



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

0th Session

Day 3

20th Assembly

**TERRITORIAL LEADERSHIP
COMMITTEE**

Thursday, December 7, 2023

Pages 19 - 78

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Kam Lake)

Mr. Richard Edjericon
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Robert Hawkins
(Yellowknife Centre)

Mrs. Lucy Kuptana
(Nunakput)

Mr. Jay MacDonald
(Thebacha)

Mr. Vince McKay
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Mr. Danny McNeely
(Sahtu)

Ms. Shauna Morgan
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Mr. George Nerysoo
(Mackenzie Delta)

Ms. Kate Reid
(Great Slave)

Mr. Denny Rodgers
(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Ms. Lesa Semmler
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

Mr. R.J. Simpson
(Hay River North)

Mr. Kieron Testart
(Range Lake)

Mr. Shane Thompson
(Nahendah)

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(Yellowknife South)

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

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, December 7, 2023****Members Present**

Ms. Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Mrs. Kuptana, Mr. MacDonald, Mr. McKay, Mr. McNeely, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, Mr. Nerysoo, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Ms. Semmler, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Wawzonek, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Mrs. Yakeleya.

The House met at 9 a.m.

Call to Order

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): The proceedings today are being broadcast live on the Legislative Assembly television network and on social media. I would also like to welcome those who are watching online today.

My name is Glen Rutland, and I am the Clerk of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. It is my duty to call the second meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee to order.

Members, in the new approach to proceedings of the Territorial Leadership Committee, you have agreed that I, as clerk, will preside over the selection process of the Speaker, the Premier, and the Executive Council. This will allow the Speaker-elect to participate in proceedings throughout the day before assuming the Speakership tomorrow.

Now, Members, I ask that you please rise while Mrs. Kuptana leads us in a prayer.

Prayer

--- Prayer

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mrs. Kuptana. Please be seated.

Members, before we begin, I would like to take an opportunity to recognize some former Members who have joined us in the gallery today. Mr. Beaulieu, Member of the 16th, 17th, 18th Legislative Assemblies. And Mr. Rocky Simpson, a Member of the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Members, you have a copy of the agenda in front of you, which includes a copy of the agreed upon guidelines for the selection processes for Speaker, Premier, and the Executive Council. As you have granted the clerk authority to maintain order and decorum during this process, I remind you that you have agreed that points of order and points of

privilege will not be permitted in today's proceedings.

Review and Adoption of Agenda

The first item is the review and adoption of the agenda. Are there any additions or deletions to the agenda from the floor? Seeing none, do Members agree that the agenda is adopted?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Members.

Members, the processes today will be conducted in the following manner: For the nominations for Speaker and Executive Council, at the appropriate time I will ask all Members who wish to allow their names to stand for either Speaker or the Executive Council to rise in their place. If only one person is nominated, that person is acclaimed; or, in the case of Executive Council, if only two people from one region are nominated, they are acclaimed. If an election is required, the names of the candidates, their speeches, and names on the ballot will be shared in alphabetical order.

For the purposes of voting, a ballot box has been placed in front of the clerk's table and two voting booths are placed on either side of the Speaker's chair. Members will be asked to approach the clerk's table to receive a ballot and proceed to vote at the voting stations. Please note that you will be asked to get your ballot and vote at the voting station on your respective sides of the chamber.

For the results, Members, you have agreed that once you have voted, Members will leave the chamber, the ballot box will be brought to the clerk's table where ballots will be counted by the clerk and deputy clerks. The results will then be certified by the law clerk. Once results are determined, the bells will be rung to bring you back into the chamber. The voting process will continue in the same manner until one candidate for each position receives the required number of votes as you have agreed

to. Once each position has received the required number of votes, I will announce the successful candidates.

Also, I ask Members to please be mindful of the time limits that have been set and agreed to. Before we begin, I would like to turn Members' attention to a new addition to the chamber specifically for the proceedings today. The podium before you, where the ballot box is located, was made in the NWT. As you can see, it features the Northwest Territories' Coat of Arms on the front and there is a sealskin at the place at the top to finish it off in true NWT fashion.

This piece actually predates the 12th Legislative Assembly. Prior to the construction of this historic building, this podium travelled with Members throughout the territory and was used for special occasions such as signing ceremonies and Members being sworn into the Executive and as MLAs. Members such as Nellie Cournoyea signed and were sworn in at this table as well as Governor General Hnatyshyn signed the NWT visitor book at this table. Today is indeed a special occasion. As your clerk, I am proud to be able to have this back in the Legislative Assembly.

Election of Speaker

Members, the next item on the agenda is the selection of Speaker. I will now ask all Members who wish to allow their names to stand for Speaker to rise in their place.

Mr. Thompson, did you want to address your nomination?

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, today I rise to put my name forward for Speaker. Sorry, I am a little emotional right now. I didn't get much sleep last night. In doing so, I am withdrawing my name for Premier.

Mr. Chair, this was a difficult decision to make. I appreciated the support, encouragement of my colleagues, constituents, and family in pursuing the leadership role in this 20th Assembly. Over the last few weeks, many have encouraged me to consider the role as Speaker. They've noted that they need for leadership in the House. They've expressed the need for more respectful tone and debate in this chamber. They have said we need to act in a manner that is respectful of each other and respectful to the trust our residents have placed in us.

Mr. Chair, I believe in consensus government. But I also know that there can't be consensus without conflict. As an Assembly, conflict can be productive. It can generate new ideas and new

energies. However while we need conflict, we do not need confrontation. Confrontation is not productive; it drains energy, it backs people into a corner. Our constituents deserve better, and our territory deserves better.

In encouraging me to run for the Speaker, people have noted that I have served on both sides of this chamber as a regular Member and as a Minister. I understand what it is like to be on both sides, asked and answer the questions. I have questioned Ministers and responded to questions as a Minister.

I was prepared to continue to stand for Premier. If unsuccessful, I was prepared to stand for Cabinet, and I was prepared to be a Regular MLA. I am here to serve my constituents. However, in discussions with my colleagues, it is clear that it is an important leadership role and this Assembly needs it to be fulfilled. This Assembly needs somebody who is more than a referee, someone who needs -- we need somebody who will be a coach, someone to help Members understand their roles and procedures and help to best work on behalf of their constituents.

With the support of my family, my friends, and my colleagues, I am prepared to fill that role. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

RESULTS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Seeing no other nominations for Speaker, I am pleased to announce the Member for Nahendeh as the Speaker-elect of the 20th Legislative Assembly.

---Applause

The appointment of Mr. Thompson as Speaker-elect will be confirmed by a motion of the House on Friday, December 8th, 2023.

Confirmation of Process for Election of Premier

Members, the next item on our agenda is the question period for Premier candidates. Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, and Ms. Wawzonek are nominated for Premier. Apart from these candidates, all other Members will be permitted to ask up to two questions of the Premier candidates. Before starting the second round of questions, I will ensure all eligible Members have had an opportunity to ask their first question. While asking your question, I ask that you please stand after you have been called on by the chair. For the candidates, after the question has been asked, I will rotate through the three candidates and provide each of you two minutes to respond to each question.

Please note at the time of two minutes, I will stop the Member and move on to the next candidate or to the next question asker.

Now, if I can just have a show of hands from Members who would like to ask questions, please. If people can keep their hands up until I call their name. Mr. McKay, Mrs. Yakeleya, Mr. Morse, Ms. Reid, Mr. McKay, Mr. Rodgers, Ms. Semmler, Ms. Cleveland, Mr. Nerysoo, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Kuptana, Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, and Ms. Morgan. Thank you, Members.

Members, I would just like to draw your attention to the presence of the gallery of Premier Caroline Cochrane, Member of the 18th and 19th Legislative Assemblies; and, Paulie Chinna, Member of the 19th Legislative Assembly. Welcome back to the chamber.

Election of Premier

All right, thank you. Is there a Member that is prepared to go first? Ms. Reid.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

MS. REID: Thank you to all the candidates. The collective agreement of the public service expired last March, and negotiations have been paused. How will you prioritize a positive relationship with the public service both in terms of a renewed and fair collective agreement as well as creating a healthy work environment?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Reid. We'll begin with Mr. Simpson. Mr. Simpson, you have two minutes.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Consensus government and governing in the Northwest Territories is all about relationships. We have to have positive relationships if we want to get things done. And the relationships with the union have been rocky at times; we've always managed to come to agreement. I found that across government, across relationships with different governments, with different bodies, there's always a way to find agreement, find common ground, and we just need to be open to doing that. I also think that, you know, in terms of healthy work environments, you know, the public service is an amazing force in the Northwest Territories. We have many, many well educated, well qualified individuals, and everyone wants to work towards a common goal of making the NWT a better place. And so by encouraging that goal, by setting the parameters through which we can work, by getting everyone on the same team and lined up in the same direction, I think that we can

achieve success in that way. When people feel like they're part of something, then their attitudes are more positive. They feel more fulfilled. So I think there's plenty that we can do to enhance morale around the territory.

I think that there's also the ability to enhance the flexibility that our employees have to make decisions. Often employees feel stifled by policies or regulations or laws that are in place and so as we go forward, we need to ensure that we are building in to those laws and policies and regulations the flexibility for employees to do what they need to do. You know, as a Minister, things would come across my desk. You know, a constituent was not happy with the way a decision that was made, and often the public servant who had to deliver that information wasn't happy about the decision that was made either. And so there's plenty that we can do to address those situations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart, you have two minutes.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Thank you for the question. I think relationships are important and the relationship with the leadership of the UNW, of the PSAC, of all the labour groups in the Northwest Territories are equally important as any other relationship we have, and we need to prioritize those and leadership positions as well so it's not just the negotiating to the bargaining team who are working back and forth. We actually do have some dialogue at the elected official level, and labour plays that very important role and that challenge function to government when it's prioritizing perhaps austerity when there's, you know, a financial crunch but we still need to give workers good wages. And that's a priority for me. It's something I believe in very strongly. It's something that my constituents support. And I know it's something that the public service needs so we can attract the best possible employees to provide really critical services to our public.

And I think as far as morale goes, it could be better. Employees of the GNWT need to feel heard. They need to feel like they are part of the process moving forward. And I think we can do that by establishing some new processes around letting front line workers, especially in fields of like health and teaching, and areas where there's a lot of stress and a lot of nuance, to give them a process where they're allowed to have their voices heard and there's no fear of repercussion. Not full whistle blowing, but just a feedback loop that can be assessed and we can start to work on recommendations that come with that. And that's especially true for the

regions as well. We need to give more regional autonomy to segments of the public service and allow them to make decisions that are -- you know, that work for their regions and aren't dictated from the -- from headquarters.

And, you know, finally, we need to take a look at the code of conduct. I think it's far too restrictive. We need to make it easier for our employees to get involved in their communities, to get involved with their democratic rights, and to feel like they're part of this whole process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek, you have two minutes.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have been a champion and a defender of the public service for the last four years. It's a role I have taken very seriously. I am also very proud of the fact that the prioritization that's taken place of the relationship between Government of the Northwest Territories and the UNW, which is not to say that bargaining happens outside the bargaining table.

I am also very protective of the fact that that bargaining space must be kept intact and must be respected but that doesn't mean we don't have relationships. And I was very proud during the evacuation process to be able to have a direct line of communication with the president so that we could better serve all of the residents and all of the public servants who are serving those residents themselves.

With respect to outstanding bargaining, the mandate, as I said, is in existence and that table is live so we don't want to speak to it, but I certainly have paid very close attention to all of the outcomes of other negotiations in the last two years.

