Northwest Territories. The first two recommendations from the external advisory committee's report focus on updating the

Government of the Northwest Territories program managers guide for funding NGOs. Collaboration between the Departments of Executive and Indigenous Affairs and Finance is ongoing to review and revise the program managers guide. The work will be completed in the next 12 months. The public will be informed, and the guide will be widely available.

I appreciate this answer, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to reviewing the updated guide as I'm sure my colleagues do as well. The response went on to read:

The third recommendation involves the analysis and development of options for consideration by the 20th Assembly. This includes exploring additional support, particularly financial assistance to enhance the capacity and stability of the non-profit and charitable sectors in their operations. Work on this third recommendation has not yet started.

I appreciate the Premier providing this response, Mr. Speaker, and I respectfully suggest that the answer is somewhat underwhelming but I do trust that as the new Minister for this file, it is the Premier's intention to ensure that staff act upon the recommendations of the strengthening the non-profit and charitable sector report.

Mr. Speaker, many of our longstanding non-profits play a significant role in helping us achieve several of our newly stated priorities and, considering this, I strongly advocate that implementing all of the recommendations from this report form part of the executive and Indigenous affairs department's mandate for the 20th Assembly. In particular I want to emphasize, as my colleague did earlier this week, the importance of long-term and stable funding for longstanding NGOs who work to implement program directly -- work to implement programming directly related to GNWT responsibilities. I look forward to discussing this further with my colleagues on both sides of the House as a mandate is developed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 101-20(1):
DIABETES IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
– TIME TO CONCLUDE ALLOWED

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about the impacts of diabetes on our residents, particularly on Indigenous people and communities in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, according to a March 2023 article from the US National Institute of Health, diabetes among Indigenous people in Canada is at epidemic levels. The Canadian Medical Association Journal has said that inequities in the social, cultural, historical, economic, and political determinants of health, lack of access to nutritionally adequate food, and barriers to proper health care, played major roles in the diabetes epidemic in Indigenous populations. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, according to Diabetes Canada, the rates of individuals with diabetes includes 12.7 percent of First Nations living off reserve, 9.9 percent of Metis people, and 4.7 of Inuit people compared to 5 percent of the general population.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous people did not always have such a high rate of individuals with diabetes as there are today. It was only within the last 100 years that the Indigenous population have become significantly and disproportionately affected by diabetes and experience higher rates of mortality, hospitalizations, and complications compared to non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this epidemic is a result of multiple compounding factors from Canada's colonial history, which included residential schools, the 60s Scoop, and Indian hospital. These factors have created long-lasting physical, social, mental, emotional harms for our communities. Or, as one board member from the National Aboriginal Diabetes Association put it, diabetes has become now multigenerational.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the small communities we see -- in the small communities we see it all the time, pop, chips, and Canadian, junk food is readily available, whereas healthier food is less accessible and more expensive. Nutrition is taking a back seat within our food system --

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Deh Cho, your time is up.

MRS. YAKELEYA: I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to my colleagues. Nutrition is taking a back seat with our food system, and that is just not right. It is literally killing our people. It is sending our residents to an early grave, and it must change. Our government, at every level government for that matter, must work to reverse the diabetes epidemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 102-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BURSARY
PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And good day, colleagues. I'm going to tell you a sad story about a young person, a lifelong Northerner and a resident of Yellowknife, who recently talked to me and brought forward their concern, deep disappointment about their experience of working through the NWT Health and Social Services Bursary Program.

Now this young person, I was really inspired -- and now I'm not going to table it because it's a -- they're even a published author, Mr. Speaker. They work with groups like Home Base, the Tree of Peace, and many other wonderful organizations, even Dechinta, about trying to find healthy lifestyles for people, Mr. Speaker. And it's a shame to see this potential and excitement wasted.

So she's been trying to find work here in the Northwest Territories in her health background and found it was a dead end so very disappointing without getting the inspiration and opportunity she was really craving. And so she thought well, why don't I pursue my masters degree in food security. So she applied and she's been doing it over the last couple of years and she's been making great strides, and to be honest I was really excited when she told me about the work she's doing. She's even worked in the community of Tuktoyaktuk, visiting the community freezer, again talking about sustainable communities, Indigenous health by eating better, working better, working collaboratively.

Mr. Speaker, she applied last summer to get a bursary of \$6,000 and being a smart person, maybe that's her fault, she was too smart. She asked where would I see myself in this return of service for my bursary? By asking that simple question, the department realized oh, wait a minute, we shouldn't have given her a bursary because we don't know -- we don't have a vision of where she would fit in the system helping Northerners; a homegrown Northerners who the carpet's been pulled from her, Mr. Speaker. So they sent her a little Dear John letter of saying, sorry, but -- you know, sorry but not sorry, we're gonna take it away. \$6,000, Mr. Speaker. Exactly. Shame. It's pittance.

Mr. Speaker, in a public service of over 6,482 employees with the annual vacancy of a thousand people, no one had the imagination in the department of health where to find someone who has such important skills to help Northerners. So whether you live in Lutselk'e, you live in Tuktoyaktuk, you live in the Mackenzie Delta, these skills and homegrown

inspirational stories are important to all our youth as we try to lead them towards opportunities that build and strengthen our future. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions with the Minister of Finance about fixing this deep and grave wrong. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 103-20(1):
FORT LIARD SNOWBOARD PROGRAM
2024

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, when you think about snowboarding, you think about mountain, ski resorts, but it is a sport that has taking hold in the Northwest Territories. It is a great opportunity to observe youth being youth - vulnerable, risky, daring, adventurous, and being silly. It is amazing watching youth making memories and, more importantly, with friends. Beyond the warm clothes and wintery ambience lies a culture that you need to see to appreciate.

In the North, you must find a creative way to get the participants on top of the hill. Sometimes it takes hiking up the hill to go down. Other times, it's jumping into a sled and pulled up by a snowmobile.

