



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

2nd Session

Day 82

19th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 23, 2021

Pages 2951-2988

The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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(Thebacha)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, November 23, 2021****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Hon. Frederick Blake Jr., Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Ms. Weyallon-Armstrong

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Colleagues, before we continue with orders of the day, I will be issuing rulings on two matters. First, I will be delivering my ruling on the point of order raised by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh yesterday. After that, I will issue my ruling on the point of privilege raised by the Member for Thebacha.

Thank you, Members, I will now provide my ruling on point of order raised by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member rose on the point of privilege about comments made by the Member for Frame Lake during debate on the Member for Thebacha's point of privilege. I clarified at that time that it would be more appropriate for the Member to rise on the point of order, which he agreed to do, citing Rule 24(h): A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if the Member makes allegations against another Member, a House officer, a witness, or a member of the public.

On page 13 of the unedited Hansard, the Member stated, "Just going back to what I was saying, the Member for Kam Lake mentioned my lawyer, and he can't be here to defend himself." It should be Member for Frame Lake. So I did ask that he retract what he said about that. I assume he was referring to the Member for Frame Lake here.

During debate on the point of privilege raised by the Thebacha, the Member for Frame Lake quoted at length the comments made the Member's legal counsel at a November 18th news conference that was called by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh at the Legislative Assembly. Rather than repeat the Member for Frame Lake's full statement during the debate of the point of privilege, I will point out the following excerpts from page 5 of unedited Hansard.

"Mr. Speaker, I'm all for freedom of speech but I view these words by the legal counsel for the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh as an attempt to intimidate me in my role as a Member that must make a decision on the report and recommendation of the sole adjudicator.

While it is possible that these words could be interpreted as a cautionary note with respect to the seriousness of the issues before the House, I did not take these words in that vein. The overall thrust of the news conference and the comments made by the Member and his legal counsel were denigrating and dismissive of a process for addressing the conduct of Members, which this House has established as an appropriate process. I viewed this news conference as a clear attempt to intimidate me and other Members as we embark on the difficult journey of considering the sole adjudicator's report."

I provided the Member for Frame Lake an opportunity to explain his remarks pursuant to Rule 25(4). In doing so, the Member provided the following explanation for his comments, taken from page 13 of the unedited Hansard, "All I did was simply quote comments that his legal counsel made at a news conference. I should be able to reference comments made from someone outside this Assembly."

Members, Rule 24(h) does not say we cannot make reference to anyone who is not a Member of this place. We do that all the time. The rule states that we cannot make allegations against another Member, our staff, a witness, or a member of the public.

I see no issue with the Member for Frame Lake making reference to public comments and statements made by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh or his legal counsel. The comments were made in a very public and open forum, and reported by many news outlets. They were specifically directed at the Members of this House.

The Member for Frame Lake did not make allegations against the Member's legal counsel, but rather said how the comments made him feel. While it may have been better for the Member to have raised a separate point of privilege regarding the words of legal counsel, it is at least understandable why he combined them with his other comments. The privileges of Members can be infringed upon by people outside of this House. A point of privilege is the proper place to raise these concerns and there is no point of order.

Now on the point of privilege.

On November 22, 2021, the Member for Thebacha raised a point of privilege alleging that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh had made threats or otherwise intimidated her and other Members.

It was a very robust debate that included participation by the Members for Yellowknife North, Frame Lake, Range Lake, Yellowknife South, Yellowknife Centre, Hay River South, Kam Lake, Hay River North, Inuvik Twin Lakes, Inuvik Boot Lake and the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

As Speaker, I am to determine whether the point of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether there is a prima facie point of privilege; in other words, at first glance the matter appears to be a breach of privilege and warrants immediate consideration by the Assembly.

Those are the Speaker's responsibilities under Rule 20(4) when a question of privilege is raised.

On the first point as to whether it was raised at the earliest opportunity, I find that it was. The events that the Member for Thebacha and other Members referred to all occurred after the Assembly adjourned on June 4th, 2021. Monday, November 22nd, 2021, was the first day that the Assembly sat since then. Accordingly, the point of privilege was raised at the earliest opportunity.

On the second requirement, the Speaker's role is to determine if there is a prima facie question of privilege. Because this is a very serious matter, I want to explain the Speaker's role here.

In House of Commons, Procedure and Practice 3rd Edition, at page 147, the authors quote a former clerk who described the responsibility of a Speaker at this stage as "the Speaker's role ought to be explained, and it is that the issue put before the Speaker is not finding a fact. It is simply whether on first impression the issue that is before the House warrants priority consideration over all other matters, all other orders of the day that are before the House.

In raising her point of privilege, the Member for Thebacha referred to a Facebook message sent to Caucus by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. She read part of it, and the Member for Frame Lake filled in the rest of the statement which reads: "I just want to say F you for making my loved ones cry. You squeezed my heart. Whoever backed this, I'm coming for you." I have edited the profanity in the message.

This message was sent on October 3, 2021, by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh - the day before the inquiry by the sole adjudicator was to commence.

When examining the rules and authorities, it is clear that intimidating, threatening, or molesting Members can give rise to a breach of privilege. As was pointed

out during the debate, Rule 20(1)(v) of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Assembly states, in part, that "The privileges of Members include: (v) freedom from obstruction and intimidation in relation to their duties as elected representatives."

Rule 20(1)(l) addresses this subject when it states "The privileges of this House include: (l) the power to maintain order and to discipline for breaches of privilege and for contempt of the House. Contempt of the House may include disobedience to its orders, misconduct before it, affronts against its dignity and authority, and any act or omission which impedes or obstructs the House or its Members in the performance of their duties. Technically, to intimidate, threaten, or otherwise obstruct a Member may be considered a contempt of the Assembly.

In House of Commons Procedure and Practice 3rd edition, the authors say, at page 108, that while such actions are technically contempts since these matters relate so closely to the right of the House, to the services of its Members, they are often considered to be breaches of privilege. It doesn't really matter how it is characterized. If the Speaker finds a prima facie question of privilege, it is treated the same way whether it is a contempt or a point of privilege.

In this case, we have heard that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh made threats to Members of Caucus. Eleven Members stood in this Assembly yesterday on the point of privilege. Most said they felt threatened or intimidated. Some indicated they were fearful because of the actions of the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. I was especially struck by the comments from the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes who expressed very real fear about travelling to Yellowknife or participating in committee proceedings.

I find that there is a threat to Members as it related to their duties as Members. Sending a message to Caucus, a body composed of elected Members, affirms this view. Furthermore, the message was sent the day before the hearings of the sole adjudicator began into the complaint against the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

The sole adjudicator's role is set out in the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, but he is like the Integrity Commissioner as an officer of the Assembly and covered by privilege. The adjudicator's role is to perform duties for Members.

It is a necessity in our democratic system that Members be able to exercise their freedom of speech without fear of intimidation or threats. This Assembly must be a safe space for all. Certainly, Members may be criticized for what they say but that is part of our democratic system. Threatening or intimidating Members goes well beyond free speech.

Also, there were allegations that the Member threatened officers of the Assembly. These officials have no voice in this Assembly.

The allegation is that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh said something to the effect that he was coming for a deputy clerk of the Assembly. The second allegation is that the same Member referred to cutting the head or neck off a snake in reference to an officer of the Assembly.

In his book of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada 2nd edition, Joseph Maingot says, at page 232, "Officers of the House of Commons, while in the execution of their duties, receive the protection of the House in the event they are interfered with, molested, intimidated, or assaulted. It is as much a prima facie point of privilege to threaten or intimidate an officer of the Assembly as it is a Member.

Finally, I would point out that none of the Members who spoke denied that threats had been made. Even the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh did not deny that he made the statements that led to this point of privilege. He apologized, but it wasn't clear what exactly he was apologizing for. In this Assembly, an apology doesn't end the matter on a point of privilege.

Accordingly, I find that there is a prima facie question of privilege and, as I said earlier, it was raised at the first opportunity.

Any Member can now propose a motion under Rule 20(5) or can give notice of a motion calling upon the Assembly to take action on the matter or referring the matter to a committee of the Assembly no later than the end of sitting day tomorrow. Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

Motions

MOTION 42-19(2):
DECLARATION OF VACANT SEAT FOR TU
NEDHE-WIILIDEH,
CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My motion is:

WHEREAS the Speaker has ruled a prima facie matter of privilege exists in reference to the point of privilege I raised on November the 22nd, 2021;

AND WHEREAS in his disposition report, the sole adjudicator has recommended that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh's seat be vacated and whereas the disposition report of the sole adjudicator was laid before the Legislative Assembly by the Speaker at the first opportunity in accordance with section 106(4) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that in order to protect the dignity, integrity, and efficient functioning of the Legislative Assembly which has been undermined by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh on unacceptable pattern of intimidation and threatening behaviour towards other Members and Assembly personnel and by his actions as described in the sole adjudicator's disposition report as tabled in this Assembly on November 22nd, 2021, the Assembly order that.

(a) the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh be expelled as a Member and his seat be declared vacant; and,

(b) the Speaker informed the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories of the vacancy in that constituency immediately following the adoption of this motion.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the mover of this motion to expel the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh from the Legislative Assembly. I do not move this motion lightly. Expulsion is the most serious sanction this Assembly can impose to discipline a Member. In this case, it is the only appropriate sanction for the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh who has been found to have been committed a grievous breach of our code of conduct and who has breached the privileges of other Members and of the Legislative Assembly as a whole.

This misconduct is not limited to a single incident. As I described in my November 22nd, 2021 point of privilege, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh has engaged in a pattern of intimidating, threatening and insulting behaviour directed at Members and staff of the Assembly, as well as at the sole adjudicator and others involved in the inquiry into the Members breaches of the code of conduct.

The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh has also been found, after a lengthy public hearing in which he was represented by legal counsel, to have committed a serious breach of the code of conduct by leaving his place of isolation before the end of the period set out by the Chief Public Health Officer and by misleading the public about these actions. These findings, and the evidence that supports them, are set out in great detail in the sole adjudicator's report which was tabled in this House on November 22nd, 2021. These many incidents must be understood as a pattern of toxic behaviour. The theme connected to these incidents is a profound disdain and disregard for the rule of law for Members and staff of the Legislative Assembly and for the institutions by

which we govern ourselves in the Northwest Territories.

The sole adjudicator's report contains many examples of the Member's disdain for the rules we must all follow. They extend far beyond specific allegations that gave rise to the code of conduct complaint. They also include unacceptable behaviour during the inquiry itself such as insulting and intimidating participants and attempting to delay and obstruct the inquiry process.

This pattern also extends to the sole adjudicator's findings that the Member committed serious breaches of the code of conduct.

The sole adjudicator found at paragraph 248 of the report that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh's "actions in misleading the public regarding his compliance with a self-isolation order are unethical and highly inappropriate as they violate the public trust reposed in him".

The sole adjudicator found that the Member knowingly made a number of false and misleading statements including being dishonest with public health officials about his whereabouts during his self-isolation period. Although the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh apologized for attending the legislature when he was required to be self-isolating on April the 17th, 2021, the sole adjudicator found that this was not a real apology as the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh "minimized his actions and failed to take responsibility for the breach."

The sole adjudicator also noted that this apology came for the first time on the second last day of the hearing, leading him to conclude that this apology was made to win sympathy and was not in good faith.

The sole adjudicator found that in breaching the mandatory self-isolation period and misleading the public about his compliance, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh "has not performed his duties of office in such a manner as to maintain public confidence and trust in his integrity."

This failure of integrity also arises in the incidents that I raised in my point of privilege. These include threats the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh made against Members and Assembly staff in August and October of this year. They also include the Member's misconduct towards those involved in the code of conduct inquiry, including the sole adjudicator himself, by attempting to obstruct and delay the proceedings and insulting and intimidating participants in that process. In each of these incidents, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh undermined the effectiveness, efficiency, and dignity of our institutions of governance, including the very instruments by which Members hold each other accountable in order to ensure the dignity of our

offices and of the Assembly as a whole is maintained.

These incidents continue as recently as last Thursday, November the 18th. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh gave a press conference in this very building at which he referred to the inquiry was a colossal waste of time, resources, and taxpayers money. He also stated that he was convinced the result of the inquiry was determined before it even started. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh characterized the sole adjudicator's recommendation that his seat be vacant as just a lame attempt to permit other Members to unseat him. This continued attack on the integrity of the inquiry must also be understood as an attack on the code of conduct that the inquiry was tasked with applying. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh has engaged in a sustained campaign to undermine the proper adjudication of the code of conduct complaint that triggered this inquiry which was made at the direction of Caucus. It demonstrates that instead of taking responsibility for his actions, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh prefers to attack the institutions that he perceives as a threat to him.

This has gone on long enough and cannot be tolerated any longer. The only suitable sanction for this behaviour is that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh be expelled from the Assembly. He has been given opportunities to explain his behaviour, both confidentiality in Caucus meetings and publicly through the inquiry process. The Member of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh has not taken these opportunities to apologize or explain. Instead, he has continued to use offensive conduct all while minimizing and making excuses for his behaviour.

His behaviour has not changed. And I have not seen any indication that it will change or stop. This behaviour cannot be permitted to continue. It betrays the trust and confidence the public places in all of us and brings the integrity of the Member's office and the Legislative Assembly as a whole into disrepute. It is a very serious breach of privilege and it requires the most serious sanction available to this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Member for Thebacha for raising a point of privilege yesterday and now this motion to deal with a remedy and the disposition report of the sole adjudicator. This is a very serious matter, and I would much rather devote attention to my constituents in making a better Northwest Territories, but we must protect the integrity of this institution and our staff.

I chaired the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures in the 18th Assembly that developed a new, more rigorous and legally binding code of conduct. This was done at the direction of the House, and many of our constituents. The code was also incorporated into the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act amendments that included changes to modify the oath sworn by Members to include specific obligations, clarify the conflict of interest regime in respect of Members and former Members, require the adoption of the Legislative Assembly of a code of conduct that established standards for the conduct of Members, require Members to comply with any code of conduct adopted, and create the office of the Integrity Commissioner to carry out the duties of the former Conflict of Interest Commissioner as well as similar duties in relation to the code of conduct and hear complaints from many members of the public or MLAs.

The rules and procedures committee also reviewed and recommended changes to the Elections and Plebiscites Act that were used in the first time in the 2019 general election, including the following:

Section 80, a nomination paper for the nomination of a person to be a candidate must.

(a) be in the approved form which must include a copy of the code of conduct adopted under section 74.1 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act and information respecting the conflict of interests requirements under part 3 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act as they relate to a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

(b) contain a declaration that the person being nominated has reviewed the following information that shall be made available by the chief electoral officer.

(i) the code of conduct adopted under section 74 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

(ii) information respecting the conflict of interest requirements under part 3 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act as they relate to a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, what all that means is that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh knew about the code of conduct before he became a candidate in the last election and declared that he had reviewed it and the conflict of interest requirements for MLAs. After his election, he signed an oath of office that states "I hereby affirm, subscribe to, and agree to follow the code of conduct adopted by the Legislative Assembly."

