



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 17

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

Pages 513 - 544

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker
Hon. Shane Thompson
(Nahendeh)

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland
(Kam Lake)
*Minister of Education, Culture and
Employment*
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and
Investment*

Mr. Richard Edjericon
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Robert Hawkins
(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Lucy Kuptana
(Nunakput)
*Minister responsible for Housing
Northwest Territories*
*Minister responsible for the Status of
Women*

Hon. Jay Macdonald
(Thebacha)
*Minister of Environment and Climate
Change*

Hon. Vince McKay
(Hay River South)
*Minister of Municipal and Community
Affairs*
*Minister responsible for the Workers'
Safety and Compensation
Commission*
*Minister responsible for the Public
Utilities Board*

Mr. Danny McNeely
(Sahtu)

Ms. Shauna Morgan
(Yellowknife North)

Mr. Julian Morse
(Frame Lake)

Mr. George Nerysoo
(Mackenzie Delta)

Ms. Kate Reid
(Great Slave)

Mr. Denny Rodgers
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Hon. Lesa Semmler
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)
Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. R.J. Simpson
(Hay River North)
Premier
Government House Leader
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous
Affairs*
Minister of Justice

Mr. Kieron Testart
(Range Lake)

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek
(Yellowknife South)
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
Minister of Infrastructure
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power
Corporation*

**Mrs. Jane Weyallon
Armstrong**
(Monfwi)

Mrs. Sheryl Yakeleya
(Dehcho)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Mr. Glen Rutland

Clerk of Journals
Mr. Michael Ball

Deputy Clerks
Ms. Kim Wickens
Ms. Jolene Saturnino

Committee Clerks
Ms. Cynthia James
Ms. Katie Weaver Charpentier

Law Clerks
Mr. Toby Kruger
Ms. Sandra Mackenzie

Box 1320
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784
www.ntassembly.ca

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	513
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	513
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 34-20(1): INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING	513
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	514
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 189-20(1): WILDFIRE REVIEW	514
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 190-20(1): FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAM	514
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 191-20(1): PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS	515
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 192-20(1): SAHTU RESUPPLY	515
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 193-20(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MUNICIPALITIES	516
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 194-20(1): AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION	516
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 195-20(1): INCREASE OF DRUGS AND CRIME IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES.....	517
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 196-20(1): FORT RESOLUTION HOUSE FIRE.....	517
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 197-20(1): HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS	518
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 198-20(1): FUNDING FOR MIDWIVES	518
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 199-20(1): YOUTH PARLIAMENT 2024	519
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 200-20(1): BILLY ALFRED DENEYOUA CELEBRATION OF LIFE	520
ORAL QUESTIONS	520
QUESTION 193-20(1): PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS	520
QUESTION 194-20(1): FUNDING FOR MIDWIFERY	521
QUESTION 195-20(1): AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION.....	522
QUESTION 196-20(1): HOUSING UNITS DESTINED FOR SAHTU	524
QUESTION 197-20(1): POLICING IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMUNITIES	524
QUESTION 198-20(1): WORKING WITH MUNICIPALITIES ON EMERGENCY PLANS	526
QUESTION 199-20(1): HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS.....	527
QUESTION 200-20(1): FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAM	528
QUESTION 201-20(1): MIDWIFERY SUPPORT	529
QUESTION 202-20(1): AFTER-ACTION REVIEW OF THE 2023 WILDFIRES	529
QUESTION 203-20(1): RCMP RESPONDING TO ADDICTIONS-RELATED CALLS	530
QUESTION 204-20(1): INCREASED SECURITY AT NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BORDER	531
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	531
TABLED DOCUMENT 100-20(1): 2023 ANNUAL REPORT NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD	531
TABLED DOCUMENT 101-20(1): FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 127-20(1): POLICIES AND FUTURE OF HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	532
TABLED DOCUMENT 102-20(1): LETTER FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE UNION OF NORTHERN WORKERS LOCAL 11 AT STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL TO MEMBERS OF THE 20TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ON THE USE OF AGENCY NURSES IN NWT HEALTHCARE	532
TABLED DOCUMENT 103-20(1): LETTER FROM THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MEDICAL ASSOCIATION REGARDING SUBMISSION OF THE NWT MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IN RESONSE TO THE CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR RESTORING BALANCE: A FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR THE 20TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY	532
NOTICES OF MOTION	532
MOTION 27-20(1): REAPPOINTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEMBERS	532
MOTIONS	532
MOTION 26-20(1): REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 94-20(1): 2024-2028 BUSINESS PLANS, TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, CARRIED.....	532
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	533
COMMITTEE MOTION 4-20(1): REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 94-20(1): 2024-2028 BUSINESS PLANS, TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT	541
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	542
ORDERS OF THE DAY	543

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, May 28, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Colleagues, I'd like to thank Lillian Elias for the opening guiding words. It's greatly appreciated, and sets the tone for the day.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank you guys for yesterday for your indulgence with me as I had to leave and deal with my son, who had an accident, and to the Infrastructure staff in Fort Providence, the RCMP detachment, and the Fort Providence Health Centre, you guys done an amazing job and I have to thank you very much from the bottom of my heart.

Colleagues, let's get to work. Ministers' statements. Minister of ECC.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 34-20(1):
INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT
PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a significant issue affecting the Northwest Territories: The historic low water levels that have been observed over the entire Mackenzie River Basin. Over the last four years, we have seen extremely variable water levels, likely related to climate change, from historic highs in 2020 and 2021 to record lows in 2023 and 2024. In this time of unprecedented variability, we are committed to giving residents, communities, and stakeholders the best information and tools we can to inform planning and decision-making.

As the ultimate downstream jurisdiction of the Mackenzie River Basin, we are also working with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure shared waters of the basin are managed in a way that maintains the ecological integrity of the aquatic ecosystem.

Current low water levels in the NWT result from a number of factors in the last two years over the entire Mackenzie River Basin, including high temperatures, low rainfall, and high evaporation rates. The consequences for residents and communities have included disruptions to marine transportation, reduced hydroelectricity production, and visible changes to aquatic ecosystems.

To inform the decisions and planning of NWT residents, communities and stakeholders, the Government of the Northwest Territories proactively provides up-to-date information. The Department of Environment and Climate Change closely monitors water, snow, and meteorological conditions and publicly shares important monthly and annual updates, including NWT Water Monitoring Bulletins and the annual NWT Spring Water Outlook. During the spring break-up period when there is a risk of flooding, and the department also provides regular, almost daily, spring break-up reports. Staff are also working with academic researchers and federal scientists to better understand how climate change and increased variability is expected to impact Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie River in the future.

Mr. Speaker, communities at risk of flooding in the NWT are very interested in understanding how more variable water levels may impact their community's risk of flooding. In the ten NWT communities that are at high risk of flooding, Environment and Climate Change is working with Natural Resources Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, as well as the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Department of Finance's geomatics division to create new flood inundation and flood hazard maps.

Preliminary flood inundation maps, which can be used to inform emergency planning, have already been developed for Hay River, K'atlodeeche First Nation, Fort Simpson, and Aklavik and are currently being updated based on the review and input of community leadership.

Mr. Speaker, current low water levels serve to remind us that water in the NWT are affected

by conditions in upstream jurisdictions. The Government of the Northwest Territories actively negotiates and implements transboundary water management agreements with neighboring jurisdictions in the Mackenzie River Basin. These agreements play a crucial role in protecting the quality, quantity, and aquatic ecosystem health of waters flowing into the territory.

Our ongoing collaboration with the Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, through bilateral transboundary agreements and the Mackenzie River Basin Board, underscores our commitment to protecting our shared waters. These are venues by which we can expect early and effective engagement, notification and sharing of information on developments and activities that might affect the ecological integrity of the aquatic ecosystem.

Mr. Speaker, through data analysis, research, information sharing and partnerships, the Government of the Northwest Territories is actively working to address the challenges low water levels currently pose for residents, communities, and stakeholders. We are committed to safeguarding our water and supporting community resilience in the face of environmental change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ECC. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 189-20(1): WILDFIRE REVIEW

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday my honourable friend opposite, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, spoke to the need to go -- for residents of the Northwest Territories to follow trusted sources when emergencies occur. And I think that is one thing we need to be very mindful of, is trust in government. When I talk to constituents, friends, and family, many of them tell me if there is another state of emergency, they will be reluctant to follow orders to evacuate. And I think that comes to the fundamental issue here. If citizens do not trust in their government to take care of them during an emergency, what do we have to do to restore that trust.

A motion was brought forward in the last sitting of this House to establish a public inquiry. That passed in February 22nd. Since then, we have had a -- we've seen the establishment order -- a draft establishment order tabled on the floor of

this House, but what we have not seen is the efforts of the government to bring forward an after-action report. Residents of Yellowknife, at least, have seen their city take on an after-action report for an independent contractor. Many people have been interviewed, and many people have gone to public engagements. But they're still waiting to see what this government is going to do.

We had not heard an update about when the after-action report is going to come forward. The Premier has been silent on this issue. And I'm hoping today we can get some clarity on this, and we can see how far the government has come along to restoring trust. Because at the end of the day, if we are in an emergency, in a life or death emergency, and this government is not someone the public will respect enough to listen to, we will have -- an even worse crisis on our hands. We have to get this right. We have to respect our citizens, and we have to ensure that there's transparency, fairness, and accountability over how last year's crisis was handled. And I hope that the Premier will have good answers for me so we can move forward together on this. Thank you

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 190-20(1): FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAM

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to share a story about health care staffing that's a good news story for a change - our family medicine residency program.

Since 2020, the program has accepted two doctors in training each year. They train as residents in Yellowknife with mandatory rotations to Inuvik and Nunavut. This is Canada's first ever family medicine residency training site north of 60. It's a partnership between the university of Alberta and the three local health authorities in the NWT, and the program was dropped with advice from the Indigenous Advisory Committee. It includes critical education on the importance of cultural safety in health care in the NWT.

So having these family medicine residents present in our system has decreased appointment wait times for some teams by as much as 60 percent. It's improved primary care screening and helped us continue offering medical services at critical times like during the height of the pandemic. As of summer of 2024, six residents will have graduated from the family medicine residency program. One of the very first graduates was YK North constituent

Thompson Gaunt who is Metis and born and raised in Yellowknife. Importantly, all of the graduates have gone on to practice medicine in the NWT. That is because young people who spend time living and working in the NWT for an extended period of time, and they get involved in community life and the diverse cultures and experiences the territory has to offer, are more likely to identify themselves as a northern physician and want to stay here and work.

So a very defeatist narrative that keeps popping up is that we'll never be able to fully staff our health care positions locally because health care workers just don't want to live in the NWT. Mr. Speaker, that is just not true. And this program shows that. The NWT Family Medicine Residency Program is one of the most popular residency programs in Canada. It has been very successful at attracting students. It even won the Premier's award for excellence in 2021-2022.

The NWT Medical Association recently wrote a letter to Ministers recommending that we work towards expanding the Family Medicine Residency Training Program from two to four residents per year. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement. I'm so close.

MR. SPEAKER: So close, but not there yet. Getting better.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. MORGAN: Okay. So expanding the program would help ensure a steady pipeline of new northern trained physicians who understand our system and our patients into our health care workforce. So I'm eager to see this government heed that call and build on this shining success story. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 191-20(1):
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about how we communicate. I'm going to talk specifics. The Northwest Territories emergency plan from April 2024 has an appendix B, which is the emergency communications protocol. One sentence on page 6 of the protocol reads: Within this model, departments and agencies are expected to implement their own communications tactics based on their own business continuity needs during an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing general concern that this will give GNWT departments the leniency

to silo themselves in future disasters down the line. It's also a concern that coordinated communications only comes into effect during a state of emergency. As we all saw in 2023, coordinated communications is crucial before the state of emergency to better speak to concerns and help maintain public confidence in times of uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, for many, it was felt that there was no certainty on who to get key information from in the government. It was incredibly frustrating having to jump around between department websites looking for relevant information. Even the new improved public safety page manages to maintain silos. It's just links to separate websites.