As far as making our public service better, our workplaces more healthy, this is a priority for us. It will make the GNWT better and that by association will serve every Member of the public better. We already have a lot of the solutions. We have employee satisfaction surveys. We have workplace assessments. We have received communications directly, particularly in the health care sector, with recommendations from the front lines as to what needs to happen. I've personally read a lot of those things, a lot of the EES surveys from every department, from the roundups, every Minister needs to read them for their department. The Premier needs to read them for every department because the action has to start from the top in terms of making healthier workplaces. The roadmap is there about how to connect front line workers better up through

management, and there should be a roadmap to make it so that we are less managing and more leading of people. That too has to come from the top down so that we are empowering people to be leaders in their workplaces. And when there's a harassment finding of their being a problem, there should be a ladder of resolution. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Next, Mr. MacDonald.

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Candidates, could you please describe your relationship and experiences with Indigenous governments and how do you plan to leverage these experiences and relationships to advance the agenda of the 20th Assembly, specifically in addressing the issue of settling land claims?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. We'll start with Mr. Testart. Mr. Testart, you have two minutes.

MR. TESTART: Thank you for the question. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. I've worked for the Yellowknives Dene for the last -- for the past two years. And through that experience, living in Yellowknife and working in a small -- very much a small community environment in Dettah, I've learned firsthand the challenges of being in that environment of being an unsettled claim that has a tremendous amount of responsibility and not enough resources to get those things done. That's given me insight in to how important it is to settle outstanding claims and realize treaty promises that have been made by this government and by the Crown in the past.

As I said in my speech last week, my commitment is to have new negotiating mandates within one year of swearing in of the Cabinet and new offers at every table within two. And I stand by that. That's something that I am committed to doing. I am committed to working diligently to reach those timeframes and to work collaboratively with Indigenous governments. I've had phone calls with leadership and met with leadership since last week as well to learn firsthand from what they would like to see in this next government, what they'd like to see from their -- from a potential Premier, and I think that's also given me insight into how we can make this process work.

And I think the other thing I've heard very strongly is we need to have this conversation about our constitution, about moving forward as the Northwest Territories, into a bold future where Indigenous governments are equal partners and have a role in public government. And the way -- this conversation is long

overdue. You know, it started at division in '99 and we haven't really picked it back up so I am committed to picking that back up. I know many of the -- that's an ambitious conversation and I've given ambitious timelines around it, but I think we need to push ourselves hard to solve -- or to build this strong relationship because it's the way forward. It is the future of the Northwest Territories. And I am committed to realizing it together with our Indigenous partners. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek, you have two minutes.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, really, as far as the relationships I have with Indigenous governments, I am very proud to say that I've had the opportunity in the last four years to come to know many of the Indigenous leaders in the Northwest Territories. And part of the reason for me waiting before putting my name forward for this role is I wanted to make sure I had made contact with as many of those leaders who I knew personally before taking this step.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, with respect to leveraging that, I am not sure I would say I want to leverage it so much as I want to be able to act as a partner hand in hand. There's a number of ways that I'd say I want to start -- I've started as I want to continue, which is to say sometimes pausing what we're doing as a government to go back and make sure that it is aligned with what people around the territory, and particularly Indigenous governments who are within this territory, want to see.

So, for example, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Action Plan, we took a pause to go check in with community contacts who are appointed and engaged with their community leadership. Regional economic development plans, again going back into those regions and asking how they wanted to structure that process. And in particular, the Indigenous procurement policy, taking a pause and not carrying forward as a government but actually going back to leadership and saying, how should we go about this. It's those kinds of pauses that I think make a big difference. It demonstrates our engagement and demonstrates that we are, in fact, partners in the Northwest Territories.

With respect to the land claims, Mr. Speaker, in my view there needs to be more engagement from the Premier's office in terms of what's happening. We've seen significant movement and significant change in the last four years. There have been publications of our mandates. You have seen the UNDRIP legislation being

implemented. But this is an opportunity now to have leadership in fact involved at the table. We take too much of a hands-off view and the political will of all of us to see settlement of these claims isn't being translated to what's happening at the table, and it's time for that to change and it can change. And I think with that kind level of leadership and engagement, we will start to see that the GNWT will not be the barrier. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson, you have two minutes.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so the Member asked about our experience working with Indigenous governments. And, of course, on Cabinet, we had plenty of opportunity to sit with Indigenous governments, government to government, and have discussion. So like some of the other former Cabinet Members, I do know that leaders from across the territories. There are many advancements that we have made in the past government that we need to continue with. The Council of Leaders, I think it's an amazing body. Good work is done there; there's general discussions had but it's also led to specific opportunities to deal with issues. So there's the housing forum that came out of that. There's going to be work on our legislative agenda that is going to be informed by the Council of Leaders.

Personally, I had a number of initiatives that I have committed to work with Indigenous governments on. So the Education Act is one of those; it's one of the major initiatives. Initially, you know, we came into government wanting to get the Education Act done. It quickly became clear that this is not something the government can or should do alone and so I committed to working with the Indigenous governments to codevelop this very important piece of legislation, again, the first time that that's happened for a non-random resources piece of legislation. As well, I worked with the Tlicho and the band in Colville Lake to take a unique approach to building their schools so that they have a hand in this and actually have the lead on it.

I think there's a number of things that we can do to work with Indigenous governments more closely. We always talk about going to Ottawa shoulder to shoulder but to do that you we can't just show up in Ottawa, knock on a Minister's door and think you're going to get things done. There needs to be infrastructure in place. We need to have people on the ground working with bureaucrats before we show up with the Indigenous governments. And we need to show up with a plan so that when we get there, we

are really capitalizing on the strength of that government to government relationship we have with the Indigenous governments. And I think that is really what's going to lead the territory into the future.

And in terms of land claims, I think it's possible to make more progress on settling land claims and self-government agreements in the next four years than we've done in the past 25. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next, Mr. Rodgers.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given the need for economic stimulus in the territory, and specifically in the regions, would you commit to working, where possible, with local governments, local Indigenous governments, local businesses to ensure that work is done in the regions, creating jobs, building capacity, and keeping that work at home? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Rodgers. Ms. Wawzonek, two minutes.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that's an easy commitment to make. That's the work that we've already begun with respect to the Indigenous -- or with respect to the procurement review that took place and we saw tremendous change in the last four years where money that was previously leaking out of the territories is now being kept within our regions. But we can certainly go much further than that. At this point, we've only just begun the work of the work plan that is going see changes, such as a vendor performance management. And what that's going to do, imagine this, that we actually didn't know if somebody committed to having work kept in the territories, whether that's through procurement dollars or whether it was through their labour that they were going to be hiring, we had no mechanism by which we would actually monitor if our contractors were doing that. That is now in place, and it is important to make sure that we actually implement that and follow through so that if people aren't doing the things that they commit to that we know about it and we take action to respond.

We also need to make it more available to people in regions, to communities in regions, governments in regions, and the businesses there, what projects are coming down the pipes, what size are they, and are we structuring our procurement processes in a way that they are accessible to those who want to be bidding on them. There's already a lot of work that has begun. We've got a one-stop shop for procurement. That was a tremendous change.

It's made it much easier. We do a lot of engagement with businesses to help educate them on how to do the procurement applications. But, again, earlier involvement and earlier knowledge as to what's coming allows people to be bidding in a way that is more successful.

That said, there's always going to be room for improvement. We've only just changed the BIP program, and one of the things I noticed when I was looking at the numbers this summer was that there's still an awful lot of companies that are not on BIP. Is there a reason for that? What is it not doing for them? What is it not providing to them? And is there a way to make it more accessible so that they can actually access that preferential treatment opportunity.

And lastly, certainly not least, is an Indigenous Procurement Policy. If we can unlock Indigenous businesses in the Northwest Territories to access our procurement, we will only benefit everybody in regions and in the GNWT as a whole. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. I agree that's an easy commitment to make. That's what we have been doing. When I was a Member in the 18th Assembly, I was quite frustrated at the amount of contract dollars from the GNWT that went south. We can't control a lot of the market forces that determine what the overall economy is like, but we can determine where and how we spend our money. And so at the beginning of this Assembly, I really pushed to keep those dollars in the territory. And being from the South Slave and so close to the Alberta border, I saw it up close and personal what the impact it has when those dollars flow south. Keeping money in the territory creates local employment. In the last Assembly, we started off with, I think, 30 percent of contract -- of the 18th, 30 percent of contract dollars went south. By the end of the 18th, 75 percent of all contract dollars were going south. In this last government, 75 percent of contract dollars now stay in the Northwest Territories. And that's something we need to continue. It also provides opportunities for training, and so we need to look at expanding some of the unique training opportunities we're doing to help people become journey persons and apprentices.

We also need to look at how we source our projects. You know, we need to look at perhaps standardizing some of the things that we do. There was a time when things like windows and what not were standardized for the housing corporation, which would allow a local company to actually tool up and then start producing

those. So there's a number of manufacturing opportunities like that as well in the territory. So there's a lot that we can do. We have been doing more but we need to focus on it. And, again, I keep going back to this, when we develop our policies and our legislation we need to focus on the end goal of serving the people of the territory, and that means keeping the money in the territory. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Thank you for the question. So I think, like the old saying, is whatever job in a small communities -- or every one job in Yellowknife is worth ten in a small community. And I think that speaks to the importance of regional procurement opportunities and making sure money is flowing outwards from the capital. And I think in the 18th Assembly I was a champion for procurement reform. It's something that was passionate to my constituents at the time, and I've been watching closely what this last government has done with it, and I also worked in economic development for a small community. So I know exactly how important that was.

Now there's still a few missing pieces, but I think progress has been made and that progress allows us to move -- to work -- move quickly into something that's even better than we've got now. I know sole sourcing opportunities for Indigenous governments is a really high priority for them. I think it gives certainty around a lot of the projects and resources and revenue that they come to expect. And especially with settled claims, I think there's some expectations that are built into those anyway that we need to make sure we're following and that our policies are following as well. And I think the other thing that I'm committed to doing that would really help in terms of regional -- getting money out to the regions is closing the municipal funding gap. That's not just a Yellowknife problem. That's an everywhere problem. And, you know, my commitment is to make this work within the first operations of maintenance budget or change the formula. But it's going to be more money at the end of the day. Maybe not the full amount if we need to change things and right size it to community needs and community resourcing. But if we just do it now, that's \$55 million that's going out the door to every community and that's in the hands of the local authority. That's in the hands of people who are making local decisions for local procurement. They're going to benefit local people and create local jobs. And those are the kind of policies I want to champion. If we're not all building the Northwest Territories together, we're just going to see more of that brain drain to Yellowknife or

down south, and we have to keep skilled workers here and we have to keep opportunities here, and we have to build our territory together as one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, as a YKDFN member, we've been going on the land for a long time to practice our way of life. We harvest fish, wildlife, etcetera. We've been doing that since time immemorial. And in September of 2022, the Lutselk'e Dene First Nation has gone out to their Timber Bay camp and practiced their way of life for a very long time. And in September of 2022, RWED, now climate -- environment and climate change, is now the new department, has come into the camp and with choppers and wildlife officers and they raided the camp and looking for some illegal activity. But what happened there, though, it brought back a lot of memories of residential school trauma. I am still hearing it even to this day that the community is still in need of healing. And they want to know why the GNWT government has come into the community, in to the raid, why did they come to the Lutselk'e Dene First Nation to talk about this issue. Instead, what they did was they came and they raided the camp. So the chief is very adamant about asking for an apology. I raised it in this House a few times. And in the spirit of reconciliation, again, would the Premier stand up today and apologize to the Lutselk'e Dene First Nation if they become Premier. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Edjericon. First up will be Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's clear that the community and the people in Lutselk'e feel aggrieved, and it's clear that to go forward we need to repair that relationship so -- and I put a lot of thought into this. And this is something that needs to happen early in this next government. And I think what needs to happen is that the Premier needs to go to the community, maybe to the camp, sit with the elders, speak with the elders, and try to come to sort of resolution. An apology in itself is just an apology. I don't know if that shows the type of meaningful work with the people that is needed in this situation.

