



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

2nd Session

Day 154

19th Assembly

HANSARD

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Pages

The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

PLEASE SEND ANY CORRECTIONS TO HANSARD EDITOR

kate_covello@ntassembly.ca

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.
(Mackenzie Delta)

Hon. Diane Archie

(Inuvik Boot Lake)
Deputy Premier
Minister of Infrastructure
Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation

Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge

(Deh Cho)

Ms. Caitlin Cleveland

(Kam Lake)

Hon. Paulie Chinna

(Sahtu)
Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories
Minister responsible for Homelessness
Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board
Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

Hon. Caroline Cochrane

(Range Lake)
Premier
Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Minister responsible for the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat

Mr. Richard Edjericon

(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Hon. Julie Green

(Yellowknife Centre)
Minister of Health and Social Services
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities
Minister responsible for Seniors

Mr. Jackie Jacobson

(Nunakput)

Mr. Rylund Johnson

(Yellowknife North)

Ms. Frieda Martselos

(Thebacha)

Ms. Katrina Nokleby

(Great Slave)

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly

(Frame Lake)

Ms. Lesa Semmler

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

Mr. Rocky Simpson

(Hay River South)

Hon. R.J. Simpson

(Hay River North)
Government House Leader
Minister of Education, Culture & Employment
Minister of Justice

Hon. Shane Thompson

(Nahendah)
Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
Minister of Lands
Minister responsible for Youth

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

(Yellowknife South)
Minister of Finance
Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, including responsibility for the Business Development and Investment Corporation
Minister responsible for the Status of Women

Ms. Jane Weyallon

Armstrong
(Monfwi)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Glen Rutland

Deputy Clerks

Ms. Kim Wickens

Committee Clerks

Mr. Michael Ball
Ms. Jennifer Franki-Smith
Ms. Cynthia James

Law Clerks

Ms. Sheila MacPherson
Mr. Toby Kruger

Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	1
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	2
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 351-19(2): ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT DURING EXTENDED EVACUATION	2
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 352-19(2): MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS	3
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 353-19(2): MINISTERS ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE	4
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	4
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1510-19(2): SEARCHING FOR FRANK GRUBEN.....	4
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1511-19(2): INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	4
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1512-19(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EMERGENCIES AND PREPAREDNESS	5
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1513-19(2): CLIMATE EMERGENCY	6
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1514-19(2): K'ATL'ODEECHE FIRST NATION RESERVE FIRE	6
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1515-19(2): SUPPORT FOR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES TOURISM OPERATORS	7
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1516-19(2): DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CORPORATE REGISTERIES TRANSPARENCY	7
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1517-19(2): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROCUREMENT POLICY REVIEW	8
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1518-19(2): CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF NUNAKPUT RESIDENTS.....	8
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1519-19(2): YOUTH HOMELESSNESS	9
MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1520-19(2): HAY RIVER AND K'ATL'ODEECHE FIRST NATION RESERVE EVACUATION.....	9
RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS	10
RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1353-19(2): IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION	10
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	12
ORAL QUESTIONS	12
QUESTION 1508-19(2): REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROCUREMENT POLICIES	12
QUESTION 1509-19(2): IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES.....	14
QUESTION 1510-19(2): SEARCHING FOR FRANK GRUBEN.....	15
QUESTION 1511-19(2): CLIMATE EMERGENCY	16
QUESTION 1512-19(2): PERMITTING FOR FRONTIER LODGE	18
QUESTION 1513-19(2): HAY RIVER FISH PLANT	19
QUESTION 1514-19(2): HOUSING EVACUEES FROM K'ATL'ODEECHE FIRST NATION RESERVE FIRE	20
QUESTION 1515-19(2): TRANSPARENCY OF CORPORATE REGISTERIES	21
QUESTION 1516-19(2): EMERGENCY LEAVE FOR GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EMPLOYEES AND INCOME SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS IMPACTED BY EVACUATION ORDERS	22
QUESTION 1517-19(2): NORTHWESTEL AND BELL BILLING AND SERVICES	24
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	25
WRITTEN QUESTION 65-19(2): PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS CAPITAL AND OPERATING COSTS AND REVENUES.....	25
REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS	26
BILL 79: AN ACT TO AMEND THE JUDICATURE ACT	26
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 927-19(2): REVISED 2022-2023 COMMISSION SCOLAIRE FRANCOPHONE TERRITORIES DU NORD-OUEST OPERATIONS BUDGET	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 928-19(2): SUBMISSION ON THE 2022-2023 TLICHO COMMUNITY SERVICES AGENCY CAPITAL BUDGET.....	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 929-19(2): FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 1353-19(2): IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 930-19(2): ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 OFFICE OF THE REGULATOR OF OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS	26
TABLED DOCUMENT 931-19(2): REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA TO THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA: CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS, INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT, 2023.....	26
NOTICES OF MOTION	26
MOTION 81-19(2): APPOINTMENT OF LAW CLERK AND DEPUTY LAW CLERK	26
MOTIONS	27
MOTION 81-19(2): APPOINTMENT OF LAW CLERK AND DEPUTY LAW CLERK, CARRIED	27
NOTICES OF MOTION FOR THE FIRST READING OF BILLS	27

BILL 90: AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT, No. 5..... 27
BILL 91: AN ACT TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CARBON TAX ACT, No. 2..... 27
CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS..... 27
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE 28
ORDERS OF THE DAY..... 28

Unedited Hansard

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, May 25, 2023****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Good afternoon, colleagues. Please join me in thanking elder Lillian Elias in leading us in prayer today.

Before we begin, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the wildfires and flooding impacting our communities across the territory. If you or your community has been impacted by the fires south of the lake, or by the flooding in my riding, please know that our thoughts are with you all. If you are impacted, I encourage you to work with local emergency officials.

I want to personally thank the leaders and staff, people who have been working tirelessly to help the affected residents. If you have not been impacted but you want to help those who are, I encourage you to make donations and reach out to those who are providing assistance. As Northerners, we help each other when and how we can. We are here for each other.

Colleagues, we have not been together in this House since March 30th, 2023, and I am pleased to welcome you back. It's great to be here. Although we have not met in this House in nearly two months, I know you have all been busy in our committees, have met numerous times, and have travelled and discussed legislation with residents. Cabinet Members have been busy with the ongoing operations of government. Each of us has been occupied with the needs of our constituents, the people who elected us and whom we represent in this Chamber. Colleagues, I hope you were also able to find time to connect with your family and closest friends, the people who support us as we work for the people of the territory.

Springtime in the Northwest Territories is a beautiful time. The days are getting longer, the birds have returned from the south, and the waterways are opening up. I know a lot of you and your constituents have been out on the

land taking part in the spring hunt. I wish everybody success and safety on the land. And I hope you get a good tan like I did over the spring.

Colleagues, please join me in welcoming our pages to the Chamber. It is an honour to share this space with our youth. Mahsi.

Not only are we welcoming youth into this Chamber as pages for this sitting, but we also recently hosted our 19th Youth Parliament. It was expiring to hear our youth read their statements and debate motions in this Chamber. Our Youth Parliament is a wonderful program that I am very proud of, and I want to thank the staff who made this successful again this year. I have said many times that I believe our youth are our future. Based on what I seen and heard during our Youth Parliament, I am confident our future is in good hands.

I would also like to welcome our interpreters back to the Assembly and thank them for their work. Our languages are vital to us as Northerners. They tie us to our culture and to the land and to one another. Our interpreters make it possible for us to use, strengthen, and honour languages. During this sitting, I am honoured that we will be able to provide interpretation into the following languages: Dene Suline Yatie, Inuvialuktun, Dene Kede, Dene Zhatie, Tlicho Yatii, and French.

Now, colleagues, it is my duty to advise the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. It reads: Dear, Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories the passage of Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024; and, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2023-2024, during the second session of the 19th Legislative Assembly. Yours truly, Margaret M. Thom, Commissioner.

Thank you, colleagues. Ministers' statements. Deputy Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 351-19(2): ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT DURING EXTENDED EVACUATION

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Premier to announce two new government policies on how the Government of the Northwest Territories supports resident who have been evacuated from their communities for extended periods of time and communities that support them. As of May 24th, nearly 2,000 people from Hay River and the K'atloodeeche First Nation Reserve have registered as evacuees in Yellowknife, with additional evacuees staying in other NWT communities including Enterprise, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, and Fort Smith. Currently, residents who must evacuate their home community receive transportation, meals, and accommodation at the evacuation centres. Income assistance clients are also provided emergency funds of \$500 to \$1,000. However, we know that not everyone is eligible for support through income assistance and being away from home can result in unexpected expenses that are particularly challenging for those who experience an interruption to their income.

Today, the Government of the Northwest Territories is launching two new programs to support registered evacuees and community governments: The Evacuee Income Disruption Support Program and the Community Government Hosting Evacuees Grant.

The Evacuee Income Disruption Support Program assists individuals who have lost income due to recent community evacuations. This program aims to provide targeted financial relief during evacuations. The Evacuee Income Disruption Support program is available to all NWT residents who are subject to an evacuation order over seven days and have suffered a loss of income because their employment has been disrupted due to the evacuation order. Eligible individuals will receive a one-time payment of \$750.

With yesterday's announcement from the Town of Hay River, many evacuees are now planning to return home. Still, I assure those residents that if their income has been disrupted, they will still be eligible for this program even if they returned home. Information on how to apply is available on our website and on the GNWT Facebook page.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that we support our community governments at this time; most notably, the Town of Hay River, the

K'atloodeeche First Nation, and the communities that have welcomed residents since the evacuation orders were issued on May 14. We understand that some evacuees have chosen not to come to Yellowknife for a variety of reasons and were being supported by other communities in the South Slave and the Deh Cho. We commend these communities for taking in, feeding, and supporting evacuees during such a challenging period.

In order to assist communities who have been unable to secure funding from other sources, the GNWT is launching the Community Government Hosting Evacuees Grant, which is a grant designed to help eligible community governments cover costs associated with supporting registered evacuees, including staffing, lodging, meals, and the provision of essential services. Municipal and Community Affairs Minister Shane Thompson has already sent letters to relevant communities advising them of this funding, which is separate from what is provided to communities operating official evacuee centres. Communities seeking the Community Government Hosting Evacuees Grant will have up to 30 days from the date the evacuation order is lifted and/or community residents are able to return home to apply for a grant through this program.

We announce both programs today, and more information is available for residents and community governments on the GNWT website or our GNWT Facebook page. We know this wildfire season is going to be challenging. The evacuation event for Hay River and K'atloodeeche First Nation serves as a reminder to all of us to do everything we can to be ready for emergencies. This includes being prepared for evacuation on short notice and, wherever possible, having plans in place to safeguard personal health and safety as well as economic well-being, and your family members and pets as well, Mr. Speaker. This is an exceptionally challenging period for many NWT residents, and we must continue to lean on each other in the days and weeks ahead. NWT residents and communities have this government's full support.