I think the GNWT tends to forget that the general public does not know how the government operates internally, and it's not reasonable or realistic to expect the public to know details regarding which department is responsible for what functions. A page of links that directs you to another list of links is a nightmare for anyone, let alone someone with limited literacy skills. The NWT alert page is a great concept but so far, the execution has lacked luster. When media asked about it at the first wildfire season briefing with the Premier and wildfire staff, the question was not truly answered. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 192-20(1):
SAHTU RESUPPLY

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past weekend, I had the opportunity to have preliminary discussions with the principals of Buffalo Airways. Instructions to stakeholders on the Sahtu resupply is as important as the plan itself.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer deny the reality of low water levels only minimizing repercussions of it. To bring into perspective, Mr. Speaker, last fall's barge delivery to Fort Good Hope seen a top-up to the winter road resupply season of 600,000 litres of fuel.

Mr. Speaker, January the 8th, 2024, Sahtu seen the costs of aviation fuel delivered to Norman Wells and emergency carryover to the heavy tanker winter road season delivery at a cost of \$1.75 per litre. This amount cost to Norman Wells was \$1 million. Now, adding further costs to transport the product on to Fort Good Hope, if it's the same volume as last year.

Mr. Speaker, this only one of many products essential cargo destined for the Sahtu. The Mackenzie River communities of Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells, and Tulita rely totally on the affordable Mackenzie River Marine Transportation. We have five grocery stores, schools, and health centres within these communities, and commercial projects, certainly an endless of customers and clients.

Mr. Speaker, MTS cancelled a 2024 sailing season. The Government of the Northwest Territories, an ambitious resupply plan, and in collaboration with Buffalo Airways' air barge, we cannot afford to miss the boat.

Mr. Speaker, in the Sahtu resupply, is the Sahtu resupply an emergency one? Myself, recognizing this, I cannot emphasize enough the extreme magnitude of the situation and, more importantly, the immediate need for a sound, logistical resupply plan. This approach is a short-term one. What is your government's long-term one? My conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I foresee the immediate need and critical --

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

Oh, thank you, Member from Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 193-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MUNICIPALITIES

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, MACA has recently released a new emergency plan, which seeks to better clarify roles and responsibilities for the GNWT, NGOs, and municipalities during emergencies and evacuations. I appreciate the department's work on this, and having read through the plan, I acknowledge that it is clear about roles and responsibilities; however, in terms of current reality, I think there is still a fair bit of work to do to figure out the fine details of how this plan will work on the ground, particularly in relation to local emergency management organizations. I also understand that some gaps still exist that we need to address, particularly who will be funding emergency response capacity building for these organizations and who will pay for it and coordinate evacuation of one community to another?

It is worth noting that the overarching assumptions of this plan were established in a time when community evacuations were relatively infrequent. That reality is changing, Mr. Speaker. And as evacuations and emergencies due to extreme weather increase, I think we need to step back and reassess whether we have all the pieces in place for this

plan to work or whether changes to the plan or increased resources to implement it are needed it.

As has been discussed extensively in this House, many of our communities, particularly our regional centres identified in the plan as host communities, are underfunded. They don't have additional capacity to take on the responsibilities laid out in this plan, either for building up capacity to respond to emergencies within their boundaries or to host evacuated neighbours. The plan speaks to how communities should look to local businesses and contractors where necessary to expand capacity to respond. But, again, building capacity within those businesses to be able to answer the call will cost money the communities don't have.

With regard to hosting evacuees, I think we need to step back and assess whether this really is something we can download on to local EMOs or whether we need to be seeking federal funding to establish resource reception centres for the regions.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can identify a path which works for communities and the territory, but I don't think it involves leaving municipalities to do this work alone. We need to fund communities to build and maintain emergency response capacity. We also need to work with municipalities to identify how regional evacuation hosting is going to work and openly acknowledge that they can't take on that task alone. I'll have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 194-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as brought forward by my colleagues in this House several times over the past week, the transition of Aurora College to a polytechnic is in jeopardy of not reaching some of its milestone commitments. Mr. Speaker, as a government, we must ensure that we continue our commitment to this important work. One of those commitments, Mr. Speaker, should be to fund the centre for learning, teaching, and innovation, an initiative that the Aurora College brought forward during the transition process, and, Mr. Speaker, this program provides expertise to develop new quality control programs that will ensure the college meets the quality assurance requirements to become a polytechnic. It will allow the college to develop made-in-the North programming, Mr. Speaker.

This important work was started through funding through CanNor but, unfortunately, that funding has come to an end.

Mr. Speaker, there was a transition team, as we're all aware, consisting of GNWT employees, senior employees, and college staff but, Mr. Speaker, once the new legislation was introduced and the new board of directors put in place, this team was -- this team was deemed unnecessary by this government. This team was funded, Mr. Speaker, through the surplus budget of the Aurora College but this funding has also been exhausted.

I can't help but think, Mr. Speaker, that if we continue to fund this important transition work either through additional funding allowing the college to have the necessary expertise or through continuing the transition team as it was initially designed, the milestones we were hoping to accomplish would be more attainable. Mr. Speaker, if you're a jet, you're a jet all the way, and if we want this transition to be a success, we must commit to it. And, Mr. Speaker, that will have to come with money. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 195-20(1):
INCREASE OF DRUGS AND CRIME IN
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm going to be talking about drugs and crime.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about the increase of drugs and crimes in the NWT. It is disturbing to acknowledge there is a rise of homicide in the NWT right now related to drugs. There is more violent crimes, and the RCMP acknowledge the link between drugs and the unprecedented number of homicide that have occurred. I want to offer my condolences to all the families and friends who have been impacted by drug crime in our territory. There is one -- I do send my condolence to the families in Behchoko that are affected by this as well, and they are -- we're having a service today.

Mr. Speaker, we see the RCMP is trying to respond to these crimes and illegal activity. When dealers are arrested or charged, parents and grandparents are so relieved and so happy. Mr. Speaker, this is what we want to see. We want to see is the RCMP take control of the drug trade in the NWT. We want our communities to be safe. We want our children to grow up without being influenced by drug -- by fast cash and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, the drug trade is destroying the lives of our peoples. Our people are being shot, assaulted, abused, and intimidated. When are we going to stand up and let drug dealers know the NWT is not a place to do business? Right now, there are homicide cases linked to drug dealing with no updates. And in other cases, when charges are laid, they get off on technicality.

Drug dealers come to the NWT and pray on our vulnerable people. They take over people's homes and set up businesses in the NWT, which leads to more crimes like theft and assault. It leads to more addictions. It leads to more destruction, trauma, chaos.

Mr. Speaker, people in small communities are scared. Our communities do not feel safe. I am very concerned about communities without an RCMP detachment. Gameti chief and council had to take it upon themselves to remove a person who was known to be selling drugs. Mr. Speaker, can I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without a consistent RCMP force, drug dealers with easily take advantage of small communities. This rise of drugs and crime is debilitating our communities and our territory. Mr. Speaker, who runs this territory? We need to make laws and take actions today because right now in the NWT, the drug trade is winning, and our people are losing. I will have question for the Minister of Justice. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 196-20(1):
FORT RESOLUTION HOUSE FIRE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2023 fire season, I stood in front of the House here and thanked all the first responders in the Northwest Territories, including YKDFN and Lutselk'e Dene First Nation, for protecting our homes and community, and I thank you for your continued service.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke about emergency planning and the devastation caused by a recent fire in Fort Resolution. There is certainly much to discuss in this Assembly regarding community administrator situation. But today I would like to revisit those events to highlight how well we all worked together despite the circumstances to save lives and to protect homes. I want to start

by -- start off by thanking ministerial colleagues, MACA Minister, and ECC Minister, for doing their best to get, gather, and deploy all the resources they could promptly and effectively at a moment's notice. I want to thank the local community leaders, Deninu Kue First Nation chief Louis Balsillie and Fort Resolution Metis President Arthur Beck for all the work they done in those organizations' effort as well. I also want to thank the Housing NWT Minister as well for helping getting those displaced families into temporary housing quickly.

I want to thank the first responders, deputy fire chief Louis Balsillie, fire fighter Jessica Sanderson, Captain Joseph Ortea, Braden Lafferty, and lieutenant Sam O'Reilly. I also need to thank the hamlet staff Dave Pierrot, Don Pierrot, Louis Edjericon, Derrick Cross, Lyndon Stratmursch of the GNWT highways has provided the community with vital support as did the staff from ECC, including Scott King, Greg Lafferty, David Cardinal, Sammy Hunter, Joe O'Reilly, and of course the helicopter pilots who rushed to the scene. And, Mr. Speaker, including the RCMP in Fort Resolution.

I also appreciate the Northern store, the Deninu Kue store for their donation of water and sandwiches. I know Bedessa Sanderson and Crystal Bougie and Eric Lafferty brought food and water to the first responders as well.

The health centre also did a great job assisting those who were injured fighting the fire. So I wanted to say thank you to all their staff as well.

While the community is devastated, this disaster shows us once again the bravery of our first responders and the unlimited compassion of ordinary community members. It was -- Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. While the community is devastated, this disaster shows us once again the very bravery of our first responders and their unlimited compassion of ordinary community members. It was also an opportunity for these different levels of government to show how they can come together to meet any threat to the safety of the Northerners head on. Thank you, all, for this hard work and dedication to making the North a safer place, and thank you for your service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 197-20(1): HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during the last sitting, I did several statements regarding health wellness and health promotion by our government. My statement today will be similar with particular focus on health promotion in schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that our government support the healthy learning and development of all our young people within every school across the NWT. Our government needs to ensure that our future generations develop skills and education necessary to have good healthy lives as they develop from adolescents to adulthood.

Mr. Speaker, as our children and our youth go through our education system, from code of conduct to high school, we need to instill in them such things as the importance of healthy, well balanced, nutritious meals, and about the dangers of harm of drugs and alcohol use, and to ensure they have sports and recreation so they stay out of trouble. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that students feel supported in terms of mental health.

There is a vacant counsellor position in my region right now. It is very important that our government works to fill those positions as soon as possible to ensure the students there have the mental health supports they need whenever they need it.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, if a school is lucky enough to have a counsellor, high turnover rates for such positions makes it difficult for a student to feel motivated to seek help because it makes it that much more challenging for students to establish a rapport and build a positive therapeutic relationship with the counsellors.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as a government, we need to ensure that all students in every region are supported physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. We must do more to help our students thrive and help lead them into futures they are proud of to look forward to in life. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 198-20(1): FUNDING FOR MIDWIVES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, midwives are more than just baby catchers. As a matter of fact, they provide

counselling, they provide information on pregnancy, sexual health, they order tests, they provide -- order ultrasounds, they do PAP smears, prescribe medication. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, they also provide continuing education during and after the birth. Mr. Speaker, they help with lactation consultation, infant feeding. And, Mr. Speaker, they have truly become a continuation of the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, if you're not convinced by the human side, well, maybe you're a dollar and cents person. I'm okay, I understand that. So here it is.

In Alberta and in BC, they respectively have saved \$7 million and \$60 million with the savings by using midwifery. But it doesn't just stop there. According to the Association of Safe Alternatives for Childbirth, they say they save \$540 per birth. And then they go on to the overall continuation using the -- versus the obstetrics program, it's \$2,000 cheaper. Midwives save money.

Mr. Speaker, Parkland Institute, which is associated with the University of Alberta, says you can save \$1,200 per birth. And in BC, they even say over the 28-day postpartum process, it's over \$2,000. This all adds up, Mr. Speaker. There's not a health care system that isn't evaluating itself asking how can we do business better? Heck, let's consider midwifery.

I'm a very pragmatic person, Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows. Health jurisdictions are asking themselves what's important. It's not midwifery versus obstetrics, Mr. Speaker. It's about the right fit in partnerships. There is money to be saved. Families, mothers, children receive less trauma. Patient care is increased. And sometimes, if not most times, medication is decreased, Mr. Speaker. All good things. It makes you wonder why the GNWT isn't do more? Oh, but they are, Mr. Speaker. On page 136 of the business plans, they're actually reviewing the regulations, Mr. Speaker. If you go to the mandate, the second bullet on page 5 -- sorry, page 5 on the fifth bullet, it points out that they want to continue the implementation of things like the Missing, Murdered, and Indigenous Women's Call to Inquiry, and 7.4 of that inquiry also talks about engaging the teachings of midwifery.

Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you any more than the fact it's that simple. Midwifery works, and we'll talk about why it's so important later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 199-20(1):
YOUTH PARLIAMENT 2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, back in April, the Legislative Assembly played host to youth from across the Northwest Territories for our annual Youth Parliament, something I look forward to every year as we get to hear voices from youth and to hear what they feel is important to the next generation.

The following words in my Member's statement today are those that were written and read in this Legislature by Kagen Ball who represented Yellowknife South as the Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about plans for the Mackenzie Valley Highway. The Mackenzie Valley Highway is a project that has been talked about for decades and will connect the Northwest Territories providing the possible expansion of communities and an increased stability to resupply those communities. So far in the project, 40 of the 42 bridges have been completed, and it is in the coming construction season we will begin construction on both remaining bridges. The planned distance for the highway is only going to be from Wrigley to Norman Wells, but once this project is completed it will be expanded to cover the communities and towns all the way up the highway, Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway.

This highway will give vital all-season supply routes to the smaller communities without the need to worry about low water levels where the barges might get stuck or how the big airport or landing strip for the supply planes is to land on, and it will help with further development and reclamation of old projects and infrastructure. My main focus with this project is connecting the Northwest Territories and giving the necessary supplies and assistance to communities that are currently hard to reach without large short-term investments, such as for crews and fuel for the barges and the planes that resupply communities along the Mackenzie Valley and further.

Another concern that is driving my wanting to focus on this project is climate change and how it is causing disruptions in the resupply routes through wildfire, low water levels that I mentioned in my concerns about the barges, melting permafrost, damaging the airports, and more. This highway will eliminate some of the problems faced by the existing resupply routes.

I know that for a few more years while we continue to work on this road, we will need to use the barges and planes to resupply unconnected communities, but the highway will connect them and eliminate the need for current methods used to resupply the communities along that route. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Kaegan for letting me bring his voice, once again, to the halls of this legislature. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 200-20(1):
BILLY ALFRED DENEYOUA CELEBRATION
OF LIFE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Good afternoon, Colleague, today, I would like to celebrate the life of Billy Alfred Deneyoua. He was born on March 9, 1968, to Henry and Bella Deneyoua. He was one of eleven children in their family. Billy attended Thomas Simpson School and was one of the lucky ones who did not have to attend residential school. Billy was taught to hunt, trap, and set snares by dad. They would go out to their cabin for weeks at a time where they would trap and bring home furs.

When people spoke about Billy, they would always say that he was a hard worker who loved to be outdoors. In the summertime he would be seen mowing the lawn, harvesting and chopping wood for the fall and winter seasons. As well, you could see him in the evening or on weekends working on his 4-wheeler. This was his mode of transportation to get around town and to get to work.

Billy worked for many years at Simpson Air with Ted and George. He was a fixture at the company. Passengers from the communities loved to chat and catch up with him. Billy was very happy with his sisters, or helpful with his sisters every year with their gardening. He would help them turn the soil, dig up the garden, sometimes he would help plant potatoes. In the fall time he enjoyed digging up fresh vegetables.

Billy loved his nieces and nephews as they were his own children. In return, they loved him so dearly. They appreciated that he would joke around with them, and he told them great stories. One of the stories was when two of his nieces saw his skidoo and try to start it. After a couple of pulls, it started and took off straight toward a tree. They could be heard saying Billy's gonna be mad, so they pulled and tugged on the machine until they finally managed to get it back to where they found it. They covered and hid the skidoo tracks and took off. A bit later, the girls ran into him, and he asked them why they

bumped into the tree. Then he started to laugh about it. This was Billy always looking at the brighter side of things.

Billy was an amazing man who was understanding and when you needed a hand, he would be there for you. His family and friends are going to miss him. It is very hard to say goodbye to an amazing angel; they were lucky to have him in their life.

The family would like to thank everybody for their condolences and for coming out to say their final goodbyes. He is now with his parents and family members watching over the family, especially the young ones. He will be sadly missed.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 3 of 7. Reports on committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 193-20(1):
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of MACA.

Under the NWT Emergency Plan, the communication incident management team is only activated in state of emergencies. Can the Minister speak to what coordination will be stood up when communities have urgent concerns on public safety that may not yet be classified as emergencies? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many levels of community -- or sorry, emergency situations and for that, every level has a different stage that they will go in for what they're going to stand up and what they're going to need at that time. So depending on what stage it might be in, us as MACA may not fully be involved but we would be there to observe and assist with the department regional superintendents and the manager of EMO. But for the most part, at every stage MACA will be involved to assist any community emergency whether they fully need us or not, but for the most part, just there to be there if it's needed. So at a local emergency level, we might not be involved at all. It would just be the local community involvement, and

they would be doing their own thing, as I've witnessed many times inside Hay River, that not too many people outside of Hay River would hear of or see of, but when it goes down to the regional area of the regional emergency measure organization, MACA would have more involvement and the ability to step in more resources as would the territorial emergency measure organization when it gets to that level. So hopefully that answers your question. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister speak to whether he'd consider expanding or re-envisioning the NWT alert page to draw from GNWT corporate communications or any centralized mechanism that would be able to consolidate all relevant and robust public safety information in a mobile app, like the BC wildfire app. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. MACA has been working to expand the NWT alerting system. They've worked with the RCMP recently for the ability for them to send out alerts. MACA's always looking at improving the way we communicate. When it comes down to a territorial emergency, right now I think we're at the stage where we're using the NWT alert system. There's also other apps and devices out there, like Alertable, for an example where you can set your region for your ability to pick up those kinds of emergencies if there is any. But there's -- locally, I would have to say the best resources are your local community agencies, whether it be the community government, your community emergency response teams, whatever that might be. And for that reason is that's where you're going to get your experienced knowledge people for that area communicating and those -- that information would be utilized also for MACA to share or the territorial emergency measures organization to share if need be. But for the most part, when it's a local state of emergency and local EMO organization is running it, it would be the local governments, like a town or municipality doing the communication that may not go out everywhere on, like, the NWT alerting device. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that really gets at the heart of what I'm getting at, but I'll try and ask my next question, which is will the Minister ensure that coordinated plain language information, including evacuation notice alerts and orders, fire bans, road closures, wildlife -- or sorry, pardon me, wildfire perimeters, air quality measurements, which are already there, road construction, campsite closures, by way of list of a small sampling could be made available through the NWT Alert Site? That's the new site

that they've put up and stood up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this is a new development central focused area for getting communication out there, the department will continue to work on it and hopefully we can get as much information on there as we can like the Member's suggesting, and I think those are all great things. It's just a matter of working on the site to get the communication and the information on there that is needed. So we'll continue to work and develop that site to have more information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 194-20(1):
FUNDING FOR MIDWIFERY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be related to, or taking up where I left off on my Member's statement, with respect to midwifery.

Mr. Speaker, I was enjoying a good read. It's not a good read in the context of happiness, but it is a good report regarding the reclaiming power in place. It's the final report of the MMIWG. And I happened to notice a familiar name, Ms. Lesa Semmler in there. So I'm sure she's very familiar with the report. So specifically, I want to point to the page, without going into context, is it talks about the teachings of midwifery and postnatal care of women and children.

So that said, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health and Social Services is, how is the Minister meeting that objective of supporting midwifery in the Northwest Territories in line with the statement that ties to the report which also ties to the mandate which also ties to the business plan of the Government of the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad that the Member, you know, in his Member's statement agrees with a lot of the things that I also agree with. And midwifery is near and dear to my heart. So one of the things that what -- you know, with all of the things that are happening in the Northwest Territories is what we are doing is we are focusing the midwifery on the programs that we currently have. So Fort Smith was the first program. We expanded into Hay

River. But currently right now, Mr. Speaker, we are barely filling those positions in those two communities where there are no prenatal services and no other services that will be providing to those members in those communities that deliver. So this is where we need to focus on midwifery because midwifery is to be able to birth closer to home with your family and those people in those communities. That is where we want to make sure that these programs are successful so that's where we're refocusing that area to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really glad we agree. So then I am looking forward to the next agreeable answer from the Minister when she explains the role of the Midwifery Advisory Council on how the services of midwifery are being rolled out in the Northwest Territories to serve sometimes the first choices of expectant mothers to go through that process. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also hear how the Minister expresses the advisory committee's advice on how we do job postings and reaching out in recruitment of midwives. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. I think that's a couple of questions in there. So I'm going to turn to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the positions that are currently in the communities are government-funded positions and, yes, I hear the Member of how we would use a midwifery advisory, you know. We have created these positions with collaborations within the department with them and, you know, moving forward this is the thing, is we need to make sure that those positions in the communities that -- Fort Smith, like I said, and Hay River, which do not have birthing services. Inuvik and Yellowknife have birthing services right now, and so we're going to switch our focus to make sure that we can support those communities. And if it means working more with the advisory on how we do that better in those communities so that these programs are successful and women can birth closer to home in those communities. I also want to note that because we are, you know, having a hard time recruiting for the Hay River, which that community also supports Deninu Kue in their prenatal/postnatal supports. So by not supporting Hay River, you know, we're not supporting Deninu Kue for those people to have that prenatal and postnatal support. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister is when is the last time there's been any recruitments in

the Yellowknife area that can support the regional centres? And, again, Yellowknife represents half the population, so I'm coming back to what is the Minister looking at from a dollar and cents point of view of recruiting more midwives in Yellowknife to support community birthing options, such as midwifery? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The more support that I put in Yellowknife, the less people that I'm going to have working in the frontline that are actually doing the midwifery program. And so the support that we're leaving in place is to -- the one position to support the two communities to be able to be effective. You know, if we keep taking away and we put it in Yellowknife, then that's going to be taking away positions or midwives that could be working in those communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very curious on how the Minister reconciles taking away from the communities by supporting the expansion or fulfilling the current program of midwifery in Yellowknife that supports the communities. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain exactly how this takes away from the communities, she keeps saying that, by not supporting the Yellowknife midwifery program? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the position -- there is still a position to support the two communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 195-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my statement, I spoke about the importance of the transition of the Aurora College to a polytechnic. Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the funding for the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Innovation that the college has been doing for the past three years. My questions are for the Minister of ECE. I'm wondering if her department would consider funding that centre to continue the important work that they're doing? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. So the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Innovation was established in May of 2020, closed in 2023. That centre was actually funded by CanNor, a project through CanNor. As far as I am aware, there has not been any additional funding through CanNor that has been given to the college for this centre. And I as Minister have not received a request for additional funding for that centre for Aurora College. It's not something that we could fund from dollars from within at this time. But if I were to receive a request, it is either something I could work with the college on either supporting them through negotiations with CanNor. CanNor has been very generous in their diversity of programs they have supported in the Northwest Territories, or I can have a conversation with the chair about what funding is required and if they even want to reopen the centre. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. I can tell you the funding, I believe, was in the neighbourhood of about \$500,000 per year. They did apply but did not receive the continued funding CanNor on that program. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I've also addressed in my Member's statement the actual transition team and the important work that that team had been doing up until such time as the board of directors were put in place, understanding now that the college is an arm's length organization, but still much important work that we could do as a government to assist them, would the Minister consider funding a transition team, either with the college allowing them to get the expertise they need to continue this work to get back on track, or as a combination with GNWT employees as well?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the transformation team for Aurora College was in place until 2023 at which time it was disbanded. At that time -- or sorry, in the life of the transformation, the \$1 million that I've been speaking about with Members on the floor of this House this week and last week was agreed to by ECE senior management, along with Aurora College senior management, to be used for the purposes of transformation, and that's where it's at right now, is that Aurora College was going to use those dollars for that purpose. As far as putting -- kind of putting the band back together again, that's not a request I've received from the board of governors for Aurora College. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Yes, I'm aware of the \$1

million in funding that was received. It was received and was to be used to develop the new Bachelor of Education program, which hasn't been rolled out yet. So what the college has been using that funding for was to develop the general studies program, which will eventually then turn into years one and two of the Bachelor of Education program and, if I'm not mistaken, the social work program as well. So that's what that \$1 million is currently being used for.