After a gap in programming of some years, the community of Fort Liard saw snowboarding being restarted on January 18th, 2024. This was after the community and local businesses fixed up their sliding hill. As in the past their program was strong. It attracted up to 30 young people ranging in ages 12 to 18, and four Fort Liard youth attended two separate Arctic Winter Games as members of the snowboarding team. With financial support from municipal and community affairs' Local Sport Leaders and Sport and Recreation Program and the Mackenzie Recreation Association, they hosted a four-day coaching and skills development event facilitated by Arctic Winter Games coach Scott Stirling and certified coach Liam Upton. Attendance was excellent, especially by females who made up two-thirds of the participants. The hamlet is planning to rebuild the program to the point where their youth will be selected and qualified to participate in Arctic Winter Games trials and eventually outside the community.

The youth are excited about the upcoming events being held in Fort Simpson this March, sponsored by NWT Snowboard. The youth are very excited to be attending.

In closing, I have been told you can never get bored snowboarding. Once you've learnt a trick, you can learn it with style. It's a social sport; you

kind of play together. There is always more to learn, different places to try things, different features to experience with and different people to snowboard with. I wish the Fort Liard snowboarding group all the best in future adventures. Thank you.

Members' statements. Member from Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 104-20(1):
CONSTITUENCY CONDOLENCES

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to offer condolences to the recent passings in the Nunakput riding over the last month. First, the loss of Joseph Haluksit in Ulukhaktok, a respected elder and community leader who I had the distinction of sitting with on the Inuvialuit Communications Society. Condolences to Elsie and family in Ulukhaktok.

Next is the loss of Sandy Wolki, a respected elder, harvester and musician, who was also one of our few Inuvialuktun language leaders left, someone who we all turned to when we needed support in advancing an Inuvialuktun language initiative, a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

Third is Mrs. Elizabeth Panaktalok, a respected elder in Tuktoyaktuk who was of humble character and lived her life taking care of her children and grandchildren. Elizabeth was a quiet, gentle person, but active in community events.

Fourth was Mr. Robert A. Gruben. Robert was an avid hunter and harvester who shared his traditional food to many in the community. I can remember last summer we needed muktuk for the youth northern games [Translation unavailable] and immediately he went out hunting and him and his partner Chanisse, my niece, harvested a whale so we could feed people during the games. That kind of expertise and generosity is few and far between. His death is tragic as he was so young, but we have lost so many over the last number of months including Mr. Robert Lundrigan, a mentor to many youth, a father, and grandfather; and Mr. Wayne Chicksi, a young father and husband but also one of our home care professionals.

This is a reminder to all of us to treat people well and live your best life. I hold them all in prayer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Our prayers and condolences go out to the families. It's sad we lose too many people over time.

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

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that joining us today in the gallery are the dedicated public servants responsible for the planning and organization of the Weaving Our Wisdom gathering that was held here in Yellowknife last week. So please join me in recognizing them and congratulating them for their excellent work in hosting a very successful and very impactful gathering. Lena Larson, the director of community, culture, and innovation, and her team Jasmine Vogt, Kyla Wright, Jessica Dutton, Chris Stipdonk, Desiree Munro, Erika Doehring-Lafferty, Inamesit Graham, Marcus Ilesami, Miranda Yeo, Tarilee Wedzin, as well as Karen Blondin Hall director of cultural safety and anti-racism, alongside with her team Janelle Bruneau, Morgan Ranseth, Anneka Westergreen, Courtney Vital, and Tisha Heron. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have some pretty cool people that live in Kam Lake, and I'd like to welcome to the gallery today. Inemesit Graham, Lena Larson and Caroline Blondin Hall.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to recognize a friend and also his friends are with him, Dean Myer. I see you here, welcome. And to your friends and colleagues. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Visitors in the gallery. I believe the Member from Twin Lakes may have missed somebody.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I also too want to recognize Dean Myer from Yellowknife. My family and his will forever be connected. Thank you for coming today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Twin Lakes. Recognition of visitors in in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oh sorry, I guess I forgot something too.

If we missed anybody in the gallery today, welcome to your Chambers. I hope you enjoy the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

Now that I can go on to the next one, acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 81-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BURSARY
PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to build on my Member's statement with my questions specific to the Minister of health. Mr. Speaker, when you get a health bursary, it either comes with a return to service agreement or you have to pay it back. It's that simple, Mr. Speaker. But the department of health pulled the carpet out from the dreams of this young person who was inspired to do service Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health and Social Services do the honourable thing and reinstate that \$6,000 grant to help inspire this young person to help Northerners? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have -- I am familiar with the circumstances that the Member is speaking to, but I don't have the level of detail to make any decision in the House here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member, can you please wait. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm that excited, Mr. Speaker. I'm that excited. Mr. Speaker, the Minister is well within her purview, her authority, to say yes to this young person to reinstate this grant bursary which was offered to her earlier this fall that is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please, would she do that?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Was that a question, Mr. Speaker? I didn't really hear the Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member from Yellowknife Centre, can you please --

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to revisit this decision to give a yes?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned to the Member, I will -- you know, I'm familiar with this situation in a small -- in a small amount. I don't know how many bursaries there are. I don't have the level of detail. I will not make that decision here in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Ministers want the questions in advance. They got the question in advance by

me asking it. It should be pretty straightforward. Will they revisit this decision, yes or no?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I will get back to the Member on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm curious with respect to this question is there a yes or a no in the vocabulary of the Minister to confirm she will revisit this decision? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: I've asked and -- I've answered the Member. I will get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 82-20(1):
LICENSED GAMING

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for our big money Minister, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Our gaming regime is actually quite liberal, and I wonder if the reforms we need are actually to put some -- a finer point to it so we can capture some revenues. So, first of all, I'll ask is the Minister willing to amend the Lotteries Act to include the VLTs or virtual lottery terminals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of the Lotteries Act and how outdated it is along with many of our legislation, and I'm willing to have a look at the legislation. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister bring forward gaming corporation legislation to allow for casinos, land-based casinos to operate in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is something I think we'd have to go and consult with the local Aboriginal groups and the Council of Leaders to start doing work and see what we can do to update our Lotteries Act. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. Is the Minister -- will the Minister bring forward reasonable

regulation for online gambling to capture potential revenue leakage? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think that's something that we have to bring forward and look with our legislation and something that we'd have to consult with all the local Aboriginal groups along with the government agencies to see what we can do. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: I think it might be too specific, Mr. Speaker, but I appreciate what the Minister is saying. So will the Minister bring forward these items that I brought up today and a revenue sharing model with Indigenous governments at the next Council of Leaders meeting? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the agendas are decided collaboratively so we'd have to bring that forward again. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 83-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ARTS
FUNDING PROGRAM