A sole adjudicator has now conducted a public inquiry into an alleged code of conduct by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh and has

recommended to the House that the Member have his seat declared vacant or, in plain language, be expelled or removed as an MLA.

I personally watched the entire public hearing from start to finish. I fully accept the report of the sole adjudicator and his recommendation. I thank the sole adjudicator and all those who assisted or participated in that thorough and fair process.

I do wish to speak to comments that have been made about whether the House has the authority to discipline its Members and whether that authority should be modified in some way through so-called recall legislation.

It is commonly accepted in all Westminster-style parliamentary democracies, including this House, that Members retain the ability and duty to discipline themselves. The House of Commons has expelled Members on four occasions: Louis Riel in 1874 and again in 1875 when he was re-elected. For the record, Mr. Riel is one of my personal heroes. In 1891, Thomas McGreevy was accused of corrupt practices and was found guilty of contempt of the House and expelled. In 1947, Fred Rose was convicted of violating the Official Secrets Act and was sentenced to serve six years in prison so the House declared his seat vacant. There's also been a number of other cases where disciplinary actions were started, including expulsion, but the Member in question resigned. Expulsion is obviously not common but a necessary remedy. According to the House of Commons Procedure and Practice 3rd edition, "the purpose of expulsion is not so much disciplinary as remedial. Not so much to punish Members as to rid the House of persons who are unfit for membership." I believe this is the case for the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh based on the issues I and others raised yesterday during the debate on the point of privilege and also what the sole adjudicator has told us.

On the issue of whether recall is a better or more appropriate way for discipline of Members, recall legislation was examined during this Assembly by the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures which I chaired at that point and on which the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh serves. I would like to quote one section of the committee report on recall legislation as tabled in this House on February 23, 2021. "Both the chief electoral officer and Mr. Wasylciw recommended consideration be given to recall legislation. British Columbia is the only Canadian jurisdiction with recall legislation and since 1995 there has been only one petition with enough signatures to trigger a recall election. The MLA in question resigned prior to this happening. BC requires 40 percent of eligible voters in the electoral district to sign recall petition. Alberta indicated it would introduce recall legislation but it has not done so yet. The committee notes that the purpose of

recall legislation is not to overturn the results of an election because one candidate lost but to address concerns about an elected Member's conduct. The committee points to the new code of conduct which empowers residents to raise concerns with the Integrity Commissioner if a Member is not seen as doing his or her job, has behaved in a way that does not uphold the integrity of the House, or if the Member is in a conflict of interest.

The Integrity Commissioner has the power to investigate and convene an inquiry under a sole adjudicator if the concern warrants it. The sole adjudicator can recommend that a Member be removed from office. Through the broad scope, the Integrity Commissioner has to start an investigation, the committee feels this is a more prudent use of public funds to deal with a concern around a Member's conduct than a costly and time-consuming recall election and subsequent by-election.

The committee notes that information pertaining to the code of conduct must be provided to all candidates while the CEO has recommended that her office should not be required to circulate this information. The committee believes the CEO is the best person as she is responsible for providing other documents with respect to candidates as part of the nomination process," Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any work on or consideration of recall legislation in this House. I would not support such a bill if it came forward given our robust and thorough code of conduct system now in place. I recognize and knowledge this entire situation has been very difficult on all of us, including the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh and his family, our staff, and this institution. We must act in a matter that protects our staff and begins to rebuild public confidence in consensus government. I very much regret that it has come to this point. Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting the motion. Mahsi.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, as I stand here as a Member of the 19th Legislative Assembly, I have to speak to a motion that I seconded and that I support to remove another Member. I do this with great sadness. When we were elected here in this House and signed in front of our friends and our family and the people of the Northwest Territories, the oath of office and each of us affirmed and subscribed and agreed to follow the code of conduct adopted by the Legislative Assembly. A code of conduct that was established, as my colleague had given the history of it, by the 18th Assembly on August 21st, 2019 it was tabled in this House, days before we were elected, which had not been updated since the 14th Legislative Assembly. This code of conduct was

created to ensure that NWT legislators kept themselves to the highest standard, upheld the integrity of this institution. What I have felt in this time that we've been going through a lot of this, the Integrity Commissioner over the last couple of years, the threats on staff, the threats against Members, this is not upholding the integrity of this institution and as a Member.

The first point I would like to make of this point of privilege is the threat that was made to all Members on October 3rd, 2021, six days before I was to arrive to Yellowknife for session.

As an Indigenous female, the stats, as my other colleague had stated, of violence are stacked against me especially when I live and I come from the Northwest Territories. I never once did think that I would be threatened in this House where we as legislators are working on one of our priorities to make sure that the NWT is a safer place for Northwest Territories, for women.

As a Member of this Legislative Assembly, I never thought I would be threatened in my job. I thought, yes, I would debate. Debate would get heated. At the end of the debate, take some time. I've done this with many colleagues in the room, you know, but never once has it come to a threat. I spoke in this House yesterday, and I am on the record and I do not feel the need to repeat what I said yesterday only that the threats have impacted me to fulfill my duties as a fully participating in my role as a Member of this Legislative Assembly.

I have known Mr. Norn for two years in this House, and from what I do know of him is a pattern of behaviour when he doesn't get his way, he lashes out in person, he utilizes the media against staff and Members, and as well through threatening messaging to staff and Members. So as per the rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, Mr. Norn has breached my privilege under the Section 20(1)(b) freedom from obstruction and intimidation in relation to the duties as an elected representative and no person in any job, role should be threatened or intimidated while doing their job and therefore I support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each one of us has a critical decision to make today. It's unfortunate that we're at this place, however as Members of this legislature, it's now up to us to decide what way forward will be. The Speaker has ruled on the point of privilege and found that the Member's comments breached the privilege of Members of this legislature. Threats and

harassment are not appropriate for any Member to use against other Members and the staff who provide support to us in our work.

Mr. Speaker, this threat affects us all but I would argue it affects women Members and staff greater. Mr. Speaker, we live in a territory where our rates of family violence are second highest in the country. We live in a society that women have, for too long, been ignored in their cries for help.

Mr. Speaker, it's not okay to threaten anyone. And we cannot say we want to address the unacceptable levels of violence against women if we allow or justify our leaders to do the very actions that we collectively say are not okay. These actions are not acceptable and cannot be justified and there needs to be consequences for these actions.

We also have before us, Mr. Speaker, the report of the sole adjudicator. When we were elected, we made a commitment to conduct ourselves in a manner that instills trust and confidence on the part of the general public in their elected officials and that we'd be bound by the code of conduct for MLAs. The code of conduct guides us as we perform our duties as MLAs but it also sets out processes to be followed should an MLA be alleged to have breached the code of conduct.

As Members of this legislature, we hold a position of trust and authority. Members are expected to hold themselves to a high standard of conduct. As outlined in the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, each Member shall comply with the provisions of the act and the code of conduct. It also states clearly in section 75 of the Legislative and Executive Council Act that we must perform our duties of office we hold and arrange for our private affairs in such a way to maintain public confidence and trust in our integrity, objectivity, an impartiality. The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act sets out a process for investigation and adjudication for allegations of the breaches of code of conduct.

In this case, Members followed this process and requested that the Integrity Commissioner determine if the matters should be referred to a sole adjudicator. The Integrity Commissioner did undertake an investigation and determined that a sole adjudicator should be appointed. We've now received the final report of the sole adjudicator.

Since the beginning of this unfortunate ordeal, I've been asked many times what my perspective is on the actions of the MLA. I have maintained that this has never been about a court of public opinion. It has been about ensuring we use the appropriate mechanisms in place to allow for a fair process. The MLA deserved that. The final report of the sole adjudicator is the result of the process that we have all agreed to be governed by. The sole adjudicator

made an important distinction in his report that I believe is worth repeating today. If the only issue he was making a determination on was the breaching of the self-isolation, he would have recommended a 30-day suspension. The sole adjudicator found more serious the MLA misleading the public health officials and the public. It is clear to me that the MLA did mislead the public and damaged the very public confidence and trust that we are sworn to uphold. As the sole adjudicator said in the report, the actions by the MLA in falsely advising the public health officials as to his whereabouts during his self-isolation period are reprehensible.

The MLA, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and chair of the Standing Committee for Accountability and Oversight, the MLA had a leadership role in the fight in this deadly disease. As was outlined by a public health official who had handled approximately 600 contact tracing investigations, the misleading and false statements by the MLA during their investigations negatively affected their ability to do their job and protect the health and safety of residents. The MLA was well aware of his responsibility to isolate when returning to the territory. As chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, he had access to more information than the public and made repeated statements about following the public health orders.

By not following the public health orders on self-isolation, he potentially exposed hundreds of people to COVID-19 and put the health and well-being of residents, communities, and especially those unable to get vaccinated, at risk. This, the sole adjudicator states, breached section 8 of the code of conduct and did not protect the public interest by not self-isolating and breaching the public health order, the MLA also breached section 2 of the code of conduct that states that Members must act lawfully and in a manner that will withstand the closest public scrutiny, upholding the integrity and honor of the Legislative Assembly and its Members. Members shall ensure their conduct does not bring the integrity of their office or of the Legislative Assembly into disrepute.

The sole adjudicator wrote in his report that the actions in misleading the public regarding his compliance with the self-isolation order are highly unethical and dishonest as they violate the public trust provided to him. I agree, Mr. Speaker.

The sole adjudicator goes on to say that the MLA's actions in breaching self-isolation requirements and misleading the public had irreparably damaged public confidence and trust. I also agree. The orders made by the Chief Public Health Officer are law, not suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, we all make mistakes in our lives. Taking responsibility and owning the mistakes is the

mark of leadership and integrity. As the sole adjudicator stated in the report, the MLA showed no respect for the participants in the inquiry and for the rule of law which is such an integral component of a democratic society. Had the MLA been truthful at the start, we would not be in this position.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the MLA respects the rules that hold us accountable. These events have negatively impacted the integrity of the Legislative Assembly and the public's trust and confidence in this House. As I stated yesterday, threatening Members and staff is not appropriate behaviour and inconsistent with the code of conduct we all agreed to uphold. The threats that were raised through the points of privilege, and the actions taken by MLA Norn outlined in the sole adjudicator's report show a pattern of behaviour that must be addressed by this House.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion brought forward by the Member that is reflective of the recommendation of the sole adjudicator to declare the seat for the riding of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh vacant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has come to a head now. This House is dealing with serious allegations of threats to Members and staff. There's now a motion on the floor to expel a Member from the Legislative Assembly and to vacate his seat. I don't take threats lightly either. And no one should ever have to hear them at any time and anywhere.

The one document that protects our safety from harm is our own code of conduct. I hope there are many people listening to these proceedings - First Nations, Metis associations, hamlet councils - there's many councils out there - on how a code of conduct can protect them from harm, intimidation and threats, and the course of actions to address these issues. Because there were many women on many of the councils out in the communities and something like this we can protect them for fear of retribution from intimidation and whatnot.

I'm not making any issues of all the other wrongs of Members and staff of this Assembly. I'm not making this an Indigenous issue. We are sworn to uphold our professionalism to the highest standards afforded to Members of the Legislative Assembly. I feel I've been backed into a corner by my colleague. I see no other recourse. If we could have had more debate, you know, as the Member is a young Member with a great political future ahead of him and supported by his riding, I would have recommended, you know, a

suspension and perhaps sensitivity training. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. To the motion, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Mr. Speaker, if I may I'd like to speak last. I'll let my colleagues go ahead of me. Mahsi cho.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, a procedural matter, the motion does not ask for a recorded vote. I believe that would only be appropriate, that this be a recorded vote, and I would ask for that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to repeat what my colleagues have said and in fact I don't want to go over the facts or get into the specifics. I really want to speak about the precedent we're setting and whether this is something we are all willing to do. I think it's important to note that the last Assembly created this code of conduct; they created this process; and we all agreed to it.

I note there has been some comments that, you know, previously Assemblies have had Members who have committed criminal acts and done, you know, things that certainly were disreputable to this House. But one of the reasons that this process was created is because previous Assemblies felt they did not have the power to hold themselves to account. That is what this process we have created is. That is what that code of conduct is.

And Mr. Speaker, in many ways, you know, one-off criminal offences that are not going to the exact process of this House, or threatening staff who work here, is a very much different conversation than the conversation we are having.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize how rare this is. The Member from Frame Lake had to reference Louis Riel to talk about how rarely this has happened. However, I think it's importance to note that in southern jurisdictions there have been numerous resignations when things like this have occurred. In party systems, the party whip would probably make sure this never happens. Party Caucuses would kick Members out and make them irrelevant and they wouldn't have the party nomination for the next election. Those aren't tools that we have in consensus government which is part of the reason why we created such a code of conduct, Mr. Speaker.

There have been comments about, you know, whether we should be afraid of the precedent we are setting and, Mr. Speaker, I have thought about that long and hard. I am happy to live with that fear. I am happy that if I am ever in a situation where I have

done what the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh has done that a code of conduct exists, that an independent process exists. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope that never occurs in my life but I pledge to uphold that code of conduct. I would cooperate with any investigation. I would accept any recommendation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, there was some discussion about recall legislation and in fact, I feel that declaring the seat vacant is only fair to the Member's constituents who now, if so, should the Member wish to rerun and should his constituents wish him to return to this House, that is possible, but we are handing this back to his constituents to make that decision. I think they deserve that right after this behaviour, to make that decision, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I believe in the process we have upheld. It is one of the strongest, most stringent code of conducts, and we are holding ourselves to one of highest standards of any Legislative Assembly in Canada. And we should be proud of that, Mr. Speaker. And god forbid, Mr. Speaker, if I ever find myself in this situation, I would not force my colleagues to have this vote. I would not force the House to go through this process. I would do the honourable thing and resign.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be honest. I didn't want to make a statement today. I want to debate the capital budget and find alternate solutions for Kam Lake's expectant mothers who now need to deliver in Edmonton, establish an action plan for getting our territory out of quarantine and jump start our economy. But I believe the people I serve would expect me to stand and speak and lend my voice to those of my colleagues.

Some have shared sentiment that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh should not be reprimanded for simply getting a public health violation ticket and that it is just a one-time thing. These comments are dismissive of fact. It isn't just one thing. It has been almost a year of costly mediations, investigations, multiple public health violations, and a pattern of threats that have monopolized many of our board of management meetings. Incredible amounts of public dollars have had to be spent to properly follow process in response to the Member's complaints and actions. It is worth noting that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh did not fully participate in each of the processes as was expected of him.

Referring the matter to the Integrity Commissioner is the primary tool that MLAs have to hold one another accountable in matters of conduct. The Integrity Commissioner is a statutory officer of this House.

They are paid fixed annual salary regardless of how much work they do for Members and Members are invited to seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner any time. And we do.