My question is, and I believe the transition team at that budget was around \$3 million per year. I think a little over \$2 million in salaries for expertise and O and M. So would the Minister consider a request from the college to, again, look at funding that over and above the \$1 million that's given for the Bachelor of Education program?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely welcome any conversation with the college about supports that they need in order to continue forward with transformation, which is a key part of their mandate and a key part of the mandate document that was agreed to between Aurora College and the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment of the day. That mandate document expires in July of this year, and I have no doubt that transformation will continue to be a key part of that mandate document and therefore, given that up -- like, for the last six months, we've had a great working relationship. I happily have had a great relationship with the chair for many, many years, and intend to continue that. So by all means, I welcome -- I welcome any dialogue whatsoever. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Minister. And, listen, I appreciate -- I know the Minister's passionate about this project, as we all are.

One final question, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to -- given that I said in my statement that the timelines are delayed, they're going to miss some of the milestones that was originally laid out in a GAN chart that we've all seen, where they wanted to be. Can the Minister commit to tabling where they are and how those milestones have changed? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I think that that is something that will need to be publicly shared and reflected. I think it's also important that we reflect on the good work that

has been done by the Aurora College transformation team as well as Aurora College. There are a total of 80 deliverables in this transformation, of which 66 of them were completed by the Aurora College transformation team. And since Aurora College has taken over, they have continued on the -- along on those milestones, and they've completed an additional three milestones in the last few short months. And so good work is still being done on that. And so I think it's really important that we also celebrate our good milestones as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Colleagues, we're 18 minutes in. Three people have asked questions. So, please, shorten your answers so we can get everybody through with the process. Thank you.

Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 196-20(1):
HOUSING UNITS DESTINED FOR SAHTU

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I emphasized the critical state we're in on the low waters here and the shipment down the Mackenzie River. My question is to the Minister of Housing.

In this new fiscal budget, can the Minister confirm the list of housing units destined for the Sahtu? Thank you.

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

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What Housing NWT can confirm, related to the cancellation of the MTS barge to Tulita, was that there was one new duplex scheduled for delivery into Tulita for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that answer.

Moving on to my next question here, Mr. Speaker, on February the 29th here, I requested from the Housing NWT Minister housing inventory for the Sahtu. Due to the MTS cancellation, is there -- what is the new shipping alternative plans for materials as well as new units? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cancellation of the barge is unfortunate, so we're not able to get much of the supply into the communities in the Sahtu. But what we're able to do and Housing NWT has pivoted to delivering the replacement duplex on the winter road and looking at building it to specifications for winter road

travel, and shipping that unit on the 2024-2025 winter road season to Tulita. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And moving forward, there's always the cost of capital costs of delays so there's a factor to that, and I'm not too sure what that cost is because I'm not privileged to the materials, but I want the Minister to keep that in mind here, it may come back to haunt this government on the cost of capital or the cost of loss. All of a sudden your sheet of plywood already doubled if you went to six months in purchasing, for example.

My last question, an Indigenous made-in-the-North to the housing crisis is being proposed by leadership of Fort Good Hope. Will the Minister accept my invitation and suggest proposed dates for the meet and greet of the leadership in Fort Good Hope? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to MLA McNeely for the invite. I've met with Fort Good Hope, the K'asho Got'ine Housing Society a couple of times on virtual meetings, but I'd be pleased to meet with them in person. We can discuss dates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Oh, thank you. Thank you. Can the Minister answer my half portion to the last question, proposed dates, can the Minister come back to me on proposed dates; is it next month or July or August? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister of health suggested 2027. It will be definitely sooner. We'll talk over the next day or so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. I'm glad you didn't take the Minister of health's advice there. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 197-20(1):
POLICING IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
COMMUNITIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to let the young people know the drug dealers and cartel do not care about them. With that in mind, the RCMP have been noted in the media saying they need a response unit. How can the GNWT support the RCMP to respond to the increase in drugs and crime with a response unit? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't quite know what I can say here. I know

the budget is before the Committee of the Whole, so I don't want to speak too much about it. But I look forward to that budget passing and us getting our crime reduction unit up and running. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are communities in the NWT without consistent RCMP presence. Can the Minister explain what is being done to improve effective level of policing in NWT communities?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So in the communities without RCMP present all the time, they have -- there are RCMP who are dedicated to travel to those communities at regular intervals. And with everything that has gone in the past few years, I guess four years now, the intervals might not have been as regular as we would have hoped. But at the Behchoko detachment, there are two officers who are dedicated to going into Gameti.

In addition, the RCMP had taken new approaches to combatting the drug trade. We've seen the increase in drugs over the last four or five years and because of that, the RCMP have sort of adjusted their tactics, and we have seen just since last year a big increase, 30 percent increase, in arrests, almost twice as many charges laid, over twice as many drugs seized and taken off the street, a number of -- dozens of handguns seized. So a lot of work is happening to prevent drugs from getting into communities, and also we have those proactive patrols into communities. And that being said, there is more work to be done. I have more initiatives that I want to bring forward, work with the federal government on them. So there's a lot more work to be done on this. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, he's very right in all the stuff that he just said. But Gameti needs a detachment.

The RCMP have also noted publicly there is an inability to hold offenders accountable. What can the GNWT do to assist the RCMP to hold offenders accountable? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the big issues now is that over the last number of years, you know, in the last 2010s, there were changes to the Criminal Code, there were decisions from the Supreme Court, all of which have resulted in people who are arrested not being remanded into custody but granted bail. And they're arrested, they're back out later that day. And some of these offenders, you know, they are innocent until proven guilty, but then they're arrested again the next day or the

next week, and they continue this pattern. And so we are seeing that the deterrent of not being remanded is not working. So what I have been doing, along with all of the other Ministers of Justice and many Premiers across Canada, have been lobbying the federal government for bail reform to ensure that we can better protect our communities. And later this year, I will be hosting all of the Ministers of Justice in Canada for one of our annual meetings, and this will be raised there as well. So there's continuous lobbying efforts across the country to address this, because this is not just a territorial issue. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see our young people, who were once full of life, now look defeated. We can just look in Yellowknife downtown. You can see that, you know. And even in the small community as well. So what can the GNWT do to make it difficult for drug dealers to operate in the territory? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, me and my spouse are from the territory and sometimes we'll run into someone who went down that path, and we can see that impact where, you know, our paths diverged and someone has gotten into that life and it is -- it's tough. It's tough on us to see. And so I know that when it's in your family, when it's someone close to you, when you see it every day in your community, it is difficult. So this is a serious issue that we are all feeling the effects of one way or another. And so there's a number of things that we're working on to try and address this. Looking at ways to shut down known drug houses. That's one way. We want to introduce the SCAN legislation, which would allow premises to be shut down as opposed to evicting the residents. So it's a different process, another tool for the RCMP. There is the civil Forfeiture Act, which I will be bringing forward, which will allow the government to retain proceeds of crime without a conviction in certain cases. So we are taking steps, both the government and the RCMP, to address these issues. Ultimately, I always say this, drug use is a public health issue. It's a tough battle to fight. I always look at the United States. They spend over a trillion dollars on the war against drugs, and they're not winning either. So, ultimately, we need to work on the demand side of things because if there's a demand, the supply will make it in. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 198-20(1):
WORKING WITH MUNICIPALITIES ON
EMERGENCY PLANS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how is the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs proposing to deal with the lack of capacities communities have to deal with the increasing number of emergencies within their boundaries? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So with the capacity issues within communities, the department is working with local governments to establish what more resources are needed, and if there's an opportunity for a local government to -- or if there's a need for a local government for more resources, then MACA will step in and ask for more assistance or get more resources and tier it up to the point where we may need to call out to other communities or other businesses to assist with capacity issues. But for the most part, it's up to the communities to realize what their capacities are and what needs they might have, and the department's always there to assist them in building these plans for preparedness. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm happy to hear that MACA is there to kind of help communities identified. But in the interim, we're in a situation where there is a bit of a gap. So, Mr. Speaker, how is MACA coordinating with communities for the current fire season and ensuring existing gaps, particularly related to hosting evacuees, are addressed in the short-term while we work on these longer term solutions?

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware of any gaps in hosting. And if there is any, the local communities need to reach out to the department to work on these gaps that the Member's bringing forward. During his Member's statement, I have access to the documents, obviously, but I went online to make sure it was on there. I word searched on the document, and I searched up something for an example, like, reimbursement costs, which took me right to the page, annex A, section 8, where it talks about full reimbursement costs. So if a local government is unsure, they could go to the emergency plan, they could resource and look at all the information that's required, and reach out to the department to clarify what help could be more used from the department to assist in, for an example, hosting. Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for the answer. So I think the Minister's touched upon something important there, and that is that the communities currently -- the way the plan is written, communities can come for reimbursement but, Mr. Speaker, this doesn't get at the issue of the costs of capacity building for communities to respond to these emergencies. So communities are in a position right now where they are taking on responsibility that I don't think was completely clear that they needed to take on. I think that that was very clear during the wildfire season last year that the gap is what we saw last season.

So, Mr. Speaker, is MACA doing anything to address the gap? That's what I'm speaking to right now, and that is the capacity of these communities to build up this capacity to respond as the plan is articulated, because it's assuming the capacity is there. I would argue that right now it's not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess if the Member says there's a gap, and I'm not sure of it, I don't see or hear the gaps. I only see and hear of the lack of communication and the lack of responsibility from the department but, at the same time, I'm told by my department that they're working with community governments to make sure that these avenues are all filled up and everything's being communicated clearly. So I would hope there's no gaps and, if there is, I hope the communities reach out to the department to clarify where the issues are and how the department can assist to clarify these or clean up these gaps. I do hear what the Member is saying, and coming from a community where we've done local evacuation -- I shouldn't say local evacuations -- isolated evacuations within a community, for an example evacuating an island, Vale Island to the main town, which is what we call New Town in Hay River. We've always set up a reception centre. The Town of Hay River's never gone to the -- or has never gone to the department for -- or to the territorial government for full-blown assistance other than the local government assistance. So in small, little areas like that, they're always working on bettering the problems they find out from every evacuation and setting up those little processes with, like, evacuation centres. So that's where you start seeing the little gaps that you might be talking about but at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the department's there to assist, and the government's there to assist with filling in these gaps if they're aware of them. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I think that my last question I'd like to say let's imagine a scenario where a community comes to MACA this summer and says, we don't have the capacity to host other communities, but other communities' local EMOs are saying they're going to be evacuating to that community. So how is MACA going to manage that situation if a community is telling them we don't have the capacity to host?

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hope no community would turn away any other community for assisting them in an evacuation. And I would hope that, you know, a local community would reach out to the department in assistance in hosting evacuation or hosting another community. But that being said, I know other communities have reached out to other -- you know, between communities, reached out to each other to assess and set up evacuation centres based on their evacuation plans, which has no involvement of the departments, especially MACA. They've done that on their own. But there is that assistance from the department if need be. So I hear what the Member is saying, but at the same time I don't think there should be that neglect -- or I know you want to call it neglect, but the wanting to refuse another community to evacuate to your area. I would hope that the communities would be willing to assist other communities in the territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Deh Cho.

QUESTION 199-20(1):
HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I spoke about the importance of providing sufficient health promotion within the schools across the NWT. Recently, the GNWT began using the education curriculum from British Columbia. So I would like to ask the Minister of ECE if there have been any major changes with regards to health promotion in our schools since changing the curriculum? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Deh Cho. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll start by saying that the BC curriculum has not been fully implemented into every grade and every classroom across the territory. That said, the NWT adapted curriculum of the BC curriculum covers a broad range of health promotion

topics, and these include things like balanced lifestyles, understanding personal choices, as well as social and environmental factors, healthy relationships, and managing mental health and emotional and social well-being.