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of sweat equity that needs to be put in to apply for federal funding. The requirements and forms can be quite complex. Can the Minister of ECE explain how her department envisions helping organizations to grow capacity to take advantage of ECE's new vision for small and medium arts organizations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECE has been distributing just under half a million dollars to approximately 17 organizations across the territory and ECE also, in October of the previous -- of this previous year entered into an agreement with the Canada Council for the Arts, and this was an agreement for \$750,000 of funding to help support arts organizations in the Northwest Territories. And part of that funding, ECE was able to hire an arts officer, and this person is currently working on a work plan and funding program guidelines to help organizations develop as the Member is speaking about -- in her statement and in her

questions today. So this person will also be connecting local arts organizations to local funding and also national funding opportunities, and I'm really excited to be able to share more details in the new fiscal year. Thank you.

MS. REID: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I heard a clear answer today, but that's okay. If it's for the next fiscal year, I appreciate that. I'm glad the new arts officer position was created, but can the Minister explain why there have been no public information nights up to this point about all these big changes or at least none that folks I have spoken to have heard about? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while changes are currently rolling out in real time, there's also more changes to come, and so the intent is that with this new position and the work that they're doing, that ECE will be in a position to communicate some of these changes in the next fiscal year and to be able to meet with existing and developing artists and to find out what their goals are and how different funding that's available can support that. And so I hear what the Member is saying, and I think the Member is one step ahead of ECE but ECE is happily working to catch up to where the Member is at and what the Member is asking for and is really excited to be able to work with arts organizations across the territory. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for the compliment that I'm speedy.

Will the Minister of ECE commit to providing Pathfinder services as and when needed by small or medium arts organizations to reduce barriers to access for our northern artists to funding? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to be able to say yes to the Member on that one. ECE and ITI are committed to providing pathfinding services for artists and organizations across the territory. This work is underway and is expected to be launched this summer. And so I'll make sure that I share those new happenings with Members so that they're able to share that with artists in their community the across the territory. In the meantime, there are arts funding available through ECE and through ITI, and there's staff members eager to support people to direct them where to go for what best suits their goals. Thank you.

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

Member from Sahtu.

QUESTION 84-20(1):
FORT GOOD HOPE ARENA

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my questions on the Fort Good Hope arena status. The community of the Dene organization is leading the project and actively working on it. The Department of MACA has assisted where possible, including funding and developing the scope of work and estimated costs to have this building and facility completed. Can the Minister provide an operational update on the progress of this facility and the construction scheduling? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Sahtu. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes down to the local governments, they are the lead on such projects with the support of MACA to get through the projects and assistance and guidance. Ultimately, the local community government is responsible for the projects and completing them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you done, Minister? Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for the response here. One of the issues that are really lacking in the smaller communities is trades and skills. Will the Minister promise to recruit and supply a project manager for this project through the community local government? Mahsi.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated the responsibility of the project lies with the community government; however, I will commit that the department will continue to work with the community government to try to assist them in that project as we already have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply here. On the continuation of my question, my last one, is that will the Minister provide a report on a spreadsheet format on the schedule for renovations in this project so I can have something to share with my constituent community? Mahsi.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reach to my department and see what we can do. I know, like I said earlier, the local government is lead on the project, so we'll

see what we can do for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 85-20(1):
NON-PROFIT DAYCARES

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. So the other day in the House I spoke to the fact that in the past the government has had to step in when non-profits collapse and they're providing essential social services. So if the largest non-profit daycares in our regional centres are forced to shut down because they're no longer financially viable, is the government prepared to take over the operation of these daycares? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no, the GNWT does not intend to take over operation of licensed programs and nor do I think it's really needed at this point. ECE is committed to providing sustainable funding, and I am committed to the relationship with child care providers and finding out what it is that they need and how we can support one another. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for making that clear. So can the Minister recommend ways that child care providers can successfully attract and retain staff given that the government's proposed wage grid is well below salaries for comparable positions in early learning in NWT communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's worth noting that between 2021 and -- sorry, Mr. Speaker, I want to be able to provide a little bit of extra information for this response.

Between 2021-2022 and 2025-2026, ECE, along with the Government of Canada, is investing just over \$112 million into the child care sector. I heard the Member during her Member's statement speak about current negotiations. Current negotiations are in regards to infrastructure funding in the 2024-2025 year. Funding changes will happen where all programs will receive an increase in total funding compared to the current fiscal year. And it's also worth noting that effective

April 1st, existing licensed program operators that charge fees below the maximum fee for newly licensed facilities will be able to increase their fees between 0 and 6 percent up to the prescribed monthly maximum.

So one of my recommendations, right now, ECE is working on the wage grid. They did consultations and engagement with the sector last year and also in the beginning of this year, they came back with what they've done so far. And a wage grid is a huge part of this, Mr. Speaker. There is still a gap, and that is acknowledged for sure in this sector between early childhood educators and the junior kindergarten and kindergarten educators as well and education assistants in the school. But wage grid and the new funding mechanism are really going to be those key pieces, and I look forward to continuing to work with the sector to see what we can do together to meet in the middle there. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that three large child care providers are considering opting out of the funding formula, does the Minister have concerns that this could leave us with a segregated system where some parents are forced to pay much more than they currently do? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can say that I'm definitely concerned, which is why I'm putting effort into creating a relationship and sustaining a relationship with the NWT Early Childhood Association. I really want to make sure that we're hearing their concerns, that we are doing our best to respond to them within the budget that we do have. And we do have a fixed budget within this program. ECE is a major funding source for licensed programs. So I really hope that we can keep everybody together and working together in order to rebuild -- or to build a robust system because I think that at the end of the day, we are stronger working together and that we do share common goals, and I think that's really important. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that fixed amount that the Minister referred to, will the Minister commit to including the NWT Early Childhood Association or child care providers in any future negotiations with the federal government about child care funding agreements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our funding agreements are agreements that are reflective of what generally other jurisdictions are also receiving. They're an agreement that happened between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada. I think that communicating those agreements, once they are set, is really important which is why I really want to continue to work with all stakeholders in this sector, and I'm absolutely committed to those relationships. And I'm also committed to ensuring that our childhood -- or child care sector is sustainable because I truly believe that we as an Assembly have set this as a priority in that it -- building a strong economic foundation is absolutely reliant on child care, and so I'm committed to seeing this be successful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 86-20(1):