Members did not decide lightly to file a complaint with the Integrity Commissioner through Caucus chair, the Member for Yellowknife North. We do so in response to the Member of Tu Nedhe-Willideh's actions and reactions surrounding the events of April and May 2021. As required by the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the Integrity Commissioner determined whether a Caucus complaint should be dismissed or referred to inquiry by a sole adjudicator.

The Integrity Commissioner referred the complaint to the sole adjudicator and board of management was then tasked with selecting a sole adjudicator in accordance with the act. Board of management selected the sole adjudicator from a list of eligible persons under the act. This list was generated long before either myself or the Member were elected. Board of management selected the honourable Ronald L. Barclay, Q.C. The honourable Mr. Barclay has both an impressive resume and reputation. That inquiry ended with a recommendation from the honourable Ronald L. Barclay that we declare the seat for the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Willideh vacant.

The inquiry state that "Mr. Norn did not practice what he breached. Mr. Norn displayed a cavalier attitude by breaching the self-isolation plan not once, but five times within a 14 day isolation period." The Member then omitted important information during his contact tracing was untruthful and wasted valuable time and resources of public health staff. Had the Member been honest about his self-isolation breaches, apologized and taken immediate accountability, I am not convinced we would be standing here today. But the first time the Member apologized to Northerners was in October during the sole adjudicator hearing. This moment was enough to actually be noted by the sole adjudicator as follows: "In making this purported apology, Mr. Norn minimized his actions and failed to take responsibility for the breach."

Mr. Barclay goes on to say, "I must observe that the purported apology comes not early in the proceedings but at the very latest opportunity. Mr. Norn has been dealing with these allegations since May of 2021 when they were first brought before the Integrity Commissioner and has never once offered an apology of any sort until he did so on the second last day of the hearing. The timing of this apology is suspicious and leads me to believe that it is made to garner sympathy with me as the sole adjudicator and was not made in good faith."

Less than two weeks after the Member was found to have breached the self-isolation plan, we found ourselves in a school outbreak. The school sits on

the edge of Kam Lake on the border shared with Yellowknife South. Both the Member for Yellowknife South and I found ourselves in isolation, having our children tested, and working hard from home to inform and advocate for hundreds of confused constituents. I was very vocal about my frustration with public information during the May outbreak. Many Northerners have expressed confusion and frustration over public health and isolation rules. That being said, the MLA for Yellowknife South, myself, and the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh all have one thing in common that our constituents do not when we find ourselves confused by public health orders. Mr. Speaker, we have the Health Minister on speed dial.

During the sole adjudicator hearing, it was implied that staff are in some way responsible for the Member's breaches of the code of conduct because he was not properly oriented as a new MLA. We are talking about telling the truth, not threatening people, making genuine apologies when you're in the wrong, and learning from past experience. This is not a learning curve that starts when you take office. That being said, Mr. Speaker, I consider myself a compassionate and forgiving person. We are all human. We all make mistakes. And mistakes aren't inherently wrong. If we never made a mistake, it would mean we never tried something new, had courage, or were simply human. Mistakes will happen. We all make them. But what matters is how we react to them. We are expected to admit, correct, or apologize and learn.

I am sad for the year that the Member has had and where he finds himself today. But I am perplexed by the Member's lack of self-awareness in his role that he played to get us here today. In addition to the sole adjudicator's report, MLAs shared yesterday about patterns of threats. In response, the Member said he was passionate and he had feist. Passion is a requirement of this job. You need fire in your belly and a sprinkle feist in this role, Mr. Speaker. But passion means a strong feeling or emotion and it is often associated with love and desire. Passion is not physical, emotional, or psychological harm. And being passionate does not give people a green light to harass, intimate, or threaten.

The Member insists that his remarks were taken out of context and that he did not realize the impact of his words. There were months between events where the Member threatened Members or staff. Between events, he was called out for his behaviour and he repeated this behaviour. This is not "gotcha culture," Mr. Speaker. This is being held accountable for your actions.

We live in a territory with the highest rates of violence against women second only to Nunavut. We work in a majority female government where we often share personal anecdotes to connect the work we do and

to one another. Our colleagues have shared lived experience as survivors. Words have weight. We are literally here to use our words with weight to improve the lives of the people we serve.

Mr. Speaker, I am tired of the mockery being made of this institution. We don't have time for it. It is unaffordable to both the public's trust and the bottom line of this government. I am frustrated by the Member's refusal to take a step back and look at this last year, his actions and reactions, and how each has culminated to this moment.

Mr. Speaker, both the Member and his legal counsel have indicated that he has not done enough to lose his seat. But if breaking the law multiple times and threatening staff and Members is not the threshold, I would like to know what is.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by saying that we as elected officials are here for one and one reason only and that is to represent our constituents and the people of the NWT. Each of those that we represent expect each of us to uphold the code of conduct we set out for ourselves. The code is clear to each of us.

Mr. Speaker, in the News North dated November 19th, 2021, the headline states, Norn says COVID-19 ticket not enough to lose your job over. He is correct in that assumption. It should have been a matter of Mr. Norn saying I broke self-isolation, I will pay the fine, and I apologize.

Mr. Speaker, being an MLA is not to be taken lightly as our constituents have placed their trust in each of us. For me, being an MLA is as simple as being respectful to your constituents, respectful to the residents of the NWT, respectful to the staff, and respectful to your colleagues. It means keeping your eye on the ball which is constituent issues and issues of those residents in the NWT.

What transpired here is not one incident, but several, some of which have negatively impacted staff and some MLAs, residents of YK and surrounding communities and businesses. The pattern of behaviour was set out not only in the point of privilege tabled yesterday but in statements made by previous MLAs today, which I concur with and will not dwell on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to keep this real. It is important to know that real people have been impacted by what transpired over the last several months. I received an email from a family that had caught the virus which resulted in the husband and wife having to leave work and are still feeling the effects of the

virus several months later and not being able to attend work.

I talked to a business owner who relayed to me that just when he thought revenue would start to increase that would allow him to actually take a paycheque, the city was put into lockdown and business suffered again.

A friend of mine, who lost his sister to violence, she followed the rules. She followed the rules during that difficult time by respecting the self-isolation protocol that her visiting sister was required to follow. She asked that I relay this to the Assembly that it was a very difficult time but it was the right thing to do because of the pandemic.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, there are people out there that are really affected, and it's not just a matter of a ticket. So for me, I would say it is time for the Member to rise and resign otherwise it is with a heavy heart that I must support this motion. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're talking about today is stripping constituents of their MLA, stripping a person of their livelihood, this motion places a heavy burden on the Members of this House. And we have to weigh that against the heavy responsibility that we have to uphold the integrity of this House and to maintain the public confidence and trust in our system.

The Members who have spoken so far have laid things out very well, and I agree with all of the comments I've heard so I won't repeat them. But I want to, you know, put a fine point on why I'm supporting this motion. I've spent a lot of time thinking about this, like many Members I watched countless hours of testimony of the public hearing, and the one thing that stuck with me, the one thing I go back to, the one thing I keep thinking about, is the intentional misleading, the intentional lying to the public, knowing that the Member did not follow the rules and told the public he followed the rules. But more than that, Mr. Speaker, it is the callous way in which the Member misled public health officials who were attempting to do contact tracing. They wanted to know who did you come in contact with. We need to contact them to make sure they're not sick, to make sure they know that maybe they had to self-isolate.

They do that to stop the spread of COVID-19. That's how we have gotten this far. That's why we don't have the mass casualties that we otherwise would. That is key to maintaining public health. That's key to keeping people alive, keeping people healthy, keeping businesses open, keeping kids in school.

And I couldn't imagine myself holding that information back from public health officials. That's what I think about the most, and that's why I have to support this motion because that is not the kind of representation that the people of the Northwest Territories deserve.

I don't see this behaviour ending, Mr. Speaker. I think that if we don't see this motion through, this will continue. As Members have said, there is a lack of accountability, the Member hasn't taken responsibility, and there's no end in sight. So it doesn't give me any joy but I have to support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River North. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we were elected into the Legislative Assembly by the people of the Northwest Territories, none of us got special rights by virtue of that election and by virtue of this post. None of us were put above the law, the rules, the policies whether they came from Assemblies before us, or whether they came from the legislators before us. Mr. Speaker, in my view it is quite the opposite. When we are elected it is a privilege. It is a privilege to serve, and it carries with it duties and obligations to the people who have placed their trust in us. It is always a privilege and it should be treated, in my view, as a gift.

Our code of conduct is what we use to ensure that we are providing a reasonable level of scrutiny. It's a higher level of scrutiny than what is used in many cases, and we are held to a higher standard. But in my view, Mr. Speaker, that is reasonable because we have a privilege to stand in this room. We have a privilege to be involved at the highest level of decision making. It's a gift given to us by our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, there has already been a fair bit discussed about the matter but I did, also, think very long and hard about this. And while I've tried to shorten my comments in light of all the many things already said, I do feel compelled to say something to my constituents about the reasons for my decision. I want to speak briefly about some of the facts and spend more of my time on the decision about sanction.

The facts have been very thoroughly reviewed, and I'm grateful for MLA Martselos for going through them. The adjudicator's reasons give a thorough review of the facts with respect to those matters. So just a few comments.

In the context of a time, Mr. Speaker, when we were still under a recommendation not to travel, the MLA

for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh decided to travel. A lot of residents that I represent have struggled with their family and their personal needs in the face of births and deaths and made choices not to travel. On his return, the Member decided that what was supposed to be just a short breach, or certainly that's the way that he seems to be presenting it, to see his daughter was okay. A lot of residents, Mr. Speaker, have been isolated separately from their families, from their children, from their parents, and from elders for a full 14 days and in some cases more. Some of them have had to stay in isolation centres. But they've done so.

The MLA also thought it was fine to stop by the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, this is the seat of government. Members of government - staff, MLAs - come in on weekends. They come in all the time. And the idea that he has claimed to come in the evening as somehow making it less responsible, I disagree with. Although I would note, Mr. Speaker, there has been a noted absence of anyone wanting to use the word "lie." There seems to be a continual effort to say that the things that have been said simply were misleading or a mistake or a misunderstanding. But on this point, Mr. Speaker, of why someone would come to the Legislative Assembly when they should be isolating, I find it difficult to understand how you can be mistaken whether you are here at two something in the afternoon or whether you were here, in fact, in the evening. By the last day of what should have been the MLA's period of isolation, based on what the findings of fact were in the adjudication proceedings, it certainly seems that there was not a care at this point whether or not there should be further isolation or whether a number of errands could now be run.

Mr. Speaker, to me it is not a defense to say that you couldn't count the days or that you didn't understand isolation procedures at this point. These were not new rules. Moreover, as has already been I think very aptly described by my colleague from Kam Lake, in this role, having travelled somewhere with a place of high incidence of COVID, would suggest that it is incumbent on any resident to ensure that they are following the rules. But it is more incumbent on us as leaders to make every effort to follow the rules, at the very least to make some phone calls and ensure ourselves that we are doing everything right and, perhaps, simply take a cautious approach.

But it does not end there.

Now, the Member decides to make all of it public, to make the fact of his diagnosis public and, apparently, ignores the advice of our officials suggesting that he not mislead the public when he does so. And then proceeds to send public health on a goose chase of information, or lack of information. Mr. Speaker, these are the public servants tasked with keeping all of us safe, preventing community spread, and

quickly identifying whether someone may or may not be a contact of COVID. This is what prevents our health care system from becoming overwhelmed and from community spread. This is what prevents risk.

Mr. Speaker, I was astounded that anyone would try to conceal their whereabouts in the midst of a global pandemic not seen in my lifetime. I am appalled that a Member of this House should behave that way.

Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to say a few comments further about constituents and their reactions. In my view, this entire debacle has showed a total lack of empathy and complete disrespect for the struggles of the residents of the Northwest Territories during COVID. These are people who have called and written to many of us in tears about the experiences that they have had making difficult choices and trying to navigate the system knowing the importance of doing so.

Many of my constituents, Mr. Speaker, have contracted COVID, particularly during the outbreak at NJ Macpherson School and they have experienced firsthand the impacts of the disease. And as for how hard self-isolation is, many people in my riding, again particularly during that outbreak, had to self-isolate not for 14 days but often for 21 days or more. I spent 14 days confined to my property during that outbreak, and it is successful, and it is tiring, and it is exhausting. But that is not an excuse and it is not an explanation. As an elected leader, I'm ashamed to think of all of the people in my riding who have made sacrifices in their choices, sacrifices they have made following public health orders despite being tired, despite being exhausted, and then for them to have to hear an elected leader blaming others for his failure to make those same sacrifices.

With respect to the matter of the threats that are before us, Mr. Speaker, this is directly tied to the matter that was referred to the Integrity Commissioner. Having seen and observed the behaviour and the language of the MLA to say anything he wants to the public, I took this threat very seriously that he was indeed prepared to come after all of us. I believed, and Mr. Speaker I continue to believe, that there is a very real possibility that the MLA will say anything to target any one of us, to target our reputations, or to make allegations or claim that may be without merit or without base and to which we will all be ill prepared to respond because there is no way to respond to that. We are now all facing that threat and continue to do so.

Having heard my colleagues yesterday and again today, Mr. Speaker, far worse to me - far worse to me - is that the MLA created an atmosphere of fear. Not only the possibility of silencing my colleagues but, has in fact - in fact - already impeded their ability

to bring forward the matters important to their constituents.

The claim that we are doing something undemocratic by acting on the laws established by the Legislative Assembly is without merit. The MLA has himself done something, in my view, undemocratic by silencing those who are brought here by their constituents to speak on their behalf.

The apology that came yesterday is notable because it came only in connection with further deflection for actions and decisions, saying that the words were taken out of context. Mr. Speaker, we are the context. We were the context, and I do not accept that explanation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to finish by speaking about sanction and my views on what the proper sanction for conduct in this circumstance should be.

I've spent a decade of my life working in the criminal justice system, Mr. Speaker, and that certainly impacts how I approached this discussion and how I approached this decision. And in my view, I will say at the front end, sanction should never be for revenge and it should never be for punishment. Those are hollow. What I have learned in my professional experience is that we should aim to deter wrongful conduct of the individual and we should aim to deter others from the wrongful conduct in question. And in this context, I would add to that, that we should also ensure that we protect the integrity of the Legislative Assembly as the house of government.

Mr. Speaker, I will agree it is difficult to find precedent that captures the full range of actions that we are dealing with here today. But I do have a couple of recent examples from the situation from the context of COVID that I would like to refer to.

Kamal Khera was a Member of Parliament. She had volunteered at a nursing home as a trained nurse during the early stages of COVID. She was bathing and changing residents on an infected ward of a seniors' residence. Then her father died followed weeks later by her uncle. And so she flew to Seattle last Christmas break in order to attend family memorials. This of course was at a time when flying out of the country was contraindicated. Mr. Speaker, she did not break a single rule. She did not lie. She did come back and apologized for her travel and she then stepped down from her parliamentary roles.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Finance Minister also decided to go on vacation last winter. It was a sunny vacation with his family and he did seem to suggest by social media that perhaps he was at home sitting by a fire in a sweater. Well, when that came out, Mr. Speaker, he flew back early. He publicly accepted responsibility for bad choices. He publicly

apologized, and resigned his Cabinet position. Neither of them broke a single law. Neither of them lied. Neither of them threatened their colleagues.