There are a few things in the territory as close to the people as being on the land as hunting and harvesting. And I recognize that it's of the utmost importance that we right this before it festers and it turns into a worsening relationship. So I've thought a lot about it, and one of the first things that I would do is I would travel to Lutselk'e and I would have those conversations. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next, Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the question. This is a really serious issue. And if this next government is going to move forward on realizing treaty rights and treaty obligations and realizing land claims, then we have to take reconciliation seriously. And this isn't about the actions of one person, one Minister, any one individually, but the actions of the past -- of past governments and how we have to make amends for those and move forward.

I've already committed to an apology. I stand by that commitment. I think it's completely unacceptable how things were conducted. And regardless of the legalities of a potential investigation that are out there, what has happened has been thrown out of court and we deserve -- or sorry, the people of Lutselk'e deserve an apology for that. And I'm committed to doing that. And furthermore identifying compensation, even if it's just providing care for trauma that has been caused by this event, being present in the community from the Premier and the Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change to actually speak to people, speak to elders, speak to the leadership, and make sure that they understand it's not just words, it's action, and put our money where our mouth is and actually, you know, pay the price of reconciliation, which is a high price. But it's worth paying if it allows us to move forward.

And, again, if we are serious about committing to finalizing the Akaitcho process, we have to start with that and we have to start with realizing some other historical issues that need to be addressed, right, and that's what the responsibilities that are placed on the Office of Premier, are to speak for the government and to speak to First Nation partners as well. And for me, this is not controversial. This is something that needs to get done. And there can be no equivocation. It needs to be clear and come with compensation attached, and I've committed to doing that for the Lutselk'e Dene. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, like my colleagues, this is a situation that can't be allowed to continue. It is marring the relationship between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the government in Lutselk'e and more importantly the people of Lutselk'e. I share my colleague's view that there is a path forward if we can come together. And when we all attended and listened to leadership

speak to us about what they're looking for from this government, I took particular note when Chief Marlowe mentioned the need to come to the community, for the Premier to come to the community, and mentioning whether we can sit and have a drum song. And I know that he's looking for an apology, Mr. Chair, but I've took note that there's a window there by which there may be a way to sit down together in the spirit of reconciliation. I had it suggested to me that this could be in the form of an elders' council. That sounds very similar to what my colleague from Hay River was describing, that a path by which we can sit, explain exactly, as was asked, as to why the officers were there, what was it that led them to be there, what was the motivation for their being there, what has happened since then, and why are they pursuing this. And in the name of conservation, what is it that we can do to work together to ensure that we maintain conservation of the caribou but importantly maintain and preserve the rights of Indigenous peoples on their lands to engage in traditional pursuits.

So having that opportunity as, again I think already said, early in the administration of this government to go, to sit down, to discuss in the spirit of reconciliation, through a process that is driven and designed not by Premier's office, not necessarily even by the Government of the Northwest Territories, but by those with whom we need to sit down and have that opportunity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Next, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. As an MLA, we all have a responsibility to our constituents. As nominee for Premier, how are you going to advocate for the priorities and needs of Indigenous government throughout the territory and not just in your own riding? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong. We'll start with Mr. Testart. Mr. Testart, you have two minutes.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the question to the Member. I think we start with -- we start here in caucus at first and then talk to the MLAs who are representing those regions. And that's a process that we're all committed to, and I think we need to continue moving forward on and building shared priorities that are, you know, that guide the public government forward that are informed by the needs and realities of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people throughout the Northwest Territories as part of their representatives here. And then going forward,

we need to make sure that there's a check on our progress as a government. And that comes from maintaining strong relationships through bodies like the Council of Leaders, continuing co-drafting work through the Intergovernmental Council. And as I said before, moving forward into the future hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, with First Nations in a constitutional convention where we can actually identify substantive roles that are integrated into our public government. So it's not just at the whim of the Premier or the whim of any given Assembly but it's built into our constitution and how we do -- how we build a public Government of the Northwest Territories that has a place for sovereign First Nations. And that's something that's going to take time, but we have to get the ball rolling on that.

I'm also very -- I was thinking of how the Government of Canada did trade missions back in the '90s, and they called it Team Canada. Jean Chretien took people to all sorts of destinations and brought, you know, luminaries and Cabinet Ministers and all sorts of people to open up these opportunities. That's when I said in my speech we need a Team NWT approach, that's exactly what I'm talking about, is to bring Indigenous governments into that process of lobbying Ottawa and other governments so we can open up those. And I think we should be even talking to sovereign First Nations in southern Canada as well, not just the federal government but many different relationships that we can build together. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, obviously we do have our own priority setting process that we are only just beginning to embark on, and I think all of us, every one of us, all 19 of us, have spoken of the importance of recognizing what we heard from Indigenous leadership from across the Northwest Territories. Once that's done, it is also very clear, and it was made clear to all of us, that Indigenous governments too have their own priority documents, their own strategic documents that they are putting forward for on behalf of their people. I suspect, based on what we heard over those two days, that there's quite a lot of alignment between us. It is time to start using that alignment and that overlap strategically, taking that alignment, going to Ottawa together, aligning our asks, making sure that we are speaking with one voice on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories where those voices are overlapping, and not going at cross purposes and not failing to utilize this opportunity of a shared voice from the North.

We have also already some forums that I think are beginning to come into their own but which can also be used in a much more dramatic way. One prime example of that is the Council of Leaders where governments from around the Northwest Territories, including the GNWT, come forward and sit together. They've begun to find their voice and begun to find their legs, and we have met with federal Ministers as a table, as a council of leadership table, but that table could speak more loudly directly to Ottawa, can speak more loudly on a national stage, and can really put forward priorities, as I've said, that I believe are aligned and shared for the whole of the Northwest Territories, whether it's major infrastructure projects like the Mackenzie Valley, whether it's better alignment of our energy alternative, whether it's Taltson or micro grids. These are all priorities that can impact all of the Northwest Territories, and we can begin as leaders to speak with a better and clearer singular voice where appropriate through forums such as the Council of Leaders and, as I've indicated, by going together when we go to Ottawa to speak about our strategic priorities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And as I've stated a number of times, working with Indigenous governments to advance the needs of the entire territory is the cornerstone of my approach to -- would be my approach to Premier. We do need to work together. You know, we have issues across the territory. The best to address those issues is to work with the Indigenous governments in their regions. We can't dictate what's going to happen across the territory from here in Yellowknife. We need to work with the regions. We need to work on advancing and settling and implementing land and self-governments and that will build the capacity in the regions. That will bring the power and the money into the regions. I've spoken about the infrastructure we need to ensure that we can go to Ottawa with Indigenous governments, whether it is as an entire territory through the Council of Leaders, one on one with an Indigenous government who may have more capacity and desire to advance a certain project, or with regional Indigenous governments. So there's a lot of opportunities. We need to be flexible. And we cannot dictate how we are going to work with Indigenous governments. We need to work with Indigenous governments and co-develop our approach and utilize what we have in the GNWT to everyone's benefit. And so when I talk about infrastructure and Ottawa, I mean offices in Ottawa where we are in constant contact with the key players at the bureaucratic level. And

that involves the GNWT and Indigenous governments. And so then we can go shoulder to shoulder to Ottawa. We can speak to Ministers. And they're not just going to say, you know, that was a great conversation and then call it a day. They always go back to their officials and they say tell me more about this project or these governments. And if that official has been briefed up, they know what's going on in the regions, they've been prepped by our people, that's when things start to move. And so, you know, we can talk about doing it, but we actually -- there's mechanisms we can put in place, and I commit to putting those in place, to make sure that we actually advance them.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Morgan.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So during the wildfire-related emergencies this past summer, it wasn't clear certainly to the public what was the role of Premier and Cabinet. So in the case of a public emergency, do you believe the role of Premier and Cabinet is to get out of the way or to take a more active role in managing the EMO or the CPHO, as the case may be, and in leading the public service?

And secondly, what do you think the Premier's role would be in terms of an independent third party review of the emergencies this past year? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Morgan. Ms. Wawzonek, you have two minutes.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the EMO structure right now is fairly well defined in that it is the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs who does take over as the lead. In my view, Mr. Speaker, let me start at the end of the question with respect to a third party review.

There is always going to be an after-action review after events like this but it is clear that this review, given the magnitude and scale is something -- of the events, the review itself should be something distinct and unique from the standard after-action review. That is going to take some time to do properly. That is going to take more time than what we probably have before this spring season, which is when we are likely to face some renewed form of emergency whether in the form of a flood or a wildfire. And so some of the questions about who is managing the EMO and who is managing and connecting as between communities, Indigenous governments, and the GNWT, those questions need to be answered immediately. In my view, one of the things that should be happening -- well, two things as I'm

looking at the clock; firstly, is a better understanding of the connections and contact points between our territorial emergency services, Indigenous governments, and communities. Communities are responsible each for their own emergency plans in response to an event, but then the EMO also steps in. But of concern to me is when we reach a certain level of emergency, for example a state of emergency gets declared, where are people gathering who have those roles, is there a command centre, and should they, in fact, be all placed in the same place. That does not seem to be uniform across the territory, and I would suggest that it should be.

And then, secondarily, is with respect to communication to the public. The kind of confusion that I sense emerging from a question like this is arising because of an incomplete and unclear communication strategy rolling out from government on behalf of EMO in terms of what's happening and who is in charge and who is responsible and where are they. So if we can do a better job of communicating what has occurred and how it's happening, we'll do a better job of supporting the public through an emergency. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So after the past couple of years, the past few years, it's clear that we need to prepare and plan for emergencies. You know, we've had unprecedented -- everything that's happened in the past few years has been off the charts. We've never seen floods like this. We've never seen fires like this. And so we cannot go into another season without putting our mind to preparation. And that is where I see the role of the Premier and Cabinet in ensuring that that happens. We need to make sure that there is a plan, there are plans in place. You know, when something is happening, they're happening quickly on the ground. And the people on the ground are often in the best position to make decisions. But what needs to happen at the Premier and Cabinet level is ensuring that those people have the tools to make decisions, that the lines of communications are appropriate, that the appropriate governments know their roles and have roles. There's -- you know, in Hay River during the flood, there was a lot of discussion about the role of the GNWT versus the municipality. Hay River, they were used to potential floods on the island, a small part of town, not for the entire town flooding. And so we need to be prepared for things like that. There needs to be preparation in terms of knowing who's staying and who's going. The Department of Infrastructure has a role to play in a community even if it's evacuated. They

need to know who's staying and who's going. The same with the health authorities. And that -- from my experience, that didn't happen. There wasn't a plan. So we need to ensure that a plan is in place and that the rules on the ground are well defined. And we also need to take a role in public communication prior to an emergency. We need to make sure that everybody knows their role. We need to make sure that the public knows if there's an evacuation, this is what's happened, this is what is happening, this is what you need to take with you, this is how you need to prepare. So preparation is going to be key. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. And thank you for the question. This one's very near and dear to my heart. I was here on the ground in Yellowknife during the evacuation supporting the emergency management operation in N'dilo and Dettah. And I know many of my colleagues also worked on the front line as firefighters or working in emergency management systems either through the GNWT or with the local authority. So we have a lot of experience here. And I think when it comes to solving these challenges, there's actually a way forward that's well established in emergency management principles. There's an instant command system that we can roll out here in the Northwest Territories. And I think we need to do that by establishing a dedicated department of public safety and emergency preparedness. I agree with my -- the former speakers, this is something that needs to be a priority, but we don't need to reinvent the wheel, we just need to give it the right resource and the right leadership.