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the severe shortcoming of the government's response to the 2023 wildfire crisis and evacuation, my question probably would be more to the Minister of environment is going to the next 2024 fire season, in my riding of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh last year, we had issues with food securities and supply chain, and we also had issues with the airlines couldn't fly into Lutselk'e. My question to the Minister would be what are they doing this -- in the 2024 fire season to help correct these problems? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I'd like to redirect that to the Minister of MACA. Thanks.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we're all aware that there was a lot of several unintended supply chain issues that we had last year in regards to the evacuations, you know, due to the Yellowknife airport being closed and other airports and other infrastructure like roads being closed. All the departments are working -- have worked together to understand these issues, and we're continually working to improve what happened. The Department of ITI has provided their information to the Department of MACA, and we'll be looking at those. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. My next question, probably adding to that as well, is we had issues with communication in our riding where

we had no communication for five days. Going into the 2024 fire season, can you maybe elaborate a little bit more about how we're going to improve the communication into our communities of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh and also in the official languages? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT is working with the Council of Leaders to find ways of communicating with the communities in regards to emergency management. Also, we're well aware of the communication issues that happened. To be honest, I was one of the ones running around stealing StarLink so that we could have communication. So I hear what the Member is saying. The departments are working on these concerns. However, local community governments are responsible for local emergency measurement, EMO organizations. Part of that EMO organization is being prepared themselves. And they're the ones that know the area. They're the ones that know the resources. And the local EMOs, I encourage them to keep working on what-if scenarios and having those readily available for their local communities. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for your reply.

QUESTION 87-20(1):

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND
NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA

MR. EDJERICON: My next question is that we -- in my constituency meeting the other day in Dettah, we have members in our community that paid expenses into the fire season last year, and they haven't been refunded. Is there a way we could go back and revisit that so that our members and our communities can get refunded for the monies that paid during the fire evacuation of 2023? Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm aware of the GNWT program that assists people through evacuation; however, I'm not fully confident or fully aware of how that is -- where it's at, so I'd have to get back to the Member on the date, the deadlines, and everything else like that. However, just be aware that, you know, some residents may have had insurance they could have tapped into also for being evacuated. So there's a few options out there. Unfortunately, through the federal disaster assistance program, we have to follow their guidelines in reimbursements and stuff. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. Just so you know that the majority of people are in my four communities, a lot of them homeowners don't have home insurance, just so you know. Also, I just want to point out that, you know, the Indigenous governments in my riding have accrued a lot of costs as a result of the fire of last year. So we're looking at what can we do as a government to reimburse these Aboriginal governments for the monies they incurred for the 2023 fire season. Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I encourage the Member to reach out to their local government to also reach out to MACA. Maybe there's something that could be done there. However, most recently we did learn of CIRNAC releasing some funds. So there is an opportunity for the local government to also reach out to them to assist. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from the Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 88-20(1):
HOUSING

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department has policies and that these policies are determined on -- seemed to be determined open a waitlist. Policies should be based on family needs. A family of four should have precedent over a smaller family. Will the Minister look at revisiting its current policies in terms of housing allocations to meet the needs of these families? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. We do have policies in place. It depends on waitlists, housing availability, the size of the household itself, the application itself. So we review these things. I don't know if we need to change these policies, but this is something that we can consider and have a conversation with the Member. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think more of these consultations should be taken out to the residents of the Northwest Territories. Will the department look at meeting with the residents of the Northwest Territories to get feedback on its policies? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, housing in the communities is operated through the local

housing associations. So we have housing associations in most of our communities. We also hold annual general meetings with the associations annually. So this is an opportunity for residents, if they do have concerns with housing, to attend the AGMs to have this conversation with the local housing associations so they can talk to district, and they can also talk to the Ministers and deputy ministers about these policies so that message is carried on. If there is concerns, they also can speak to you as MLA and also speak to the tenant relations officer. So there's many opportunities for residents to speak about concerns that they have with certain housing policies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the general public has lost confidence in the housing -- local housing authorities because they themselves have to follow these policies. Will the Minister look at doing a consultation round with the residents of the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope they haven't lost confidence because these are local agencies and these are local people that fill these positions, so it's important to have that conversation locally. And I'm willing to talk to residents. We are planning a tour of the Mackenzie Delta in April and I'm willing to have that conversation directly with any residents. So happy and looking forward to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the tour with the Minister. Thank you, and that's just a general comment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Please, folks, if you don't have a final supplementary just advise me so we can get on to the next one. Thank you.

Oral questions. Member from Range Lake -- or sorry, Frame Lake. Yes, Frame Lake. Sorry, my fault.

QUESTION 89-20(1):
WILDFIRE MOTION RESPONSE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to be clear.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday Members made a number of statements suggesting open collaboration between the regular side and the Cabinet, suggestions for ways to move forward. I certainly made some statements to that effect

myself. And then we saw the Premier turn around and go to the media after the motion was passed and state that they don't plan to listen.