So as far as deterring others, I was left in a situation where it seems to me that there were few precedents, because I think as has already been noted, quite often politicians don't get this far. They do wind up resigning or being encouraged to resign by their parties or by their governments.

I would just make one last side note on this, Mr. Speaker. The number of other professions that also have to govern themselves - lawyers, doctors, nurses, accountants, geologists, architect, and many many more all have codes of conducts and all are self-governing professions. They all sit in judgment of their colleagues. It is their duty. It is not easy but they are asked to do it. Self-governing professions deal with codes of conducts because they understand the role that is played by their colleagues. And of course in our case, as was I think amply and very ably described by MLA O'Reilly, that process is found in the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. But on that note, Mr. Speaker, this is not just another job and it is not just another profession.

Fundamentally, in my view, Mr. Speaker, we are here because of actions and choices made by the MLA from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. But I still ask myself what is the minimum response that we could use that could deter any further conduct. Removal is the ultimate sanction. Mr. Speaker, I see no other path forward by which the MLA will accept any responsibility for anything that has occurred, for the harms done to anyone, including my colleagues, public servants, or damage to the integrity of the Assembly.

There have been four reasons offered, among many, but four in particular offered as to why there should be no sanction whatever. And so in conclusion I am going to run through quickly for you, Mr. Speaker, those four reasons and why I reject all of them.

MLA Norn has suggested that this process is politically motivated. There has been very little explanation as to what political gain any of use might have. If these recommendations are accepted, there will be a by-election and that is the political result. If anything, this drawn out process has been nothing but political embarrassment to every single one of us. That we've had to sit through such open disregard and disdain for the totality of the process contained within the Legislative Assembly Act is politically embarrassing. We are asking our residents to respect our authority for governance and for laws and policies and yet one of our own has shown nothing but blatant disregard for legal process created by this legislature. There is simply no political gain.

Second, Mr. Speaker, there's been a suggestion that this entire process is retribution because the MLA had previously made an unrelated allegation against the clerk of the Legislative Assembly. My own recollection of the events that began that incident, Mr. Speaker, began in the context, again, of all of us being witness to. Yet the allegation was serious, it was taken seriously, taken seriously to the tune of having hired one of the most respected and well-refuted human resource investigative firms in this country. Unfortunately, despite that very process, the MLA turned his back on the process thereto apparently failing to fully participate or complete the interviews and ignoring correspondence in regards to that investigation. The only threat of commonality I see between the MLA's complaint against the clerk and the complaints that bring us here today is this: It's the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh's choices, actions, and decisions and his attitude about the rule of law and fair process and whether that should apply to him.

The third is that the sanction here is a product of a southern adjudicator who simply could not understand the context of the North. Mr. Speaker, there are a great many things different between North and southern Canada, between rural and urban Canada, between the east and the west and the three different oceans that surround us. Mr. Speaker, the role of a leader does not change based on your place of residence, your ethnicity, your party. The evidence that was called was from witnesses in this community within a process designed and made by this Legislative Assembly and the application of that law to those facts is what is now being scrutinized by Members of the Legislative Assembly. And so this line of defense, in my view, has no merit.

My fourth and last comment, Mr. Speaker, is again on that idea that nothing similar, no similar precedent exists, and nothing like this has ever occurred. Indeed, MLA Norn's counsel had the instructional latitude to go far as to tell all MLAs that we should be afraid, be very afraid should we act on this lawfully considered recommendation by a senior member of the judiciary in the course of our deliberations here.

Mr. Speaker, no MLA should ever be afraid to act in good faith on the advice of a senior official, or on the recommendations of a senior jurist in order to discharge our legal obligations as Members of this House. I find that threat from a member of the bar on behalf of the MLA to be repugnant, and I reject it.

Last, Mr. Speaker, in considering appropriate sanction is, again, to maintain the integrity of this House. Mr. Speaker, there are significant aggravating features to the breaches of the code of conduct that are before us. And one, again, is that the MLA has shown total disregard for the rule of law, democratic institutions including this Assembly, Members and staff, since the start of the process. I

do not agree with every law, rule, or process or policy of government. That is why I ran to be in government, so that I could go about seeking change. It was sad to hear and see an elected official behave the way the MLA did throughout the inquiry having publicly maligned that process in making unsubstantiated claims of bias and impropriety against the adjudicator, the adjudicator's counsel, and at least one witness, all while still an elected legislator responsible to uphold the integrity of our democratic system, the rule of law, and the integrity of this Assembly.

Also aggravating is the MLA's apparent indifference to the context within which all of this began. We are still in the midst of a global pandemic. Twelve residents of the Northwest Territories have died as a result of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, and many more have seen their lives deeply disrupted by this disease or by the measures that were put in place to keep this plague at bay. And for someone in a position of public leadership during this pandemic to be so careless with the orders is aggravating and dangerous to the cause of public protection during this worldwide crisis.

And so in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I did ask myself if there was some residual reason or argument that might be mitigating, but there is nothing mitigating that I can find. The MLA's blameworthiness, lack of responsibility and deflection leave me feeling that I have no choice other than to stand today. I do not believe the MLA will come to any sense of understanding about any of these matters. I expect he will continue to cast the net of blame far and wide.

Mr. Speaker, I started off very angry some months ago about what was happening. I have come to a point today where I am very sad. I do hope sincerely that someone can get through to my colleague MLA from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh but it will not be any one of us here. I am left in the position I did not ask for, I do not like, but in my review of the code and considering my role as an MLA and considering my role as a representative of people, I see no option in the circumstances but to accept the recommendations of the adjudicator and to be in favour of this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. Colleagues before we continue I just want to remind the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh that the mover has the right to conclude debate at any time so if you want to do your statement.

The Member -- the mover has the right to close debate at any time so if you want to -- Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORR: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Well, here we are. This has been a long and harrowing road, a

path, and I have a lot of sadness. I feel a little bit at peace but a lot of sadness today. I have some words prepared but, again, the time of blaming is over. Like, I have to respect all my colleagues and what their beliefs are. I have to respect their vote. And this has affected my family a great deal. And my three girls, I love them very much.

Throughout my life I've always been surrounded by powerful ladies, and my great-grandmother raised me. But when I leave here today, I got to still be a strong role model for my daughters and -- but life goes on. I'm resilient. I've always been resilient. I'm going to stay strong for my family and do the best thing I can to provide for them. And like I've always been taught, my ancestors before me, you know.

And like I said, it's been a long harrowing road. And I accept what's going to be said here, like, what's the vote going to be, but we are here. And one thing I will say, this is not any word of blame, this is not like I listened to some other precedents that have been set in other democracies. But I can't help but wonder if, you know, it would have went down in another part of the world, you know. As an aboriginal man, I've worked as a police officer in Saskatchewan, and I can't tell you how harrowing that job is to begin with. That's a scary job, to drive those farming communities and rural prairies, middle of the night. I've done that. I've dealt with the judge that let Colten Boushie go, the killer of Colten Boushie go. I worked with him before. He used to be a RCMP force lawyer.

And some of the things that are happening around the world right now, you know, a young Caucasian kid kills few people like in plain view, and he gets away with it. I'm not going to use my, the color of my skin anymore. I'm still going to go on. I'm still going to bat 60 percent of random searches at the airport, which I still do. I'm still going to be followed around the stores, make sure that I'm going to pay for my items. That's my life. That's what I live every day.

And with all this going on, I -- every single syllable that has left my mouth has been scrutinized, judged to the nth degree. And it probably will for some time. And I just, like I said life will go on. I apologize to the bottom of my heart for, if I caused any pain, hurt, fear. I would never hurt anybody. I would never hurt a fly. I would never hurt you. And apologize if I caused any fear and that's just -- I feel terrible, and that burns in my soul and this is something I will have to live with for the rest of my days.

But I will say that when I leave this Chamber, I will still serve where I can and when I can. I will still go out there and put my body, my mind and heart in harm's way because that's all I know. And I'll still hold my head up high. And I'll do the best I can for my family, and. And this is regrettable, and I will say that I will resign. I will prevent you from making this vote. I will save you that. I will do that and do you that

honor. And that I could feel the will of the people in this room, and I will respect that. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Colleagues, we'll call a short recess.

---Recess

Colleagues, I wanted to check the record to ensure that I heard Mr. Norm's resignation clearly before we proceed. While I am confident that this was his clear intention, I regret to inform you that the legislation as it is currently worded, and at this late hour, still requires a decision of this House.

Are there others that still wish to speak to the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that opportunity.

I was one of the people who sat on the rules and procedures committee in the last Legislative Assembly. And to put it into some context, not only had we an unprecedented number at that time of new MLAs, we were also in the thick of the #metoo movement, and with that in mind, we decided to work on changes to the code of conduct that would make it more stringent than it had been in the past, and with the support of our Members at the time in the Legislative Assembly, that code of conduct and its commentary was passed.

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that it would apply to a situation such as the one that we are discussing today where the behaviour of the Member is wholly unacceptable and for which the Member is taking no responsibility. This is a very different situation than we anticipated in crafting that code of conduct.

Just to reiterate a few things that I've heard before but I think they're important, this problem began a year ago. It began in this room in a confidential meeting, and it has persisted through an entire year in different forms and always with the same outcome, that the Member or soon-to-be-former Member of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh was dissatisfied with the result, did not feel his concerns had been heard, and felt that he was being treated in a racist manner.

I want to say that I appreciate Rylund Johnson going forward with the complaint on behalf of Caucus which started the -- first with the complaint to the Integrity Commissioner and then to the sole adjudicator.

I want to reject the commentary that the sole adjudicator was somehow not suitable to conduct the public hearing that we saw in October and November. He was a ten-year Conflict of Interest

Commissioner in Saskatchewan and has a 50-year practice of law in many different capacities. There's no question in my mind that he had the expertise we needed to conduct the hearing and to come out with a result.

As he said in his own report, it wasn't an overly complicated two questions that he was asked to rule on. The first was whether the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh had broken his isolation, and what we know through the testimony is that, in fact, that happened five times; it wasn't just a one-off. It happened five times, and it was not inadvertent or minor. He did this knowingly and subjected people to the risk of COVID-19 infection knowingly, which is reprehensible.

Secondly, the sole adjudicator was asked to rule on the question of whether the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh had misled the public. And the short answer is yes. In many ways, shapes, and forms, he did not, in fact, tell the truth. He did not own his behaviour. And consistently throughout, he behaved as if there was a different law for himself than there was for everyone else.

I want to point you to a moment in the hearing where the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh said to the deputy clerk that he had a political exemption that would allow him to be in the Legislative Assembly while he was in isolation.

What that demonstrated to me is that he thought he was above the law, the law that requires us to self-isolate during the pandemic. And in fact, nobody is above the law. There is no political exemption. The law is one in the same for everyone wherever they live in the NWT. Whatever their race, origin, hair color, it's the same rule for everyone.

So what we know is that he broke isolation and he lied about it, that he subjected hundreds of people to risk, even though it was a low-level risk, it was still a risk, with his cavalier attitude and we could have had a great number more cases in the third wave than we had. The third wave was particularly acute here in Yellowknife with the NJ Macpherson outbreak. But we could have had even a worse time than we did there.

Mr. Norn's rationale for misleading the public was exhaustion and stress. And the sole adjudicator, at paragraph 256, rejected that saying that he did not accept Mr. Norn's explanation and did not believe him in his reasons for not -- for misleading the public.

As other colleagues have said, the public expects a great deal from us in this Legislative Assembly. We've been elected, and as my colleague from Yellowknife South said, given the privilege and the honor of representing our constituents here. And they want us not only to acknowledge that we're

above the law but to act in that way, that we are -- pardon me -- that we are not above the law, and they want us to act in a way that shows that we are not above the law. And because of the MLA for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh's conduct, he actually brought us all into disrepute, and he brought this House into disrepute because he did not behave in a way that inspires confidence and trust from the public.

I want to thank all of my constituents who contacted me on this matter. It was quite a robust response. And I want to say that with one exception, the advice I received was that having gone through the process of the sole adjudicator, spent the money on the sole adjudicator, and dragged ourselves through the whole ordeal, that we needed to follow the advice of the sole adjudicator, and I totally agree with that. I think that having asked for this advice and received it, there is no way forward except to follow it and to acknowledge that vacating the seat given the level of betrayal he displayed in losing the trust and the confidence of us as his colleagues and the public that the right thing to do is to declare the seat vacant, and I will certainly be voting in favour of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely regret that we are in this situation and having to debate this motion of revocation.

As a Member of this Assembly, I have the right to be safe when doing my job. Our staff in the building have the right to be safe when doing their jobs. We have a right to be free of threats for doing our jobs within the rules of this Assembly, which my colleague from Frame Lake so eloquently outlined.

The Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh could have dealt with this in a measured, less antagonistic approach. He could have apologized immediately during the adjudicator hearings. He could have accepted the role of fellow MLAs in following the rules of this House. He could have restrained from lashing out with threats to myself, to my fellow MLAs, to our staff, and even the media.

I do not take this lightly. I trust -- the trust is broken but -- both with the public and the institution, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. I give the mover the opportunity to make closing comments if you wish.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, my point of privilege and the sole adjudicator report both speak to this motion in its entirety. I would like to acknowledge and thank all my colleagues for their statements that came from the heart.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Members, a recorded vote has been requested. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Ball): The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Hay River North.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 17 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

This matter is now concluded. Colleagues, I'll call a short recess.

---Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 179-19(2): PROOF OF VACCINATION CREDENTIAL

HON. JULIE GREEN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to entertain everyone. Mr. Speaker, it's becoming more common for people to be asked to prove that they've been vaccinated against COVID-19, and as a result, the GNWT has worked diligently to make sure that NWT residents have a safe, secure proof of vaccination document that is accepted across the country and internationally.

We've been working with governments across the country to develop a standardized vaccine certificate that NWT residents can use to show they've been vaccinated against COVID-19, including for air travel, as new federal regulations come into effect.

The NWT proof of vaccination credential has been tested and accepted by the Canadian Border Service

Agency. Through this work, Mr. Speaker, residents now have easy and secure access to their own health information. With the roof of vaccination credential, we are able to resume some semblance of pre-pandemic life.

The process for getting the certificate was designed to be as convenient as possible while ensuring that people's privacy is protected and health records are secure. We encourage all residents who can do so to download their proof of vaccination credential online.

The GNWT has also made in-person options available in all communities across the territory. You can now request your proof of vaccination by filling out the online form on the GNWT website, submitting a request by e-mail, or requesting it through your health centre.