To the question itself, however, I do think Premier and Cabinet need to trust in the process that's been established. If there's an emergency management plan, then that plan needs to be followed. And the people who are identified in that plan need to follow the chain of command. That's really important in an emergency so there's consistency. Premier and Cabinet still play an important role by being trusted broadcasters to the public and giving a sense of comfort and leadership when there's a lot of confusion. And the evacuation there was a lot of confusion and people were very scared, and I think a lot of the Members, including returning Members to this House, did a fantastic job in providing comfort to the people of the Northwest Territories during a very desperate time.

As for the independent review, I think -- the afteraction reports have -- are underway, and they should be done. That's standard operating

procedure. But what the public's asking for is a public process that they can participate in. We need to give the public some healing, some accountability, and some truth. And I think the best way to do that is to support an independent commission that can come through by way of motion of this House. And if I'm Premier, I'll be directing the Cabinet to support that. So they're -- and opening the doors of the GNWT to fully resource and cooperate with that commission. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Next we have Mrs. Yakeleya.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Good morning. Mahsi sodene. Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is what will you do to ensure your bureaucracy has meaningful authentic engagement with the people we are elected to serve? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mrs. Yakeleya. Mr. Simpson, two minutes.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the things that I've always thought that was very important was having a feedback loop so that we as decision-makers know what's happening on the ground. And to do that, we need to listen to the people on the front line, the bureaucracy, because they oft -- more often than not, they want to do a good job. They want to work with the people. They want to provide services. And they know better than anyone what's working, what's not working. And so by listening to them, we can make the changes that we need to make. When we made changes to our income assistance program, which should be implemented in the new year, I put a heavy focus on ensuring that the public service, who is interacting with the public, would have the time and ability to work with clients because that's important. The residents of the territory don't want to feel like they're being brushed off. They want to feel like the people who are serving them actually care. And they do, they do care and so we just need to give them that opportunity. And, again, that goes towards the really client-centered person-centered approach that I want to take with all aspects of government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. This is a really important one because this is often what -- I think there's a lot of people, especially the farther removed you get from the capital, that feel disconnected from the public -- from the public servants and the public service at large. I think the public servants care, but I think that we need to do a better job of getting front

line services out to the people. And we have great -- these great officers, government service officers, who are present in many of our communities, especially the small communities, who provide single point of access for government service. And that's a model that we should be applying across the Northwest Territories, including in Yellowknife so you have a very clear way to get access to services you need and you don't have to, you know, hunt down information or call your MLA. You know, we still have important jobs to do but the government should make itself more accessible through things like that.

I would like to see the next Premier appoint regional directors who can be the executive's eyes and ears in certain regions and get a sense of what's happening, how things are going, and changes that need to be made so the Premier can direct that directly to the deputy ministers and to the Ministers' offices themselves. And I think we need to regionalize our policies as well. We heard a great example in Fort Liard where they would like to access an agreement with the government of British Columbia over medical service because it's easier for them to get there than it is to go to Yellowknife. That's currently not being done and that's the example of a regionalized policy that just makes sense and better serves the people of that community. So that's the kind of thing I want to support and work with representatives of the region to build those -- that policy environment that really serves the people of that particular place.

And, you know, I think finally deputy ministers can't just stay in Yellowknife, you know, they need to come out on tours, just like Ministers, come with the Minister, and really meet the people that are part of their departments. And that's something I believe there's no substitute for face to face, and we need to get out there and meet people across this territory. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to hopefully get through three things in my response, and the first one is about having representation in every region so that there is a strong regional director, that that position is filled, and that we ensure that we are engaging in succession planning so that we don't have any gaps or absences in those regional positions. Those regional positions should be reporting -- obviously there's an administrative reporting role, but they should be reporting also into the Premier's office.

I've met with my departments on a biweekly basis throughout the last four years. It has been an extremely important way for me to maintain my engagement on what's happening and was a critical way that I was able to actually action things and see that things were getting done and adhering to timelines. And so in addition to having our directors reporting to the Premier's offices, I would think that departmental superintendents should also have a line to be meeting regularly with the Minister's offices so that Minister's offices are politically aware of what is happening within the regions and that are impacting on their departments.

Part and parcel of that, when we find we do meet with our superintendents tends to be when we're travelling into those regions. So while I do think that engagement and connection should be more regular and more consistent, I think there should also be an expectation on the Premier's office and on every Minister's office that they are attending in regions throughout the year with an expectation that they are doing those tours and not necessarily waiting but that we set up a schedule to make sure that we are in those regions and having a presence on a regular basis.

And last but not least, Mr. Chair, is integrated service delivery. There was an MOU signed between departments early in the last government to try to advance integrated case management integrated into being integrated service delivery across all regions. That hasn't advanced. It needs to advance. It's referenced in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Action Plan. It was then referenced in the homelessness strategy. Everyone seems to be saying that it works. And so now we need to make sure that it's rolling out for the front lines across the regions so that everyone gets the benefit of that program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Next, we'll go to Mrs. Kuptana.

MRS. KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to talk today about addictions and how it's affecting the entire Northwest Territories. It's become an absolute crisis, and we have a question today to prospective Premier candidates about addictions and having a clinical treatment centre in the Northwest Territories, something that we need, and we need in every region, and also holistic aftercare and on the land programming. Many come home from treatment and they don't have proper aftercare facilities, and they go back to the same situation that they're in. So my question to the candidates is what would they

do over their term, if elected as Premier, to lead the Northwest Territories to have a proper addiction facility in this territory? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Kuptana. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and thank you to the Member for the question. This is an addictions crisis in the Northwest Territories, and it has been for quite some time. And previous governments have kind of committed to or previous MLAs have committed to treatments, brick and mortar treatment centres, and then uncommitted as the operational challenges become aware. And I think we need to be bold and ambitious in meeting those challenges and recognize that we can't do it alone, especially if we're going to have regionalized models. So I'd like to establish a working group that brings together all relevant levels of government to really find the path forward, to eliminate the barriers to why clinical models haven't worked in the past, and to reinforce the holistic models that are working. You know, we have wellness camps. We have on the land programming. We have things that have been very successful in treating people, especially Indigenous people, with the respect they deserve and being culturally appropriate to get them well, to get them healed, and to return them to their community in a good way. And we need to build on those models of success and find ways to integrate them back into clinical models. But we do still need clinical supports.

We have a lot -- we have a wealth of knowledge in the Northwest Territories on people who provide care for addictions. So let's bring them in and understand how we can make this work, because it can work. It can work. I believe in that. And I believe we can make it work. But we have to work together to succeed, and we have to go to Ottawa and get them to pay for it in a significant way. I think this is as much a part of reconciliation and their commitment to building security in the Northwest Territories. We need to solve this crisis, and we need to make this a part of a national conversation, so the Northwest Territories is no longer being left behind. We have some of the worst statistics for social ills and those need to stop, and we need to be bold and bright and full throated in how we pursue this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I said this in my speech seeking the Premiership last week, that we are in a crisis with respect to addictions across the Northwest Territories. That has been true for some time. I

think we want to look firstly at what is our goal, and it is trauma recovery and it is full recovery and it is helping youth so that they are not in a situation where they need to be facing recovery from whether it's trauma or addictions. So with that, I would suggest three things in terms of what I could do in the next four years, one of which is to ensure that we are properly engaging and pooling resources with Indigenous governments. There's a lot going on in the territory right now. There is the wellness centre here in Yellowknife, the wellness centre that's going to be built in Yellowknife, as well as the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Centre. There's community groups that are hosting on-the-land camps. I know the Gwich'in has the wellness camp. There's a lot happening. Are we adequately pooling our resources to maximize what's happening, and what do we need more of? What is working and what do we need more of? In this sense, some of these are opportunities because the concern, of course, too is we are struggling to staff some of the positions that we have, whether it's in counsellors, whether it's psychiatrists. But if we can be more flexible, if we can look to people with lived experience and if we can look to communities and Indigenous communities and Indigenous governments for the people that they know in their communities who can be leaders, elders, what can we do to maximize that and make sure that they're being compensated for their skills and then maximize that lived experience.

Aftercare is a crisis and has been for some time. People can't be well if they don't have housing. So it's not that I can solve housing in the next 20 seconds here, but I can certainly say that finding a better path to save housing is critical, and it's a critical part of solving our addictions crisis. The accelerator fund from the federal government is for municipalities and Indigenous governments. We need to make sure that municipalities and Indigenous governments can access those funds and not be a barrier by the GNWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the Premier carries out the wills of -- will of the Assembly. And so if this Assembly prioritizes addictions recovery, which I hope it does, I have a feeling it will -- then that's something we can work towards. We have limited resources here in the territory. We've tried clinical treatment centres a number of times. We have not been successful. We do have -- there is access to treatment right now, as imperfect as it is, so people can go out but when they come back, then what? I think that, right now, is as far as the GNWT is concerned the missing piece that

we need to address. It's aftercare. I can't -- it makes no sense to send someone out and expect that when they come home and they're homeless or they're couch surfing that they're going to remain sober. So we need to deal with aftercare. If we're going to put our limited resources anywhere, I want to put it in aftercare. That said, a number of Indigenous governments have come forward with ideas for treatment centres and that's something that we can pursue together. The territory alone, I don't think that we are well positioned to create a territorial clinical treatment centre but with Indigenous governments, with their resources, with our resources and our ability together to go to Ottawa and get more resources, then that is something that I believe is achievable. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next question will be Mr. McKay.

MR. MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Premier candidates, considering the unprecedented wildfire events this summer and the impact to Hay River and Enterprise, with the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and so that no other community in the Northwest Territories has to go what we went through, would you support a third party independent of this government review on the wildfires?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as one of the earlier questions I had the opportunity to take note that given the unprecedented nature of what's occurred that a rather unprecedented response and including an unprecedented style of review is likely in order. As to the design and structure of it, Mr. Speaker, an independent is being called for but also an opportunity for the public to be more engaged and to be better engaged with what's happening and their experiences of it as well as ensuring that what we are doing aligns with interests from Indigenous governments who also have suggested that there needed to be a different way of responding to what happened this summer, both in terms of the communities that were directly affected, such as Enterprise and Hay River, but also when they were facing indirect effects. When Yellowknife was evacuated, many communities faced immediate impacts to their food supply chain. So certainly in that sense, the answer in some ways is easy but I do want to emphasize, Mr. Chair, with this opportunity I am concerned looking forward to the spring. We are likely to face emergencies in the matter of a few months, and that will be happening. Perhaps we can get as far as an interim response. My

fear is that we wouldn't be. And I do want to make sure that we have an opportunity to make any changes right now so that the lines of communications that are clear so that there's no question as to where people can get their information and so it is clear as to what the chains of command are and where they will be situated in the event that there is a call of an emergency and particularly if there's a state of emergency so that there is both the bigger picture in long term but also in that of the shorter term responses. If, in fact, this is to be another wildfire season, one thing I would ask if there are wildfire plans across the Northwest Territories, they are now becoming somewhat dated. I would like to look at where our highest risk zones are and look at whether or not those plans for those higher risk zones can be prioritized to be reviewed in advance of this wildfire season. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I am in support of an independent review of the wildfire season and the response. I don't think there's any question that that's what needs to happen. It can't be a run-of-the-mill review. It needs to be an enhanced review. I think we're all still coming to terms with what happened, the fact that two-thirds of the territory was evacuated. The level of trauma that was involved and then the Member who asked the question is probably more aware of that than I am. There was trauma in this territory. There's trauma in Hay River about what happened. I'm sure there's trauma in Yellowknife, in Behchoko, and the other communities. And so the public needs to feel as though that the review is being taken seriously and that it's going to make a change. I think it's very important that, you know, as the public government we listen to the public when they ask for this and that we deliver it. We need to help the territory heal. We also need obviously to learn from what happened so that it doesn't happen again. You know, there's a number of things I could go into, many of the details, but yes, I'm fully in support of it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Member for the question. It took days in some cases for some communities to be notified of what was going on with the emergency management -- or the territorial emergency management effort while they had to be left to their own devices to figure out to do things, you know, and that shouldn't be a case for any of our communities in the Northwest Territories. And I think we all understand the