The GNWT is incredibly grateful to the community and the residents of Yellowknife, who have welcomed so many evacuees with open arms and open hearts. I also want to thank everyone involved in supporting evacuees at the multiplex here in Yellowknife and in Enterprise, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, and Fort Smith, as well as any other communities that have welcomed evacuees. Your compassion and time have not gone unnoticed.

Further, on May 18, the GNWT announced its commitment to supporting fire evacuees from Hay River and K'atlodeeche First Nation through a donation matching program through the United Way NWT. The GNWT is matching donations up to \$150,000 providing critical assistance to those affected by the ongoing community evacuations. One hundred percent of donations raised through United Way NWT's 2023 wildfire response fundraising campaign will go towards supporting evacuees. The community and corporate support we've seen for this campaign has been truly inspiring, and I want to thank the donors for their generosity.

On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I want to give our heartfelt thanks to the crews on the ground, the pilots, the air attack officers, and tanker base teams for their incredible support to combat these wildfires. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 352-19(2):
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, today I want to extend my continued sympathy to the families of two men who gave so much to our territory and also highlight how our government will be honouring their memory for years to come. I am of course speaking about the loss of two exceptional men, former housing minister Alfred Moses and former Housing NWT president and CEO Mr. Tom Williams.

I have carried their memory in this portfolio, advancing our relationships with Indigenous governments and, most importantly, working directly with our communities. It is because of their leadership and support that we have been able to take the National Housing Strategy and convert it into successful relationships and funding for housing in the Northwest Territories. During the 19th Legislative Assembly, examples in this government include individual partnership agreements with Indigenous governments for housing, as well as direct funding from Canada to Indigenous governments for housing-related infrastructure projects.

I am pleased to be a part of the success in this relationship, and all relationships throughout the Northwest Territories, that opened the door for Housing NWT to be successful in the Northwest Territories. I am still saddened by the passing of Alfred Moses and Tom Williams and during the time of this government in respect of their work and accomplishments for this

government and this portfolio, today I would like to announce scholarships in both their names.

The two new scholarships that Housing NWT has recently introduced, the Alfred Moses Memorial Scholarship and the Tom Williams Memorial Scholarship, to recognize and celebrate students who have provided positive contributions to housing programs across the territory. These scholarships are in memory of Alfred and Tom, who demonstrated a profound commitment to addressing housing issues throughout the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT will offer six scholarships of \$1,000 in the name of Alfred Moses and six scholarships in the name of Tom Williams. Both scholarships will award one in each of the five Housing NWT districts and one in Yellowknife, are available to students who are entering into the field related to housing. Applications will be open. The closing date is July 5th of this year.

Housing NWT already strongly supports the development of apprentices, which was a huge commitment of Mr. Williams, in the maintenance and trades and these new scholarships will provide additional support to widen our workforce and students to become interested as a complete post-secondary and secondary education programs.

Mr. Speaker, as we have previously shared with the Members of the Legislative Assembly, we will work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to promote and coordinate Housing NWT's apprenticeship program to secure additional candidates throughout the territory. Housing has a target of hiring 12 local housing organization apprenticeships positions every year.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT understands that investing into our youth means a better future for our residents. Our values include innovation, stability, and collaboration. With the introduction of these scholarships, we are expanding our support to many students and apprenticeships across the Northwest Territories. We believe this will help strengthen our workforce with the more skilled workers and leads to a brighter future for housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, Alfred Moses and Tom Williams have made a lasting impression on my life. As being a first-Member elect, it was saddening to see and hear the passing of these two individuals as I entered into my political career. Today I would like to welcome Pam Williams, the wife of Tom and their son Aurora and James, I'd just like to express my sympathy to the family as well, too. Your dad was a very

great mentor and a strong colleague of mine. Mahsi. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Deputy Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 353-19(2):
MINISTERS ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the Honourable Shane Thompson will be absent from the House for today and tomorrow to attend the federal/provincial/territorial Ministers for conservation, wildlife and biodiversity meeting in Ottawa, Ontario.

I also wish to advise the House that the Honourable Caroline Cochrane will be absent from the House for today and tomorrow due to illness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1510-19(2):
SEARCHING FOR FRANK GRUBEN

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, with the permission of Frank Gruben's mother Laura, I'd like to speak to everybody here, and throughout the Northwest Territories and beyond, to tell you about Frank who has been in Fort Smith attending college and was last seen on May 6th, 2023.

Frank is 30 years old from Aklavik. Frank is Inuvialuit and Gwich'in. He has a beautiful blended culture and is passionate about his traditional values he learned throughout his life. Frank loves learning and speaking the Gwich'in language. He had the most fun on the local radio station with his mentor elder Annie Buckle. He also taught Gwich'in to the children of the Aklavik Jordan's Principle Program. Frank has a beautiful smile that captures anyone's heart. His smile could light up any room, and he could make you laugh from your tummy with his silly gestures and his acting behaviour.

Frank loves taking care of his appearance with all his brand name clothing, always looking sharp the way he dresses. Frank is a kindhearted young man and is willing to help anyone who needs it or asks for help. Frank loves his elders, especially his grandmother Renee Stewart. Frank is such an inspiration to his baby sister Kimberlyn. She adores her big brother, and he loves her so much. Frank is

also a big brother to Steven, and they both love to cook and try new recipes challenging one another. Frank has so many friends who are all posting their memories and stories of their best friend asking for answers to bring him home. So many are heartbroken. Many tears have fallen since he has gone missing. The people of Aklavik, friends, family, especially his parents Laura and Charlie, brother Steven, and especially his little sister Kimberlyn, are asking to help bring Frank home please.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to bring awareness of who Frank is, make a face, and turn him into a person for the rest of the territory and the rest of the world. Frank is an Indigenous man of the LGBTQ community, and when I heard of a statement released by the RCMP yesterday of no evidence of foul play, it shook me to my core. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, if there is no foul play, then where is he? He wouldn't just disappear. Something has happened to him and somebody knows something. Mr. Speaker, Frank's mother told me RCMP, what she felt is that they are not doing enough to find him. Mr. Speaker, it makes me think of all the work that we have done to raise awareness of MMIWG 2SLGBTQQIA and the inquiry and this House and the work that we've been doing as Indigenous people to raise awareness. If Frank was a non-Indigenous person from a wealthy family, would there be more done? That's what goes to my mind, Mr. Speaker. Would there be more to find him? Would there be animals, search animals that the RCMP can have throughout -- you see it on TV in the rest of Canada. Would they be out there searching for Frank? My understanding the RCMP has no tips from the public on Frank's disappearance. So on behalf of his family, please, if anyone has any information, no matter how small or unimportant they think it might be, to tell the RCMP, to reach out to Crime Stoppers, even if they're scared and want to do it anonymously, to 1-800-222-8477. What if this was your son? What if this was your brother? Your cousin? Your nephew? Your grandson? His family needs to find him, and they need to bring him home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1511-19(2):
INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, today I'm going to speak about the state of internet connectivity in the NWT and lack thereof.

Mr. Speaker, two months ago the Auditor General of Canada released a report titled Connectivity in Rural and Remote Areas, which stated that rural and remote communities are still lagging behind the rest of the country when it comes to internet. The report also stated that the NWT has the largest disparity of internet access in the country, with only 18 percent in small NWT communities that have access to high-speed internet. In comparison, 98 percent of people in larger NWT communities have access to high-speed internet. Mr. Speaker, this large disparity in internet connectivity for the people of the NWT is not acceptable.

Our government needs to work at a faster pace with the federal government, along with the private industry, to bolster internet access across the board if the NWT hopes to meet the federal government's goal of providing 100 percent of Canadians with access to high-speed internet by 2030.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, has held a series of public hearings over the last year to receive consultations on the status of telecommunication services in the far North. During the last couple of hearings, there were several NWT witnesses who provided some great ideas for the CRTC and internet service providers to consider. For example, one person rightly stated that it's mostly Indigenous people who don't have access to internet services and as a result internet service delivery should be considered within the text of reconciliation. I agree with that because increasing access to high-speed internet will work to advance economic reconciliation for Indigenous peoples and communities. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, another big issue on this subject is the lack of competition of internet service providers in the North. In the NWT, we have a monopoly over internet delivery from NorthwTel. Without some degree of competition, prices remain high and the speed of internet continues to remain low as well. In fact, NorthwestTel itself has admitted that increased competition in recent years from Starlink satellite service has motivated them to expand and improve their own internet access. NorthwTel admits that it has lost some customers to Starlink already, which is pushing them to expand fiberoptic lines

in more northern communities, which is great to see.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on about this but I will leave it at that for now. 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 Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1512-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
EMERGENCIES AND PREPAREDNESS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I welcome you and my colleagues back for another productive session. I rise today to give thanks to all the hardworking and dedicated people who have spent the last few weeks fighting fires in the South Slave, dealing with the flooding in the Beaufort Delta, and supporting evacuees barely one year after they coped with the devastating floods.

My heart breaks for the people of the K'atloodchee First Nation. Not only did they suffer from the flooding last year, with some of them still not in their homes, but now they've also lost significant infrastructure in their community, the extent of which is not yet fully known. Thankfully, I hear several historical and cultural artifacts were spared, items that are irreplaceable, however, people have lost their homes. We can never replace the mementos and the photos, the family heirlooms passed down from generation to generation, and for that I am truly sorry.

This has been a hugely stressful time for all residents across the territory. We are a small community. We all have loved ones, friends and family, that have been impacted by the recent emergencies; emergencies that are only increasing in frequency as the earth's climate continues to change. Storms that once only occurred every hundred years are now coming more regularly, and we must figure out how to adapt if we hope to survive. One thing about Northerners is that we are resilient, and we are strong.

Do I like that we're constantly challenged by the environment around us? No. But what it has done is given us the ability to persevere when the going gets tough. And it is that perseverance that will help us to adapt to the change around us.

Mr. Speaker, we must stop being reactive to disasters and start to plan more accordingly. The GNWT has a dismal track record in this area, choosing to wait until it is too late and the

emergency has begun. The Minister of MACA has told me that his department doesn't have the capacity to deal with emergency situations or project management as it's a very small department. That it is the responsibility of the underfunded communities to prepare and deal with a climate change driven disaster. A scary thought, Mr. Speaker, given the lack of resources and money in most communities.

Mr. Speaker, when is this government going to get proactive and stop leaving our communities to pay out-of-pocket for situations created by lack of adequate funding or investment in our communities? I would have had questions for the ECC Minister, but he has chosen not to be here today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1513-19(2):
CLIMATE EMERGENCY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In December 2019, I called on this Cabinet to declare a climate emergency. I tabled a draft motion, I got resistance from Cabinet; what's happened since?