Mr. Speaker, is it the Premier and Cabinet's intent to simply ignore the calls for collaboration and suggestions made by myself and my colleagues? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, no, that is not my intention. I have a responsibility when the House brings forward a motion and recommendations to carefully consider those. I also have a responsibility to ensure that we are operating the government in a responsible manner. I think there's a lot of information that -- there's a lot of assumptions about what a public inquiry is. Even yesterday, even after I tried to clarify some of the facts around what we can and can't do, there was still assumptions remaining. You know, there was comparisons of our Inquiries Act to the federal Inquiries Act without taking into account the other federal acts that interact with the federal Public Inquiries Act and allow them to set budgets. There were comments about independence of certain other reports. So there's a lot of these things that as the government, when we do something we actually need to know the facts. We actually have to do research. We have to look into things. It's a lot more than just, you know, standing up in the House and saying something. There's a lot of work behind the scenes. So we need to do that work, Mr. Speaker, and we intend on doing that work. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that goodwill from the Premier and look forward to collaboration.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke to difficulty engaging with constituents on the proposal that the Cabinet had brought forward. Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier not made their proposal and scope of work public so the public can assess it for themselves and decide if it passes muster? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It can be difficult to negotiate in public and through the media, and so when we are trying to work with just the Members, we want to avoid that type of noise that comes with that. It is a difficult balance. I get where the Member is coming from. You know, I struggled with that as a Regular Member. But the fact is that, you know, we are elected to do that work on behalf of constituents. So sometimes the constituents

don't have all of the information but they've appointed us to look at that information and make our best judgments. But I understand where the Member is coming from. It's a constant battle between keeping too much confidential and releasing too much in the public at inappropriate times. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I do appreciate the Premier's goodwill and openness to discussing this with him publicly. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit to openly and transparently engaging the public and Regular Members on a proposed approach for a fully arm's length review of the 2023 wildfires? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we have our own after-action review that we are currently trying to start. I wish that the RFP would have gone out last week, and we wanted a bit more time to work with Members but that is going to happen imminently. And so that review is going forward. Happy to hear anything that Members have to say on that. I know that I was -- I know my answers on the floor of the House yesterday. That's what that -- that was the response I was told I was going to get on the floor of the House, but if there's more feedback that the Members have I'm happy to hear that. If there's specific feedback, I'm happy to hear that. In terms of the draft -- the order related to the public inquiry, the motion required or called for collaboration with AOC on that, and so I'm happy to have that discussion as well as we work on that order. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly there does seem to be a bit more of a collaborative tone from the Premier today in the House than I saw immediately after the vote in the media yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, final question: Is it the Premier's position that we're still in a negotiation with privacy concerns? I'm just trying to get an understanding for why a draft terms of reference or scope of work couldn't just simply be made public so the public can assess it for themselves. I know when British Columbia did this, their draft terms of reference was on their website. Can the Premier give some substantiation for why it needs to be done in confidentiality? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, there's procurement issues so I don't have an answer that I can -- that I think would be sufficient right now at my -- on the tip of my tongue. So I would have to get back to

the Member with a written response. Thank you.

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

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QUESTION 90-20(1):
RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these questions are regarding eviction process for public housing tenants. What is the eviction process for public housing tenants? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi. Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for the question. I think this is an educational process because we deal with evictions, but it's few and far between with public housing. So public rental evictions are dealt with under the Residential Tenancies Act. So the local housing association makes a tenant aware of their violation, seeks the agreement with the tenant to resolve the issue. When all reasonable efforts are exhausted, the LHO issues a termination of tenancy notice and submits an application to the rental office. The rental office may try to remediate and may set a hearing process involving both the tenant and the landlord. The rental office makes a decision and may issue orders. The tenant is given an opportunity to appeal the decision. Orders, for example, an eviction order, are filed with the NWT Supreme Court. Housing NWT continues to try to work with tenants to address the issue of concern. If the tenant does not engage or if the concerns are addressed, then Housing NWT may make the decision to implement the eviction order. Housing NWT obtains support from the sheriff's office to serve the order and carry out the eviction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I got one of my answers from my previous questions in there, so thank you. Thank you for that. Are evictions handled differently by Housing NWT compared to a private landlord? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Housing NWT recognizes that it is a social agency and not just a landlord. So in many of the communities, public housing is one of the only options available to house people with lower incomes. This means that Housing NWT will, except in extraordinary cases, work much harder than a private landlord to maintain a tenancy rather than moving towards an eviction. These efforts include extra steps to communicate with the tenant and change the

behaviours that can result in eviction. Except in the more severe cases, LHOs complete a tenant success plan checklist to ensure that all efforts are being made to maintain tenancy without moving to an eviction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: What support does Housing NWT provide public housing tenants facing evictions? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the supports that Housing NWT provides is they offer tenants opportunities to enter into payment plans if their issue is related to arrears. Housing NWT also reviews the rent calculations if there's a concern, if they have income changes. Say, they lost a job or they're starting another job with a different income level. So Housing NWT may refer tenants to other social services or health resources if the client is facing complaints from neighbours or is also to seek out additional assistance to avoid losing their home. And then Housing NWT also seeks out alternative housing options if available to support the tenant's needs. That's only if it's available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What can a public housing tenant do to avoid an eviction?

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So for a tenant to avoid eviction, they can do the following things: The best thing a tenant can do is to maintain communication with the local housing association and then show that they're serious about complying with their tenancy agreement. That can be including adjusting their behaviours to reduce complaints about noise and disturbances, after 11 o'clock especially, and reducing -- or setting up a payment plan to pay down their debts to housing. If a rental officer hearing is set, it is important to attend and tell your story. So it's really important they attend the rental officer hearing. The rental officer provides an opportunity to say what they're willing to do to avoid the consequences. The rental office also considers that in writing -- with writing orders.

If a rental office order is issued, it's not too late. The LHO, so the local housing association, and Housing NWT is still willing to work with tenants to resolve the concerns. Only if a tenant continues to cause problems or not comply with their tenancy agreement does housing proceed with implementing the eviction order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Housing. Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

QUESTION 91-20(1):
DIABETES PREVENTION

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of health. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what sort of preventative and proactive measures our government is taking to lower the rate of individuals with diabetes in the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work being done in this area so, you know, I want to be able to provide some of the information, and I'll highlight, and then what I don't get to I'll provide that information to the Member, specifically to her riding as well.