I want to give a very large thanks to the staff from the Department of Finance, Information Shared Services, Health and Social Services, and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority for their excellent work on the design, delivery, and implementation of this important tool.

Vaccination is a vital resource for public health management. It's still our best weapon in the fight against COVID-19. Since the COVID-19 vaccines have been available here in the territory, our government has and continues to encourage all residents to get vaccinated. Of course, if a resident of the Northwest Territories does not want to get vaccinated, that is their choice.

For those who have chosen to help protect themselves and their community, the proof of vaccination credential gives them the tool to prove their vaccination status wherever it may be required, whether it is in the gym, community hall, airport, or their employer.

The NWT wide gathering order currently in place provides the opportunity for businesses and community organizations to use the proof of vaccine credential to increase the number of people who can access services or activities. This program provides confidence to residents who have chosen to protect themselves by getting vaccinated.

Like many governments, businesses, and organizations around the world, the GNWT and many other employers in the territory have introduced vaccine mandates to protect employees and those they serve. Thanks to this new credential, residents can quickly, reliably, and securely prove their vaccination status to anyone who requires it.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to encourage all eligible residents to get the COVID-19 vaccine and the booster shot when available. It is the best protection against the virus, and it's readily available

in every community health centre or public health unit in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ALCOHOL DELIVERY

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, this week is national Addictions Awareness week. Addictions and substance abuse is a major issue in the NWT and has been for many years. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic has only intensified the existing struggles of addiction and substance abuse. The pandemic has increased feelings of isolation, stress, and anxiety and has severely limited the availability and accessibility of services for people with addictions and mental health issues.

Despite these challenges, the Government of the Northwest Territories has made several questionable changes to liquor regulations over the course of this pandemic.

Most recently on October 19th, 2021, the Department of Finance amended liquor regulations to enable residents to order liquor from liquor stores and have it delivered to their home via taxis. While this amendment is only in effect temporarily until December 31st, 2021, this decision has potential to cause devastating effects for those with addiction issues.

Mr. Speaker, according to a May 2021 report from the Canadian Institute for Mental Health Information, Canadians with past and current mental health concerns reported greater increases in substance abuse during the pandemic and those with past and current substance abuse concerns reported more mental health symptoms.

Those who reported poorer mental health were more likely to have increased their use of substances such as cannabis and alcohol. The report also states that more Canadians received substance related hospital care during the COVID pandemic than in the previous year.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the data speaks for itself. More people turn to alcohol and drugs during this pandemic than they did in pre-pandemic times. This is a disturbing trend which I certainly hope will not continue any further; however, when I see a policy -- when I see policy decisions that only

enables addictions and makes it easier for people to access alcohol while still having difficulties to access addiction or mental health services, I have a problem with that.

Using COVID as a justification for this liquor policy change, whether temporary or not, is not okay. Overall, Mr. Speaker, addictions and substance abuse affects people in all walks of life, all nationalities, all income levels, and all ages.

For these reasons, it is very concerning to me that our government is now permitting alcohol to be delivered to people's doorsteps. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LANDS

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: [Translation]. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to bring up the issue about -- about the land administration and property tax in Tlicho communities.

Constituent had reached out to me asking what we can do to make it easier to transfer property into their names. Many had -- are living in a House registered in a late family Member's. The process is very legal, overly complex, and it's just too difficult for the land officer to resolve on their own.

So now under programs and services because we can maybe do something and make it out for them, so -- so for that reason, I just -- so under the working for the people in the right direction, I would like to also work well with the land administration because it's under the community government and the people that's employed there.

We should also have a legal terms of having the land or all that information passed on to them. [Translation Ends].

We own the homes they are living. And that effects their eligibility for other government program. For example, many of my constituent in this situation are not eligible for major, minor, or emergency housing repair through the Housing Corporation. This situation is not acceptable, especially because Tlicho communities have a housing crisis, which I spoke about yesterday. This is according to the NWT statistics. Tlicho communities have the most household in all of the NWT that are not suitable, which is sitting at 39 percent.

Mr. Speaker, people want to transfer the file of their late family home and -- House and land in a quick, affordable, and uncomplicated way.

At this time, some of the -- my constituent were told that in order for them to transfer the file for the land transfer, they were told to go to Department of Justice, get a lawyer, to go through court, to settle all this through court. And in order to get a -- to hire a lawyer, it's going to cost \$10,000 to settle this claim, in which many cannot afford. There's not too many jobs in small communities. If we are faced with this in my constituents, I'm sure there are other constituents that are in the same situation as myself here.

So for -- so I just -- I want to ask the government if the government can do anything to make things better. Maybe the legal team, maybe they can send a legal team to Behchoko, Whatì and Wekweètì and Gamètì to settle this outstanding land issues. And there is a lot of back -- back -- sorry -- backlog of outstanding land issues.

The legislation could be amended so that bylaws can be implemented that would require, that would ensure that people wills are properly recognized. These issue are not going to go away anytime soon. So thank you. So I will be asking a question to the Minister of Justice after. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OBSTETRICAL CARE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, by April of this year, my office began hearing from residents regarding the escalating burnout, stress, and fatigue amongst nurses in the NWT. Issues raised included understaffing, the preferential treatment of locums, stress due to working closely with southerners, and having to use leave time to isolate for two weeks if they should travel out of the territory.

Over the subsequent months, we continued to be contacted by several constituents and other residents with personal concerns regarding the conditions they had encountered at Stanton that they saw as resulting from burnout and stress.

In early November, all Members of this Assembly received a letter from several healthcare professionals stating that these issues were reaching critical mass which would likely result in decreased healthcare capacity.

This letter echoed the earlier concerns that had been brought forward to my office's attention highlighting burnout, loss of vacation, feeling overworked, and a lack of compensation for the increased hazard faced due to COVID.

Yesterday while we were sitting in this Chamber, Members were informed that birthing in Yellowknife would now be redirected to Edmonton despite our brand new, state-of-the-art hospital meaning that several families would now be extremely disrupted with very little notice expected to travel during a global pandemic.

Yesterday the Minister of Health also tabled a document that highlighted the concerns of nurses and answered some of their questions; however, what the document also highlighted is what one of the barriers to providing nurses with the accommodations they are asking for is the collective agreement.

In the Northwest Territories, nurses are part of the same collective agreement as any other GNWT employee. Therefore, it is difficult to accommodate the special circumstances that only nurses encounter. All civil servants are considered the same under the Public Service Act. This puts the Department of Health and Social Services in an awkward position. They have been tasked with increasing the number of healthcare professionals by 20 percent as per the 19th Assembly's list of priorities.

What was already set to be a difficult task has only become near impossible as we deal with COVID and the ensuing pandemic. Throw in mounting concerns raised by those same professionals, we are now poised to actually have less healthcare workers at the end of this Assembly than we started with.

Perhaps it is time that we treat our healthcare professionals with the care that they deserve, time to look at what can be done in order to ensure that we are always looking after them the way that they have always looked after us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS SHORTAGE

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, after receiving the notice that Stanton will be suspending service for the obstetric unites, I had many mixed thoughts about this. I thought of my past experience as a nursing manager and trying to recruit obstetric nurses throughout the year. It was always a struggle to secure indeterminate OBS nurses and I had to rely on term contracts. This upset a lot of the other nurses, but not only in OBS, emergency and OR nurses, trying to keep the positions staffed became way more challenging during peak vacation time, Christmas, summer, and spring break. There were

times when there was discussions that possibly having to suspend services to a specific area. These discussions come up more than the public gets to know.

But patient safety is always top priority, and no one makes this decision lightly. You're trying to juggle your staff's holidays over patient safety. Mr. Speaker, staffing shortages throughout the country are impacting the North. Our health care staff have been heavily relied upon during this pandemic. The nurses have been reaching out to MLAs for support with their concerns even before the pandemic but more so now during the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to see that what we're doing is not working. We have heard that they're burning out; their work environment is toxic; their concerns are not being addressed.

We now have families being impacted by this closure, having to do what families from 29 other communities have to do when they are 37 weeks, leave their home, their support, their lives until after they deliver. It's not fair for this to happen to anyone, but it is what has to be done for them to have safe deliveries. And it's unfortunate that this shortage has come to this.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the NWT has a lot to offer for families for family work life balance if fully staffed. And "if" is a very important part. We have salaries that match our southern provinces, if not more. But, Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is getting more expensive, and in some communities, there is even the lack of housing. Mr. Speaker, we need to look at other ways that will make the NWT a place that people want to come and work and live.

As a registered nurse myself, I have received from Registered Nursing Association a recruitment and retention survey which is opened from November 10th to November 28th, and I encourage all registered nurses to complete this survey so that they can voice their concerns and be heard. I look forward to the results of this survey and what it will re-enforce that we may already know as well as bring to light the issues of our staff in the nursing area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. The Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID ACCOMMODATION MEASURES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The Government of Canada is working with provinces, territories, Indigenous organizations, and local authorities to develop accommodations to appropriately address the needs of remote communities.

What are remote communities? In this instance for the NWT with the exception of Yellowknife, the remaining 32 communities are considered remote communities.

Mr. Speaker, air travel in the North supports our residents' medical and health needs, and it allows for one's well-being, and it supports community infrastructure of those remote communities. When I reflected on the answers received yesterday from the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Infrastructure, access to air travel appears to be, in part, at the heart of why unvaccinated people in the North will lose their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, for the past year and a half, the vaccine has been front and centre, and for good reason, while the issue of the need to accommodate workers has been pushed to the back of our discussions. It is the lack of this consideration for accommodation that will determine if some workers have jobs come December 1st. I understand we can accommodate those workers in jobs where travel is not required. However, we have workers who may be long-term employees with families that will be without an income, may lose their home, and be forced to relocate or find a position where being vaccinated is not a requirement.

Mr. Speaker, we allow those that are vaccinated and who are also potential carriers of the virus to travel into remote communities without self-isolating or being tested. On the other hand, we have unvaccinated persons who would require PPE and a negative test prior to travel.

It seems a bit like putting a gun with a single bullet in the hand of the vaccinated while we put one that we know is not loaded into the hand of the unvaccinated person who has tested negative and using PPE and send them into the community.

This may be a bit of an exaggeration, but it's to make the point that testing along with the PPE is important. The federal government has indicated a willingness to be flexible in developing accommodations for the unvaccinated and make timely adjustments as the situation changes. Including in this willingness is the use of a local molecular COVID-19 test by airlines at the gate. So there are options.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLAWBACK OF FEDERAL GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Many Members have seen the recent national media coverage on the claw back of federal Guaranteed Income Supplement, or GIS, payments from seniors who received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB, during the pandemic.

The federal government was encouraging everyone to take CERB payments without a thought to how that might affect future income from our social safety net.

Only later, much later, are seniors now finding out that CERB payments are being counted as income against GIS and other social assistance, which are now being reduced. As many as 90,000 seniors are affected nationally.

Here in the Northwest Territories, there are further consequences with the federal claw backs. With the reduction in federal GIS benefits comes a corresponding cut in the NWT Seniors Supplement.

All of this because CERB emergency payments are now being declared and counted as additional income. And as we learned earlier in the year, people in the Northwest Territories public housing, including seniors, are having their rents increased if they received CERB payments.

So what can this government do to provide some clarity and help for seniors. First, we should find a way to de-link the calculation of the NWT Seniors Supplement for those who did not receive GIS because they took a CERB payment.

Ideally, we need to recognize that CERB was an emergency program during a global pandemic that might happen once a century and not penalize the poorest seniors by counting this assistance as some sort of unearned income.

I implore this government to work with other provincial and territorial governments to stop this unjust treatment of seniors. I'll have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on what this government is doing to stop these unfair claw backs of social assistance to NWT seniors. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OBSTETRICAL CARE

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, in my duties, I try to be empathetic and put myself in the shoes of constituents. Yesterday expectant parents ready to deliver in Yellowknife were informed they will travel to Edmonton to deliver their child. And I refuse to accept this.

Some families have three weeks' notice that they will have three weeks or more less work and less income, be moved from the safety of their community and support system, potential deliver without their partner, potentially be left with no support for older children, and then be expected to travel home and isolate with a newborn.

I had my first child at 23 in the middle of float season, my husband is a bush pilot. He called in sick to be in the delivery room and returned to his work schedule the next day.

Travelling to Edmonton would not have been an option. Like many deliveries, mine did not go as planned and ended in C section. If I had been in Edmonton, I would have been alone unsure how to get home with a newborn after major surgery. But as a mother, the most devastating part would be leaving my older children for weeks while I waited to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, just last year, a constituent had to be sent south for specialty prenatal care, but her own childhood trauma meant that leaving her older children in Yellowknife was not an option.

Mr. Speaker, Stanton has incredible OBS staff, and I want to acknowledge the demands of shift work on family life and thank the staff that continue to serve our communities. If Stanton cannot find a solution, this change will not be a straight transfer of patients to Edmonton. Families will require financial supports. Medical travel policies need to reflect actual costs, and solutions need to be established for older children unable to stay home.

Mr. Speaker, we are still in a pandemic. Recently Alberta cancelled its services to northern residents during a surge of COVID-19 patients. As Southerners feel the effects of waning immunity, this could again just interrupt the NWT's access to health care. But then what?

I know Stanton made this decision for the safety of patients, but this is not a solution, Mr. Speaker. My time here is not enough to talk about the significance of people leaving their land, territory, and supports during childbirth. This is a huge step in the wrong direction for our entire territory and a decision I just simply cannot accept. We should be fighting for more and not less. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NURSING ISSUES

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleagues for their previous statement on the nursing situation in our territory. I think it's clear that

our nurses are not having a good time in our territory, and many of these problems existed even before COVID-19 arrived in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I sense that, you know, we are in a bit of a downward spiral and morale, and I don't want management or the department or the nurses to get defensive. I really want to find a solution so that we can all get through this.

I've heard many complaints from nurses about management, and then they are told to take those complaints to the very same people they're complaining about. I contrast to this House, Mr. Speaker, where we have a very rigorous complaint process we just went through.

Mr. Speaker, COVID arrived, and the nurses are now joined by all health care workers in the stress of a hospital and health care facilities across the North and Canada. They have been put in a high-demand position. I've heard reports of some of them are leaving indeterminate jobs so that they can be treated better as locums. I've heard of reports of other nurses taking benefits advantage of the signing bonuses that numerous provinces are now entering.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that, you know, this is just a problem of throwing money at it. I believe there is some cultural issues in management. I believe this is some flexibility needed. And I know there is a survey out. I encourage all nurses to take that. And more importantly, I encourage the department to take everything that is said in that survey very seriously.

I worry that we know what many of the asks are going to be. If they're going to be difficult and if we ignore them once again, we are going to find ourselves in an even worse situation.