I confess I gave up on a motion with the COVID pandemic which seems to have overtaken everything we do as a government. However, there are now over 650 Canadian governments that have made a climate emergency declaration including the federal, territorial, provincial, municipal, and Indigenous governments. This government's climate emergency failures and lack of leadership has got me going again.

On April 1st, 2023, the Premier finally fulfilled one of her leadership campaign promises, to change the name of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. That's great, but it doesn't get this Cabinet off the hook from an astoundingly bad track record on the climate emergency.

Look no further than the so-called establishment policy for this new department that the Premier signed off on. The definition of climate change doesn't even acknowledge that climate change is the result of human activities. The new department is charged with helping us to understand and adapt to climate change. There is nothing about mitigation or complying with national and international commitments and targets. This policy is so weak it doesn't even incorporate the statement of environmental values or state that climate change presents a crisis or an emergency situation for the Northwest Territories. Maybe

Cabinet hasn't been paying enough attention during the recent unprecedented floods, fires, and extreme weather events.

In fact, during my more than seven years in this Assembly, I've only heard one senior government official use the words climate crisis or climate emergency. Only once, Mr. Speaker. Not from this Cabinet or any of its Ministers. It's all about using these events to leverage federal money for infrastructure for adaptation rather than doing anything about mitigation or changing our business as usual trajectory.

This government is on a clear path of failure to achieve its commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This government doesn't even acknowledge that our carbon tax is a tool to help with those reductions as there is nothing to link the climate emergency to a carbon tax in that legislation.

I will have questions for the Deputy Premier on Cabinet's climate emergency failures later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1514-19(2):
K'ATL'ODEECHE FIRST NATION RESERVE
FIRE

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sunday, May 14th will go down as the day the residents of K'atodeeche First Nations will never forget. That is the day a fire was started by unknown sources close to the old village and new site of K'atodeeche. By late afternoon, the fire gained momentum and grew by the minute. That for the safety of KFN residents, they were evacuated across the river to Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, that fire became known as the KFN fire. The month of May has always been considered as having moderate temperatures, but this spring was like no other as we were facing very dry conditions and a heat wave. So dry, even a spark could ignite a fire.

Mr. Speaker, this spring, the residents of KFN were spared from a major flood as in all previous years in which they were evacuated to points beyond, including the Yellowknife multiplex. It is with heavy hearts we had to hear of another catastrophe faced by the K'atodeeche First Nations residents. Heavy hearts as they were still dealing with the effects of last year's major flood and the ongoing remediation work to many homes.

Mr. Speaker, the major KFN fire affected the town of Hay River as evacuation orders were issued for both the town and KFN. Residents were scattered to Enterprise, Fort Resolution, Fort Providence, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, and Yellowknife in the NWT. Many other residents went south to stay with family and friends. Many residents were put up in hotels and available buildings where they were available, cots, couches and what have you, to provide as much comfort as possible during these difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, many of the evacuated residents are very thankful for everyone opening their doors to them and providing meals and hospitality. It always goes without saying that we should be helping our neighbours through their difficult times, as trying as the situations may be, to provide the necessities of life. Mahsi to all the communities involved and the numerous volunteers involved to assist in the KFN fire of 2023. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1515-19(2):
SUPPORT FOR NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES TOURISM OPERATORS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories is renowned for its awe-inspiring landscapes, pristine wilderness and warm hospitality, so no one should be surprised that our tourism industry has become a vital pillar of our economy and source of pride for our people. However, the same industry is now under grave threat by the suffocated excessive red tape, unreasonable demands from our own government. In recent years, the Northwest Territories has emerged as a sought-after destination for travels from all over, from corners of all of the globe. Our remote lodges, tucked away in the heart of our nature, have been a haven for adventure seekers, nature enthusiasts, and those seeking a respite from the hustle and bustle of southern city life.

They have provided not only employment opportunities for our residents but also showcase the unique beauty and culture richness of our land. Yet, instead of nurturing and supporting this thriving industry, our government has chosen to burden it with a web of bureaucracy of obstacles. The excessive red tape imposed on remote lodges have reached unprecedented levels stifling their growth and endangering their very existence. What was once a thriving industry, contributing significantly to our economy and fostering

community development, now faces an uncertain future. It is astonishing that these burdens and regulations have been thrust upon tourism operators without any corresponding changes to the territorial regulations. Our hardworking lodge owners and operators find themselves caught in a web of ever-increasing demands demanding tens of thousands of dollars of unnecessary expenses.

This is a gross injustice as it places burden on our entrepreneurs and jeopardizes their livelihood of countless families across the Northwest Territories. Our government must be reminded of our duty to support and promote our own local business, not to suffocate them with unreasonable demands and standards. We demand transparency and accountability from our elected officials. They must provide a valid justification for these excessive regulations and explain why they are necessary to maintain the safety and integrity of our tourism industry. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. I'm calling upon the Minister of ITI to work with her colleagues to re-evaluate their approach and support the hardworking lodge owners and operators who have poured their blood, sweat, and tears into creating a unique experience of our visitors. Their dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment have brought the wonders of our land to the world. We need a government that fosters an environment conducive to growth and innovation, not the ones that stifle it. We cannot allow excessive red tape to strangle our tourism industry and rob us of our opportunities it brings. It is time that our government respects the needs of our tourism operators while ensuring the safety and satisfaction of our visitors with a fair and supportive environment for our tourism industry. I would have questions for the appropriate Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1516-19(2):
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CORPORATE
REGISTERIES TRANSPARENCY

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement is regarding the corporate registries division of the Department of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to compliment the Department of Justice's corporate registries division for the accessibility of information of all societies registered in the NWT. Each society's constitution, financial statements, and list of directors' information is available to all simply by accessing the information for a modest fee. However, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to corporations, the access to important information is not available. The ownership of each privately-held registered in the NWT is hidden from the public. The province of Alberta and other jurisdictions have made ownership disclosure mandatory for all registered private corporations. The NWT should do the same.

Mr. Speaker, currently, we have many unknown companies operating in the NWT. Many do not bother to obtain local community government business license. We have concerns about some of the business practice of these companies. If they do not pay their bills, how can we follow up? We would like to know who these companies are and who owns these corporations. Mr. Speaker, I will have question for the Minister of Justice at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1517-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES PROCUREMENT POLICY
REVIEW

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I grow increasingly concerned that the procurement review is never going to end, Mr. Speaker, and I don't mean in a good way, that will continue to review our policy and make sure we are improving procurement for the residents. I mean that we will never actually complete it and change the policies that define GNWT procurement. And this isn't just a suspicion, Mr. Speaker. In the GNWT's own work plan, they say by the end of this Assembly they will identify potential policy mechanisms to support enhanced Indigenous procurement. Mr. Speaker, what this should read is that we will create an Indigenous procurement policy with set out targets by the end of this Assembly.

I do not know whether we will have an Indigenous procurement policy in this Assembly or the next, Mr. Speaker. I do not know whether our P3 policy will be amended. I do not know whether we will create a consolidated purchasing policy as recommended by the procurement review. We say we are going to finally make changes to the

definition of a northern business in the business incentive policy by the end of this government, Mr. Speaker. Well, time is ticking to get that policy through Cabinet approvals. I have not seen that, Mr. Speaker, so certainly not enough time for Regular MLAs' feedback.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, there was recommendations for targets for negotiated contracts. There were recommendations that the GNWT consider its approach to leasing. I have repeatedly asked in this House to change the leasing of improved real property policy from 1998, Mr. Speaker, and what I'm told is that we have to wait for the procurement review to be done. But the procurement review work plan makes absolutely no mention of leasing. So why am I being told that that has to be done when it's not doing anything to do with leasing, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, at this point, this government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on procurement all while talking about how we're going to improve procurement but not actually changing the policies. These are executive level policies; they take time to get through Cabinet - I get that. But let's get them done before this Assembly is done and put a bow on procurement so we can end this review once and for all. I'll have questions for the Minister of finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1518-19(2):
CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF
NUNAKPUT RESIDENTS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to pay respects to the constituents who have passed since our last sitting. You know, Mr. Speaker, when I bring their names up in the House, their names will never be forgotten because it's in Hansard and the history books of the NWT for all my constituents in Nunakput.

I just want to pay my respects to the deceased Harley Sam Tedjuk, Adam, young baby, son of Jeffrey Adam, Suzie Tedjuk of Tuktoyaktuk. Harley is survived by his parents, his grandparents, and many siblings and relatives.

Edith Tutliloot, daughter of Eddie and Alice Gruben of Tuktoyaktuk, survived by her children Erika, Ariel, Bobby Lou, Alissa, Alecia, and Alice and many grandchildren and sisters and relatives.

Billy Pankaktoluk of Tuktoyaktuk, son of Bob and Mable Pankaktoluk, survived by partner

Barbara Pankaktoluk and daughter Lynette Pankaktoluk and many brothers and sisters and grandchildren and relatives.

Buddy Gruben of Tuktoyaktuk, son of Charlie and Purses Gruben, survived by daughter Heavenly Gloria Elias and grandchildren, his brothers and his sisters and relatives, and he will be sadly missed, and a lot of good hunting with Buddy when I was younger.

Catherine Kategiyuk, daughter of Richard and Winnie Kategiyuk, survived by son Gilbert and many family, friends, and relatives.

Alison Ratti passed of Tuk. Her sister Betty, survived by sister Betty, Leslie, Tony, and Vincent.

In Inuvik, my uncle Scott Kasook. To all the family, thoughts and prayers are with you all.

And whoever lost loved ones across the Delta, across the Northwest Territories, thoughts and prayers are with you all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and communities at this time. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1519-19(2): YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of listening to NWT youth speak about mental health, addiction, access to sport, climate change, reclaiming language, family violence, living in care and, the piece that links so much of this, housing.

One fifth of Canadians experiencing homelessness are youth between 13 and 24. More youth experiencing homelessness identify as male, Indigenous, and a significant number identify as 2SLGBTQIPA+. Youth experiencing homelessness are six times more likely to be victimized and nearly every youth that spoke to social development on homelessness prevention was or is involved with child and family services and has experienced homelessness. Every single one.

In the NWT, youth age out of care at 23, which is higher than other Canadian jurisdictions; however, increasing the age without supports still leaves youth vulnerable to experiencing or being at risk of homelessness. Youth aging out of care may not be prepared or ready to live independently. And, in addition, youth and all residents are faced with serious housing barriers. In many communities, there is zero

percent vacancy rates for affordable housing. In addition, a lack of resources and high costs of living leave youth vulnerable to homelessness.

Other jurisdictions are preparing youth by developing legislation to support their transition from care, allowing youth who have exited care to reenter, funding transitional housing, and providing youth with self-advocacy resources in the transition process.