In addition to the BC curriculum, Mr. Speaker, we also have our child and youth counselling program, which is our school-based mental health and wellness program in our schools across the Northwest Territories. And with the change that was recently done that started in this school year, there was the addition of that promotion and prevention piece within our schools, and it provides all of our schools and our school boards the autonomy to design programs that work for what they need to respond to in each of their region to make sure programs are specific to the challenges those students are having. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that response. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell me if the youth counsellor position has been filled in Fort Providence today? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting one where when we breakdown silos and do things a little bit more together as departments, we end up sharing questions on the floor of the House as well, which I know can be challenging for everybody. So the clinical counsellors that are found within communities and within schools are -- fall under the mandate of the Minister of Health and Social Services, but I don't want the Member to waste her question either so I can confirm that while this position was filled in Fort Providence, it has become vacant and for any further questions on hiring, that would need to go to the Minister of health. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Thank you for that response. I will get back to Minister of health later on.

The next question is can the Minister tell me if there are any health promotion campaigns currently taking place in our schools, such as the Drop The Pop campaign or Don't Be a Butt Head. Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. So the Don't Be a Butt Head campaign as well as the Drop The Pop campaigns are both campaigns that are put together and administered by the Department of Health and Social Services. They have a few health promotion campaigns that are on the go right now -- not the Minister of health, though, but they do have programs for tobacco

cessation. Healthy eating, that is something that also carries through into our schools, and MACA supplies funding for after school snacks and after school programs. So a bit of some kind of cross departmental things going on. We have some -- or sorry, health and social services has some staying active campaigns, sexual health campaigns, and substance use education. I would highly recommend that people use some of the material that is on the health website under health promotion. Under sexual health, before COVID hit, the CPHO declared a syphilis outbreak. That has not gone away. I encourage people to go out and get tested. And also for the cannabis and substance use, there are also tools for educators, parents, and for youth as well that are found on the website. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. No?

Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 200-20(1):
FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAM

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. First, what is the Minister's response to the NWT Medical Association's recommendation to expand the Family Medicine Residency Program from two to four residents per year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, I recognize the importance of the family residency program. And this program began -- it was launched in 2020 and it provides a way to train and retain potential candidates for permanent family medicine positions in the NWT. Four residents have now graduated from this program. Two newest residents started on July 1st, 2023. However, I do agree with this program and, you know, but when we were taking in account as to ensuring the number of residents that we can support and provide -- expanding their scope in our facilities, we have to make sure that we can provide that to each of the residency. So I'll leave it at that. I'll let her finish asking questions.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that this recommendation is coming from the NWT Medical Association, which is made up of physicians operating here in the NWT, who would have an intimate knowledge of their capacity to, you know, supervise and train

medical residents, does the Minister believe that it could be realistic to aim for an expansion of this program by the last year of this Assembly, 2027? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to commit to that on the floor today as I'm unable to be able to confirm whether we could meet that funding and clinical training requirements as I mentioned in my previous comments. But I'm committed to continue to work with what we can do to expand this program, and if there's ways that we can find other funding to fund this, if we can support it within our system, then I'm always willing to commit to continuing that work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, and one positive aspect is that the program is partly funded by the University of Alberta and other partners, so I look forward to the Minister's analysis on that.

One final question here, does the Minister see any opportunities to transfer lessons learned and the successes from the Family Medicine Residency Program to offer additional on the job training and residency opportunities within our health care system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, I -- and I really want to -- I appreciate the Member for bringing this forward in a positive way because this is a good thing for the Northwest Territories. But I would also like to recognize this is just one program. There are a number of areas that we have been doing -- increasing health practitioners as well. So educating registered nurses in the Northwest Territories for over 20 years, we've been graduating nurses, licensed practical nurses, personal support workers, ophthalmology technologists. And we hope to again soon to be able to bring back social work, educating social workers in the system. But I believe there's an opportunity to continue to grow our ability as -- to educate health and social services professionals in the Northwest Territories, and I continue to be working with my colleague to ensure that, you know, we can continue to support these things, because these are ideal for the Northwest Territories. You know, when we work together to be able to train people in the Northwest Territories, we're more likely to keep them in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 201-20(1):
MIDWIFERY SUPPORT

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will do my best to not break your rules today, but I'm going to go back to what I was asking the Minister of Health and Social Services yesterday.

My first question is whether or not the Department of Health and Social Services has asked Indigenous midwives about what would support the growth of midwifery in the territory, specifically in our smaller communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the -- I guess, with the midwifery program that we're talking -- like, I can't speak to what has been done over the 20 years, but I know that Fort Smith was a driver and the history of midwifery in Fort Smith has been kind of the model. So as to when and where, what discussions have happened with Indigenous midwives, I don't have that information here on the floor today but like I said, midwifery, I mean, we want to be able to provide this service where there's no service available to deliver. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. I realize these are last minute questions, and I appreciate that. I hope she can get back to me on maybe some of the history of what the department has done to talk to Indigenous midwives.

My next question is why have midwives not been considered in the recruitment and retention strategies that have been applied to nurses and physicians? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that detail. Recruitment falls within HR, and whether it falls within that department -- within that HR team, I'd have to defer that to the Minister. But as of right now, I mean, I can follow up and get back to the Member on that whole process. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 202-20(1):
AFTER-ACTION REVIEW OF THE 2023
WILDFIRES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Premier update this House

on the status of the after-action review of the 2023 wildfires? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So this is a -- it's a long story. So going back to February, of course, we sat in this House and there was a request for a public inquiry. That came after the decision was made to hold this extensive after-action review where the department would go out -- or hire a contractor to go out, look at everything that happened in terms of the 2023 fire season response, hold public meetings, speak with staff, and then generate a report with recommendations. Because there was a desire to ensure that this was not influenced by government, the idea -- it actually came after a meeting I had with the mover of the motion and the seconder, the MLAs for Range Lake and the Deh Cho, as well as the chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, we had a discussion and from that I left the meeting and we put together a proposal of creating an oversight committee comprised of Members appointed by Council of Leaders, Standing Committee on Accountability of Oversight, and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

That work has been done. Those appointments have been made. Their role is to actually evaluate the RFPs and choose the contractor that will undertake the work. This will ensure that the government is not handpicking the contractor.

Once the contract begins, that oversight committee will ensure that the contractor is not influenced by the GNWT. All of the reports will be given directly to the contractor -- or to the oversight committee before the government to ensure that there is -- that the contractor's report is not influenced. And those reports will be shared with the three bodies who appointed the Members. So the RFP assessment process by that oversight committee is underway, and we hope to award an RFP next week or the week after. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my preference, of course, is a public inquiry. I still think it's the way to go. I appreciate we are joining the Premier in this process for now. How long until we get this final report and we can see what the contractor learns from the emergencies last year? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I knew coming into this Assembly is that I wanted to work in collaboration with the relevant partners. The other thing I knew coming into this is that collaboration takes a long time. And so if we would have just gone

ahead and issued the RFP as government and managed the contract that way, we would have been a couple months ahead but as it is, once the contract is awarded, there will be six months until the final product is to be delivered. So we are looking at a final report in December. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if there is -- this report -- now we have a draft -- we have a draft order on the table, so to speak. The public can see it, Members can see it. If this after-action report is ultimately found lacking by Members of this House and members of the public, is the Premier willing to call a public inquiry? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to get into hypotheticals as it's not in line with the rules of the Assembly. But I look forward to seeing what comes of the after-action review, and we'll make our decision then. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the contractor undertake public engagements in every affected community or every community that was evacuated during the 2023 wildfires? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the list of communities at my fingertips, but the engagement will be robust. I'm happy to get back to the Member with that information. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 203-20(1):
RCMP RESPONDING TO ADDICTIONS-
RELATED CALLS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Yellowknife Women's Society commissioned a report regarding the overpolicing of Indigenous women and a lot of the -- if you read the report carefully -- I'm sure the Minister of Justice has read it, you know, cover to cover as they say. But one of the things they underscore is the fact that, you know, the women feel they're overpoliced, and statistics probably prove that to some degree. Mr. Speaker, but the problem is there's no other reply or response to stepping up to the need when they're called because the RCMP cannot ignore that phone call.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Justice, who is probably familiar with the overall context of the problem is, is what other options are there for -- to redirect the need

when you run into a problem if someone's intoxicated or under some types of drugs or influence other than sending the RCMP to continue care of the individual until they sober up or deal with whatever they're dealing with?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, the idea that women in Yellowknife, and generally people in the NWT, are overpoliced, there could be some validity to that given that we have more RCMP per capita than anywhere else in Canada, twice as many as the Canadian average. So there definitely is a lot of policing. The RCMP also receive many, many, many calls from the shelters. If one of their clients is violating one of their policies, they will often call the RCMP to come and deal with that. So the RCMP do get those types of calls. They have turned into sort of the catchall for every issue that arises. And I know there's a better way to do things because the RCMP have other things to deal with other than basically, you know, addictions and public health issues. So in Yellowknife, I know there's the Street Outreach. In other communities, there's non-profits who similarly work with people who might be experiencing issues. But I think that going forward, you know, the future in the territory is going to have to involve some other collaboration between health care professionals and the RCMP for some of these issues perhaps. Whether it's social workers, I'm not quite sure at this point. But I'm very open to exploring other avenues because having the RCMP, who are there to enforce the Criminal Code, having them deal with, you know, people who are just too drunk in the middle of the day, that's not a good use of their time and it's not the best way for those people who are being arrested, you know, to be treated either. It's not an ideal situation but, unfortunately, it's the situation that we're in here just given the way that things have evolved. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the fact that the Minister -- or I should say Premier -- has a broader sense of the problem, and I can also appreciate the fact that we all might agree that RCMP may not be the best solution for a lot of cases here, including hospitals and whatnot.

Does the Premier -- or sorry, is the Minister willing to look and investigate into alternative tasks force to partner with the RCMP to ensure that these people are cared for to the abilities of what -- and responses they require, which often isn't jail? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to -- I don't want to say that we're

going to develop some working group to look into these things, but what the Member is talking about is the way, I think, that we need to go forward. This government is integrating services. We have our homelessness strategy, which is really looking at how we can better support people who are experiencing homelessness, what sort of wraparound supports we can provide, how to better provide those supports. So that's the type of work that we are doing moving forward. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to provide some type of response to me before the beginning of the next session in the fall? That will give the department enough time to come up with some options and ideas that we'd be able to look at as a broader picture as a response to the issue. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to sit down with the Member, maybe have a conversation, maybe get a written question, just so I know I'm clear on what we're discussing. I'd like to -- I wish I could just say, you know what, we got some -- we do have things in mind. It's a matter of resourcing and all of that in order to get into fruition, but I'm happy to have a further discussion with the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 204-20(1):
INCREASED SECURITY AT NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES BORDER

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is for the Minister of Justice. So has the GNWT considered legislation that would increase security at the border? Can we prevent people who are on bail in other jurisdictions from entering the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Build that wall. I'm just joking, of course. The territorial border, it is a -- you know, it is a border but in Canada, there are mobility rights. We can't just stop people at the border and search their vehicles. There was a time when it was easier to do that. But unfortunately, we don't have that ability. So what we do is we work with -- or the RCMP, I suppose, undertakes investigations. They try their best to stop drugs before they come into the territory. And I always say, we need people to bring information forward. The RCMP need credible tips to act upon. So I'd recommend that anyone with that type of information, reach out to the RCMP. If they don't feel comfortable reaching out to the

RCMP, reach out to Crime Stoppers, and you can provide that information anonymously. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Minister to Make NWT Great Again.