Mr. Speaker, lastly, the reality is the nursing profession has found itself in extreme demand throughout this pandemic. Other provinces are competing. We are losing that competition. I have heard nurses requesting signing bonuses, requesting increases in pay. And I've heard that for whatever reason, collective bargaining, and the way we do that does not allow us to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not accept that. We need to work with the union. We need to work with the nurses. And we need to find a way to be competitive in this field. And I know that is hard. I know that it is a different form of bargaining than we are used to. I know our finances are tight. But that is at least step one in solving this problem. I'll have questions for the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR MARTINE LOMEN

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Martine Lomen was born on March 16th, 1933, in the Mackenzie Mountains past Fisherman's Lake 18 kilometers from Fort Liard. Her biological parents were Christina Dudan and Alexi Lomen.

In 1947, she was married to Fredrick Kotchea through an arranged marriage.

On October 13th, 1948, both of them had their first child, John Kotchea. The stories she told that she was pregnant and was due anytime and wanted to be at Fisherman's Lake with her parents when she would have her first child. However, during their travel, she went into labour on the way there, and just when -- it was just Fred with her. She gave birth to John. After the delivery, she told Fred she and the baby were okay. So they continued their travels to her parents' camp.

Both of them went on to have eight sons and four daughters. At the age of 15, she was a young wife and a mother and learned her craft skills with traditional moose hide making.

She said her mother had asked her to start fleshing a moose hide since she has injured her arm. That is when she realized that she was very strong, and fixing a moose hide was no problem for her.

She went on to develop her skills and passions for the moose hide making. When shares her stories, she said with a smile, I never go without flusher and scrapers.

She was known for her skills in crafting moose hide moccasins. Fort Liard is well-known for its traditional birch bark berry baskets. She and her late sister, Sarah Edda, contributed to reviving and redesigning the traditional ways of the birch bark berry baskets. Together they developed a new way of crafting birch bark baskets, such as a general sanding the bark and adding colored -- colorful dyes, porcupine quills. And as saying goes, the rest is history.

She was passionate and created her birch bark baskets with colorful quilled flowers and birds, and harvest the material from the land.

Many people are thankful and grateful for her traditional crafting as she usually passed on her skills and knowledge. She was well-informed, a stern teacher to her daughters, daughters-in-law, and great -- and grand-daughters.

On February 11th, 2021, she passed away. Martine and Fred had raised a large family with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they will be forever missed and loved.

Mr. Speaker, as her son Steve said it best, Her legacy is with us, and her shoes will never be filled. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community. Members' statements. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Nunakput.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 18-19(2): REPORT ON BILL 24, AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVOLVING FUNDS ACT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction

Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act received second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment (Committee) on March 30, 2021. On March 31, 2021, the Minister tabled a plain language document on Bill 24 in the House (see Appendix A). The passage of the bill would allow the Minister to raise authorized debit and credit limit of the Petroleum Products Stabilization Fund from \$1 million to \$3 million.

Public Feedback

Committee published a notice seeking public feedback on the Bill and received one comment. The public raised concern regarding the limit of the fund, the last time the fund limit was amended and an analysis on the privatization of fuel services in the NWT, in which the department provided a technical response (see Appendix B).

Committee Concerns

On June 30, 2021 committee met in camera with Minister and senior officials to discuss the rationale for the amendment and the Petroleum Product Stabilization Fund generally. Through this process committee was concerned about several issues related to the fund including:

- the performance and management of the fund,
- the cause for increases in fuel volume purchases by the fund,
- limitations on fuel price increases for communities,
- the process for sourcing the lowest price of fuel for NWT customers,

- the ability for the GNWT to maximize economies of scale for fuel sales in communities, and
- whether standards were specified in procuring fuels such as low sulphur fuels for the NWT.

Committee received further information from the Minister on these matters and then held a Public Hearing with the Minister and proceeded to a Clause-by-Clause review of the Bill on September 21, 2021.

Conclusions

Committee is satisfied the department takes adequate measures to:

- source the lowest price of fuel,
- increase fuel storage capacity in communities to stabilize the supply chain of fuel,
- follow the Canadian General Standards Board regarding the type of fuel used in northern Canada,
- monitor industry progress on renewable petroleum products, and,
- efficiently and economically manage the administration of the fund.

Committee recognizes the department is constrained by the increase in demand for fuel volume, increases in the price of fuel and the limitations of the fund as currently legislated.

Committee supports the passage of Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act to assist with better managing fuel supply for NWT residents.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Member for Nunakput. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE REPORT 19-19(2): REPORT ON BILL 29, RESOURCE ROYALTY INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATUTE AMENDMENT ACT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, your hardworking committee and your standing committee on Economic Development and Environment is pleased to provide its report on Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act and commends it to the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act is a private Member's bill introduced by MLA O'Reilly. Bill 29 received second reading on June 1st, 2021, and was referred to Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment.

Bill 29 proposes to amend three pieces of legislation to the Mineral Resources Act (not yet in force), the Northwest Territories Lands Act, and the Petroleum Resources Act. The amendments would allow the Minister to disclose information of a confidential nature received by development and evaluation policy (such as royalty payments) to Members of the Legislative Assembly and Indigenous governments subject to restrictions for further disclosure.

Public Engagement

Committee sought feedback from Indigenous governments, companies currently paying royalties in NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines. Stakeholder comments were received: Tlicho government, Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines with the Mining Association of Canada, Arctic Canadian Diamond Company, The Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, Alternatives North.

Mr. Speaker, stakeholder submissions (Appendix A) were polarized between opposition overall of the bill versus support of the bill including suggestions to strengthen the clauses. The industry was not supportive of the bill.

The bill was viewed as creating uncertainty in an already poor investment climate and duplicative or unaligned to other jurisdictions. There was concern with sharing confidential tax information beyond staff with financial and tax expertise such as business and financial information shared with staff that may not have responsibility or expertise to protect sensitive financial data.

Confidentiality provisions were viewed to protect industry investment and the sharing of information more broadly increased concerns regarding the likelihood of breach of confidentiality. The scope of information to be shared was viewed as unclear and not necessarily supported by all parties. The bill was not viewed to support the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, premature to the concluding the review of Mining Fiscal Regime Review.

The Tlicho government, the Sahtu Secretariat and Alternatives North supported the intent of the bill. The Tlicho Government suggested clarifying the purpose and scope of implementation of the bill with provisions to ensure no information related to Indigenous governments would be shared. Both the Sahtu Secretariat and Alternatives North suggested

to strengthen the bill requiring the Minister to share information.

Mr. Speaker, if it's okay I will let the Member from Deh Cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

Committee concerns

On September 15, 2021 committee held a public hearing with the sponsoring Member. Committee also invited public presentations. The public hearing was live streamed on the Legislative Assembly channel. Presentations were provided from the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines with the Mining Association of Canada, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, as well as the sponsoring Member.

Members held varying positions on the bill. There was concern regarding the bill duplicating the information found through the federal Extractive Sectors Transparency Measures Act (ESTMA). Under ESTMA extractive companies must publicly disclose payments made to governments in Canada and abroad. ESTMA helps the Government of Canada deter corruption in the extractive sector. It was recognized that royalty payments made by mining companies to the GNWT could be located here however it was also noted the royalty payments reported through ESTMA do not match the royalty payments recorded in the GNWT's public accounts.

The GNWT public accounts report the royalty revenues from mining, oil and gas received annually as an aggregate total (i.e. it is not broken down by mine or by company). There are other additional reasons why the royalty reported in the public accounts do not match the royalty reported in ESTMA (not limited to differences in fiscal year reporting, and the number of operations a company may have in the NWT).

Canada supports global financial transparency efforts and aligns with Extractive Sectors Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards through the reported information made publicly available through the ESTMA. Canada was a major player to develop the global standard on mandatory extractive sector transparency payment disclosures and is a contributing board member to the initiative. Although Canada doesn't report under EITI, it is a supporter of the initiative and requires company payments to be disclosed through the information made public under ESTMA.

There was concern that Bill 29 implicated the mining oil and gas sector to disclose confidential information without requiring other sectors that pay royalties

(such as quarrying, forestry) to do the same. It was noted that the information disclosed would be information already provided to the Minister and the Minister could decide to share the information with Members of the Legislative Assembly or Indigenous governments. Committee recognized that even if Bill 29 was enacted, the Minister will still hold discretion whether to disclose confidential information.

There was concern among committee with the unknown risks regarding potential breaches of confidential information made possible through Bill 29. Following the public hearing, committee proceeded with the clause by clause review of the bill. I will hand it back to the Member for Nunakput. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank Mr. Bonnetrouge for reading that section there.

Committee could not reach agreement on how to proceed with the bill, and therefore recommends the bill for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Reports of standing and special committees. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION 783-19(2): HOUSING NEEDS

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, mahsi. [Translation]. Yesterday, I spoke on housing issues, and we have a lot of problems in our community. We don't have enough housing for our membership. There is overcrowding in a home, and I've mentioned that as well. I'd like to ask the question to the Housing Minister.

Who is eligible for housing and who is eligible for grants and repair program? There's a lot of people that are in need. Do they consider people's situation when they are approved for repairs? I'd like to know some of these rules and regulation on these. [Translation ends]. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for your questions. The eligibility for housing grants and repairs are

accepted by application. We do have the local housing authority that is in the community and also the district office as well too. They travel quite frequently into the Tlicho region. Can I provide the Member when our staff members are available to be meeting in the community and just to inform the Member when the Housing Corporation will be in her region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Can the Minister commit to working in partnership with the Tlicho government, the community government and the MLA, myself or any other MLAs, who are experiencing the same situation, to prepare a needs-based action for our regions.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Member had newly got elected I did make myself available to meet with her immediately to talk about the housing issues in Behchoko as this is what I recognize in her election time and wanted to follow up with that.

But right now the Housing Corporation is working with the Tlicho housing working group and we have developed that partnership. We do engage into federal engagements and applications for funding for her region. Also we do have the council of leaders housing working group which includes all Indigenous leaders throughout the Northwest Territories. That group was actually just established in June of this year as direction by the Premier. I believe that the council of leaders housing working group had met for the second time, I want to say in November. I can provide further information to the Member as well too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Will the Minister commit to providing additional housing units to the Tlicho region in this upcoming fiscal year. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, previously, in my announcements that we had acquired federal funding and the Housing Corporation is going to be delivering 90 units throughout the Northwest Territories. I can confirm that the Tlicho region will be receiving ten of those units. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Ten? Ten was not the number I was looking for. But that is okay for now, you know. Because what we're looking for -- like, I said, Tlicho region is in housing crisis and ten is not enough to -- and then we have 200 people on the waitlist and so that was the reason why. And then now the government is committed to retrofit some houses and those houses, it's not going to help reduce our waiting list. So therefore I'm just asking the Minister, will they commit to giving up the houses

that are too costly to repair so that they can build more houses. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just, you know, throughout the term of my time as Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, I want to reiterate that this is the largest housing delivery that we have had in a number of years, with 90 units coming to the Northwest Territories, and also the Housing Corporation submitting another federal application for an additional 14, which brings us to 108. We will meet the mandate requirement of a hundred units throughout the Northwest Territories.

And also I just wanted to highlight that the Housing Corporation works with each of the communities to develop a housing plan and that is initiated at the community level as well too. And just throughout the Northwest Territories to date, the Housing Corporation has retrofitted 324 housing units throughout the territory as well too, and looking at the home ownership programs as well.

And also the engagement with the Indigenous groups throughout the Northwest Territories by the federal government with those conversations going forward, there is going to be a significant amount of money coming to the territory that will be allocated to the Indigenous groups to help us with the housing crisis throughout the territory and a portion of that is going to the Tlicho. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 784-19(2):
ALCOHOL DELIVERY

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on October 19, 2021, the Department of Finance amended liquor regulations to allow liquor deliveries to people's homes. Can the Minister tell us if this was a directive from the Chief Public Health Officer or was this decision made by Cabinet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my role as the Minister of Finance I have had the opportunity to meet with the Chief Public Health Officer and the Premier and the Minister of Health regularly throughout this pandemic. It came to my attention during one of the recent outbreaks that began as of August that one of the challenges that was being faced was that individuals were leaving self-isolation in order to go out and access alcohol services. When that information came to me, the decision does come to me whether or not to amend regulations on Liquor Act and with that information and that knowledge,

knowing the situation we were in, that was under my decision. It was not a direction of the Chief Public Health Officer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if she is aware of any problems that have occurred under this temporary regulatory change since it was instituted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not right now aware of any challenges or difficulties or any new types of charges or any of the sort. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware in fact that it's been very minimally used, in fact almost not used at all and really I'd say that that's hopefully good news. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if there are any future plans to make this temporary liquor regulation into a permanent regulation for the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no, certainly not in the fashion that this one came about. This came about very responsively to situations that were coming to our information in regards to managing the outbreak of COVID-19. This is certainly not how I would intend to generally manage liquor regulations or to make any amendments to them. I would note that there is, of course, the much bigger review happening of the Liquor Act and the management of alcohol in the Northwest Territories and certainly under that context, it may well be reviewed generally and whether or not this is something the people of the territories want to see changed in some fashion could occur. But that's the only way that anything permanent would come into play, is in the course of a proceeding of that nature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, December for many people is the Christmas season, which is a special time for family and togetherness. Would the Minister consider ending this temporary liquor regulation earlier than December 31st, 2021. If so, how about November 30th, 2021, or sooner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the original impetus behind the change arose, if I recall correctly, when the outbreaks were, at that point, still in Yellowknife. There's been something of rolling outbreaks it seems, unfortunately, over the last few months. So I think I would say that I have been fairly reactive to the liquor regulations over the last couple of years with COVID-19 and quite quick to make amendments, where appropriate, to respond. So I will certainly go back and look and consider whether

or not that is feasible in the circumstances. I am cognizant that there's still something of an outbreak in the Beaufort Delta right now so I would want to consider if the original reasons for making this decision have changed and if they have, then I'd certainly reconsider that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 785-19(2):
COVID ACCOMMODATIONS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know the importance of air travel for the delivery of goods, passengers, medical travel, and workers around the NWT. From what I heard yesterday, the reason for terminating unvaccinated staff was because of not being allowed on aircraft.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance what discussions, if any, has the government had with the federal government to address the importance of air travel and our need to keep staff employed through accommodation measures when air travel is required. As I understand it, testing and PPE may be an option when flying to remote communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, this is one of those occasions where there's of course more than one department working together and in collaboration. So it's in cooperation with the Premier's office but also, of course, the Department of Infrastructure responsible for airports that we're putting some information together in this arena. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, airports, airport management, airport control, that is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. And many of discussions have indeed been had to ensure that where there is an emergency need, in the nature of medical need, that individuals will have leeway and will be able to access medical services. But in so far as otherwise, at that point, Mr. Speaker, the choice of the federal government was to put in place a mandate that was fairly strict, that is quite strict indeed, and if in fact it is a job requirement of someone who is a member of the GNWT's public service that they need to travel, then their job requirements would now no longer line up with what is available to them.