As the government finalizes its homelessness strategy, this government needs to prioritize youth and youth aging out of care. The homelessness strategy does not make commitments to prevent or reduce homelessness experienced by Indigenous youth in care and does not address creating safe spaces for 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth. These were both recommendations social development included in its review of child and family services, neither of which received adequate response. This territory needs to stop perpetuating the cycle of discharging youth and children involved in child and family services to homelessness. These youth need preventative supports and wraparound services. The NWT needs legislation making the provision of suitable housing for youth leaving care mandatory. The GNWT must immediately give child and family services the staffing and resource development capacity to proactively keep youth in care from homelessness like self-advocacy tool kits, accessible websites with working links to support this. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. Entering adulthood, Mr. Speaker, seems harder than ever these days. Youth transitioning out of care need the GNWT to immediately give child and family services the people and resource development capacity to proactively keep youth leaving care from homelessness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1520-19(2): HAY RIVER AND K'ATL'ODEECHE FIRST NATION RESERVE EVACUATION

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, there's no place like home. And I think that the residents of Hay River know that as well as anyone. For the second year in a row, the entire community of Hay River, as well as KFN, have been evacuated in the middle of the night. And finally today, the majority of residents of Hay River can

go back to the community and I am sure many of them are on the road right now. I am sure many of them were on the road yesterday. Unfortunately, our neighbours, our friends, our family, our co-workers, at KFN, they don't have that same luxury and so our hearts go out to them. I want to take this opportunity to thank a lot of people and I might miss some, but my intention is really to thank everyone. It is a big deal when two entire communities evacuate, and they have to go somewhere, and so a lot of people have to help.

And first and foremost, I want to thank those fighting the fires on both sides of the river. We have over 150 wildfire firefighters working on it, we have the structural firefighters in Hay River patrolling that side of the river, we have a number of first responders, and they are doing their part, and they have been working full out for the past ten days. So we are so appreciative of their efforts. Because of those efforts, the fire that damaged KFN and threatening Hay River has now been downgraded to being held from out of control. And Mr. Speaker, from what I've heard, the comments from firefighters who have been around for 50 years and those who are brand new, they have a lot of, I guess, respect for this fire. I mean, it's big; it's powerful; there's a lot of fuel out there for this fire. And so while it may be being held now, it is still threatening. So I want to make sure that even though we are allowed to go home, we are going home, that residents are prepared to leave on a moment's notice if they need to because that fire, it's only six kilometres away from my community. That's a few hours if the winds shift. So it can come back, so I want to make sure everyone has their gas tank full and a bag packed.

I want to thank all the communities, the individuals, and the businesses that opened up their arms to the residents of Hay River. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

It's no small feat to house and feed 4,000 people, and that's exactly what happened. I want to thank the staff and volunteers who are providing support at all of the evacuation centres. I want to thank everyone who's made donations. I want to thank all of my colleagues here as well. Every time I had to call one of my Cabinet colleagues, they answered the phone, a number of the Regular Members that reached out and offered their support. So personally, I want to thank them as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is the second year in a row that this has happened now. For those of us living on Vale Island, I believe it's the fourth year

in a row we've had to evacuate. Residents were scattered all across the Northwest Territories, and Alberta, some went to British Columbia, I'm sure there's some elsewhere. I was here in Yellowknife, and I spent my days at the evacuation centre speaking with constituents and residents of KFN, and I want them to know that I did listen. I heard what they had to say, and I relayed those messages to Cabinet every single day. They talked about their accommodations. They talked about their safety at the evacuation centre. They talked about challenges housing their pets. They talked about their finances and the challenges, you know, affording to evacuate. And so I did bring those to the Ministers every single day, and I want to thank Cabinet for coming forward with a new evacuee financial support program; the first time it's ever been done in the territory. So that's very much appreciated. It's not going to make anyone whole. Not everyone's going to be eligible. But it will help those -- many of those in need.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this was -- this was a tough one. There was a different feeling this year from last year when we evacuated from the flood, and that's because we were still recovering from the flood. We're recovering from a number of drug poisonings. There's been an explosion in Hay River. It's been a tough year. People are stretched financially, emotionally, and nerves really are frayed. So I know yesterday when we got word we could go home, everyone breathed a sigh of relief, you know, we got to relax our shoulders a little bit, and you could see it walking around town there was a different mood. So I just want to make sure everyone who is home stays safe and is prepared in case the worst happens again. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River North. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

Returns to Oral Questions

RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 1353-19(2):
IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by Inuvik Twin Lakes on February 13th, 2023, regarding the Impacts of COVID-19 on Education. The question is:

What is known about high school attendance rates through COVID-19, the attendance rates in small communities versus regional centres, and Indigenous students' attendance?

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, or ECE, has publicly shared attendance data for 2020-2021 through the JK to 12 Performance Measures Report. In the 2020-2021 school year, many students returned to school only on a part-time basis and a few schools experienced closures due to COVID-19 public health orders announced by the Office of the chief public health Officer.

The Northwest Territories school system was able to adjust the collection of attendance data to capture remote learning; however, the effects of the pandemic impacted and continue to impact the ability to compare current attendance rates to pre-pandemic rates.

Additionally, attendance rates for the 2019-2020 school year only reflect the portion of the school year that included face-to-face and in-class instruction - from September 2nd, 2019 to March 13th, 2020 prior to the schools closing. As a result, data for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years remains incomparable to previous school years.

ECE publishes attendance data by grade, education body and community type, but not ethnicity. Further detail regarding the 2020-2021 attendance data can be found on pages 47 to 49 of the JK to 12 Performance Measures Report.

Overall, attendance in the NWT for the 2020-2021 school year was 79.9 percent. In Yellowknife, it was 85.3 percent, in regional centres 75.5 percent, and in small communities, 76.3 percent.

The 2021-2022 attendance data is currently being verified and will be included in the JK to 12 Performance Measures Report for 2021-2022, which is tentatively scheduled for release in June 2023.

In October 2022, ECE released the COVID-19 Impact Indicators Report. This report examined available data on the effects of COVID-19 on the NWT JK to 12 education system. The report found that attendance was difficult to properly maintain in 2019-2020 through to the 2021-2022 school period and that inferences from this time are therefore difficult to make. ECE will continue to collect, analyze, and report on data related to the impacts of COVID-19 to better understand the pandemic's effects on education and improve student outcomes.

Question, Does the department identify and support students to complete their high school education that did not graduate and are ineligible for post-secondary studies?

Once students have entered high school, they begin taking courses and earning credits toward graduation; a total of 100 credits are currently needed to graduate. Although there are generalities around the order in which students take courses, there are no strict rules around courses and years. As such, students can continue to take high school courses year after year until they complete the 100 required credits for graduation. For some students, this can take only two years and for others, this can take upwards of five years.

The Career and Education Advising, or CEA, Program exists in schools to assist Grade 9 to 12 students through a career exploration process. The CEA Program supports them in making career or education development and transition choices and accomplishing related tasks, such as work experience, career, post-secondary or other training, and community living.

There are eight Career and Education Advisors with three based in the Yellowknife Region, one in the South Slave, one in the Deh Cho, one in the Tlcho, and one in the Sahtu, and one in the Beaufort Delta.

Full funding is available for students up to 21 years of age, with partial funding available for students older than 21 years of age, to continue taking courses in high school. Students can choose to leave high school before graduating but they are never removed from high school for not meeting graduation requirements. If a student contacts the department or the Divisional Education Council, support will be provided so long as they are under the age of 21. If they are older than 21, individuals are able to seek supports through Aurora College's Community Learning Centres.

Question, Is there a funding cap through the SFA program for students who might need multiple years of university PREP?

The Student Financial Assistance, or SFA, Program offers full-time and part-time assistance to Northwest Territories residents attending accredited, post-secondary programs at an approved post-secondary institution. The SFA program supports eligible students who attend the Aurora College Occupations and College Access Program, or OCAP, and the University and College Access Program, or UCAP. There is no funding cap for students who access OCAP or UCAP. As long as the students remains eligible, they are able to access SFA funding for these programs.

While the SFA program offers assistance to students enrolled in OCAP or UCAP at Aurora College, the program does not provide

assistance to students enrolled in other academic upgrading at Aurora College or any post-secondary institution.

ECE has completed the SFA program review and is proposing changes that will help to reduce the barriers students face in pursuing post-secondary education such as removing all semester limits for Northern Indigenous students and expanding remissible loans to all NWT residents. ECE believes these changes will better support students who need additional time to complete their post-secondary studies, including more time completing PREP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Great Slave.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Jamie Linington, the interim general manager of the Tu Cho Cooperative and president of the Freshwater Fish Harvesters Association which is a newly incorporated entity that is looking to transform the national entity into a harvester-led one. Jamie is also an intergenerational Metis fisher-owner operator and is unfortunately one of the evacuees from Hay River, which was good news for me because I got to catch up with her in person. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to acknowledge three St. Patrick High School students who are Frame Lake residents serving as pages in this sitting: Ava Maurice, Deniye Lockhart, and Kyla. Mahsi, merci, and thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize two constituents from the Sahtu. I'd like to recognize Ms. Rhea McDonald who is working with us in the Legislative Assembly, and she is just completing her political science degree. I'd also like to recognize Mr. Robin Doctor from the Sahtu as well, too. He is celebrating 14 years with the GNWT and actually works for the Department of Infrastructure. Mahsi.

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

Colleagues, I'd like to recognize Pam Williams, also Aurora and James -- oh, James must have stepped out. But I see this spring both Pam and James went to the Islanders game, which was Tom's favorite team, and it looked like you had an enjoyable time. It's a privilege to have you all in the House today. And I know Tom was a good friend to many of us and dearly missed. Thoughts and prayers are with you all.

And if we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber and I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to have people in the public gallery. Thank you.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1508-19(2): REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROCUREMENT POLICIES

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the start of this Assembly, there was a lot of talk about an Indigenous procurement policy, and then the feds, they stepped up, and they created some targets for Indigenous procurement and as well as the Yukon, and we kind of seem to fall apart on that. And now our plan says we're going to identify some potential solutions and maybe get this work done. I'm actually a little confused whether we will have a clear Indigenous procurement policy in the life of this government. So my questions for the Minister of Finance is why are we at in regards to creating an Indigenous procurement policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we don't need to do things the way the Yukon or the federal government do. I know the Yukon process wasn't necessarily greeted with a hundred percent pleasantness from the Members around the -- from the Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories -- or in the Yukon nor from their businesses.