So there's early planning for testing culturally grounded approaches to diabetes prevention and management, and this is currently being completed in partnership with the Tlicho government, Tlicho Community Services Agency, Deh Cho First Nations, and NTHSSA Deh Cho region. We've also implemented group nutrition education sessions in all regions for people diagnosed with pre-diabetes. Regionally, we've got diabetes education and care programs in Fort Smith, Inuvik, Hay River, and Yellowknife. There are an additional two initiatives underway under our primary health care reform designed to implement the implementation of an integrated care team which will provide clients with access to providers, all working at full scope, who are responsive to the client's needs in real time. On the land camps for diabetes management and prevention. Focus on intergenerational prevention and management of type 2 diabetes. And there's many more and I can provide those to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide a figure for how many people are living with diabetes in the NWT today? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that diabetes is a significant chronic disease in the Northwest Territories impacting approximately 10 percent of residents over the age 24, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister provide a dollar amount for how much the NWT healthcare system is paying to provide the proper healthcare treatment for people with diabetes in the NWT? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not at this time but I have my department looking into kind of a number of how we can get. But the main goal is to reduce the instance of diabetes and using money on preventative care, so we'll -- the department is trying to come up with some kind of numbers for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. And thank you to the Minister for that. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister share whether she considers diabetes to be an epidemic within the NWT? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, diabetes is a chronic disease, and it's a major problem for many NWT residents, specifically Indigenous people. This is why our priority is to work in partnership with individuals, families, communities, and to encourage healthy lifestyle choices and provide supportive disease management services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 92-20(1):
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: All right, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, employment issues are varied throughout the Northwest Territories. There's not a one-size-fit-all solution. You know, there's those positions where we want to hire local employment, but sometimes we need skilled and foreign workers to come to our communities, whether it's Inuvik opening up -- or making sure the restaurant's opened. It's in Nahanni; we need a SAO. We need specialized skills sometimes in special places.

I'd like to ask the Minister what is she doing to support employers to bring in specialized skills, often referred to as skilled workers, into our northern communities. How is she supporting that and developing that opportunity?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of ITI -- or ECE. Okay. Minister of ECE.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are like many jurisdictions across the country where we are relying on Canadian newcomers to help fill some of our employment gaps in our territory. Over the course of the -- so far this year, I asked for engagement to take place to see what people, including employers, wanted to see as far as immigration and an extended immigration strategy. So right now we are compiling that information to see how we can work with employers to better serve them. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be able to elaborate on what type of hands on support does the department offer so employers can fill out these applications and potentially fill skilled worker openings? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECE has approximately three staff members who are accessible by phone and by e-mail to members of the public and also to employers to be able to provide some direction and let them know different programs, different entry streams that are available, and then ultimately, though, the bulk of that work is done with the Canadian government. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: So is the -- thank you, Mr. Speaker. So is the Minister saying that the three staff in that particular section just tell employers, who are trying to create economic opportunities and growth in the North, to just go to the website? Is that their main role? Or do they actually spend some efforts with them helping them fill out the paperwork so they can process the paperwork properly? Because we all know how busy these employers are. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hope that any public servant that answers the phone is willing to field questions from the person on the other end of that phone. I know that, you know, paperwork can be intimidating and there can be a lot of it, and so I would hope that employers would be able to communicate what their needs are and staff of the public service would be able to let them know what they can do to support them, but this is definitely a tricky realm where it includes a lot of work from the federal government as well to make this happen. I know that there are employers in town who hire consultants to help them through the bulk of the process because it is a lengthy process as well. It's not a quick process. It's not one piece of paper. And so there are employers in town who have definitely invested a lot of time in figuring this out, and I'd be happy to act as a connector between those employers who are wanting to

learn the process and learn the ins and outs and also with employers who have essentially, to the best of their ability, mastered this process. Thank you

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister recognizes this is a daunting process, if the Minister recognizes that it's challenging in the sense of that it affects a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, why isn't the Minister advocating that there is some actual hands-on people to help steward employers through this process? Because we know it is complicated and sometimes quite lengthy. So would she do this, or what will she advocate for?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. I can say wholeheartedly I've been talking about immigration in this House for over four years and will continue to do so at the department level. I think that making sure that we have easy to use processes is really important, not only for enriching our communities but also for filling our labour shortages. So I'm committed to working on this not only with the department but also with employers of who I represent most. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 93-20(1):
DAYCARE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have further questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment regarding daycare.

So on February 9th, the Minister and the Department of ECE shared a very helpful package of information with Members on this side of the House that included detailed numbers broken down by NWT communities and regions about the number of child care providers, the number of spaces we have, and changes over the past decade or so. So will the Minister commit to sharing this information with the Early Childhood Association as they have been requesting? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely committed to being as transparent as possible and to ensuring that I'm working with the sector

so that we're working together to create the number of spaces that are actually needed. And so as long as there's no information that would breach anybody's privacy, I'm happy to share information with the NWT Early Childhood Association. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Yellowknife North.

(audio)

Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 94-20(1):
PUBLIC LAND USE FEES

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My initial question is for the Minister of ECC. Proposed traditional cabins. Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, the Minister and the Member of Inuvik Boot Lake had an exchange on leases, rents, for Indigenous users of the land. Can the Minister just clarify why the GNWT charges lease rents fees to Indigenous users? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: From the Sahtu. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. As the manager of public lands, the GNWT is required -- legally required to charge rents and fees for use of public lands. However, as I mentioned previously in this House, the GNWT would like to collaborate with the Indigenous governments and find a way to change the administration and management processes on traditional lands and cabins on public lands. But until that work is complete, Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories will have to continue to charge fees on those cabins as is outlined in our legislation and our regulation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that clarification here. My next question is in that same exchange, the Minister confirmed that his department will pause collections onto the lease rents arrears from the Indigenous recreational leaseholders. Can the Minister confirm what this means? Mahsi.

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as of August 28th, 2023, the department committed to not sending any arrears for Indigenous leaseholders that qualify to collections. And they would also go so far as to suspend any of the collection actions that were previously started against Indigenous leaseholders from that while we work on a collaborative process to address the concerns

regarding the traditional lease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for that clarification. It's comforting to know that these collections for additional costs will be paused on the leaseholders.

The Minister mentioned collaboration with Indigenous governments on a new process to address traditional cabins. Can the Minister confirm this work is just about lease rents, or is this engagement broader? Mahsi.