It is unfortunate. There has been, I think, a fairly long period of time within which hopefully folks have had an opportunity to consider their options, consider their choices, but at this point, unless the federal government makes a change to their arrangements, I'm not in a position to force them to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our airports, marine transportation services, and ferry services and correction services all have a connection to federal legislation. While the federal government is requiring some federal employees to be vaccinated and allowing accommodation for others, I ask the Minister what impact will this have on GNWT staff and contractors in areas that are subject to federal legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT very specifically ensured that our policy did allow accommodations so that individuals had the opportunity to be accommodated should they choose not to provide proof of vaccination. To the extent, however, that an GNWT employee is under a federally regulated field then they are subject to the jurisdiction of the federally regulated field and to the federal regulations and as such they would have to comply with those laws just as much as anybody else would. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after yesterday's questions and answers on COVID vaccine and accommodation, it's still not clear to me what departments or divisions would require employees to be vaccinated or which ones allow for accommodation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister which departments or divisions will require employees to be fully vaccinated prior to coming to work or, if not required to be vaccinated, which department or divisions have accommodation provisions. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all GNWT public servants are going to be subject to the mandatory vaccination policy that we have in place. They are being asked, everyone is being asked to provide their proof of vaccination by November 30th. If an individual does not provide proof of vaccination by that point, then they will be subject to the option of PPE and testing. Or if they still wish to not avail themselves of that accommodation, they can take leave without pay.

Now, there are some divisions or rather entities that I know people are sometimes not clear about, Mr. Speaker, so for example, MTS, the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority and NTPC are not members covered by this policy. They are not under the GNWT's public service. Similarly YK1, YCS staff are not. But other than that, I would think there's the other sort of typical or usual expectations of who is a public servant would apply. But certainly if anyone is not clear if the policy does in fact apply to them, they should be speaking to a supervisor to confirm if they are indeed a GNWT public servant because they do have seven days now in which now to provide their proof of vaccination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a stressful time for, you know, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated employees, knowing that, you know, they may not have a job come December 1st. So, you know, we don't want to be losing long-term employers, long-term Northerners, putting them out on the street, you know, possibly seeing them lose their homes, not being able to put food on the table.

So I'd ask the Minister if she would commit to sitting down with her federal counterparts and coming up with a solution to save jobs in the North. We may not be able to save all of the jobs but if we can save some jobs through accommodation, you know, it would be better than nothing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know there are some voices that are very loud about their belief about not being vaccinated or not informing the government, essentially, of their choices around vaccines.

The policy and the approach of the government has always, from the early days of the pandemic, been one about education, trying to provide information, trying to educate people about the best way to keep themselves safe, to keep members of the public safe, members of their community safe, and vaccination is a critical element in that.

So quite simply, Mr. Speaker, I would expect that I certainly can speak, and I do speak regularly with the CPHO. I anticipate, given that the federal government's regulations are even stricter than they too view vaccines as being an essential part of keeping their people safe as well as keeping the public safe that they serve.

So I am hopeful that over the next seven days, we see a high uptake in terms of the number of proof of vaccines that come in. I am hopeful that if people continue to have uncertainties or questions that they will speak to their health care provider. They don't need to come to the government, they don't need to look to the government for that information, they can go and speak to someone they trust in the health care profession. They should be getting that information from those professionals who can hopefully answer their questions, provide them the assurances they need, and it is certainly my hope that we will not be losing a great deal of jobs here in the Northwest Territories over that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 786-19(2):
OBSTETRICAL CARE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding nursing.

My first question is why was the labor and delivery announcement made now as opposed to sooner so people could plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I found out about this issue on Friday, and it was announced yesterday. What happened was we had a block of unfilled shifts on the obstetrics ward and we tried a number of ways to fill those shifts, but finally we could only get it down to 46 vacant shifts and at that point we had to make a decision about what to do with people with births going forward from December 10th. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to all of those that do have to travel to Edmonton for their birth. My next question is what has the department done to try and mitigate the labor and delivery reduction in services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Specifically to mitigate this, we have this program of transferring expectant mothers and their partners to Alberta to deliver safely in Edmonton or in another Alberta location. So our aim first and foremost is to provide a safe delivery for patients. This is an area in which it's hard to predict the amount of staffing that is required because it's an on-demand service. And I understand from nurses that births bunch up and so you might have a very busy couple of days and then a couple of days without as much traffic.

What we do know is that there are 80 to 90 people who would have given birth at Stanton between December 10th and February 21st and another 25 to 30 from Kitikmeot. So the volume was simply too great for the number of staff that we had and so we have arranged this alternative to go to Edmonton.

But let me say, it is not ideal. I recognize that this is a hardship on families, but I am hoping that they will support our rationale that a safe delivery is the kind of delivery that they want and unfortunately that is not possible here between December 10th and February 21st. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's quite shocking to me. I knew we were a fertile territory but I didn't realize the number was that great. I guess my next question is what other ongoing work is being done to address the nursing

shortage in the NWT overall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of course, we have a mandate commitment to increase the resident work force and to that end, we have created a draft plan to create a sustainable workplace which the standing committee will see when it is in its more advanced form.

The recruitment staff have continued to go to fairs, career fairs. They have employed everyone who has come out of Aurora College in the last year. They have used social media platforms and traditional forms of advertising. They've called agencies for locums. They've talked to people about canceling their transfer assignments. They have talked to people who are not currently working as OBS nurses about whether they would like to come back as OBS nurses. So I feel confident that the health authority has tried every way to mitigate this, but if more ideas come forward as a result of this announcement, we're certainly willing to work with them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions. Final supplementary, Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that there is some optimism around turning this around. So I guess then my next question for the Minister is what does she see as some of the biggest barriers to addressing our nursing shortage here in the territory. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. I think the biggest reason is, in fact the reasons that were outlined in the letter that was sent to all of us at the beginning of the month - nurses are burned out. They have had their leave cancelled and shortened, and they are at the end of their rope. We are giving them the time off that they are requesting, and this is the end result of it. We don't have enough nurses to keep the obstetrics unit open.

We pay very well. We have the second highest wages in the country. But having said that, because there have been more wages paid in the South, the gap between southern wages and northern wages has started to close. So it's no longer as lucrative for nurses to come here as it might have been, even a couple of years ago.

We have very limited levers to do anything about that for reasons that some people have already discussed. The nurses are part of the UNW, and the UNW settled its collective agreement this spring for two years and provided everybody with an increase but not with a special amount of money for nurses.

So where we're at is we're in this highly competitive environment to attract nurses here. We have good wages but they are not as good as they once were in comparison to other jurisdictions. And of course

we also have a high cost of living. So we're in a very challenging situation to bring on full-time staff. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 787-19(2):
OBSTETRICAL CARE

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to start off by saying thank you to the Minister who has listened to many of the anecdotes I have shared from constituents of Yellowknife who have come forward to me.

I want to start off by asking about supports for families. When parents are away, they're going to be expected to be leaving three weeks early. That means that they are going to be receiving at least three weeks less income to start off. In addition to that, I received word today that one of my constituents is being asked to pay a copayment fee in order to travel down to Edmonton. They're not a GNWT employee, so they do not receive additional medical travel benefits for that and so I'm wondering what financial supports the Department of Health and Social Services are making available for families. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is making medical travel supports available to people so that means the airfare is covered. The accommodation is covered on a sliding scale depending on the family's income, whether they qualify to go into Larga or whether they need to get a hotel of their own. What we recognize about these situations is that they are all unique. And so the staff has been calling each expectant parent and doing case management with them where they determine what their needs are and what kind of supports in particular we can provide to them by coordinating benefits with an employer, engaging federal supports such as Jordan's Principle, providing system navigation with other departments such as ECE for income support, and even potentially establishing brief voluntary service agreements through Child and Family Services to support families who need extra income for child care, grocery vouchers and so on. So we recognize that this is a difficult situation, and we're trying to provide case management to reassure parents that we're going to help them.

Now, on the topic of lost income, I'm sorry, we don't provide lost income for expectant parents. And I just want to underline that while this is a novel situation for Yellowknife, of the 23 births anticipated from December 10th to the end of the month, eight are

from Yellowknife and 23 are from the communities. And my point in raising that is that this situation of having to leave family and supports and come and live in a place that we're not from for three to five weeks is in fact a common Northwest Territories experience. That doesn't make it great for people in Yellowknife.

But we need to consider that we need to make the situation equitable among the people who come from small communities and those in Yellowknife who are now inconvenienced by the closure of the obstetrics unit. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's safe to say that this is a little bit more than an inconvenience for people having to travel away. And I absolutely respect the fact that people have been doing this for a very long time from communities, but there's definitely been -- they've had more than three weeks notice that they're pregnant and expected to travel not in their home community. I have, for example, in my constituency that I serve, people who now have weeks of notice that they will be expected to travel. They do not have a support system in town where they can simply leave older children. They do not work for the government. They are not Indigenous and eligible for supports through NIHB. So right off the bat, there is a definite significant financial burden. As well, many of the people I serve are self-employed. They don't qualify for EI payments either. So this is definitely an emotional and financial shock to their family. With that being said, the hotel benefits for medical travel right now are \$50 a night. I don't know of a single hotel in Edmonton that is \$50 a night.

So is the Minister willing to change the medical travel hotel benefit to reflect the actual cost of hotels in Edmonton. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, medical travel will by default approve a support person to go with the pregnant person to Edmonton to give birth. That means that their total benefits are \$100 a night for a hotel room - I'm assuming that they would share that hotel room - and \$36 for food.

I recognize that that doesn't cover the whole costs, but medical travel doesn't, in any case, cover the whole costs; it makes the services more accessible. But you could argue that that still isn't enough, but that is the medical travel policy as it exists today. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, that means that somebody who's travelling without their spouse because their spouse doesn't have the time off required or somebody who is a single parent is getting \$50 while somebody who is in a

double-income potential family is getting a hundred dollars for their hotel room. So that's a huge discrepancy. And when we're talking about equity, that is not equitable.

Mr. Speaker, my next question for the Minister is in regards to supports for parents that have no support system in the NWT or do not feel that it is safe to leave their children home in the NWT for weeks. Are there supports that Health and Social Services is working to make available in Edmonton for families that need to travel with their children. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate again that the obstetrics team is calling each patient individually and doing case management with them. They -- I have enumerated a number of supports that may be possible to families. And the obstetrics teams are eager to set people up with supports.

What we want is to help them organize and plan their trip and to make this experience as least disruptive as possible. And so that is what they -- that's what they're working on. And I would really encourage the people who are caught up in this obstetrics closure to engage with the obstetrics team and talk to them about the things they need so that they can be accommodated. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while a parent travels to Edmonton to deliver a child and travels home with a newborn, they will be required to isolate when they return to the Northwest Territories. My concern with this is that families are going to want to be together. Potentially there will be other children in the family. And one of the parents may still be required to go to work.

So I'm wondering if there will be an exemption for the parent that needs to return to work to be able to live in the home to support a new baby and a parent who has just delivered. And so I would like to know what the rules will be around exemptions for vaccines -- sorry. I've lost my words at the end of that sentence. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand there's new guidance on self-isolation coming that will reflect the vaccination of children ages 5 to 11.

In the meantime, what I can say is that if this is a one-child household, the child's just been born in Edmonton, if the parents are vaccinated, the family doesn't have to isolate on return. If they have children who aren't vaccinated, that changes the story, and they will have to isolate on return.

Of course it's always possible for people to ask for exemptions to isolation by contacting cpho@gov.nwt.ca and explain the circumstances and determining with whether it is possible to get an exemption based on need. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 788-19(2):
CLAWBACK OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
SENIORS' ASSISTANCE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question's for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment who is responsible for income support programs.

First of all, can the Minister confirm whether benefits under the NWT seniors supplement are being reduced for those who received payments under the Canada Emergency Response Benefit? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit is a fixed payment of \$196. For those who are eligible, either receive it, or they don't receive it. So the benefit itself would not be reduced other than being reduced to zero if the person is not eligible for Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

The eligibility criteria for the NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit are the same as for the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement. And so if someone is not receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement from the federal government, they are not receiving the NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit. They may see a reduction in their GIS. I've heard of that. But they are still receiving that supplementary benefit from the NWT.

Every year we have around -- well, last year we had around 1500 people receive the benefit. The year before that, about 1400 people. The year before that, 1300. This year we're already at around 1500, and we're only partway through the fiscal year. So for the most part, we aren't seeing a decline in those people who are eligible and who are receiving the benefit. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Look, I'm confused at the best of times, and it's been a long day, but my understanding is that seniors are seeing the NWT senior supplement -- they see it being reduced if they took CERB payments. So last year during the global pandemic, this government declared an exemption period during which some

forms of assistance would not be counted as unearned income in calculating benefits. These exemptions were in place April 1 to October 31st. In some cases, right up to December 31st.

Can the Minister tell us what the status is of those exemptions and how they impact any clawbacks of the NWT seniors benefit? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

I will send the Minister the questions ahead of time. Thanks.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are no claw backs of the NWT Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit. There's no claw backs from what I understand of any federal benefits such as Old Age Security or Guaranteed Income Supplement.

What's happening is that seniors who received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit last year had incomes greater than the threshold to receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. And so this year's Guaranteed Income Supplement eligibility is based last year's income. And if the CERB program increased your income over that threshold, you no longer receive GIS or you've seen it reduced. Our benefit that we deliver has not been reduced. It's either you get it, or you don't get it. So I want to clear that up for the Member.

Last year, the Member's correct, the income assistance program exempted around \$10 million worth of benefits, so around \$7.8 million worth of CERB. The rest is gifts from family members, supports from Indigenous governments or non-profits. And those have all ended.

There was a one-time GST payment, one-time Old Age Security payment. But that all happened in 2020, and they would all -- they would count against -- or count as income in 2020 when assessing this year's eligibility for GIS. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that very eloquent explanation that I couldn't get out very easily. So clawbacks might not be the best term, but that's what the seniors are calling them. What's happening, of course, is that they're getting dinged for taking the CERB payment.

So what steps can the Minister take to not link the NWT seniors supplement to GIS and allow seniors to access this benefit for the 2020 tax year. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And from what I understand, if people are seeing a reduction in their GIS because they received CERB, they would still receive more money overall; albeit it would have been in the last fiscal year and isn't necessarily much good to people in this fiscal year.

The NWT Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit is a legislated program, and there is -- the only way to do what the Member is requesting is to change the legislation, and if we were to do that, that change wouldn't happen until late next year. So I don't think that is likely.

What we can do, though, those seniors who are suffering financial hardship and who are eligible, can apply for income assistance. And I know there are -- you know, people don't want to apply for income assistance. But it's a program to help people in those situations. I know there are negative connotations with it, but the fact is it is if you can't pay your rent, we want to help you pay your rent; if you can't pay your heat, we want to help you pay your heat. That's what the program is there for. So if people are suffering financial hardship, I encourage them to apply through the income assistance program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I think what he was saying to me there was almost code for a private Member's bill. But I did pretty good in the last Assembly. We'll see if it happens in this one.