Where we are on this one, Mr. Speaker, an Indigenous procurement policy has gone to the Northwest Territories Council of Leaders and our modern treaty and self-government tables. This is where it belongs. These are the groups that are going to be impacted. These are groups that need to have a voice and need to

have a role in developing this policy. So we're taking this through that process. They've already met with officials. It's already on the agenda for the upcoming Council of Leaders meeting. The work is already moving forward in terms of developing the internal process that they'll be using to look through what steps they need to take to define an Indigenous business and define a northern Indigenous business and how we can work through ensuring that any policy we apply is in line and respectful of the treaty obligations that we have to modern treaty holders and our economic chapters.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not putting a deadline on this. The intention was never to force through a policy and to place it down on Indigenous businesses or Indigenous governments. It really is to work with them, and that work is now well underway. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I worry that this is going to get caught in negotiations and hopefully by the next Assembly, we'll have an Indigenous procurement policy. But I'm hoping for a clear yes on the business incentive policy. The work plan is pretty clear that in the life of this government, we are going to revise the definition of a northern resident, and we are going to increase BIP thresholds for tenders and RFPs.

Can the Minister provide us an update about whether that work to finish the BIP review will -- and amend the BIP policy will be done in the life of this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I had previously said the work is well underway and will be delivered in the life of this Assembly. There will be a change to the definition. We're going to be getting rid of the need for a Schedule 3 and getting back to focusing on what the objectives of the BIP really are, which is around investment in the Northwest Territories, encouraging investment, encouraging business growth here in the Northwest Territories, and supporting businesses that support that objective. That definition, as I've said, so it is on its way. It will be here in the life of the Assembly, and the Member will have plenty of opportunity to ask me questions about it before the August session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the procurement review, there was a couple sections on leasing, and then the procurement review panel said that the GNWT should look into whether there was a different approach to leasing, and then the Department

of Infrastructure kind of took that as we can't do any work until the procurement review is done. But I don't actually believe the procurement review is changing anything with leasing. I could be mistaken. But can the Minister let me know whether there is any intention to change any of our leasing policies related to procurement in the life of this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, leasing does fall a little bit out of the wheelhouse for me in the Department of Finance but certainly in terms of understanding what's happening as a whole-of-government, infrastructure and the Department of the Executive do confirm that they do want to look together at the improved real property policy. They do want to do that once the formal procurement processes for government procurement and public procurement are done, but also in line with the Indigenous procurement policy that I had just described a few moments ago. So that work will be underway once that is complete. It's important to -- again, we want to be integrated in the approach here, and we don't want to develop this policy around leasing knowing that there's Indigenous development corporations and Indigenous businesses that are interested in this area until the Indigenous procurement policy work is done.

Mr. Speaker, what I suggest is we can certainly add this to our work plan in this area so that there's a clearer timeline and a clearer sense of the work that's happening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I get that perhaps the desire to negotiate Indigenous procurement policy, which could potentially affect all areas of procurement, has, you know, paused some of that other work. I guess perhaps a review of a new work plan that clearly will take beyond the life of this Assembly of what is being done and when would be helpful. There was some recommendations about negotiated contracts policy in the procurement review. Some are small, some are larger about setting targets, some are about reporting. I'm a little confused what's being done there, or whether that also is completely dependent on first finishing a negotiation on an Indigenous procurement policy. So can the Minister tell me whether any changes to the negotiated contracts policy will occur in this government's term? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are indeed some guideline changes coming through the Department of EIA to support more clarity around the negotiated contracts policy but, really, the challenges here are, as I think the Member's pointing out, the negotiated contracts policy's right now being used in place of an Indigenous procurement policy to really look at how we are supporting and helping grow Indigenous businesses in the Northwest Territories. So the Indigenous procurement policy really is what is going to be the focal point here with guidelines, as I've mentioned nonetheless in the interim, to help make the negotiated contracts policy more clearer. But as far as what we have done here, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance does have an improvement already in terms of our overall reporting. There's contracts reporting. There's an online dashboard. There's a lot more online information about how we procure, what's being procured and where. And importantly, Mr. Speaker, vendor performance management has already rolled out, continues to be enhanced, and is at a stage of ensuring that there's actual enforcement around vendor performance management. If we're at a point where we can enforce the contracts and enforce the expectations, we have on businesses to be hiring locally, procuring locally, that is going to be addressing the needs of our local businesses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1509-19(2):
IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in April during the CRTC public hearings on telecommunication services in the far North, your deputy Minister of Finance testified. In his testimony, he stated that Indigenous households have an internet take-up of only 63 percent compared to 94 percent of other households.

Can the finance minister expand on that point and tell us where this statistic came from and what her thoughts are on those public hearings from CRTC? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a lot there and our submission to CRTC was around 70 pages or so. So let me try to sum up. The

statistics of the 63 versus 94 comes from the Northern Canada Internet Use Survey, NCIUS, and that's done by Statistics Canada. This one was from 2021. And, Mr. Speaker, the -- I would say the public hearings were productive. One very discrete and specific outcome was we saw that NorthwesTel, in fact, agreed with the proposal that we've been advocating for, both at the federal government and publicly, around the Connecting Families 2.0 Initiative. This is an opportunity where it bridges a digital divide. It's something the Government of Canada keeps telling me is available and yet hasn't been available to residents in the Northwest Territories because we needed an internet service provider to actually participate. So we were pleased that, having raised it get again, it does seem that we've finally been heard and NorthwesTel will be participating in that program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, overall there's a lack of competition with internet service providers in the NWT. Does the Minister agree that having more options of internet services for the NWT residents will help reduce the household costs of internet and also bolster the speed of internet in the long-term? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, having more competition certainly is one way, traditionally and historically, that improves affordability in a marketplace. It does, of course, rely on there being the infrastructure to provide the options to the market and that is still an area where we are challenged here in the Northwest Territories. As far as the -- all that said, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what we've been expressing at CRTC for some time, trying to balance between the fact that we need significant investments to support infrastructure in a marketplace that wouldn't necessarily have the customers to actually then offset the high costs of the infrastructure at the same time wanting to get services into the hands of residents and be affordable and available. So one of the reforms we've put forward is reforms to the wholesale access provisions within the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker, that are controlled by the CRTC with the hope that does -- that that does help find that balance between encouraging and allowing for infrastructure development at a high cost while also ensuring that there's a greater affordability for residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what the Government of the Northwest Territories has done over the course of the 19th Assembly to address the issue of internet disparity between the small

communities and regional centres within the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I've certainly advocated to counterparts in the federal government now, several of them indeed, has been exactly on this issue that we face where we not only have a lack of infrastructure to deliver the services, we then have a lack of affordability and we have a lack of redundancy, which for us in the Northwest Territories isn't just a luxury; it means that when one line gets cut, entire communities go without services for significant periods of time. We've suggested ways that the federal government could change their subsidy programs, could change their funding programs. But we've also worked with communities to try to ensure that they are able to apply, where applicable, to these different funding criterias. And I'll look to the example in the Tlicho with the Whati Highway and the ability to support the Tlicho in terms of becoming an applicant. So we certainly are doing, I believe, our part to try to get that message out to modify what we see. And, in fact, the report that the Member referenced earlier makes a lot of the same points, that the funding right now, as is structured around the federal government, needs to be adapted to the needs of the North, needs to be adapted and modified to the needs of the North, and so we're pleased to see the uptake of that message that we've had.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly continue to advocate for all of these things. Again, we're happy to see that we're now part of the northern families subsidy program and opportunities like this, Mr. Speaker, to continue to bring forward around what other needs we have. Satellite is probably one of the next options. I'll stop there, Mr. Speaker, but that's another area where we're going to need to see some options given the delays coming out of LSAT with the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister agree that increasing access to high-speed internet will overall help to advance economic reconciliation for Indigenous peoples and communities within the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Speaker; absolutely, Mr. Speaker, access to quality, available, affordable, reliable, competitive, internet telecommunications, absolutely that increases economic reconciliation. Mr. Speaker, there's -- I could stop there but this is an opportunity -- I know

there's times where our federal government counterparts are listening. I know they follow what we say. I hope the CRTC follows what we say here because that is an absolute truth. We're trying to do our part. We need to have private sector involved. We need the federal government to be involved. These are major investments, major infrastructure investments that are needed, not only to bring fibre but where fibre's not feasible or realistic, to ensure that they have those satellite systems up and running, that we are notified well in advance when they're not, that to the extent that there are federal regulations around satellite provision, that they are keeping up to date with the realities on the ground. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the right things are being said. The right things are hopefully going to be happening. The CRTC, while their formal hearing process is over, final submissions are not. So the opportunity to get our message out is not over and we will continue to take that opportunity whenever it arises. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1510-19(2):
SEARCHING FOR FRANK GRUBEN

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

Mr. Speaker, as a mother of two children, I can't even imagine what Laura is going through with Frank missing. The feeling of not having any power and to feel that the RCMP is not doing enough to find her son. So I'm asking the Minister of Justice to commit to contacting the commanding officer of the Northwest Territories to ensure that the RCMP in Fort Smith have all the staff that they need, any missing persons expertise to continue the investigation to bring Frank home. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, as everyone knows I can't direct the RCMP. But I certainly can relay what is being said in the House, and I will say that I did speak to the commanding officer about this prior to today actually, and I know that, you know, he is concerned, the RCMP are concerned. I feel for the mother. This is unimaginable. This is every parent's nightmare. And so I think that if I was in the same position, I would also feel that people weren't doing enough. I can't imagine, Mr. Speaker; so my heart goes out. And I appreciate the Member's statement as well, her call for people to get out

or bring information forward. And I've had this discussion with other MLAs as well. There's rumors out on Facebook. There's lots of talk. But the RCMP needs information. There is someone who knows something, they need to come forward, they need to bring that information forward. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, I think the Northwest Territories is going through a lot right now, and I think the Minister is going through a lot right now in his own home community, and I think the Northwest Territories continues to be a reactive. We're always reacting to situations. And, you know, we've worked hard in this government to bring the missing and murdered to life and to make actions and Calls to Actions. And I just want the Minister to follow up with the RCMP on their section of that -- section 9 of the Calls to Action, because is there a way -- is there a department that maybe my -- the mother can go to to make sure that the investigation is being done properly because -- and that's what these recommendations calls for, because Indigenous people, throughout Canada, have continuously been failed. People don't take our word as face value. We don't -- it just seems like we're not heard and RCMP needs to hear us and, please, somebody help this mother bring her son home. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will certainly raise these issues with the RCMP. You know, we, as a government, have been work on implementing our action plan, our response to the final report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Department of Justice has been working on a missing person's legislation. I was hoping to get it done this term, get it introduced, but it's taking longer than we had hoped. There's a bit more work to be done consulting with the RCMP, with other departments as, you know, it's a piece of legislation that impacts a lot of different departments and other pieces of legislation. So like I said, this is unimaginable for the family. And as the Member is correct, there's a lot going on in the territory. You know, dealing with the wildfires, I'm always -- and the floods, I'm always struck by the fact that life continues to go on despite that these things that everyone's living through, life continues to go on and we do need to recognize that people do have these struggles and we do need to be responsive to them, not just reactive. So I take the Member's point. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess my last question is is, you know, it's this time of the year, the mother is concerned that there are fires close to that

community; it is a time of the year where all the animals are coming out and, you know what, we don't want to think the worst but, you know, the reality is we haven't seen him for a long time and so is there -- within his department or any other department that there's funds available somehow to support the family or more searches within that -- the surrounding area of Fort Smith and to, you know, with the police and everything? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs does have funding. The community government applies to -- applies for that funding to initiate or support a search of an area that is available. And it's my understanding that that has happened and those funds have flowed to the town of Fort Smith to help support those efforts. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1511-19(2):
CLIMATE EMERGENCY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Deputy Premier.