Mr. Speaker, in small communities, many parents are complaining about young people on income support. The young people are not buying groceries but paying off debts to drug dealers and/or drug dealers waiting for them on income support day outside Northern stores. So I want to ask the Minister how can the GNWT support the RCMP to reduce crime associated with drug trades and, you know, that goes with harassment and vandalism and thefts. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And when I was answering the Member's questions earlier, I spoke about some of the initiatives that this government wants to undertake and provide additional tools to the RCMP. But ultimately, this starts in the community. You know, when I've heard of communities really getting past their drug issues, it's been at the grassroots level that has driven it. And so, you know, public safety is in our mandate. Dealing with this issue is in our mandate. So I look forward to working with the Indigenous governments, many of whom have a very strong interest in this area as well and I've had many conversations with, and with the Members of this House, to figure out how to tackle these issues and better support our residents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Colleagues, the time is up. Oral questions. Written questions. Return to written questions. Relies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for PUB, Public Utilities Board.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 100-20(1):
2023 ANNUAL REPORT NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: The Annual Report Northwest Territories Public Utilities Board for the Year Ending December 31, 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Public Utilities Board. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

TABLED DOCUMENT 101-20(1):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 127-20(1): POLICIES AND
FUTURE OF HOUSING NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 127-20(1): Policies and Future of Housing Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Tabling of documents. Member from Great Slave.

TABLED DOCUMENT 102-20(1):
LETTER FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE
UNION OF NORTHERN WORKERS LOCAL
11 AT STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL
TO MEMBERS OF THE 20TH LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY ON THE USE OF AGENCY
NURSES IN NWT HEALTHCARE

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a letter from the Union of Northern Workers to Members of the 20th Legislative Assembly on the Use of Agency Nurses in NWT Healthcare. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 103-20(1):
LETTER FROM THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
REGARDING SUBMISSION OF THE NWT
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IN RESONSE TO
THE CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR
RESTORING BALANCE: A FISCAL
SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR THE
20TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a letter from the Northwest Territories Medical Association regarding their Submission of the NWT Medical Association in Response to the Call for Submissions for Restoring Balance: A Fiscal Sustainability Strategy for the 20th Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Notices of Motion

MOTION 27-20(1):
REAPPOINTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION MEMBERS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move -- or sorry, I give notice that on Thursday, May 30th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that the Legislative Assembly recommend the reappointment of the following individuals to the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission:

- Ms. Marion Berls of the Town of Fort Smith for the term of four years; and,
- Mr. Charles Dent of the City of Yellowknife for a term of four years.

And further, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective dates of these appointments to the Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Range Lake.

Motions

MOTION 26-20(1):
REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 94-
20(1): 2024-2028 BUSINESS PLANS, TO
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 Business Plans has been tabled in this House;

AND WHEREAS 2024-2028 Business Plans require detailed consideration.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 Business Plans, be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1), Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Minister's Statement 24-20(1), Tabled Document 93-20(1), and Tabled Document 94-20(1), with the Member of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We wish to consider Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 Business Plans in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. We will proceed with the first item. Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess, and we'll resume with the first item. We'll take a 15-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 Business Plan. I will now open the floor to general comments on Tabled Document 94-20(1), and each Member will have ten minutes to speak. I'll go to Member -- any hands? Any comments? Yeah, general comments on the Tabled Document 94-20(1). I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sure, I will kick it off with some comments. I will be fairly brief. We have some long days coming, and I'll try not to keep Members here too late today.

Listen, the business plans are great. I mean, I don't know what else I can say. I think there's a lot of excellent work done in there. I think this is --

MR. HAWKINS: This is the plans.

MR. TESTART: Except.

MR. RODGERS: You know, could I have been a little more aggressive in some areas? Absolutely. And I guess we can all say that about our ridings and individual things that we want to see action based on the business plan and things that are in here. But, yeah, overall, it's a great document, and I appreciate the work that the departments did putting it together. It's a bit of a read, but certainly, it's -- yeah, so -- you know, I can point to specific things that I'd like to see but, Mr. Chair, I'll save those for when we go through the main estimates, as we will be going through by department by department. I will be referring, as we know, the main estimates are annual, and this is our four-year plan, which, again, I appreciate. And, yeah, I'll speak to individual departments at such time when we go through the main estimates and talk about and refer to some of the great work that's been done in this document. So other than that, Mr. Chair, again, thank you, good document, let's get 'er done now.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I want to thank the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Any other Members that want to make general comments on Tabled Document 94-20(1)? I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now, as a planning document, I think this is the right kind of document for what we need out of a four-year plan and to give clear direction to government. And you get everything in here from programs that are going to be implemented to legislation that's going to roll out to policy changes that are going to be significant. So if anyone's looking for the Bible of the 20th Assembly, it's right here, at least when it comes to the affairs -- or the business of governing. Where the rubber meets the road is, of course, in the actual budget deliberations that are forthcoming, but -- and that's where we're actually going to have the opportunity to debate whether or not we think the cuts are appropriate, where we can see some changes in programs and policy. But what this is, it's not our document. It's not a document of the Assembly. It's a document of Cabinet. And in that regard, they have succeeded, and they should be commended for bringing this forward in a tangible, measurable way.

My comments yesterday about the mandate were pretty harsh, and I'm not retracting those because this is what I'd like to see, and I think we've kind of -- we should be moving forward in this direction. Any time we do forward planning at the start of a new Assembly, we should be as measurable, as clear and concise as possible, so people can get a sense of where we're going

and what we hope to -- what the government hopes to achieve, and then we can course correct as we move forward through budget cycles, through deliberation, through debate, all that kind of stuff. But having a very clear vision of what to expect, that's priceless in a democracy, especially a consensus government that often struggles to have kind of a decisive vision moving forward. So kudos on the business plans. Everything else needs more work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I want to thank the Member from Range Lake. I'm going to go to the Member Danny McNeely from Sahtu. Mahsi.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I too agree with the principles of the business plan; however, there's always room for improvements. It's a four-year document that really sets the direction for this Assembly and a everchanging climate, whether that climate is the cost of living in the small communities, the larger communities, and our territory as a whole. So realizing that, we really don't have any idea what the economic environment is going to be next year or the year after, but having the guiding principles to move forward with an updated review, certainly shows efficiency of this Assembly in moving forward and capturing and addressing the many challenge that could possibly create barriers and challenges for this Assembly. We have no idea on the water levels of next year for an example or what the prices are going to be of fuel to generate power in our smaller communities. So those are unforeseen costs that we will face.

But focusing on the principles for the next 48 months is really a challenging but a good corporate strategy to give our people the impression that, yes, we have faith in our abilities to move forward and here's our four-year plan, and I look forward to going through the finalization. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Any other general comments from the Members? I don't see any hands -- oh okay, I see one there. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I actually prepared detailed notes so it might take longer than ten minutes, but here it is. Buckle in.

Overall, I want to start by thanking the civil service for the work they put into these business plans within such a short timeframe and for the efforts that each department took to see itself in each priority even when the link is

not obvious. So, for example, how ITI might see a role for itself in promoting access to health care, I think each department really did try to see itself in each of these priorities.

I do think that these business plans are a work in progress and that there's still a disconnect between the intentions we set out in our priorities and the targets and measures we see in these business plans. In some cases, I see important pieces that are entirely missing. In other cases, the objectives are not ambitious enough and, too often, the targets are entirely process-oriented instead of being outcome-oriented. For example, the target is the number of meetings held instead of what is actually accomplished in them. So I'm going to department by department. Here I go. I'm going to start with ECE.

I appreciate that the ECE targets are, for the most part, specific and measurable; however, one gaping absence in the business plan is a goal related to basic education and literacy, and that should be linked to the economic foundations priority because it's fundamentally how we build the workforce. So I would propose we add an objective that says improve literacy and numeracy outcomes amongst JK to 12 students. And I appreciate that the department should not be telling teachers which methods they should be using in their teaching, but we need to set concrete goals and expectations around literacy. I note that there's a contradiction between a goal stated in this business plan to maintain or increase uptake in the small community employment support program when we are at the same time seeing cuts in the main estimates to this, although I'll speak more to that later.

I support the commitment to work with ITI and GNWT partners to advance plans to transition the diamond mine workforce, but ECE does not specify any targets or measures on this one, saying it first wants to consult with partners. I have to say I find it rather astonishing that at this late stage of the game, ECE still cannot define its role in terms of transitioning the diamond mine workforce. I think there's been a lot of work with partners, and I think we're ready to know what the actions are to move forward.

In terms of the Giant Mine remediation project, the proposed action is to continue to participate in the project, and yet, the logic is that that will somehow lead us to meet or exceed the employment targets even though they haven't yet been met. So I would question that logic. And similarly, ECE commits to work with the mining sector and GNWT departments to make northern hiring requirements more clear and the idea is that will lead to increases in the number of residents -- northern residents hired

and trained. I think that there's some analysis missing here in terms of what actions will actually lead to our desired outcomes instead of just continuing to do the same things we've been doing and expecting that's going to give us different results.

And finally, for ECE, the objective around access to health care is to focus on health promotion and preventative care in schools. So I agree that there's a place for this. I'm just concerned that the pendulum has swung too far away from recognizing the benefits of offering mental health counselling in schools, and we're exclusively focusing now on prevention and promotion, given that I don't see objectives mentioned at all in terms of clinical mental health counselling in schools. And I do think schools have a role in facilitating that. So now my comments on ECC.

While some of the targets laid out by ECC are meaningful, my main comments in this one are pointing out that often the measures are too process-oriented and somewhat meaningless. So the target of we're going to participate fully in the integrated resource management regime, I would argue doesn't say much. So on this note, I am begging all departments, please don't waste resources collecting or reporting on data such as number of files we post to an online portal or the number of routine meetings we hold. I don't think that's useful and so I would beg you not to collect that data. One important objective is the efficient and timely regulatory review and EA processes in decision-making, but disappointingly, once again the measures seem to be process-oriented such as the number of reviews that the department participates in, the number of processes coordinated by the department. But what we need is evidence that improvements are being made. On this, ITI's business plan is more helpful in terms of identifying goals, actually completing regulatory initiatives identified by the Mackenzie Valley operational dialogue. So these two business plans need to be dovetailed and aligned. I also see goals around completing and addressing recommendations in the 2025 Environmental Audit, which leads us to wonder what happened to the 2020 audit and why aren't we establishing goals to implement those recommendations.

In terms of supporting communities to access public land through individual parcel transfers and bulk land transfer processes, so ECC is promising to -- and I quote -- initiate all processes for land transfers. But clearly there's -- we're hinting here that there are some barriers to completing them. So I think we need to be more upfront about identifying those barriers and how we propose to address them, how the government proposes to address

them, such as if there's resources needed for land surveying or changes needed to legislation, some indication of that needs to be in the business plan so we know how we can move forward.

Okay, next, Executive and Indigenous Affairs. So a significant new role that EIA is taking on is to lead GNWT efforts to support NGOs to secure sustainable multi-year funding. That's great. The catch is that all the actions seem to involve helping NGOs get funding from other parties, third parties. Even when NGOs are delivering core social services on behalf of the GNWT, yet they're still expected to cobble together funds from the federal government or private charitable donors. And so some of the actions identified, I would argue, are not helpful in many cases. So in many cases, NGOs don't need guidance in their funding submissions to other parties. They don't need more meetings. I think they would rather, honestly, just take the money and just -- just give the money directly to NGOs instead of having all those meetings and trying to help them with funding applications to other people. I think a more useful action in this regard would be to commit to implement the recommendations of the report, strengthening the nonprofit and charitable sector external advisory committee report that was tabled near the end of the last Assembly.

Okay, and in terms of the homelessness strategy, which EIA has also taking the lead on, there's a large disconnect here. So I appreciate that EIA states its goal is to implement the strategy, that's great. But the actions that it proposes will get us there are focused on putting together five teams of staff that are colocated and setting up regional committees. So that, on its own, is not going to solve homelessness, and I think we could all admit that. But I think these business plans should instead just adopt the goals and the measures that are already laid out in the homelessness plan itself. We've already got the targets and measures provided. Just adopt them, work them in to these business plans.

And, finally, in terms of EIA, in the list of departmental highlights, I would say that the project that sticks out like a sore thumb is the one gov project in terms of its disconnect from our core priorities. I would venture a guess that no one in this room campaigned on the idea of consolidating GNWT websites. So I would strongly question the urgency and the cost of this project.