So, but I'd understood that this government is doing some sort of review on income support systems for seniors. Can the Minister give us an update on that work and a timeline as well. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Member is correct. We are looking at the income assistance program, not just for seniors, but one of the key changes we want to make is tailoring a program for seniors and persons with disabilities, essentially people who have aged out of the workforce, we know aren't going to be in the workforce and shouldn't have to meet the same requirements as others. So that work is well underway.

As with everything, you know, things haven't gone as quickly as we would hope, but for the most part, it is on track. This year there was a lot of preliminary work done, looking at our programs, looking at programs in other jurisdictions, doing literature reviews. There has been surveys on productive choices. And that information is being put together. And I haven't even seen that yet, but I look forward to sharing this with the standing committee when the opportunity arises.

An RFP went out for the engagement piece of this. And so in the coming months in the new year, there will be a public engagement.

And I know we are in the time of COVID, but there are some things that we can do virtually that are easier to do virtually, and there's some types of engagement we want to do more in person. So I've asked the department to ensure that we are reaching

the people we need to reach when we go to engage, because not everyone has a computer, not everyone's computer savvy.

So that part is beginning in the new year, and by April of 2023, we hope to have the program rolled out. And those who are eligible to be transitioned into the new program for seniors and persons with disabilities, we hope to have them transferred by that date. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 789-19(2):
NURSING ISSUES

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know there's been a lot of discussion about nursing and health care staff today. I thank you for the Minister's answers. I think she has illustrated a lot of the problems we're facing well.

I guess I struggle as an MLA, and there seems to have been a breakdown of communication. I know the Minister directs the department, and the department directs an arm's-length health authority, and the health authority directs the hospital, and then there's the union and the local, and it just seems that at the end of the day, many of our nurses do not feel they are being listened to.

And I would like to hear what the Minister is doing to make sure that those lines of communication are flowing and that our nurses do feel that their concerns are ultimately being heard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. We are trying to get to the bottom of the issues that are making nurses unhappy. You know, I'm getting the same correspondence as the Member is. I'm aware of a number of issues that have been raised.

So to that end, the department started to do exit surveys with nurses who have left since January to try to determine why they left. Was it the work environment? Was it the workload? Was it the pay? Did somebody in their family get transferred to another location and they decided to leave? So we're trying to understand why people are leaving.

The other thing that we're doing that relates to the nurses who are still working for us is doing a survey. The Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut is currently administering a survey referenced by the MLA for Twin Lakes asking nurses about job satisfaction, about gaps that they see and how those could be filled and so on.

That survey is available now to nurses of all kinds and in all places in the NWT, and I would really encourage them to fill in this survey, take the time to fill in the survey -- I understand it's 15 to 20 minutes -- so that we can get a better grip on what kinds of issues are pushing people away and what kinds of things would pull them back in again.

At the end of the day, staff is everything to the delivery of health, and we are very fortunate to have good, loyal, well-trained staff. We need more of them. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I just -- I checked Hansard, and I saw that a few Members and the Minister had raised the issue of exit surveys which we weren't previously doing in the spring, and I'm glad to hear we are now doing that.

I'm also happy to hear that we're doing this, there's a larger survey going on. I guess my concern, Mr. Speaker, is I think we can anticipate many of the things it'll say. It'll say they're burnt out. Staff tend to raise management concerns when they are surveyed. They're clearly going to raise some of the compensation concerns.

And I know that many of those areas we can't quite solve now. So I'm unsure if we get them in a survey, whether that changes. So I just want to hear what the Minister plans to do with the results of the surveys and whether maybe this can be a tool to push us over the edge to take some of those actions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this situation, it is infinitely preferable to keep a nurse we have than to try and hire a new one. You know, they are already established here; they understand the operating environment; they understand our electronic medical records system, and so on and so forth. We would like them to stay.

We offer very good professional development benefits and professional training opportunities and other things that are beyond salaries and within our control to incentivize nurses to stay and to take any additional training which may enhance their careers and their sense of job satisfaction.

I have heard people say that the work environment is the problem. I'm not clear what that means, and I'm looking forward to hearing what that means so that we can address whatever that is. I don't know if it's not enough staff on shift or whether it's scratchy relationships between the union and management, or what it is. This is something that I need to learn so that we can address those issues and encourage nurses to stay with us. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that answer. I've heard the Minister say that we have a new collective agreement with

the UNW. We are unable to offer, you know, one specific profession a bonus. And I guess I don't quite understand where that resistance is coming from. I don't see how a union is going to refuse to allow its Members to get more compensation. I don't understand if that resistance is from the finance or the local or where that is coming from.

So I would welcome some enlightenment on that. But I guess the real question is can we give our current health care workers some sort of bonus or raise, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Union of Northern Workers represents nurses and the civil service in the NWT. In the summer, they ratified an agreement for 1.5 percent increase for two years this fiscal year, next fiscal year.

If we are going to offer more money to people to work, then we need to make the situation equitable. And at this point, we don't have a way to do that. Health is understaffed. But not only health. Education is very understaffed. There is a lot of gaps in teacher assignments in the Northwest Territories. Corrections officers are understaffed.

So the problem that we have is how to single out one occupation and incentivize them without taking into consideration that there may be other occupations where there's a shortage of staff, a competitive environment for staff.

And so at this point, there's no easy way around that. I will just say that in many jurisdictions, nurses have their own union to deal with their own issues, workplace issues, compensation, and so on. But that, so far, has not been a direction that's gone in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I guess I want to head off the potential of, you know, there's some debate about whether the UNW Act and the Public Service Agreement allows the nurses to form their own union, whether that's legal. There's a tension, I imagine, in the UNW of taking Members out of their union. I think there is possible options of instead of an own union, a separate collective agreement for nurses. But I really do not want to be here in two years where the situation is where the local is in a fight with the UNW who's in a fight with the Finance Minister, and we're in a very tense situation. And I know there are talks of year after year of organizing their own unions.

So I guess I want to ask the Minister are there conversations happening between the respective parties about possibility of their own collective agreement or just making sure if that happens, that

it does not get really messy, because I think this could be a conversation that needs to happen now, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not well-informed in this area at all about any efforts that have been made or are being made to create a separate union for the nurses or a separate bargaining unit.

Really, the relationship with the union is managed by the Department of Finance which has responsibility for human resources. And so in terms of those questions, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, would be more informed than myself. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 790-19(2):
LAND ISSUES IN TLICHO COMMUNITIES

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Masi. I have questions for the Department of Justice. So is the department aware of the difficulties in Tlicho region regarding the land administration systems and transferring ownership. What is the Minister and department doing to support the communities and address the problems. Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues that the Member has raised, they occur all across the Northwest Territories. We have the Office of the Public Trustee, which manages the estates for persons who are deceased. They can often provide some advice. We have the Legal Aid Outreach Clinic, and the constituents can call that to perhaps get some advice or get pointed in the right direction. But the unfortunate reality is that often these things require a lawyer.

And I wish that we had a team of lawyers to send out to communities to deal with some of these issues or/and proactively deal with some of these issues. But outside of those resources that I've just mentioned, we don't have those available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: I wasn't aware he was going to say that public trustee. But public trustee, they do not have the capacity.

So I'm just asking the Minister, can he commit to send a legal team from MACA to help our community government in Behchoko, Whati, Gameti, and Wekweeti to address the outstanding land issues. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. No, I can't commit on behalf of another Minister, the Minister of MACA.

And you know, frankly, when we had one initiative in this government that required, you know, intensive use of a legal team, we had to add more positions to the budget because we don't have bodies to commit to issues like these. So I know that's not the answer the Member is looking for, but that's the only answer I have right now.

But I will have conversations with the Minister of MACA so that we can dig a little deeper into this. I'm happy to have further conversations with the Member as well to perhaps get a better sense of some of the specifics of these issues and see if we can start chipping away. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Well, in the long run, only changes to the legislation, the Tlicho Community Government Act will fully address the problems with the land administration systems.

Will the Minister commit to working with his colleague, Minister of MACA, to consider bringing forward changes to the legislation in consultation with the communities. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that's out of my jurisdiction. Justice wouldn't really have a role in that, other than, you know, providing the legal services that would then be billed back to MACA. But I can -- obviously the Minister has just heard that. I can have a further conversation. And perhaps, you know -- I see the -- the Member looks like she has a legal team flanking her with lawyers on each side that might be able to assist with some of her issues as well. I know that Members do provide some legal services in the communities, and so maybe that's another option. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Written questions. Oh, sorry. Member for Kam Lake.

ORAL QUESTION 791-19(2):
OBSTETRICAL CARE

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There was still three minutes left, guys. I'll be really, really quick.

I have a couple more questions. My questions are still for the Minister of Health and Social Services. And I'd like to know if parents are coming back potentially after having delivered in Edmonton and having to isolate when they get home, how does the Department of Health and Social Services, namely public health, intend to do well-baby visits and how do they intend to further support new moms. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware that there will be any changes to those services. They're not delivered by obstetrics nurses. They're delivered by public health. And so when people return with their newborns, they'll get the same services that they would have if they had delivered here. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I must be very confused because my question is in regards to if somebody's coming home, they're having to isolate, then they can't have anybody in their home from public health. So I know it has nothing to do with obstetrics. But I'm just wondering, as far as somebody being on isolation with a newborn, how is public health able to provide support to that parent. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, I'm sorry. I don't have a specific answer to that question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that's an important one that we follow up on so that if a parent does have an issue that they need assistance with, how the department will be able to support that parent. I know that those first two weeks are an important time for postpartum depression, lactation consultants. There's mental health supports. There's a lot of reasons that a parent would need support in those first two weeks. If someone has had a C-section, quite often you have staples removed. There's multiple different reasons. And so I'm just making sure that parents have solutions once they're home.

My last question -- and I promise to move on in your agenda, thank you, Mr. Speaker -- is I'm wondering if Health and Social Services would be willing to provide birth worker grants even through child and family services so that people who feel that they need consistent care between the Northwest Territories and Alberta have access to dollars to be able to hire a birth worker. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. I'm sorry, I don't have a good answer to this either. I think that we don't cover birth work here. So we wouldn't be covering it in other jurisdictions as well. But I'll certainly get back to the Member about that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 466-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES AND BORROWING
AUTHORIZATIONS), NO. 4 2020-2021

TABLED DOCUMENT 467-19(2):
ADVANCING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY – DISCUSSION PAPER

TABLED DOCUMENT 468-19(2):
OIL AND GAS ANNUAL REPORT 2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 469-19(2):
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGREEMENT REPORT FOR
MINES OPERATING IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do have some documents to table. I wish to table the following four documents, Mr. Speaker.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 4, 2020-2021; Advancing the Northwest Territories Knowledge Economy - Discussion Paper; Oil and Gas Annual Report 2020; and Socio-Economic Agreement Report for Mines Operating in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services

TABLED DOCUMENT 470-19(2):
ADDICTION RECOVERY EXPERIENCES
SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS, OCTOBER
2021

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Addiction Recovery Experiences Survey Results and Analysis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Justice.

TABLED DOCUMENT 471-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LAW FOUNDATION
3RD ANNUAL REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDING
JUNE 30, 2020

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Northwest Territories Law Foundation 38th Annual Report for the Period Ending June 30th, 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 472-19(2):
A REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT OF THE
NATURAL GAS ROYALTY SYSTEM IN BRITISH
COLUMBIA PREPARED FOR THE
GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA,
SEPTEMBER 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I was worried I got a promotion there for a second.

I wish to table A Review and Assessment of the Natural Gas Royalty System in British Columbia Prepared for the Government of British Columbia, dated September 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services

Notice of Motions for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 40:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE MEDICAL
PROFESSION ACT

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm clearly your favorite, and I appreciate that. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, November 25th, 2021, I will move that Bill 40, an Act to Amend the Medical Profession Act, will be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: That's very good, Minister. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Colleagues, before we continue, by the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 137-19(2), Tabled Document 138-19(2), Tabled Document 139-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 437-19(2), Capital Estimates 2022-2023. We'd like to start the consideration of the Department of Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay, we will proceed with Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am happy to present the Tabled Document 437-19(2) Capital Estimates 2022-2023.

These capital estimates total \$502.6 million to support and continue infrastructure investment in our communities.

Major highlights of these estimates include:

- \$150.2 million for highways, winter roads, bridges, and culverts. This includes funding of
 - \$23.5 million for the Great Bear River Bridge;
 - \$16.9 million for the Mount Gaudet Access Road,
 - and \$13 million for the Prohibition Creek Access Road, a total of \$36.2 million to advance the environmental and planning work for the Mackenzie Valley and Slave Geologic Province All-Season Roads.
- \$5.9 million to advance the replacement of the Frank Channel Bridge, and
- \$4.4 million for the completion of the Tlicho All-Season Road Project.
- \$84.1 million for various airport and runway projects under the Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund, Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan, and the Department of National Defence.
- \$70.2 million to address the one-time cost associated with the government's adoption of Public Sector Accounting Board -- Public Sector Accounting Asset Retirement Obligation Standards.
- \$47.4 million for long-term care facilities, health centres, improvements to health information systems, and biomedical equipment, including \$2.9 million towards a wellness and recovery centre in Yellowknife.
- \$21.7 million for the replacement and renovations to existing schools, including
 - \$11.1 million to complete the work on the Mangilaluk School in Tuktoyaktuk and

- \$6.9 million to complete the J.H. Sissons School replacement project.
- And \$29 million in continued funding to support community governments with their infrastructure needs.

The overall capital spend is offset by a total of \$216.2 million in support from the federal government through various infrastructure programs, including

- \$70.3 million from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan,
- \$56.5 million from the National Trade Quarters Fund,
- \$41.2 million from the Department of National Defence,
- \$20 million from the Building Canada Plan,
- \$14.2 million from the Airport Capital Assistance Program, and
- \$11.5 million from the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund.

That concludes my opening marks, Madam Chair. I will be happy to answer any questions the Members might have.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. We've agreed to begin with general comments on the capital estimates. Do Members wish to make general comments before we consider the tabled document in detail? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that the Chair rise and report progress.

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

---Carried.

I will now rise to report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I please have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Report of Committee of the Whole

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 437-19(2) and would like to report progress. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Motion is in order. To the motion. House seconded, Member for Yellowknife Centre. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried.

MR. SPEAKER: Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, November 24th, 2021, 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' statements
3. Members' statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of visitors in the gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral questions
8. Written questions
9. Returns to written questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notice of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for the 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
 - Tabled Document 437-19(2), Capital Estimates
 - Tabled Document 438-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures, No. 2, 2021-2022)

- Tabled Document 439-19(2),
Supplementary Estimates (Operations
Expenditures), No. 2, 2021-2022
- Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities
Act
- Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving
Funds Act
- Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information
Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
- Bill 30, An Act to Amend the Aurora College
Act
- Bill 31, An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act
- Bill 32, An Act to Amend the Northern
Employees Benefits Services Pension Plan
Act
- Bill 33, National Indigenous Peoples Day Act

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, November 24th 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