The establishment policy for the new Department of Environment and Climate Change came into effect on April 1st, 2023. Can the Deputy Premier tell us whether this government acknowledges that the current climate emergency is the result of human activities and explain why that doesn't appear in the policy? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories Climate Change Strategic Framework clearly acknowledges that the climate change is linked to human activities. The definition of climate change in the establishment policy is consistent with how climate change is defined in the Climate Change Strategic Framework, and its broadly accepted definition as well, Mr. Speaker. The establishment policy is intended to be a high level overarching document that describes the work of the department. And it's important to note that the new department specifically has climate change in its name to reflect the significance of climate change action to the department and the GNWT.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to note that the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment reviewed the draft establishment policy and provided feedback in February. Mr.

Speaker, concerns about the definition of climate change were not raised at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I can -- I'm raising that concern right now, and it's not in the definition, but let's move on to the next question.

Nowhere in the establishment policy is it acknowledged or recognized that climate change in the NWT is a crisis or an emergency. And I will tell the Minister this was raised by standing committee. So can the Deputy Premier tell us whether this government considers climate change a crisis or an emergency for the Northwest Territories? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Climate change represents serious and urgent challenges for the Northwest Territories, and the GNWT takes climate change action for seriously. Mr. Speaker, like look at us now, we're dealing with wildfires and floods so I mean, this is very real to us. The Climate Change Strategic Framework, as well as the energy strategy and their associated action plans, are guiding the GNWT's commitment to address climate change and its impact.

The Legislative Assembly has advanced a number of climate change related mandate items, including ensuring that all Executive Council and Financial Management Board decisions consider the context of climate change within all of their decisions.

As I noted, Mr. Speaker, adding climate change to the name of the new environment and climate change department demonstrates the importance this government places on climate change action. Mr. Speaker, the government and Premier Cochrane take climate change and impacts being felt in the North seriously. Like I said, she has spoken at length and in great detail at recent events, particularly to a national audience, about the severity of climate change in the North as well as some of the impacts felt by some of the Northwest Territories residents as well as our communities. This message is one that she is very passionate about, about trying to alert other Canadians the realities of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I was at one of the events where the Honourable Premier Cochrane had spoken about that, you know, climate change is more active in the North. It is. I mean, we're seeing it on a yearly basis. So I mean, this is a message that this government is doing to ensure that we

are getting the message out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Deputy Premier for that. I didn't hear the word crisis or emergency. I heard serious, but I didn't hear the right words. So I'm going to try it a different way, Mr. Speaker.

I mentioned in my statement that I've only ever heard one senior person in this government ever use the word crisis or emergency next to the word climate. So can the Deputy Premier tell us whether the public service are allowed to call climate change a crisis or an emergency? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's no restrictions on public service related to the use of the term crisis or emergency. The way we communicate climate change to our residents is important and the terminology we use ultimately plays a role in shaping public discussions. The GNWT uses climate change generally in our communications because it is commonly accepted and understood by residents.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize climate change is a highly political issue. So are the conscience of using the terminology that we could be dismissed or polarized by individuals who are holding very different views. Ultimately, there are a variety of factors, including audience engagement, political sensitivity, that shapes how this government communicates about complex issues, including climate change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I just wish that the GNWT would get on board and, you know, join one of the 650 other Canadian jurisdictions that have made a climate emergency declaration, so. But in all the debate and public statements I've seen from this government around a carbon tax, I don't ever recall it being clearly linked or described as a tool to fight the climate emergency. So can the Deputy Premier confirm that the real purpose of the NWT carbon tax is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stand here as Deputy Premier, as well as wearing several Minister roles, I also have the opportunity to be able to redirect this question to another Minister that's able to provide more information on climate change and more specifically to the

carbon tax issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to redirect to the Honourable Caroline Wawzonek. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Minister responsible for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to confirm while the carbon tax itself remains for us a commitment under the pan-Canadian framework of clean goals and climate change, that's the federal-based system and that's why we have to continue to adapt ours. In the online annual report that is put out by the Department of Finance on carbon tax, in the message from the Minister it does quite clearly, say from me, the carbon tax is intended to encourage carbon conservation and the substitution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's quite clear. There's a number of other. I took the chance to have a quick look at Hansard just to make sure I'm being very clear. And it is important that people realize no one likes paying more taxes, no one likes the carbon tax, but there is a reason behind it. I want to find solutions that will reduce carbon taxes in the North because -- so that we have less reliance on fossil fuel use. That's the point of the carbon tax, is to get people off fossil fuels. And, Mr. Speaker, again, I realize we all know that that's difficult in the North but, nevertheless, on another occasion I had the chance to say we don't want to be on fossil fuels; it is not helping the climate. It's expensive. It's not the way of the future. Fundamentally, this is what we need to do. So semantics or not, Mr. Speaker, we do need to find a pathway off of fossil fuels. And the last one, just to make sure that we're very clear, Mr. Speaker, I think it's when we had some federal Ministers visiting us here, we want them to see the lack of alternatives. If there's federal money that it can start to come here so we get off fossil fuels. We need to do that for climate change reasons. We need to do that for the cost reasons, and we need to do it because it's the right thing to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1512-19(2):
PERMITTING FOR FRONTIER LODGE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Lutselk'e Dene First Nation purchased the Frontier Lodge just outside their community. It's a lodge that will be able to provide employment, training, and opportunities for the First Nation.

And it's managed by Cory Myers who is the general manager for Frontier Lodge and already, as you know, the lodging industry here in the Northwest Territories is full swing right now, and I just want to mention that the -- you know, the lodge, Cory Myers, received a letter from the health and social services department talking about the current water system they have is no longer acceptable by the GNWT.

Mr. Speaker, we want -- this is a concern to the chief and council in Lutselk'e, and I know Mr. Myers has been working diligently with the Minister of ITI and they've been making some good progress in some areas, and they have a real good relationship. But right now as it is, it's concerning now that the lodge is, you know, may be forced to either close if, you know, the system is not upgraded right away. And we need to take a look at a system, and we need to either need to work together with Mr. Myers, chief and council, ITI, and the health minister Ms. Julie Green there, and if we could work together trying to figure this out so that, you know, some of these barriers we could work around and still provide, you know, employment and training to our people in our communities.

And so anyways, I just wanted to maybe just ask some questions to the Minister.

Can the ITI Minister tell me how many remote lodges were told that they must significantly upgrade their water treatment system before being granted essential operating permits? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to redirect the question to Minister Julie Green. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Deputy Premier. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, water regulations are under the Department of Health and Social Services. It's my information that the environmental health officer has been working with the Frontier Lodge to resolve the issues around permitting that have arisen, that this work has been ongoing for a year, and that what we're trying to achieve here is public safety. We're not trying to put anyone out of business or to inconvenience. We actually regulate collaboratively, if you will, with the operator to ensure that it's a resolution that is feasible and practical. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister, health Minister Julie Green. I guess my question would be to her again now is, you know, in terms of -- can you also explain what have changed since last summer when Frontier Lodge was granted their food establishment permit that makes their existing water treatment system inadequate now? That being a question to the health minister. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the regulations haven't changed in more than a decade but the information available about the water system has changed, and that's why we're at a different footing now than we were a year ago. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, other remote lodges continue to operate with their existing water treatment system. Can the Minister explain why Frontier's not being given the same opportunity? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true that some small lodges are exempt from the water system regulations; however, Frontier is not a small lodge; it's more the size of Blachford Lodge, and so the water system requirements are different for Frontier than they would be for a smaller lodge. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister provide a reasonable explanation for the lack of consultation with remote lodges with no communication between her department of health and department to properly assess the impacts of these changes to regulations before health and social services started enforcing the new water treatment standards? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the regulations themselves haven't changed, and the department is working with the operator to resolve the situation around the permits. And so I encourage the MLA to transmit that message to the operator. I certainly don't want to see them lose a season of business. I went there last year -- I don't think the Member was there, but I went there last year on a retreat and it certainly is a very nice place to be, and I think that this is a problem that can be resolved so that others can enjoy it as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1513-19(2):
HAY RIVER FISH PLANT

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are about water but in a different area. I am going to ask the ITI Minister about the fish plant.

So given that we've heard a lot about the impacts to Hay River and the South Slave with the fires and the flooding, can the Minister speak to what is being done to support the fishers to ensure that there is enough production of fish to go through the plant and not make it a folly? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Fish Revitalization Strategy from back in 2017 speaks to these exact challenges. Unfortunately, rather than seeing production go up from the time of 2017, production has only continued to go down. We are nowhere near hitting our quota on the lake, and it certainly is going to impact the fish plant. There's no secrets to that, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, we need to work with the fishers. We want to ensure that they know that we're working actively to make sure that we are not going to remain under FFMC forever. There's different pathways to get there, Mr. Speaker, and I've asked to make sure that we have one available and ready to go. We've been hoping the federal government would help us provide that path. It hasn't happened. So we're going to have to chart our own way through.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, we continue to provide direct supports to the industry. There's shipping and freight supports. There's SEED money to support having infrastructure available, new boats, etcetera, to support some of those costs. And, Mr. Speaker, again, but really, it's wanting to ensure that there's -- well, there's an entire commercial fish program, Mr. Speaker, that has different supports available to them. Perhaps I'll stop there lest I go too long but I do want to acknowledge that we certainly are aware of this and want to ensure that the commercial fish production, any subsidies are tied to ensuring that we're getting those production numbers up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister being brief. There's been a lot of Ministers' statements in QP today.

My next question has to do with that support for the fishers. It's my understanding out of a

recent meeting, there is a long list of unmet obligations by the Department of ITI with respect to the fishers and the fish plant. So can the Minister speak with what is being done to meet those action items that were discussed with the fishers and ensuring that they have a healthy fishery? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was recently in Hay River. I attended there with the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister. We sat down together with fishers and with representatives from the Tu Cho. It was, I believe, a very productive meeting, Mr. Speaker. It gave us the opportunity to have action items.