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is looking to work collaboratively with the Indigenous governments across the Northwest Territories to develop a new approach to administration and management for camps and cabins on public lands that support traditional use. We are hoping to talk about these administration and management of these structures in a more broad way than has been done in the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 95-20(1):
HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
EVICTION POLICY

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: This is still for the housing Minister. What does the public housing tenants do if they are evicted? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi. Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If a public housing tenant is evicted, so most LHOs have a minimum time, up to six months, before they will allow an evicted tenant to reapply for public housing. So they have a six-month period where they won't allow any applications. And after that six months, the evicted tenant can reapply for a public housing unit. The tenant may be asked to show that they're -- they won't resume their same behaviours that they were evicted for before allowing them to reapply for housing. So the LHOs will refer the former tenants to other social agencies and programs that may be able to assist them in securing housing. For example, Housing NWT offers a rent supplement program that can assist with the rental costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 96-20(1):
WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one thing that's become clear from the debate around safe disclosure to public processes is that we don't have adequate legislative protections in the Northwest Territories for public service workers. Is the Minister -- or is the Premier considering bringing forward either an amendment to the Public Service Act or standalone legislation to protect whistleblowers in the public service? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: From Range Lake. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have to confer with the Minister of Finance, but I do know that public servants do have some whistleblower protection under section 2 of the Charter, freedom of expression, and in certain circumstances. But that's not a decision for me. I have to confer with my colleague, the Minister of Finance as she is responsible for the Public Service Act. So I will do that as soon as reasonably possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 97-20(1):
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE WAITLIST
TRANSPARENCY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank my colleagues for their indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services following up on some of my questions yesterday. And one of the questions -- the nature of the question or the heart of the question is transparency on the doctors' waiting list, and her brazen response is, you know, that's only an issue in Yellowknife. Actually half the population here is in Yellowknife but it's a respect factor of how people in Yellowknife feel. And I got some phone calls how upset people were about that perspective. So my question here, specifically to the Minister of Health and Social Services, is simply this: What can she do to bring transparency to the waiting list? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in this

House, the -- we are doing a review and the primary health care reform is going to look at how we provide services to all residents in the Northwest Territories. And I understand that there is a model that's been used in Yellowknife which, yes, it is the half of the population but, you know, on the other opposite end is there's the other half of the population that doesn't have access to physicians and services. And, you know, we've heard from Members in this House that said they don't have even an access to a nurse all the time. So we are looking at the entire territory and how we provide services to the residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I really wish the Minister would answer the question. What is her hesitation for putting some transparency on the doctors' waiting list? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand where the Member's coming from. There is also question on waitlists. And like I said specifically, there is a model that's been going on in Yellowknife, and it's not the same model that's been going on the rest of the territory. You know, and so I think with this model, everything will be changing, or we're looking at making changes so that there's equitable access to everybody in the Northwest Territories. And so there may not be waitlists in the Northwest Territories because we'll be defining how we provide service differently in the city, in the towns, in the hamlets, in the villages. You know, so that's something that we're looking for in the future and so, you know, we provided the numbers to the Member, and if -- you know, if the Member wishes to share that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm convinced the Minister doesn't understand the question. Her response to me was -- written response, sir, is the 2,000 people are on the waitlist. So they know what the waitlist for a doctor means. That said, what is the apprehension or hesitation for providing some level of transparency, so you know where you are on the waitlist? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the opposite sense is why is there a waitlist? You know, I went and seen a physician on Saturday. I didn't have to see -- you know, so this is why I'm saying the primary health care reform is changing how we're looking at how patients have access to services, not necessarily how everybody's going to have a specific physician to this many clients or this many patients or within this system. So that is -- you know, when we

provided the information that we do have to the Member, and if he wishes to share the information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Short supplementary.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, they provided information, but it wasn't detailed such as can a doctor refuse to take a client. So, Mr. Speaker, when people are waiting six to eight years on the medical waiting list to get a family doctor, they have no idea when it's coming. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking again what can the Minister do to bring some level of transparency to the doctors' waiting list for the public? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I answered the Member. As this list is changing and the model may change, and so that is the work that we're doing. So as there's a list, whether it's changing, those are things that -- you know, everybody has access to a physician whether it's a family -- like, the model is changing and it's changing across the country. And so I've answered the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services. Members, time for oral questions is up. Oral questions. Written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 37-20(1):
INUVIALUIT WATER BOARD 2022-2023
ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS

TABLED DOCUMENT 38-20(1):
THE NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION TRUST FUND FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
MARCH 31, 2023

HON. JAY MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: The Natural Resources Conservation Trust Fund Financial Statements for the Year ended March 31st, 2022; and, Inuvialuit Water Board 2022-2023 Annual Report and Financial Statements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Tabling of Documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

TABLED DOCUMENT 39-20(1):
EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY
FRAMEWORK – SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL
EDUCATION COUNCIL OPERATING PLAN
FOR THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

TABLED DOCUMENT 40-20(1):
ANNUAL REPORTS FOR THE EDUCATION
BODIES OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES FOR THE 2022-2023
SCHOOL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 –
VOLUMES 1 AND 2

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Education Accountability Framework - South Slave Divisional Education Council Operating Plan for the 2023-2024 School Year; and, Annual Reports for the Education Bodies of the Northwest Territories for the School Year Ending June 30th, 2023, Volumes 1 and 2. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notice of motion for the first reading of bills. Member from Range Lake.

Notice of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 3:
CARBON TAX REPEAL ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, February 27th, 2024, I will present to the House Bill 3, Carbon Tax Repeal Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 2:
MISSING PERSONS ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 2, Missing Persons Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Justice. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 2 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

Second reading of bills. Member from Yellowknife North. Sorry, my mistake. Yellowknife Centre.

Second Reading of Bills

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BILL 1:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
ACT,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member from Kam Lake, that Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to adjust the maximum amounts allowed for Members' expenses as adjusted by using the average change in the consumer price index over the last past five years. This aligns the Act with changes already made in the previous Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and to have Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council, moved to Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Can you read the second time and then ask after that, then ask for unanimous consent to go into Committee of the Whole.