real human impact this whole -- this incident and how it was managed had on communities, had on people. And that's why this independent review is so important. And I firmly believe it needs to be driven by this House and not by a government, not by an external contractor, but be in the hands of this House and this House sets the terms of reference, and this House ensures that all 19 Members are the ones who are driving the process forward and it reports back here, and it is not a GNWT process, it is not a local process. It is a process that belongs to the people through the Legislative Assembly. And as I said, as Premier I would fully direct the GNWT to cooperate with that process and provide any kind of support that can be provided to make sure clear answers are being given to why decisions were made. I don't think anyone -- I don't think we should be in a position to second guess why the big decisions were made, right, but we should know why they were made, but we should know what systems need to change, what worked, what didn't, because clearly some things didn't. And there are experts out there who know how these things can be managed, who knows how these systems work, and they need to be heard and they need to be put into places where they can actually change the system from top to bottom so we don't run into this problem again, and I support that, which is why I support the creation of a new department of public safety and emergency preparedness. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Next, Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, my question today is about leadership. The Premier of the NWT does not have the same formal powers as our federal and provincial counterparts. NWT premiers don't drive the government's political platform, control the majority of Members in the House, select their own Cabinet, and determine the timing of elections or schedule the Legislative Assembly. Despite these constraints, both MLAs and the public expect that the Premier's role brings something special to the effective functioning of Cabinet. What are you bringing to distinguish your role and given that, how would you exercise leadership? Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cleveland. Mr. Simpson, you have two minutes.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, I've often given that same preamble when I talked about the Premiership and the powers of the Premier. The Premier is not like, in other jurisdictions in Canada, you know, Danielle Smith can say what she wants done and it gets done. That is not the situation here

in the territory. So we are forced to work together. And I think that's a good thing. And so my style, as I've said many times, would be to bring people together. That is the only way forward. The Premier does write mandate letters for the Ministers and for the deputy ministers and in those mandate letters, I would ensure that what is expected of the Ministers and the deputy ministers is included so that there are parameters for the decisions that are made, for the types of initiatives that are undertaken, and for how we deliver and develop policies and services for our residents.

It's also important that the Cabinet and the Regular Members work together. You know, if there's an issue on Cabinet, there's a Cabinet Minister who needs to be removed, the Premier can't remove them. They can take away portfolios, but they need the support of the House to remove that Minister. And so you can't just remove portfolios and have a Minister sitting there with no -- nothing to do. And so that means that if you do that, the House has to know, they have to have faith that that was done for a reason and they have to support it. So working together is of the utmost importance. I believe I've done that as a Minister to the greatest extent possible. As Premier, I've given thought to how I would implement that across all departments to ensure that all Ministers are working in the same way and serving the Regular Members and the public in that type of fashion as well. And so there are structural changes we can make to how we operate upstairs in our offices. So working together is the bottom line, and I believe that I can bring people together. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. My approach is to empower Members to succeed and not only Members of the Cabinet but Members of the Legislative Assembly as well. I've spent the last two weeks chatting with my colleagues here, learning what opportunities and challenges exist in their regions, what kind of roles they want to play in the Assembly and the kind of priorities that they want to see in the next Cabinet. And I did that not to horse trade or curry favour but to understand what the next -- what the options are and -- what the available options are out there, what people actually want us to -- want to succeed in. And everyone needs a win, everyone needs to be a leader in their own community, and everyone needs to be front and center representing their constituents. And, you know, I believe I really enjoyed those conversations. I've learned a lot from all of you. And I've, you know, tailored my

speech and my approach to this whole thing to be about listening, listening to your concerns, listening to how we can work together effectively. And that's what empowerment means to me. It's not sitting back and, you know, opening the door and forming good relations. We can always do that. But it's about giving back to every Member of this Assembly so we can all share in the success of this Assembly and all shoulder the challenges together. And that's why I propose associate Ministers to be a fundamental change to how this Assembly works and give Regular Members who are chairs of standing committee more profile as associate Ministers and more access to Cabinet so they're not just sitting in a room waiting for the government to come and drop a briefing on them, whether it's ahead of time or after, or in public or in camera, but actually being part of the process every step of the way so they know what's going on and they can help drive that progress. For me, it's about everyone in this Assembly being able to come together and be proud at the end of the day that we've worked together effectively and get the things that you got elected to do done in your ridings. And I'm committed to do that if I'm successful as Premier. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think what I'd like to bring and what I do bring is an empathy driven approach to action and delivery. I care very deeply. That is why I went to law school in the first place. That is why I ran for office. And that is ultimately why I did, after discussing and connecting with colleagues here, after talking to Indigenous leaders that I know, made the decision to put my name forward for Premier. I'd like to continue as I have started, which is through dialogue and communication which provides, in my view, transparency, but also with shared vision. And I have said before the vision is not singularly that of Premier, but the Premier is responsible for delivering a vision on behalf of this Assembly and on the government. We are only just at the point of setting our priorities but it is clear that we have shared vision, in my view, for the Northwest Territories to be healthier, to be better educated, and to be able to maximize who we are for every single region.

And so with that, as far as being a leader is concerned, I believe I can help motivate the team - the team of Cabinet, the team of government, through a shared vision, by acting out myself as a leader as I would like others to act, and I believe we can deliver on all of our actions through the structures within government. Having simple things, regular meetings between the Premier and every

Ministers' office, including their deputies; regular meetings with our regional directors and superintendents as I described earlier; ensuring that our meetings are driven by priorities, driven by priorities which are driven by action lines which are actions and timelines; that we check back on them so that we know that if there is a barrier to undertaking something, any action in a region, in a community, that we remove that barrier, and we do it before there's a delay. And that provides accountability and that's fundamentally where I would like to end. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Nerysoo.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. My question is in regards to the youth and the recreation infrastructure that's available and/or lack of infrastructure that's available within the smaller communities.

With the high volume of drugs and alcohol in our communities, we have to find alternative measures to keep our youth occupied. There's climate change. It's becoming a shorter period of time for our youth to engage in hockey tournaments or in hockey within our communities. We've struggled with this for a long time, and we've tried other alternatives like cultural activities. We have a dance group that's from Fort McPherson, the Tetlit Gwich'in dancers that travel throughout Canada to perform, and this brings them -- they're really proud of their -- what they're doing, and it makes them happy. So we need more culturally based and recreation programs within our community. My question is what are you going to do to improve the infrastructure within the communities to help our youth stay away from the use of alcohol and drugs?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Nerysoo. Mr. Testart, you have two minutes.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. I think this touches on the real issue around many of the public safety concerns we have in communities, that there are root causes that are creating many of the challenges we face and, in this case, not having -- having any adequate facilities to provide activities and engagement for youth often allows them to be led astray. And this is something that we can -- that the Member clearly pointed out and that I think we've heard around the Northwest Territories. So I think it is time to carefully look at what funding sources are available for all arts and culture programs in the Northwest Territories, can we contribute to local infrastructure that's going to make a difference as well, and

leverage this strength of self-governments and regional governments as well, to work with them, to build these facilities. I'm committed to closing the municipal funding gap. That's going to provide more resources for operations and maintenance to municipalities that would allow them to maintain those kinds of facilities that the Member was asking for. And I think that's the key piece here. Even if we put a new school in or a new rec centre, there needs to be funding attached so it stays open and stays in good repair. So we need to look at all those things. And I think the best way to do that, again, is a regional approach, where we listen to what the communities want, we empower communities by giving them the resources they need, and we kind of get out of the way and we let the GNWT provide support where they need support, like in engineering plans and things like that. But listen to the needs of the community and be there for them when they need our help to ensure that they have success, that they are empowered, and that especially the next generation of Northerners are given access to the facilities that they need to stay healthy and safe in their own communities and embrace the culture that's so important to First Peoples in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think the idea that some of the youth, who are in some of the most vulnerable communities and most at risk, are not having access to services, I find that to be something that we need to take a moment and connect in to the other priorities we're talking about around addictions and wellness and recovery. So tackling this from the perspective of a whole-of-government priority, looking again at what is our response to addictions, where do the youth and youth activities and sports fit into that, mental wellness, is it in our educational funding formulas? Is it in health and social services funds? I think there's an opportunity here to look at better integrating this issue into some of the bigger issues that are right now seeing increases in funding and where there are calls for increases in funding.

One of the other areas, though, that I want to touch on here is in the non-profit sector. There are non-profits across -- and NGOs, sports organizations, cultural organizations, across the Northwest Territories working to deliver this kind of opportunity to youth, to adults, to everyone in their communities. And without much fanfare, there was a review done, independent, strengthening the non-profit and charitable sector. It was tabled here in the fall. It was done by people from within this area, from within the non-profits, and they landed on

something, that I had also found, which is way back in 2014 we put out something called the Government of the Northwest Territories Program Managers Guide to Funding for NGOs. It is meant to help increase the capacity of our non-profit sector, better empower them to deliver what they do and to do what they do well, and it is time that we stop having to review these things and actually get this implemented so we have more opportunities across Northwest Territories in this sector for those delivering on those programs and services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Youth will find something to do. You know, we can't say don't do drugs, don't get into trouble; they'll find something to do. So what we need to do is give them an alternative to those things. We need to give them activities that they can engage in that are safe and that are healthy. And, you know, I grew up in the Northwest Territories. I know what it's like. In Hay River, there was a time there was no youth centre. You'd just walk around town. I mean, that's not necessarily the safest thing to do, especially these days with what we're seeing happening in the communities. So one of the changes that was made in the last government, I brought forward changes to our capital standards for schools. It used to be that if you had less than a certain number of students, you got no gym if you got a new school. Or if you had a certain small number of students, you might get a gym but it would be small. You wouldn't be able to really practice even half-court basketball in it. And so changes were made so that every new school in every community that is built will get a gym. The size of the gyms has also increased for the smaller communities. Because I've been to a number of the communities with the small gyms, and those just aren't adequate. They're not going to prepare students to -- you know, to go on to the Arctic Winter Games and things like that. So that's one major thing that we've already done.

There's been efforts to work with the DEAs in communities to ensure access to those gyms as well. Because it's the DEAs who do control the access, and so we want to work with them to ensure that those gyms can stay open after hours, on weekends if necessary.

A number of years ago, we also made change -- the 18th Assembly made changes to how funding is distributed to sports organizations. It's been a number of years now. I think it might be time to relook at that and ensure that that money is being used in the way we want it to be used and it is supporting the

types of organizations you want it to support. There could perhaps be some more local and regional funding available. And this goes to our support for NGOs as well. We need to ensure that funding we do have, whether it's arts or sports, is accessible to NGOs and that it is stable as well, so we have multi-year funding. So there's a number of changes that we can and should make. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next we'll go to Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. My question today is with respect to the cost of living raised by countless families through the North, and they're struggling to get through yet another year and even are confronted by the challenge of should they need to or can they even stay. I put forward ideas about immediately, effectively, and positively creating better ways to move forward such as eliminating the payroll tax or even eliminating certain fees. Some of them are meaningful ideas that will have positive effects and some are good and, of course, some are less good in some cases. But it's about eliminating micro costs that are hurting families day to day.