On to finance. One action that I think is missing here in terms of addressing our labour market challenges is that we need to address our extremely long timelines for hiring. I've heard

that we often lose out on good candidates because our hiring processes take much longer than anywhere else. So that's something that's tangible that we could put into that plan. Other than that, I actually think the targets and measures are well thought out for finance, and I'm encouraged that the department will advocate that all proposed initiatives undergo a Macro-Economic Policy Framework lens review. The problem I see is when the Department of Finance has other lenses it's requiring departments to consider, like the Government Renewal Initiative, the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy, that can sometimes be in conflict. And I could perhaps conclude if I was given a second chance, if others let me at a later time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to thank the Member from YK North. I'm going to continue on with round one, and then I'll come back to the Member to conclude her statement. Is there any further general comments from the Members? I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, let me just get organized here.

So, yeah, I'm going to try and keep it to ten minutes but similar to the Member for Yellowknife North, I mean, we are talking about a very large document so it's hard to go through all my comments on it in such a short period of time. But I want to speak kind of generally to it and then speak to some of the things that I would have liked to see in there and maybe some things that I would like to advocate to be put in there.

So, first of all, have we established measurable targets? I think it's a bit of a mixed bag. There are areas where they are clearly measurable. There's dates established but in many cases, targets simply say literally TBD. Or the goal is quite vague, or as, you know, articulated by the previous speaker, goals are process-oriented, number of meetings as opposed to outcomes-oriented. And so we need to look back to the smart goals principle. Are we setting goals that really lay out what we're trying to achieve?

Have we been focused? Are we focused on our priorities? When I look through this document, I'm a bit less confident about that. I will say that the process of having each department speak to the priorities shows me that the government is thinking about the fact that we need kind of an across departmental approach. And I really do appreciate that, because I know that there's been criticism in the past of siloing amongst departments, so I really do like seeing that every department has found ways to see

themselves in the priorities of the Assembly, and I think that is really positive. The question is are we being particularly focused and strategic in terms of actions that we're taking to achieve those priorities? Are we trying to do too much? I would say I'm a bit less confident about that just noting how big of a document this is.

So I'm going to go -- try and go through department by department with some things that I would like to see. And I'm not going to speak to all of it because, of course, that would make many hours, and, you know, I'd love to ask some questions, but I think we talked about -- AOC brought forward, you know, the idea of perhaps reviewing the business plans in more detail, and I think that is something that we -- we're still talking about, and I would love to see us do a kind of a more fulsome review of the business plans as part of our process because I recognize that this document is incredibly important to the work that staff are doing and to achievement of the priorities. So I really do think we need to be focusing on this and not just the numbers in the budget. So let's go to department by department.

ECE first. The grow and enhance mandate commitment. So I appreciate that the government is kind of speaking to some legislative targets, but I would like to see the government establish clear targets for polytechnic university implementation. Whether or not they're going to be investing in a Yellowknife campus, which has been stated as a need, and how the polytechnic university implementation is going to go forward, the college has been said that they need housing, so there's a lot that's not contained in here that needs to happen in order for this project to go forward. And my colleagues have been speaking to that, and I've been speaking to that in the House, the importance of focusing on that project. So I'd like to see more in the business plans on that. And I also think that we need more of a focus and targeting of JK to 12 education. We touch upon it, but I don't see a strong statement in here of where we are, what the current conditions are, where we would like to be at the end of this Assembly. So a goal of progression towards something better than what we've got now. I think we have -- we recognize that this is a critical need in terms of building up people and the workforce in the NWT, but we haven't really addressed it in the business plan. So I'm going to move on to ECC.

There's a -- one of the mandate commitments is encouraging private investment in housing. One item I'd like to see added to the business plan here is working to eliminate overlap between municipalities on land management. So not simply processing applications, but eliminating the overlap, replacing overlap with

policies about how funding is to be used to address concerns about land mismanagement, but rather than kind of managing the lands within municipal boundaries, simply setting processes -- policies and expectations and letting the communities take on that role as most other jurisdictions do.

Further to ECC, increasing investments in certainty. The business plan speaks to the 2025 Environmental Audit but doesn't speak to the current environmental audit, which I would note many recommendations from have not been implemented yet. So ITI also speaks to the Mackenzie Valley operation -- or sorry, I'm going too quickly here.

So I would like to see ECC establish targets for implementation of the 2020 Environmental Audit and prioritize actions based on implementation time, start getting them done in order. Just noting that I would expect that many of the recommendations from the 2025 audit, recognizing that many from the 2020 haven't been done, will reiterate the recommendations. So let's get moving on it now as opposed to waiting until 2025. I would also note that ITI speaks to the Mackenzie Valley operational dialogue in their business plan, but it's not spoken to in ECC's, but it's worth noting that ECC is responsible for many of the MVID recommendations. So I see a bit of a disconnect there in terms of where the department sees itself and where ITI sees itself with regards to regulatory.

I'm going to jump very quickly into MACA. I realize that it's at the end but I'm just going through my notes in the order that I made them. I would like to see MACA, similarly to ECC, work to eliminate overlap with municipalities on land management, and I'd like to see them implement a new formula funding agreement for communities. There's lots of talk about underfunding of the communities. I think implementing a new formula agreement is the fair way to address that problem. So I'd like to see that addressed.

Man, does the timer ever go quick. Moving on to EIA. Land claims, I mentioned -- I had mentioned previously, but I think that we're not being particularly ambitious here, or at least we don't appear to be. I realize that they need to work with partners and that there's more to item than the GNWT, and they don't stand alone on this. But I just want to emphasize the importance of land claim settlement to the First Nations involved, to our territory, and I want to see the department prioritize getting these claims done as quickly as they can and coming to the table to the parties saying, what do we need to do to get these claims done, what do

you need from us, let's get this done, as opposed to dragging it out indefinitely.

Similar to my -- the Member previous to me beat me to it, but I would also like to see an implementation plan timeline and costing for implementation of strengthening the nonprofit and charitable sector report. And I would like to see us commit to and fund NGOs with core funding. And I want to speak to this one a little bit, just that I think often in the past, we've seen GNWT's answer to things tends to be, what can we do, what can the GNWT do to solve this problem. And it tends to result in the staff growing. We've seen the government grow at a virtually exponential rate over the past number of years. And I don't think that we're thinking about the fact that we need to be thinking about what the government can do in terms of funding others to help them grow their sectors themselves as opposed to the government doing it for them and taking the funding that could be going to them and using it for staff. So that's a shift in the way that we do business, and I know that the mandate speaks to shifting the way we do business. I think that's a key way. I could speak to that quite a bit more, but I don't have the time.

The health department, I'm going to try and be quick. I've got a huge number of notes here. But I will just say with health, I'm quite happy with the business plan in this case. I like that they're focusing on primary care. The one glaring omission that I don't see in here is the issue of management and human resources at NTHSSA. There's been lots of talk, agency nurses, the issues that nurses are facing on the front lines. I'm not going to reiterate them here, but I don't see a concerted plan in these business plans to address these issues. And we've been hearing from frontline health professionals for years now that they are approaching a breaking point. They may feel that they're at the breaking point. We really need to address this problem head on.

Moving on to ITI. I appreciate that they are talking about laying out an economic vision. What is missing right now is the Ws of that - the who, what, where, and why, what the timeline is for it. I would like to see us establish a timeline and say when it's going to happen because it relates so closely to all the work that we're doing, and I think that having a vision is really key. I note that I'm out of time, Mr. Chair. So I'm going to stop there and hopefully have a second opportunity to finish up my comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Before I go to the next Speaker, I just want to make a little comment here.

Members, I just wanted to remind everybody to wait for their light to come on and before speaking, and when you're done, if you could just say thank you as well so that it will give a much clearer picture to our technical staff and for people watching as well.

I'm going to continue on. Is there any other Members that want to make general comments? Okay, I don't see anybody else. I'm going to go back to the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the second stab at this.

So in wrapping up my statements on the Department of Finance, I think it's really important that we put a macroeconomic policy lens on our decisions. What I was trying to say is that the Department of Finance also is asking departments to put a fiscal sustainability lens on things. And some of that can be in conflict in that if I was asked, I could either consider a rigorous macroeconomic policy framework or just find a few things to cut that will be noticed by the least number of people, I would definitely choose the second option.

But moving on to health and social services. There are a lot of important actions in here that I support. In particular, I appreciate the commitment to clarify and redefine roles and responsibilities for Health and Social Services corporate support and program and service delivery between the department and the health authorities. That's a really important step. I would note that the actions listed under recruitment and retention strategies mostly focus on recruitment. Retention still seems to be this black box. So that's where the health care task force that I mentioned yesterday could fit in nicely.

Also, in accordance with another of the NWT Medical Association's recommendations in that March 1st letter that I tabled today, the business plan should include the objective of establishing a health care workforce plan. So that would build on the physician workforce plan that was completed in 2020 but that has not actually been implemented yet.

To put things in perspective, we currently have 310 unfunded positions within NTHSSA and 52 unfunded positions within the TCSA. And that's not certainly the fault of the health authorities because we don't have a clear idea if we're allocating funds for the services we want or we need to provide, whether our staffing models actually meet those needs, and where medical travel would be cost effective and where it would be better to provide those services locally. That is a real in-depth analysis that I'm

not sure anyone within the health authorities have had the time or resources to do. And I think it's important we set ourselves on that path.

On to ITI, so in contrast to the macroeconomic policy framework being proposed by finance, I see the ITI business plan committing to basically increase the number of people and organizations funded in every sector imaginable when you look at the targets and measures. And yet we're not increasing the funding pots. So that leads me to conclude that we're proposing to just reduce funding amounts and sprinkle it around more thinly to more people and businesses and organizations. To me, that doesn't seem wise or sound according to economic principles. And I'm not sure that we always want to simply increase the number of, for example, artists or filmmakers that we're funding. I would argue that we need to increase the value of the income, the employment, and look at increasing value as opposed to just the number of people we're funding.

And finally, with ITI, again, we have a goal of a certain number of lower emission infrastructure projects or climate resilient projects in NWT parks. They picked a number of ten. So, I, again, would focus on the value for investment GHG reductions, not simply on the number of projects.

Moving on to infrastructure. My first main point here is that I don't think we can continue to advance all three of our major infrastructure projects that we've had on the books for a long time. We just need to pick one. It just hasn't worked to keep our fingers in all these pies and kind of play coy with the federal government on stating which one's our favorite. I think we need to come up with clear criteria on how we're going to evaluate what's most important and urgent based on this Assembly's priorities and just pick one. Sound simple? And no, it's not.

The business plan for infrastructure is strangely very silent on energy policy, which worries me, and specifically the role of the GNWT in directing energy with clear energy policies that will lead us through an energy transition to keep up with the rest of the world. I do appreciate that there's a policy initiative to issue some policy direction to the Public Utilities Board. So that's a good step. But we also need to extend policy direction to NT Energy and NTPC.

I would note that the renewed energy strategy is due to be released by the fourth quarter of 2025-2026. I would argue we need it sooner. We've already had consultation complete and a draft What We Heard document. I think we need to move forward on some of the recommendations in there, including

developing a short, medium, and long-term roadmap for our electricity system.

Justice. Just a few comments here. I note that the measures -- so despite the fact that our mandate really emphasizes crime prevention and addressing social issues and addictions and things that would lead to crime, the measures and targets we've got in this business plan focus heavily on RCMP-related actions. So I don't see much that's going towards the crime prevention and social issues. So I think we need to add an action that basically states that in cooperation with law enforcement officials, we're going to build better, on-the-ground outreach services and integrate teams of social and health support workers to ensure that noncriminal social issues are addressed appropriately.

And I do understand from numerous statements by the Premier that that is his intention as to the approach that he wants to take. So let's just state it straight out in the business plans and hold ourselves accountable to it.

MACA. So there's some really weak targets in here. For example, in terms of supporting communities in developing or updating emergency plans, the measure is how many MACA is able to contact. So we need to strengthen the accountability in terms of making sure that our communities have emergency plans in place. And I think we need to rethink the value of -- I think the go-to move in MACA is to run workshops for communities, and that's not always the most helpful thing. I think we need to expand our toolbox there.