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to -- I want to be realistic. I know that the fishers have also been evacuated from their homes, from their communities and from a critical time when they should be preparing to open the summer fishing season. That certainly is -- has no doubt interrupted some of the back and forth necessary to move forward. But that said, Mr. Speaker, I know there are funds available that we were alerting our colleagues in Hay River to around training, to ensure that they can bring new fishers on, mentors on, and we're going to work with those interested to see that those funds can be available, that they can apply. Normally this would be an application to ECE. In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, we're going to try and make -- we're going to ensure that we can support people to have those applications done so that they're ready to hit the water. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm following on those action items myself. It's not been -- it's not been that long, and there's been an evacuation, but as far as making sure that they're going to be moving forward, Mr. Speaker, that is why they are reduced down to an action item list that gets passed around between the parties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: I'm not sure I would have called that answer brief, but I do appreciate the Minister's response.

Can the Minister tell me whether or not she thinks it's appropriate for her staff to be going outside lines of communication and contacting fishers directly? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't -- I guess I don't know what the lines are of communication that look to have been breached but, Mr. Speaker, the job of officials in ITI is to be in direct contact with fishers all around the lake. And I would expect them to continue to be in contact with fishers all around the lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: I find that quite an interesting answer, Mr. Speaker, given that I've been cc'd on the correspondence between the Minister and the fishers regarding this exact situation. There is a line of communication that comes from dealing with entities that have executive directors, that have managers, etcetera, and to go outside of that to other people within that organization, to circumvent or undermine the leadership, is inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. The Minister needs to get her staff under control. I will leave it as a comment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. I'll give the Minister an opportunity to respond.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of confidence in the staff of ITI. They are dedicated to the fish revitalization strategy. They are dedicated to the relationship they have with fishers and dedicated to the relationship they have with fishing organizations, including the Tu Cho and including the fish federation. So, Mr. Speaker, I will on behalf of all of the staff, and the public servants who may have been listening just now, I do want to say that I have confidence in their skills. I want to encourage them to continue working in this industry, and all of us are going to be on the path to revitalizing the industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, I'd just like to remind you to respect the rules of the Chamber. Thank you.

Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 1514-19(2):
HOUSING EVACUEES FROM
K'ATL'ODEECHE FIRST NATION RESERVE
FIRE

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my original questions were geared for the MACA Minister, and unfortunately, or fortunately, for him, he's not in the House for the next couple days. However, I do have questions for the housing minister.

I understand there were several public housing units operated by Housing NWT on the reserve on KFN, all who had to evacuate. My question is what arrangements were made to accommodate these evacuees to find suitable temporary accommodations in other communities? Mahsi.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for his question. We do work with the emergency management team as well. So with those evacuees for public housing on the K'atlodeeche Reserve, they were encouraged to come here to Yellowknife to the emergency centres. And with that, we did follow up with the public housing tenants as well, and we're trying to find suitable accommodations for their return back to K'atlodeeche. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. At the point of evacuation and the days leading afterwards, there was no messages or messaging to the public renters on available accommodations or what Housing NWT was going to do to accommodate finding them suitable units, and many were, you know, handicapped and many were elderly, and there was many women that were pregnant at that time. So I'm really wondering how Housing NWT missed that boat. Mahsi.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member as well that, you know, I just want to really elaborate that we were dealing with a -- with an emergency for Hay River and K'atlodeeche. I did work with the MACA Minister, as well along with my colleagues, to look at what -- how would we be responding and how would the residents of Hay River be taken care of. They were encouraged to come here to Yellowknife and further looking at their suitable accommodations here.

Unfortunately, we didn't look at the available public housing units here in Yellowknife as well too, but we are working directly with those tenants as they return back to the community. We do have ten federal housing units that are available in Hay River today. We are working with the community to look at the allocations of those units. And I will look at further updates for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. What I'm getting at there is that the renters in the housing public rental units on the reserve are the responsibility of Housing NWT in the Northwest Territories, and not go for any other community. And I'm wondering why was there no provisions made to pay for accommodations like hotel rooms and their meals while they were temporarily removed from their public rental units? Mahsi.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I really want to just really include that we were a part -- we are a part of

emergency management throughout the Northwest Territories, and we respond as one government in supporting this initiative through MACA.

Right now, we are in in the conversation with the communities as well too and looking at what are we going to be doing for housing replacements in K'atlodeeche, also looking at our affected clients, both in Hay River and K'atlodeeche. We do have access to federal units right now, but we are looking at the ongoing conversation with the chief as well, what are we going to be doing and how are we going to be responding, are we going to be putting new units on the ground, are we going to be looking at the federal units that are currently there. This is a further discussion that we are having at the community level. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. And mahsi to the Minister for those answers. There have been about four of the public units that were burnt and also five seniors' homes on the Beaver Road. I'm wondering what are Housing NWT's plans to replace those units moving forward? Mahsi.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working directly with the emergency management and also with K'atlodeeche as well and looking at to finding further solutions to replace those units. There's actually ten units that have been affected. I'm not too sure of the condition and if we've actually lost all of those units or if there's just severe damage to them. But as we go forward, I will provide those updates to the Member. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1515-19(2):
TRANSPARENCY OF CORPORATE
REGISTERIES

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to following the best practices of other jurisdictions and ensure that the ownership of all privately-held corporations is made known through access through the corporate registry search? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So corporate registries is publicly available.

Anyone is able to search the corporate registries. It's a free search. For a fee of \$4, anyone can then get detailed access to reveal who are the directors of that corporation, but the corporate registries does not keep a list of the shareholders of a corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason why I ask that is that because in the NWT we have a good system in place, you know, for societies. But when it comes to corporations for profit, we don't have any information. We don't know who owns what businesses, etcetera, and there's no requirement. And I just wanted to know why, you know. So what is the purpose of keeping this information private? How do we ensure many of these business owners or these businesses are truly living and working in the NWT? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So corporate registries is responsible for extra-territorial registration, so companies from outside of the territory who want to do work in the territory, as well as corporations in the territory. So that information, like I said, it can be publicly found. The directors, you know, the location of the office, so things like that are publicly available. If a municipality, an Indigenous government, is having difficulties, the Department of Justice is more than happy to help. If the Member has a specific issue that she would like to raise, she can send me an email, with some details and we can discuss it. I might not be much help here on the floor right now. I don't have details of the concerns that she's raising. I will say I'm not the most familiar with the Business Corporations Act. It's been a while since I've read it and I will say I have not read it in full. So it's difficult to sort of get perhaps the detailed answer that the Member is looking for. But, like I said, if they're running into roadblocks, we're happy to help. And so I encourage her to reach out. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will take him up on his offer and meet with him to discuss this further. So no more comment. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1516-19(2):
EMERGENCY LEAVE FOR GOVERNMENT
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
EMPLOYEES AND INCOME SUPPORT FOR
RESIDENTS IMPACTED BY EVACUATION
ORDERS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, for the second year in a row, Hay River and K'atlodeeche First Nation residents have been hit with severe disasters and forced to evacuate as we have heard much of today. Residents who work for the GNWT, but can't work remotely, are being asked to use vacation leave, special leave, or even leave without pay during this time. This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Mandatory evacuation should not be made to take away from people's family and medical needs, mental health breaks, or vacation leave. The GNWT must reinstate these banks to GNWT employees who evacuated from Hay River or K'atlodeeche First Nation. So I'm wondering if the Minister can make that commitment here today. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, emergency leave is available to public servants during an evacuation. This is paid leave. It does not draw down from other leave banks. And if an employee is being asked to take some other form of leave, Mr. Speaker, they should be discussing that with their supervisor or raising it in appropriate ways. If necessary, it come through MLA, it can come to me, but they should be on emergency leave with pay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the Minister stating that because I had the privilege of having dinner with people from Hay River last night, and this was not the information that they were receiving from their supervisors. So I think that was really important information from the Minister, and I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the emergency leave that is afforded to public servants is equal to the number of days that they were under mandatory evacuation. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, if you're on emergency leave, if you're subject to an evacuation order, you can remain on emergency leave and it won't draw down, again as I said, on your banks.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge there are public servants who are based within the community that's under evacuation who are working, who are working remotely, and I just want to acknowledge that we -- I'm conscious of the fact that they are doing so under great

strain when things are more than disruptive in their lives. So wanting to also extend that while these emergency leave banks are available, I certainly want to extend my appreciation for those that have been called to continue to work under circumstances that are very difficult, whether remote or otherwise. But certainly to be very clear, again, there are different types of leave. And even when the evacuation order is lifted, it may well be that some people cannot yet return to their homes or to their communities. There are those who can't return right now maybe under health circumstances, back to Hay River in the circumstance. And, again, they can be looking at what types of leave are appropriate, whether emergency leave is still appropriate or whether special leave or an annual leave is appropriate. But, again, at that point, Mr. Speaker, once the evacuation order is fully lifted, that may change but right now, if they can't go back, they should be speaking to a supervisor to ensure that they're being appropriately accommodated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask that the Minister also -- and, you know, the GNWT's very good at using Bear Net leave, and as MLAs get Bear Net over here, and I'd like to ask that this information be added to an upcoming Bear Net circulation as well.

Mr. Speaker, GNWT employees are not the only NWT workers impacted by severe disasters. People who are self-employed or work for small and medium business who do not have billable or hours worked are going weeks without pay sometimes during these mandatory evacuations that are happening. We heard here earlier today from the Deputy Premier that the GNWT will provide \$750 one-time payments to residents. When we look to the south and what's happening in Alberta, Alberta residents are receiving \$1,250 per adult and \$550 per dependent child when they go seven days of a mandatory evacuation.

One of the concerns that I have is that there is such a high cost of living in the Northwest Territories, and quite often people are evacuated for a week at a time. And to expect residents to be able to pay their bills at even one week is 25 percent of your monthly income. So I'm wondering if, first off, if the Minister is looking at raising that amount to something that is more reflective of the cost of living in the territory; and second, why they have that caveat of seven days of evacuation? Because missing even one or two days of pay is extreme for people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't make everybody whole. The Government of the Northwest Territories can't make everybody whole. I think more -- several of my colleagues have already spoken about how heartbreaking this is, to hear on late Sunday night that this community was being evacuated yet again. Mr. Speaker, my first thoughts were to children who were being woken up in the middle of the night to have to leave their houses again. So, you know, it's not for lack of awareness of how tremendously difficult this must be to the extent that someone who is not experiencing it can even pretend to actually be able to say that we know someone feels when we're not in those shoes.