My question for the Premier candidates is this: What specifically can you suggest that will directly and effectively eliminate some costs and fees which will immediately have a positive impact on families that are trying to get by? Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Ms. Wawzonek, you have two minutes.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to look at the perspective of costs of living on two sides. This issue came up to me as well throughout the campaign process but it's been one that's been coming up, really, for as long as certainly I've lived in the North. And firstly, what is it that's keeping our costs so high. Two big ones come to mind immediately. First is our lack of transportation infrastructure and second is our lack of energy infrastructure. So we have large scale projects, Mackenzie Valley Highway. That certainly isn't a short-term thing that's going to change the high cost of living. There are shorter term projects, smaller scale connections directly into communities that are now isolated with all-season roads and sometimes even without winter roads. There's been some success on projects like that. There was awards for the Tlicho All-Season Road. What can we do to have more success like that, more awards on a national scale for the good work that's happening in the Northwest Territories? Still that's a fairly large scale. But then I get back to energy infrastructure. Both

electricity and heat, this is an area where we face significantly higher costs than everywhere else. I know myself and other Ministers in the last government raised the alarm bells with the federal government. And one of the last things I was able to share with city administrators and municipal government administrators and Indigenous governments was a long list of funding opportunities to help them remove the need to rely on diesel and to bring in alternative sources of power or to reduce their costs of electricity through other means. So I'd like to look back at that immediately and see what we are doing to capitalize on the availability of those funds to change the reliance that we have right now on the high types of fuel. And then, of course, there is the longer term question of what are we going to do for micro grids for small communities that are not connected, better transmission lines to ensure that they are and the larger scale projects of renewables, and then ensuring that we actually have the infrastructure to adapt to renewables so that we see actual meaningful long-term change to bring our costs of living down. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, I've often given that same preamble when I talk about the Premiership and the powers of the Premier. The Premier is not like in other jurisdictions in Canada. You know, Danielle Smith can say what she wants done, and it gets done. That is not the situation here in the territory. So we are forced to work together. And I think that's a good thing. And so my style, as I've said many times, would be to bring people together. That is the only way forward.

The Premier does write mandate letters for the Ministers and for the deputy ministers, and in those mandate letters I would ensure that what is expected of the Ministers and the deputy ministers is included so that there are parameters for the decisions that are made, for the types of initiatives that are undertaken, and for how we deliver and develop policies and services for our residents. It's also important that the Cabinet and the Regular Members work together. You know, if there's an issue on Cabinet, there's a Cabinet Minister who needs to be removed, the Premier can't remove them. They can take away portfolios, but they need the support of the House to remove that Minister. And so you can't just remove portfolios and have a Minister sitting there with no -- nothing to do. And so that means that if you do that, the House has to know, they have to have faith that that was done for a reason and they have to support it.

So working together is of the utmost importance. I believe I've done that as a Minister to the greatest extent possible. As Premier, I've given thought to how I would implement that across all departments to ensure that all Ministers are working in the same way and serving the Regular Members and the public in that type of fashion as well. And so there are structural changes we can make to how we operate upstairs in our offices. So working together is the bottom line, and I believe that I can bring people together. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. My approach is to empower Members to succeed, and not only Members of the Cabinet but Members of the Legislative Assembly as well. I've spent the last two weeks chatting with my colleagues here, learning what opportunities and challenges exist in their regions, what kind of roles they want to play in the Assembly, and the kind of priorities that they want to see in the next Cabinet. And I did that not to horse trade or curry favour but to understand what the next -- what the options -- what the available options are out there, what people actually want us to -- want to succeed in. And everyone needs a win, everyone needs to be a leader in their own community, and everyone needs to be front and center representing their constituents. And, you know, I believe I really enjoyed those conversations. I've learned a lot from all of you. And I've, you know, tailored my speech and my approach to this whole thing to be about listening, listening to your concerns, listening to how we can work together effectively. And that's what empowerment means to me. It's not sitting back and, you know, opening the door and forming good relations. We can always do that. But it's about giving back to every Member of this Assembly so we can all share in the success of this Assembly and all shoulder the challenges together. And that's why I propose associate Ministers to be a fundamental change to how this Assembly works and give Regular Members who are chairs of standing committee more profile as associate Ministers and more access to Cabinet so they're not just sitting in a room waiting for the government to come and drop a briefing on them, whether it's ahead of time or after or in public or in camera, but actually being part of the process every step of the way so they know what's going on and they can help drive that progress. For me, it's about everyone in this Assembly being able to come together and be proud at the end of the day that we've worked together effectively and get the

things that you got elected to do done in your ridings. And I'm committed to do that if I'm successful as Premier. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think what I'd like to bring and what I do bring is an empathy driven approach to action and delivery. I care very deeply. That is why I went to law school in the first place. That is why I ran for office. And that is ultimately why I did, after discussing and connecting with colleagues here, after talking to Indigenous leaders that I know, made the decision to put my name forward for Premier. I'd like to continue as I have started, which is through dialogue and communication which provides, in my view, transparency, but also with shared vision. And I have said before the vision is not singularly that of Premier, but the Premier is responsible for delivering a vision on behalf of this Assembly and on the government. We are only just at the point of setting our priorities but it is clear that we have shared vision, in my view, for the Northwest Territories to be healthier, to be better educated, and to be able to maximize who we are for every single region. And so with that, as far as being a leader is concerned, I believe I can help motivate the team - the team of Cabinet, the team of government - through a shared vision by acting out myself as a leader as I would like others to act, and I believe we can deliver on all of our actions through the structures within government. Having simple things, regular meetings between the Premier and every Ministers' office, including their deputies; regular meetings with our regional directors and superintendents as I described earlier; ensuring that our meetings are driven by priorities, driven by priorities which are driven by action lines which are actions and timelines that we check back on them so that we know that if there is a barrier to undertaking something, any action in a region, in a community, that we remove that barrier and we do it before there's a delay. And that provides accountability, and that's fundamentally where I would like to end. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Nerysoo.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. My question is in regards to the youth and the recreation infrastructure that's available and/or lack of infrastructure that's available within the smaller communities. With the high volume of drugs and alcohol in our communities, we have to find alternative measures to keep our youth occupied. There's climate change. It's becoming a shorter period of time for our youth

to engage in hockey tournaments or in hockey within our communities. We've struggled with this for a long time and we've tried other alternatives, like cultural activities. We have a dance group that's from Fort McPherson, the Tetlit Gwich'in dancers that travel throughout Canada to perform, and this brings them -- they're really proud of their -- what they're doing, and it makes them happy. So we need more culturally-based and recreation programs within our community.

My question is what are you going to do to improve the infrastructure within the communities to help our youth stay away from the use of alcohol and drugs?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Nerysoo. Mr. Testart, you have two minutes.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. I think this touches on the real issue around many of the public safety concerns we have in communities, that there are root causes that are creating many of the challenges we face and in this case, not having -- having any adequate facilities to provide activities and engagement for youth often allows them to be led astray. And this is something that we can -- that the Member clearly pointed out and that I think I believe we've heard around the Northwest Territories. So I think it is time to carefully look at what funding sources are available for all arts and culture programs in the Northwest Territories, can we contribute to local infrastructure that's going to make a difference as well, and leverage this strength of self-governments and regional governments as well to work with them to build these facilities. I'm committed to closing the municipal funding gap. That's going to provide more resources for operations and maintenance to municipalities that would allow them to maintain those kinds of facilities that the Member was asking for. And I think that's the key piece here. Even if we put a new school in or a new rec centre, there needs to be funding attached so it stays open and stays in good repair. So we need to look at all those things. And I think the best way to do that, again, is a regional approach where we listen to what the communities want, we empower communities by giving them the resources they need, and we kind of get out of the way, and we let the GNWT provide support where they need support, like in engineering plans and things like that. But listen to the needs of the community and be there for them when they need our help to ensure that they have success, that they are empowered, and that especially the next generation of Northerners are given access to the facilities that they need to stay healthy and safe in their

own communities and embrace the culture that's so important to First Peoples in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think the idea that some of the youth who are in some of the most vulnerable communities and most at risk are not having access to services. I find that to be something that we need to take a moment and connect in to the other priorities we're talking about around addictions and wellness and recovery. So tackling this from the perspective of a whole-of-government priority, looking, again, at what is our response to addictions, where do the youth and youth activities and sports fit into that, mental wellness. Is it in our educational funding formulas? Is it in health and social services funds? I think there's an opportunity here to look at better integrating this issue into some of the bigger issues that are right now seeing increases in funding and where there are calls for increases in funding.

One of the other areas, though, that I want to touch on here is in the nonprofit sector. There are nonprofits across -- and NGOs, sports organizations, cultural organizations across the Northwest Territories, working to deliver this kind of opportunity to youth, to adults, to everyone in their communities. And without much fanfare, there was a review done, independent, strengthening the nonprofit and charitable sector. It was tabled here in the fall. It was done by people from within this area, from within the nonprofits, and they landed on something that I had also found, which is way back in 2014, we put out something called the Government of the Northwest Territories Program Managers Guide for Funding to NGOs. It is meant to help increase the capacity of our nonprofit sector, better empower them to deliver what they do and to do what they do well. And it is time that we stop having to review these things and actually get this implemented so we have more opportunities across Northwest Territories in this sector for those delivering on those programs and services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Youth will find something to do. You know, we can't say don't do drugs, don't get into trouble. They'll find something to do. So what we need to do is give them an alternative to those things. We need to give them activities that they can engage in that are safe and that are healthy. And, you know, I grew up in the Northwest

Territories. I know what it's like. In Hay River, there was a time there was no youth centre; you'd just walk around town. I mean, that's not necessarily the safest thing to do, especially these days with what we're seeing happening in the communities. So one of the changes that was made in the last government, I brought forward changes to our capital standards for schools. It used to be that if you had less than a certain number of students, you got no gym if you got a new school. Or if you had a certain small number of students, you might get a gym, but it would be small. You wouldn't be able to really practice even half-court basketball in it. And so changes were made so that every new school in every community that is built will get a gym. The size of the gyms has also increased for the smaller communities. Because I've been to a number of the communities with the small gyms, and those just aren't adequate. They're not going to prepare students to -- you know, to go on to the Arctic Winter Games and things like that. So that's one major thing that we've already done.

There's been efforts to work with the DEAs in communities to ensure access to those gyms as well. Because it's the DEAs who do control the access, and so we want to work with them to ensure that those gyms can stay open after hours, on weekends if necessary.