Okay, finally, I'm going to move on to housing, the last department. I have to say I very much appreciate the new transitional housing program for those who are returning from, say, addictions programs, so aftercare. That's a really important step. I think we also need to set some goals and targets around other kinds of supportive living facilities, including those that are focused on harm reduction, that are getting people off the street, and stabilizing them. I don't see mention right now in our plan, and I think that's a really important aspect for this Assembly.

I notice one of the goals is around -- talking about investing in Housing NWT infrastructure, including new construction and repairs, and it's mentioned that the goal is to spend \$120 million over four years, but there's no context provided in here in terms of what are we actually trying to accomplish with that money, what are the goals of what's going to -- what we're going to be left with at the end of this Assembly. And it's also not clear where this money is coming from.

So I would like that spelled out more in the business plans.

I actually really appreciated this section under housing that talks about the risks in terms of the challenges that are faced in accomplishing the goals under this business plan. And it articulates those risks really well. But there's not much in the way of identifying solutions or what we're going to do to confront those risks. So that stood out to me. And it's okay, but I think we need to be honest about this is going to be really challenging and we need to lay out some kind of path on how we're going to start identifying solutions or ways to mitigate those risks.

So that brings me to the end before the end of the time. I appreciate your patience. I really just wanted to get all this out now before we go line by line into the main estimates. But I very much appreciate you listening. And I know this is not a voteable item, but I hope this has been useful and that we can move forward with the discussions in a productive way. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, the Member from Yellowknife North. I'm going to go to the second round of questions, I'm going to I believe Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your indulgence in allowing us an extra kind of -- to finish up our statements. I will try to be quick like I was yesterday.

So I left off on ITI and speaking to the economic vision. And just a few thoughts on that. I think I would like to see a timeline. I'd like to see that timeline be short and towards the beginning of this Assembly as opposed to toward the end. If we need to develop a vision, if we need to be implementing a vision, I want us to be implementing that vision, you know, today, and if not today, as quickly as possible, because I think if we're halfway through our term by the time we get a vision in order, it's not going to help us be strategic in our decision-making.

I also want to note about that, like, being strategic in our decision-making, if the vision that comes back is simply that we're going to do everything, I think that we haven't established a vision. The point of the vision is that we're going to have to be focused. We're going to have to make some decisions about what we are and are not doing, the direction that we're taking this territory, and I would really hope that that -- those decisions are based on evidence that we've collected and information that we use to make informed decisions about what's going to work, that we have evidence to support that.

And I think, again, I'm just going to note in this department, a lot of the measurables in here aren't outcome-based. Again, it's numbers of meetings held. This doesn't really tell us what we're achieving. It tells us what we're doing. But you could hold a lot of meetings and not achieve anything in any of them, so what are we looking to achieve in the meetings? Again, there's also kind of speaking in the business plan to supporting a diverse range of economic activities. But, again, what do we mean by this? I think that we need to be targeted and specific. There's some activities that certainly have more value than others. If we simply support everything, we're not really being strategic in the money that we're investing, we're not being strategic in this the directions that we're going.

Specifically in support for arts, again, I'd like to see us -- and this comment stands for the way that we fund NGOs also, but I want to speak to the arts specifically on this. I'd like to see us shift to more of an ecosystem-based approach to our thinking on how we're funding the arts. Recognizing that the number of artists or organizations funded doesn't actually tell us anything about the health of the sector, return on investment that we're getting. And recognition that arts is about culture also. It's not just about kind of growing industry, but that in some cases successful arts organizations are able to leverage a lot of federal funding. And that's not necessarily based on sales. It's based on the activity and the cultural heritage that they're developing. So I think we need to take a bit of a more holistic view of the arts and just note that -- you know, actually, I'm going to save my comments for a Member's statement about the ecosystem approach. But just noting that core funding for organizations is how we build up sectors. If we're just funding individual artists all over the place, we don't necessarily build the sector in a way that makes it sustainable and self-sustaining and give us that multiplier effect of the way funding can be -- the return on investment can be increased.

I'll share some short comments on Infrastructure's business plan. As the previous Speaker mentioned, we're being urged to pick a project. I think this is a wider discussion and -- but bottom line, I just want to note that there is a big disconnect between what we say we're planning to do and what we have the fiscal capacity to implement, and I feel like I'm, of course, preaching to the choir here. I mean, we've been -- the government's been telling us this since pretty much day one. But have we really stepped back and looked at some of these projects strategically and the work that Infrastructure is doing and said, you know, we're going to be strategic and focused about what we're doing, or, again, are we kind of

trying to keep a number of things moving. I think that is a conversation that we have to have. I think also it's worth noting that a lot of these projects kind of have a very long timeline ahead of them. And we have mines -- you know, the closure of mines is coming in less than two years. I mean, we -- the downturn in the economy is coming quickly, and I think it's fair to say that none of the projects that are currently in the hopper are things that are going to immediately stimulate activity in the way that I think is being hoped that these infrastructure investments will make. So I think that we need to be kind of looking in a strategic way at that also. I mean, are we maybe trying to do things that are too big? Do we need to be focusing on the smaller pieces? And, again, as I noted yesterday, the foundation of the economy, building the foundation to ensure that we are taking the action to move forward in a positive way.

I'm going to move to Justice. Give me a second here. So Justice has been an interesting one for me to review. And I think there was some comments made today actually in the House when I was asking about this at the in-camera meeting, but I'll just refer to the House comments.

So we're establishing -- you know, reestablishing this territorial crime reduction unit. And you know, the Premier was saying today that we have kind of a high police-to-resident ratio, and I would just note that the numbers are showing an increase in crime despite that. And so what we seeing saying ourselves is that the approach that we are laying out here appears to not be working. And I think that we need to think about that a little bit. In some cases, you know, I'm just hoping that we're using an evidence-based approach to lay out our plans and that we are ensuring that we're putting the resources in the right place to get the results that we're looking for.

I just need to switch back to my other notes here.

Okay, and I'll share some short comments on housing, very high level. Looking at the housing business plan, I think when I first looked at this -- and this is getting a bit into budget conversation, and so I'll save my budget comments. But I was looking at it and thinking, okay, we said that we were prioritizing housing. It's a bit difficult to see in this budget. And I understand that looking at the business plan that the needs assessment is a key step towards obtaining federal funding for a plan. So I would like to see us, as a follow-up to the needs assessment, develop a long-term plan, developed in coordination with partners, and

considering the federal funding that we can access, and would like that to become, yeah, the follow-up from the needs assessment. So I want to see us long-term planning. And, again, as opposed to kind of speaking to process in the business plan, what is the outcome that we're trying to achieve. We've got a needs assessment. That's telling us what is needed. And so obviously I'm hoping that the outcome becomes attached to the need that's identified in that, that that becomes the basis for our plan, and then we move forward in figuring out how we're going to fund it.

And another comment on housing, you know, I made a statement about this in the House in the last session -- or the last sitting of the session and will just say it again here. We are simply not funding operations and maintenance adequately to maintain our stock. And I think knowing that, we absolutely need to increase this item. I think if the Assembly wants to make good on our priority putting housing at the top of the list, this has to be on our radar. And we have to acknowledge that if we're not maintaining what we have, we're going to have an even bigger problem with -- how am I putting it? The needs assessment will end up kind of coming back on itself in the sense that we've identified what we need, but things are falling off on the back end. So we need to be maintaining what we have, building new to fill the gaps that we haven't filled, and hopefully holistically moving forward with our housing plan.

So I'll leave my comments at that for now, Mr. Chair, on the business plans, and look forward to getting into the budget. And just to close, as I've said, I do hope that we, you know, create a process and find a time to dig into these with a bit more detail, being able to ask Ministers and departments questions about them and get through them because, know, it's a big document, and it's an important document, and I think taking a close look at this is a change that I'd love to see us implement, and I think it help us with effectiveness significantly. So I do hope that we can move forward in that way in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. That was the first second round. I want to thank the committee for your general comments. I'm going to move the -- I'm going to go to the MLA for Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 4-20(1):
REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 94-
20(1): 2024-2028 BUSINESS PLANS, TO
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that the Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 Business Plans, be referred to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight for further review. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): The motion's been called. You're moving the motion? I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I did want to speak to this because it is perhaps a new practice -- well, it is a new practice. So this is the first time the business plan's been tabled, and given the importance as kind of a guiding document for this Assembly, I think there is a need to do a more thorough review of the context of them.

My comments earlier today were more about the actual principle of the document and the technique around it rather than the contents. So I for one would like to do a more in-depth dive into what the government is committing to over the next four years, and I don't think we have -- we don't have the time to do that today. This format is -- I don't think this is the right format to achieve that. I do think the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is an excellent place to do that. And I hope that the review of these plans will be in public and available to the public to see and hear their MLAs speak to what those commitments are, and also to have witnesses from the departments come forward and explain the decisions that were made. We've had great commentary from colleagues about those specific choices that were made and perhaps how they can be improved. And I think the best way to do that is by referring this to committee. It's going to be more work for us, but I think we're up to the task. So I do support this, and I thank the chair of the standing committee for bringing it forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? Oh, sorry, sorry about that. I'm going to go to the Member from the Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair, my apologies. I think I just wasn't fast enough getting my hand up. Mr. Chair, just a very brief comment. Certainly, I know I'll just

say for my own departments, I did find the comments today very helpful and wanted to encourage, you know, a couple of examples, again, drawing only really from my own departments, but it was just to say when I have my other hat on and not as Member for Yellowknife South, but it is a sincere hope that the business plans can be used in the main estimates reviews that we're about to go through. Having four-year business plans was something new only as of the last Assembly, and tying them to the same timing as main estimates is new as of this process. So there are some growing pains in that process. It was something that I can say directors of policy and finance from across departments were very glad to see, certainly streamlines their work, rather than spreading it across the year but, more importantly, the main estimates provides the funding through which the departments do all of the things in the business plans, including the opening sections. So not every activity of every single public servant necessarily finds itself in the mandate document of the government, but every public servant is contributing to the core functioning of every department. And that is included in the opening sections of everyone's business plans, and it's often reflected throughout some of the background work that may be going into contributing to the mandate activities that are in the business plan.

So, for example, again, I'll rely only on finance, to the extent that there's questions around what kinds of recruitment activities there are, there is a section in main estimates for human resources, which then would be an opportunity to speak to what is happening in the human resources area and what they're doing to contribute to the mandate, what they're doing to contribute to retention of health care workers, for example.

In Infrastructure, I know there was mention specifically on the energy strategy. When the main estimates document comes forward, the energy and strategic infrastructure division has funding there, and it may well be an opportunity to ask what they're doing with their funding to advance that work and to see that it gets done quickly.

So throughout there was an opportunity here in saying that focusing on the business plans and not just the numbers in the budget, Mr. Chair, I hardly agree and, again, acknowledging this is the first time we've done it this way and acknowledging it's still a new Assembly, I sincerely hope that I -- I hope I'm not overstepping my speaking for my colleagues on this side, but I think we all want to speak to the business plans in conjunction with the, right now, proposed \$2.2 billion associated with

achieving all of the work in those business plans. So I hope we find a way that we can integrate that and also, of course, we'll look forward to what may come of committee's motion at accountability and oversight. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you to the Member from Yellowknife South. To the motion. Any other Members?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question's been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion's carried. Tabled Document 94-20(1) will be referred to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight for further review.

---Carried

Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 94-20(1), 2024-2028 Business Plan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we have concluded consideration on Tabled Document 94-20(1). Thank you. I'm going to pass the mic to Inuvik Boot Lake. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: I now move that the chair rise and report progress.

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 94-20(1) and would like to report progress and motion carried that the consideration of Tabled Document 94-20(1) is concluded. And, Mr. Speaker, I move the report of the Committee of the Whole to be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Do I have a seconder? Member from Great Slave. Thank you. All those in favour? Opposed? No opposed. Abstentions? Motion passed.

---Carried

Reports of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

„ **Orders of the Day**

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

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 4 of 7
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. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season
 - Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation
 - Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a Day Child Care in the NWT

- Minister's Statement 24-20(1): Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention
- Tabled Document 93-20(1): 2024-2025 Main Estimates

21. Report of the Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Colleagues, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 29th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