MR. HAWKINS: Déjà vu. Or as a former Speaker used to say, déjà vu all over again. Mr. Whitford. So starting from the top, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for your indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to adjust the maximum amounts allowed for Members' expenses as adjusted by using the average change in the consumer price index over the past five years. This aligns the Act with changes already made in the previous Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: In order. To the principle of bill. The principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and to have Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council, moved to the Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. The Member is asking unanimous consent to move Bill 1 into the Committee of the Whole. Any nays? Seeing no nays.

Member from Yellowknife Centre -- sorry.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1), Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Tabled Document 28-20(1), Tabled Document 29-20(1), Bill No. 1, with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'd like to call committee to order. I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Committee would like to consider Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. We'll resume after a short 30-minute recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. I'll be asking -- I'll ask the sponsor of the bill, the Member of Yellowknife Centre, to introduce the bill.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to speak to Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, in my capacity as a Member of the Board of Management.

In the previous Assembly, changes were made to the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to adjust pay by the average percentage increase or decrease in the consumer price index for Canada in a period of five years. This bill aligns the maximum amounts allowed annually for Members' expenses to the same consumer price index to make sure the act is uniformly using the same measurements. That concludes my remarks on Bill 1. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Member of Yellowknife Centre. Member, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

Okay, sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers. Members, please introduce yourself and your witnesses. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, to my left is the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Rutland; and, to my right is deputy clerk, Ms. Wickens.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I will now open the floor for general comments on Bill 1. Members may speak up to ten minutes at a time. Anyone -- any Members want to speak up? We got a Member that's going to speak up so make sure I get this right. Member from Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question for Mr. Hawkins and the staff. Why the change to the -- why the change to the bill was made, if you can explain that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will move to the Member of Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the question. I believe if I have it correctly, the change is to bring consistency over a five-year period that reflect the consumer price index. If it went year by year, it would be influenced by major spikes, be it up and down, therefore this brought longer-term consistency. I look to the -- I look to the clerk for maybe some further explanation beyond that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Meanwhile we'll go to Mr. Rutland.

MR. GLEN RUTLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the changes were first made for this current fiscal year to the legislation last year. There's two provisions in the bill that needed to be changed. One related to the indemnity paid to Members and one related to the allowances. The change regarding the allowances was missed last year. So this will -- but what was actually -- the allowances provided to Members was based on the five-year average so this catches that. And then it also sets the MLA pay

and indemnities for 2024-2025 beginning April 1st based on the five-year formula.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Mr. Rutland. I'm going to go back to the Member from Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: My second question to the Member and the staff is it consistent with like collective agreements and what the CPI increase would be with collective agreements; is there consistency with that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Good question. I'll go to Member of Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Member. I believe if I understand it correctly, most of this is set by the independent commission and given the direction to the Assembly on that. If I need a further -- there is maybe one further comment provided by our clerk who can elaborate. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Mr. Rutland.

MR. GLEN RUTLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the independent commission makes recommendations to the Legislative Assembly. The recommendation was that Members receive a CPI increase annually. Members in the 19th Legislative Assembly decided to change the legislation such that it would be a five-year average of CPI. At the time, the CPI increase would have likely resulted in about a 7 percent increase. But by doing a five-year average, it brought it down to, I believe, about 3.8. 3.34, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Mr. Rutland. I'm going to go back to the Member from Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: I have no further questions, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Is there any further comments from Members? I'm going to go to Mr. -- or sorry, hang on. I want to get this right.

Member of Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I just wanted to follow up on the question asked by my colleague from Nunakput. She asks whether it aligned with the collective agreement of the public service and so I just wanted to get some clarification on that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you for your question. I'm going to go to the Member of Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate the question from the Member just to further clarify. It does not. This guidance has been -- this guidance is offered and given by the independent review committee and passed on to the Assembly for final direction.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go back to the Member of Frame Lake. No further questions? Any further comment from the MLAs, Members? I'm going to go to the Premier. Mahsi.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the salary of MLAs is something that's been an issue in every Assembly I've been in. It's always a political issue. And part of the reason, from my understanding, that it's not tied to any sort of a negotiated contract, a collective agreement, is because we don't want our salaries -- we don't want any skin in the game when we're in those negotiations. It wouldn't make sense. I don't think it's good practice to basically be negotiating our own salaries. So I think that is the rationale for the exclusion. So, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you to the Premier for your clarification. Any further comments from the Members? I'll go to Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not a question but a comment. It is my understanding, for further clarity on a political matter of us discussing our own salaries, that -- sorry, one of the sections is actually tied to the collective agreement. The northern allowance section copies what the public servants receive depending on their community of origin or community of work, and it is my understanding that in the past MLAs have made the decision collectively to restrain their income based on the fact that public servants were not given percentage increases. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you for your comment as well. Is there any further Members from the Assembly that have general comments? Okay, thank you. Doesn't look like there was anybody putting their hands up. Thank you.

Is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments? Committee, we'll -- thank you.

Does the committee agree to proceed to a clause by clause the review of the bills? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses.

Please return to page 1 of the bill. Clause 1, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 2, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 3, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Clause 4, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): That Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, is now ready for third reading. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree that concludes our consideration of Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act; does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Members. And thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Mahsi.

What is the wish of the committee? I'm going to go to the Deh Cho Member.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you. Mahsi.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, and would like to report progress and that Bill 1 is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: From Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Do I have a seconder for the report of the Committee of the Whole? Member from Frame Lake. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? All those abstaining? The motion has been carried, and the report of the Committee of the Whole has been concurred with.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day. Madam Clerk.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Kim Wickens): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Monday, February 26th, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 62-20(1): Consultation with Members of the Legislative Assembly on Policies and Strategies
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions

12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
 13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
 14. Tabling of Documents
 15. Notices of Motion
 16. Motions
 17. Notice of Motion for First Reading of Bills
 18. First Reading of Bills
 19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 2: Missing Person's Act
 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season
 - Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation
 - Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a day Child Care in the NWT
 - Tabled Document 28-20(1): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2023-2024
 - Tabled Document 29-20(1): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024
 21. Report of Committee of the Whole
 22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 1: An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
 23. Orders of the Day
- MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 26th, 2024, at 1:30.
- ADJOURNMENT
- The House adjourned at 12:54 p.m.