A number of years ago, we also made change -- the 18th Assembly made changes to how funding is distributed to sports organizations. It's been a number of years now. I think it might be time to relook at that and ensure that money is being used in the way we want it to be used, and it is supporting the types of organizations we want it to support. There could perhaps be some more local and regional funding available. And this goes to our support for NGOs as well. We need to ensure that funding we do have, whether it's arts or sports, is accessible to NGOs and that it is stable as well, so we have multiyear funding. So there's a number of changes that we can and should make. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next, we will go to Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. My question today is with respect to the cost of living raised by countless families through the North, and they're struggling to get through yet another year and even are confronted by the challenge of should they need to or can they even stay. I put forward ideas about immediately and effectively and positively creating better ways to move forward, such as eliminating payroll tax or even eliminating certain fees. Some of them are meaningful

ideas that will have positive effects, and some are good and, of course, some are less good in some cases. But it's about lending the micro costs that are hurting families day to day. My question for the Premier candidates is this: What specifically can you suggest that will directly and effectively eliminate some costs and fees which will immediately have a positive impact on families that are trying to get by? Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Ms. Wawzonek, you have two minutes.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to look at the perspective of costs of living on two sides. This issue came up to me as well throughout the campaign process, but it's been one that's been coming up, really, for as long as certainly I've lived in the North. And firstly, what is it that's keeping our costs so high. Two big ones come to mind immediately. First is our lack of transportation infrastructure and second is our lack of energy infrastructure. So we have large scale projects, Mackenzie Valley Highway. That certainly isn't a short-term thing that's going to change the high costs of living. There are shorter term projects, smaller scale connections directly into communities that are now isolated with all-season roads and sometimes even without winter roads. There's been some success on projects like that. There was awards for the Tlicho All-Season Road. What can we do to have more success like that, more awards on a national scale for the good work that's happening in the Northwest Territories. Still, that's a fairly large scale. But then I get back to energy infrastructure. Both electricity and heat, this is an area where we face significantly higher costs than everywhere else. I know myself, and other Ministers in the last government, raised the alarm bells with the federal government. And one of the last things I was able to share with city administrators and municipal government administrators and Indigenous governments was a long list of funding opportunities to help them remove the need to rely on diesel and to bring in alternative sources of power or to reduce their costs of electricity through other means. So I'd like to look back at that immediately and see what we are doing to capitalize on the availability of those funds to change the reliance that we have right now on the high types of fuel. And then, of course, there is the longer term question of what are we going to do for micro grids for small communities that are not connected, better transmission lines to ensure that they are in the larger scale projects of renewables, and then ensuring that we actually have the infrastructure to adapt to renewables so that we

see actual meaningful long-term change to bring our costs of living down. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, this is one of the issues that everyone in the territory feels. You know, we used to have exemption from the carbon tax on heating fuel, which we no longer have. And I look at my bill now, and I'm shocked by the cost of that. And so there's things like continuing to lobby the federal government, trying to make them realize that the North is not the south. The idea of the carbon tax is -- you know, maybe it's a good idea for some jurisdictions. It just doesn't work for us. And so we need to continue to lobby the federal government to make the exemptions for the Northwest Territories that people need. A number of changes were made in the last government to help our most vulnerable populations, changes to income assistance so that families when they need it are better supported, changes made so that seniors and persons with disabilities will have more income, can live more comfortable lives, can afford the things given the rising costs. We need to do a better job of expanding access to childcare. We've seen millions of dollars go back into parents' pockets because of the new childcare funding but I personally believe this is one area where the GNWT needs to make additional investments so that we can expand the number of childcare spaces, which is a huge cost for many people. We need to continue keeping work in the Northwest Territories. You know, the cost of living is high if you have no income. And so if people are working and we're keeping money here, that is going to help families as well. And one of the biggest things we need to do is deal with housing. The lack of housing has driven costs up so high across the territory. We need to work with municipalities to help develop land. A number of municipalities have good, solid plans on how to develop land, how to get more houses on the ground, and we need to make that priority and we need to push it because, you know, a number of the places are -- most places, in my community, in Yellowknife, and a number of communities are just unaffordable if you're looking at market rent. And it's supply and demand. We need more supply. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. I'm feeling I'm in election forum again, Mr. Chair. But I agree with my colleagues. Like, I think this is a system line problem, and it's going to take all levels of governments of the Northwest Territories to

solve, and it's going to take input from all members. And I do thank the Member for giving us something to think about at the start. We have an opportunity all to collaborate on a fiscal strategy that will allow us to consider options like that. I do think we need to take a look at things like the tax system to look at how incomes are taxed in the Northwest Territories. I don't think that we need to rely on own source revenues as much as we need to rely on population growth to drive new revenues which will allow us to take the edge off -- you know, off -- the edge off people by lowering fees and services across the board. That's kind of where I take this. It's about taking the pressure off northerners. And, fundamentally, every northerner needs a raise. We can't keep up with just -- we can't build all the projects that we need to build and fundamentally transform or environment. What we can do is pay people more like we used to. The northern advantage has been eroded over the years, and we need to bring it back. And that means we need some -- we need to give more as the government back to the public service and support private sector giving similar wage increases to their staff as well because, fundamentally, if we fix that problem, we're going to encourage more people to live here, restore that opportunity and that promise of northern opportunity that brought my family here way back in the '70s and '80s. And that's -- so that's how I see things moving forward, right, like, we can talk about all the things we can do. We can build Taltson. We can build the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We can repeal the carbon tax, which I'm committed to doing using the federal system which will get us those exemptions in place. And we can build -- put in an affordability and policy lens into Cabinet decision-making as well, so affordability is always front and center with what we do as a government. But fundamentally the thing Northerners need right now is more money in their pocket, and I'm committed to doing that working with all of you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Morse.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In previous Assemblies, Regular MLAs have often raised concerns about being left out of Cabinet decision-making, finding out at the same time as the public about announcements, and raising that as a concern. So will you commit to the principle of no surprises between the Executive and Regular MLAs, and what will you do to ensure Regular MLAs have input into Cabinet decision-making with the goal of better adherence to the principles of consensus government?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. We will begin with Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. You know, a lot of those concerns I believe we actually addressed in the last Assembly. I was a Regular Member in the 18th Assembly, and I was as frustrated as anyone when I would hear about something through the news. And so I took great pains in the last government to ensure that we were working with Regular Members the way that I wanted to be worked with when I was a Regular Member. It's not always easy. Sometimes, you know, I'll learn of something being publicly announced moments before it is and I'll do my best to fire off emails to all of the Members. Sometimes you don't quite get it, but there's definitely an effort put into that. And my office has learned a lot about how to do this and how to work with the Members. And I want to take those lessons that I've implemented and implement them across Cabinet. So ensure there are structures in place that will ensure that that happens and that, you know, Ministers' offices are supported to better work with the Regular Members. And there's a number of opportunities for the Members to work with Cabinet. We have countless meetings with the Members. We sit in this House, and we hear concerns from Members. I can assure everyone that all of that is absorbed and feeds into any decision-making that we have. There's always opportunities to do more. When I got onto Cabinet, I took what the issues I saw, and I addressed them. We're going to -- there's going to be more Members -- there are returning Members in this House as well. I want to hear what they thought worked well. And if we can address those issues address those as well. Speak with the new Members and see what they think we need to do and address those as well. So there are plenty of opportunities to do this. And it's imperative that we do it because, of course, we're a minority government; we all have to work together. And I have a good feeling about this group. I think we can do that, and I look forward to doing it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Member for the question. And, you know, I too think this is a great group of MLAs. I think we can accomplish a lot together, but we have to keep working together. And, you know, tension happens. Tension happens in any kind of environment like this, and that's why structural changes are important to me. I think it's easy to say we'll just have good relationships and good relationships are the way forward. Of course they are. But what happens when you don't, right? And I think a

change like having associate Ministers, which allow the chairs of standing committee to peek in behind the curtain and be part of governance, observe government decision-making, be able to ask informed questions, and then transmit that back to standing committees and Regular Members, will create a more cohesive government structure. So even though the Cabinet will still be a minority for all intents and purposes, there will be that bridge between the two sides. And those divisions are -- exists operationally, and they don't just go away because you have good relations. We work on different sides; we work doing different jobs. This will allow those jobs to come together in a meaningful way.

The other thing I think we need to take advantage of is caucus. I think the caucus is a place where you leave your hat at the door, all Members are equal, and everyone is free to speak on the issues that are important to them and free to speak frankly and candidly with decision-makers. And I think those opportunities are so important to building trust and building results that are going to move the territory forward. So I'd like to use caucus as more than an avenue to do, you know, administrative work for the Legislative Assembly and prepare us for session but also prepare us for political decision-making that needs to happen. And I think a good example of this is the meeting that we had as a caucus with the Indigenous nations and their leadership. We can continue doing that as equals throughout this term and find other ways to do that as well so we're not speaking as two different sides. We're coming together on those important issues and working together. And when -- and building a new structure, an evolution of consensus government that gives the Regular Members a place at the -- on the Cabinet side. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I again would like to continue on as I had already started and which is to say a lot of what I've done in the last four years is something that I was doing intuitively but would like to actually see now put into place more formally. For example, the Fiscal Responsibility Policy and the Affirmative Action Policy, both are internal GNWT policy documents but we made it -- it was clear to us that in a consensus system, those types of reviews should actually go to Members for their input separately and independently so that we could actually incorporate their feedback at the front end, not just say here, we've done a review, and we have a new policy. And the feedback that I received from Members was significant in terms

of improving the process of what was happening with that.

The budget process, of course I know I have spoken too many times, but it has evolved significantly over the last four years. It started off where there was a very formal letter exchange, but it evolved to a place where I was in front of committee, along with senior members of my team, on a regular basis. The conversations became more engaged. They became more involved. We were able to have dialogue that lasted throughout a budget Assembly -- a budget session, to reach an end point where the changes that were being made to the main estimates were reflective of priorities of the Assembly, not simply one by one but truly reflective of all of our priorities. So I'd like to look for ways that we could implement types of processes like that across all Ministers' offices.

So, for instance, what types of policy reviews do we have coming, what level of engagement should we be seeking, what is the schedule of review so that members of the Legislative Assembly know what's coming to them and then they can decide what level of involvement they may want. It certainly has come to me -- departments often make offers for technical briefings but are not necessarily always responded to by Members. So what barriers are there on their side so that Members can be involved when they want to be? Perhaps Members have individual interests, and they can sit down independently. Perhaps it's for committee. But there's ways to improve these pathways of communication meaningfully for all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. I have Ms. Semmler, then Mr. Thompson, and then we'll take a short break. Ms. Semmler.

MS. SEMMLER: Good morning, and thank you all candidates for putting your name forward today. And thank you to Mr. Thompson. Congratulations as being our new Speaker.

As someone from the regional community, I have witnessed and have many residents raise the concern that we were slowly losing any decision-making authority in our regions. Our last government made a priority to increase regional decision-making authority. In my opinion, this did not happen. So my question for the candidates today is how important would regional decision-making be in your term as Premier if elected, and how do you vision this happening? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Semmler. We will start with Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. And thank you for the question. It's an important question, and I think we need to solve this divide once and for all and give regions and small communities the ability to make decisions for themselves that are meaningful and impactful. And that starts at all levels, not just in terms of building relationships with local authorities and Indigenous governments but also within the public service itself so that regions have the autonomy to operate within a framework that's established by central agencies and headquarters, right. But regions need to be empowered to make those decisions, and I think we also need to think about giving regions back human resourcing so it's not centralized in one department but is there local so the human resource officers know their -- like, know who's being hired, know their employees, and can service them directly, so you're not waiting for Yellowknife or Inuvik to answer all your concerns. And regional directors will help this as well. Having a strong regional director that reports to the Premier is going to be able to see all the different parts of the machinery of government in that local region and how they're connecting and how they're not connecting, and then those decisions can be brought forward and fixed at the center and flow down to the regions as well. But this is not a -- this is a problem that's been growing over time, and the answer has always been kind of more top down thinking, and I think we need to go back to basics and start where it matters most, which is in the regions, and build up. And, I mean, by -- my dad's told me about this for years. He's worked in small communities his whole life. He's talked about how MACA has changed substantially, which is why I think we need to brief -- fundamentally rethink MACA and do away with that centralized department and really take as many functions as we can and give them locally and give back to local autonomy within the public service as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we have all, I think, spoken to this, and certainly I have today already, the idea that we must get to a place where we have regional directors, that they are in place, and that there's succession planning so there's no gaps in those service opportunities and superintendents within every department, again making sure that they are staffed and making sure that we have succession planning in place, again so that there's no gaps. They should be meeting

directly with the Premier's office as well as with their respective ministries. But then on the ground within those offices, and even further down to the front lines of delivering our services, we need to get to a place where we are actually offering person-centered services; person-centered services that are responding to the needs of our residents as they are coming forward to the government, and how can we do that in the best way? Obviously, in my mind, it's having that ability to make a decision at the front line that is meaningful to the person coming forward for the service.