So, Mr. Speaker, no relief program that we ever come out with is likely going to be one that is completely satisfactory, that makes anyone whole and that totally fixes every single need that anyone has. I know that. I'm aware of it. If we're going to compare ourselves to Alberta, Alberta has some billion-dollar surplus; we do not have a surplus, we continue to run a deficit. We have an operating surplus that offsets some of the debt we take on for our capital plan. So that said, we're trying to find gaps. I know the United Way right now has over \$500,000. They've been trying to get that money out the door. We're looking at ways that we can better support them going forward so that process can be made more easy, that that process could be more accessible. It's a nonprofit, I certainly don't want to put a burden on them but there's a lot of money there that we want to be able to support them going forward. So we're having that conversation. And now we're looking at what other gaps we can fill. Again, employees who are -- we've looked at the number of employees who are under income assistance, they received their income assistance emergency funds and continue to receive income assistance, looked at who -- what the employment demographics are, who are GNWT public servants, again emphasizing they are on emergency leave, they don't have to draw down their banks. So trying to make do with the resources that we have, with the public dollars that we have available to us to try to fill some gaps, and that's how we landed on the program that we have here to try to fill up for anyone that is seeing an income disruption that they can have a top-up, take a bit of the pressure off for them, and that has been the goal that we've tried to achieve. We landed on the \$750 looking at what the emergency funds that are provided to income assistance clients, so we're trying to be fair across the board to the different types of programs available. That's how we landed on that one, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear the empathy from the Minister and I also hear the acknowledgement from Ministers and Members on kind of the cumulative impacts of having to evacuate, as the MLA for Hay River North said earlier during their Member's statement, two, three, four consecutive years here, going on with disasters from -- really, from the impacts of climate change and so we're just going to continue to see more of them. But we also heard the MLA for Hay River North today during their Member's statement speaks about how the fire is only six kilometres away right now, and so people may very well return home for a few days and be evacuated again. So my next question, and my last question for the Minister, is if that is the case and they are re-evacuated to Yellowknife, will they, again, be eligible for that subsidy if the evacuation order lasts another seven plus days? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minute there's another evacuation, all of the things start to happen again. The GNWT provides, firstly obviously, the cost of fighting the fire and, again, accommodations to all those who have been doing so tirelessly, 24/7 now for over a week. Mr. Speaker, we also will be providing again emergency transportation, emergency sheltering, emergency relief in terms of food, toiletries, some basic necessities. And perhaps what we now observed is that a lot of people don't want to come to Yellowknife. I appreciate that. We do now have also the community back -- the community government hosting grant through MACA to try to support communities around the lake who have been stepping up and stepping in. So that support will be available again. And, Mr. Speaker, any community that is affected by a seven day or longer order will now be subject to this policy. That again is part of trying to get -- you know, it's a policy that was developed in the space of days by public servants who are also being asked to address some of the other needs and emergencies. We've done our best to try to make it clear, accessible and, Mr. Speaker, it'll be available going forward. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1517-19(2):
NORTHWESTEL AND BELL BILLING AND
SERVICES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two days ago on May 23rd, I went to NorthwesTel which is owned by Bell in the Northwest Territories, to help a Hay River evacuee pay for their phone bill because it was going to be cut off. NorthwesTel told me they don't do Bell payments there even though they are owned by Bell. They told me I had to go to the bank. This is a very important issue, especially in light of the various natural disaster emergencies that the NWT has experienced in recent days and years. Does the Minister agree that this is not okay? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly feel for any residents right now that are, you know, anywhere in the South Slave dealing with some variety of natural disasters or any other personal circumstances. I'm not going to be in a position to speak to what -- whether or not NorthwesTel and Bell need to sort out their billing in a different way. I can certainly raise it to the counterparts at NorthwesTel that I do meet with on occasion and see if there is a path forward or, you know, perhaps try to support -- provide us some information about online banking opportunities. And if that's in, you know, some supports there for this person, if they're a business they may be able to access some help in terms of getting themselves set up online. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, in addition to natural disaster emergencies, there's also a major concern about the lack of cellphone infrastructure on all NWT highways. Between Fort Smith and Hay River, there are no cell services. Between Behchoko and Yellowknife, there are no cellphone services. And in the last two weeks, there have been at least two traffic-related fatalities near Enterprise and Behchoko. So if there were broader cellphone services across the NWT, there is a chance that those tragedies could have been prevented. Does the Minister agree? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we're on a slightly different line right now than paying bills. But, Mr. Speaker, with respect to telecommunication services across highways, that, again, is one where all of Canada and all of rural and remote Canada struggles with this. I have certainly looked at many a map that shows the coverage for telecommunications. But we're not alone. And, in fact, northern parts of many provinces are in a more dire circumstances than what we are in terms of

their demographics and populations that are affected. So as far as whether it would have prevented a highway accident, Mr. Speaker, that is probably a question that I'd have to go back to the RCMP about. I don't know if cell service would have prevented an accident necessarily. No doubt having access to cellular services can access emergency services more quickly, Mr. Speaker. And that, again, is something where we continue to advocate to the federal government to ensure that they're making a pathway available for funding for communities that want to try to have that kind of infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister tell us what NorthwesTel's master plan is for addressing some of these issues? Have they shared any plans with you or Cabinet and not with all of us? NorthwesTel and Bell need to start being accountable. Does the Minister agree? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do meet with NorthwesTel periodically and they -- and frequently -- well, and the purpose of those meetings is to get an update on achieving 50/10. That is their mandate through CRTC that they are to be providing the availability of 50/10, even if not with the affordability that I also continue to advocate where availability doesn't do much if we can't afford it.

Mr. Speaker, I have on those occasions asked them and encouraged them to also reach out to standing committees to make their presentations available. I will certainly follow up to ensure that they are reaching out. I think this is information that would be a benefit to all Members in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the master plan and accountability issues of NorthwesTel must be shared with all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and it should include how they're going to lower their rates and create more choices. In this day and age, it is extremely important that the people of the NWT remain connected with the rest of the world via modern technology with the internet and phone services. Does the Minister agree with that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the digital economy is most certainly the way of the future right now in many respects; it's upon us. It provides tremendous opportunities, and I would like nothing better than to see some of the many small businesses, artisans,

crafts -- multiple sectors could benefit from better access to the internet, tourism, tourism providers, so on and so forth. There are programs at BDIC with ADAPT to try to get businesses online. There -- hopefully now there's going to be the new subsidy that I mentioned earlier coming available for residents. So, again, I think -- and this is where the Member and I are likely in agreement. And, Mr. Speaker, again, I will, again, confirm and follow up with NorthwesTel and encourage them to meet with Regular Members. It is information that we should all have. The more we're all talking about the same goal, the more we could hopefully achieve it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 65-19(2): PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS CAPITAL AND OPERATING COSTS AND REVENUES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President.

My questions are for the Minister of Finance. The Government of the Northwest Territories is increasingly using public-private partnerships or P3 financing for large capital projects. P3 project accounting and disclosure is an area that continues to evolve. To better understand what P3 projects the GNWT has initiated, their costs and impacts on public financing, please provide a list and a brief description of all P3 projects undertaken by the GNWT with partners for each P3 project and:

1. The original projected capital costs, operating costs, debt servicing costs, and any projected revenues and associated timelines for each project at the time of their approval by Cabinet for the last ten fiscal years;
2. The annual actual capital, operating costs, debt servicing costs and revenues for each P3 project for each of the last ten fiscal years;
3. The P3 costs (capital, operating and debt servicing) and revenues as a percentage of the main estimates and capital estimates for each project during each of the last ten fiscal years; and
4. Whether there is any analysis conducted on the impacts of P3 projects on public financing, particularly programs and services, and whether any of this analysis is publicly disclosed.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 79:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE JUDICATURE ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 79, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act.

Bill 79 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on March 29th, 2023, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review. The standing committee held a public hearing on May 10th, 2023, and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Minister of Justice on May 24th, 2023.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 79, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 927-19(2):
REVISED 2022-2023 COMMISSION
SCOLAIRE FRANCOPHONE TERRITORIES
DU NORD-OUEST OPERATIONS BUDGET

TABLED DOCUMENT 928-19(2):
SUBMISSION ON THE 2022-2023 TLICHO
COMMUNITY SERVICES AGENCY CAPITAL
BUDGET

TABLED DOCUMENT 929-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 1353-19(2): IMPACTS OF
COVID-19 ON EDUCATION

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Revised 2022-2023 Commission scolaire francophone Territories du Nord-Ouest Operations Budget; Submission of the 2022-2023 Tlicho Community Services Agency Capital

Budget; and, Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 1353-19(2): Impacts of COVID-19 on Education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

TABLED DOCUMENT 930-19(2):
ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 OFFICE OF
THE REGULATOR OF OIL AND GAS
OPERATIONS

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Annual Report 2022-2023 Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 931-19(2):
REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF
CANADA TO THE PARLIAMENT OF
CANADA: CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL AND
REMOTE AREAS, INDEPENDENT
AUDITOR'S REPORT, 2023

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2023 Independent Auditor's Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada on Connectivity in Rural and Remote Areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member for Kam Lake.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 81-19(2):
APPOINTMENT OF LAW CLERK AND
DEPUTY LAW CLERK

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, May 29th, 2023, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that the Legislative Assembly recommends the appointment of Mr. Toby Kruger as law clerk and Ms. Sandra Mackenzie as deputy law clerk as recommended by the Board of Management;

And further, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of the appointment to the Commissioner.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Notices of motion. Motions. Member for Kam Lake.

Motions

MOTION 81-19(2):
APPOINTMENT OF LAW CLERK AND
DEPUTY LAW CLERK,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with a motion today. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Appointment of Law Clerk and Deputy Law Clerk.

WHEREAS section 54(3) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act provides that the Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Board of Management, approve by motion of the Legislative Assembly, shall appoint a law clerk;

AND WHEREAS the current law clerk to the Assembly, Ms. Sheila MacPherson, has been appointed as a Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories after more than 25 years of outstanding service and dedication to the Assembly;

AND WHEREAS Members of this Legislative Assembly wish to publicly recognize and thank Ms. MacPherson for her service;

AND WHEREAS Mr. Toby Kruger has served as deputy law clerk to the Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Board of Management has passed a motion recommending the appointment of Mr. Toby Kruger as law clerk and the appointment of Ms. Sandra Mackenzie as deputy law clerk.

AND THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that the Legislative Assembly recommends the appointment of Mr. Toby Kruger as law clerk and Ms. Sandra Mackenzie as deputy law clerk as recommended by the Board of Management;

AND FURTHER, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of appointment to the Commissioner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Thank you.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 90:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
ACT, NO. 5

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, May 29th, 2023, I will present Bill 90, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 5, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

BILL 91:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM
PRODUCTS AND CARBON TAX ACT, NO. 2

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I give notice that on Monday, May 29, 2023, I will present Bill 91, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, No. 2, to be read for the first time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration of Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23 and 29, Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration of 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 Kam Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Présidente. I move that the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Does committee agree? 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 and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 23, Bill 29, Minister Statement 264-19(2) and Tabled Document 681-19(2) and would like to report progress. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Friday, May 26th, 2023, 10 a.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 the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees

14. Tabling of Documents

15. Notices of Motion

16. Motions

17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act

- Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act

- Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's Report on Suicide

- Tabled Document 681-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-19(2): Report on the Child and Family Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth and Families: An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together

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 Friday, May 26th, 2023 at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:49 p.m.

Unedited Hansard