To better empower the public service to do that, there are some simple things that I think can be done throughout departments and can come from the top down to empower people at the front lines, having an understanding of conflicts. One of the concerns that comes up as well, if there's decisions being made in small communities, that they can be subject to concerns of there being too many conflicts in a small community. That doesn't have to be the case if it's clear that there's a matrix that shows here's what is conflict says, here's how you declare a conflict, and here's who you might go to in our office if you have a conflict. The public should know what decisions can be made. It should be clear what the decisions are that's available within a community office and what are the basis for the decision, what are the parameters within which someone can exercise discretion. So it doesn't have to be a box checking exercise. There can be discretion that is exercised. But discretion can come with parameters so everyone still knows what it is that's at issue, how to have that decision made and how to represent themselves, and the timelines for those decisions need to be public as well. When things go wrong, there can be appeals that are made, and that too can be public, and that will provide better opportunities within the regions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I hear these complaints on a regular basis. You know, I'm from the region. I hear about decisions that are made by people in the capital, well-meaning people I'm sure, but who don't have an understanding of what's happening on the ground. And sometimes it's contrary to what you might consider common sense. If you don't have an understanding of the situation, the resources available, the people involved, how can you make a decision in the best interests of the actual resident? So there's a number of things we can do to enhance regional decision-making. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. The GNWT has had regional decision-making at times in the past, and we

can go back to what has worked. There's regional directors, as mentioned multiple times today, and I think those positions are imperative. We need to actually know -- as leaders, we need to know what's happening in the region. And I do lean on my colleagues as well to hear what is going on in their communities. And there's certain areas that we can even -- that we can focus on. You know, health programming is one. The needs of, you know, perhaps the community of Fort Smith and the community of Inuvik might be different in terms of health programming. So we need that ability to have localized services delivered in the manner that's appropriate for those residents.

We also need to focus on capacity building. It's often the case that there might just be no one in the community with the qualifications to do a certain job and so it defaults back to headquarters. So we need to ensure that when we have those people, we are working with them to build their capacity and to mentor people to take over in the future. I have a number of instances in my own community where I see situations where someone should be mentoring someone because we know this person is going to retire and there's no one to fill that position. And that happens across government in all the regions, and we need to ensure that we have the people on the ground with the ability and the qualifications and the backgrounds and the confidence to make those decisions. And once again, I've said it many times, we need to focus on giving front line staff the flexibility to serve the residents. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So you've all heard my speech when I was running for Premier, my speech reply to the Commissioner's address. NWT HSSA was a creation in the 18th Assembly, and it was supposed to make health and social services better for the residents of the Northwest Territories. It started with a deficit. It's now over \$240 million. We still have problems with our healthcare. We still have problems with our medical travel. We still have travel with medivacs. In the last two months, I had a constituent pass away because of medivacs, 12, 14 hours waiting for a medivac plane.

So as Premier-elects, or people that are running for Premier, how are you going to fix this? This is a fundamental issue. We're not just talking about health but we're talking health and social services. So how are you going to fix this? And I apologize to the three candidates, I didn't give you the questions in advance because I didn't make my decision until 8:55

what I was going to do with my life, so there's my question. I'll have the second one later on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. We'll start with Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have also been living the challenges of the authority system for the last four years. The Department of Finance obviously looks closely at what's happening in terms of our budgeting. We carry the budget -- or we carried the deficit, rather, for the authority, but we are also deeply involved in terms of human resources and what's happening. And the authority consistently, sadly, comes in at the bottom of our employee engagement and satisfaction survey. They are the frontline people who are supposed to be keeping our people healthy, and those workplaces are not healthy themselves. Just to put a finer point on it, this is a situation where there is almost one-third of our operating budget going into health. We add \$50 million or more into supplementary appropriations, we run a deficit, and it is still not working. We simply -- one thing I will say is we simply cannot continue as we are going on.

The challenge we have right now is the legislative structure makes it so that the NTHSSA does not report to the Minister of health, does not report to the Premier. The CEO reports in to the chair of the wellness leadership council. So we need to, I would suggest, take a look or have the department take a look if that piece of legislation is, in fact, allowing us to accomplish the kind of accountability that we need in our health care system or not or if, in fact, it's time to take another look and see some change in how we structure the accountability within the authority. But in the meantime, I would suggest there's a critical time to work with the wellness council and leadership council and look at all of the thing we know that need doing, whether that's in the human resources sector and the many reports that have come out about how to improve the wellness of our health care providers so that they can better provide services, whether it's to look at the NHIB funding, which is woefully underfunded by the federal government. That also cannot be allowed to continue. We must find a way, immediately, with leadership from across the Northwest Territories to go forward and start to fix some of those problems. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And the member mentioned that it's a fundamental

issue. We're talking about public safety. At the bare minimum, the government needs to provide a safe and secure environment for people. When we don't have confidence that we'll have physicians in our communities, that a medivac will arrive, people don't feel safe. We're not fulfilling our duties. And so I agree that changes need to be made. We are -- I've said before I believe the government is stretched too thin. We're trying to do too many things, and I see that in the health care sector as well. We'll often take money from the federal government for health for their pet project that they want to implement, and then once that money runs out we'll just keep funding those positions, that program. We need to take a critical look at what we're delivering and what we want to deliver and what we want to focus on and then we actually need to focus on that. We can't continue to just add more health care positions when we don't have the staff to fill the positions that we have now. We create a new position. We're poaching staff from somewhere else within the health care sector. So what we're doing is not working. There's questions about the governing structure. I think those questions are happening across Canada. There's discussions happening nationally about health authorities versus other ways of doing things, and we see what's happening in Alberta, and I think we owe it to our residents to engage in those discussions here as well. We need to ensure that there is accountability and that when a Member in a region brings forward a concern, there's someone to answer for that concern. And I'm not sure right now if the structure we have in place really gives us that opportunity. So as I've said, fundamental issue, and very -- something that the next Cabinet really needs to dig down into, and I think I've heard consensus from everyone who's answered so far that that's the case. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member. And no one -- no lives should be lost because of those kinds of gaps in the health care system. And my heart goes out to his community for that. And I think that's -- that should be the message we take from that concern, is that there's a real human cost to when our health system isn't working. It's not just delays and costs but there's an impact on the lives of our residents. And that's why it's so important to get this right. And I think -- I don't think we need to study the issue very hard. We know it's not working. We know there's not enough accountability and transparency in the system that's been set up, and that needs to change. And that means a legislative review, legislative changes, and they

need to happen swiftly because the longer we wait, the more money that's going to be -- that's going to be hemorrhaged by a system that isn't working. And the solution is always seemingly has been to say give more money to provide health services but with no accountability on that money, how that money's being spent, we don't actually know if it's getting the best results for patients and is being used to the most efficient way possible. So I would like to see that.

I would like to see us -- the new health Minister have that specifically in their mandate, to go forth and use their departmental resources to do a full redesign of the authority and how we provide health care services in the Northwest Territories. I think we also need to be flexible and consider whether or not do we need to split the departments, which is something the Member also raised in his speech, into social services and perhaps attached income support and some other programs, and then health as a standalone because it's such an important portfolio to our residents and there are so many challenges. Having a focused look at that is really essential. So I think we need to look at how we can change our own leadership as an Assembly around the health file and around how it's operating on the ground. Something needs to be done, and it needs to be a priority for the next Minister and for the next Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. That concludes the first round of questions. As indicated earlier, members agreed they can have up to two questions, but we will take a short break and recess shortly. Thank you.

--- SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Members. We will resume with the meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee. For this round, I will simply do a show of hands after each question. Is there someone with a second question? Ms. Reid.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Thank you, again, candidates. My second question is how do you propose to be cost effective with the resources available to us while pursuing the priorities we set as an Assembly?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Reid. I'll start with Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And that is the \$2 billion question. We don't necessarily in the Northwest Territories have -- or the GNWT have a revenue problem. We have an expenditure problem. We do have a pretty healthy revenue. More money would always be

better. But I think that if we focus our efforts on the areas where we want to see impacts, then we can make impacts in those areas. As I've said before, we're stretched too thin in certain areas. And I've seen it as a Minister, where you want to accomplish something, but you have positions that aren't filled, things take a long time, and we don't quite get where we want to go. If we had more resources on those specific areas, and those are going to be the priorities that this Assembly sets, then we can do more with what we have. We also need to look at when we develop legislation and policies at how we can provide more services within our current resources and whether it is giving certain professions or occupations the ability to provide more services. You know, a common one that you hear about is pharmacists giving flu shots. We need to look at all of those types of things so that we are making sure we are leaving no stone unturned when it comes to cost savings and effective deliverance of services. We also need to get our infrastructure costs under control. There's no need -- there's no reason for architectural drawings for every new outhouse we build. We can have one set of drawings, and we can build that outhouse all across the territory. The same goes for things like housing. All types of infrastructure. We can look at standardization. And that's been done in other places, and it's proven effective. We need to look at the number of positions we have on the books in the GNWT. A lot of those positions are vacant. What is that money being used for. So there's a number of housekeeping things that we can do as a government to ensure that we are getting more bang for our buck. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Thank you for the question. And I think this is a fundamental part of how we need to govern in the Northwest Territories. And the last speaker was absolutely right. I think we have a healthy revenue inflow, but we have a lot of priorities and needs. And we've always been a government that's been catching up with our deficits. And that's why we need to take a full review of existing capital projects and make sure they're still meeting the needs that they're originally set out to do. This includes the large mega projects, like Taltson, the Slave Geological Province that have millions of dollars invested into them, and we need to look at if that investment is something we want to continue or if we need to prioritize something more urgent like Mackenzie Valley Highway. We need to review unfilled vacancy -- vacant positions as well and see what the barriers are and if we still need those on the books or if we need to defer those resources elsewhere.

Because right now, I think, again, the priority needs to be on wages and on retaining our skilled workforce in the public service so we can get moving on our other priorities.

I would like to see more centralization within the public service as well. I've talked about an executive council office that would bring in the financial management board and strengthen its treasury functions so it will allow it to properly -- to analyze proposals that are brought forward to Cabinet to make sure that they're -- there's a double check. A policy check that makes sure that they're meeting our policies and there's a financial check that makes sure they're spending our resources wisely, and they're not setting us up for a ticking time bomb later on. And if we standardize that approach and streamline how decisions are getting to Cabinet and make sure there's that double check, I think we'll have better results internally. And I also think we need to do more on cutting the red tape. Standardization is a really important way to cut costs, and if we have a Minister who's charged with that portfolio and is looking not just at cutting the red tape for businesses but cutting the red tape for the bureaucracy as well, I think we'll find savings there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I do agree we have an expenditure problem. It is not new. It is many years now that there is a gap that continues to increase between revenues and expenditures. There's three things I'd like to put forward to try build on what's already been said, and one of them is our procurement efficiency. We've had procurement review take place, and it's been overall, in my view, very successful. There are still internal processes to look at in terms of the actual doing of procurement and how we're going forward. We're creating red tape within our own processes and within our own departments. And I've had colleagues here provide at least a couple of examples to me over the last few days about ways in which we are creating unnecessarily extra steps, and with every extra step comes extra costs for the proponent but also to the government. For the proponent, it's increasing the cost of our ultimate project and obviously internally is increasing operational costs generally.

But number 2, Mr. Speaker -- or Mr. Chair, would be government renewal. This really is the vision of government renewal. It started from saying why is it that we can't get our expenditures under control? Why is it that we continue to spend on programs without necessarily knowing if they're effective? And so

we now, four years ago, did not even know all of the problems and services administered by the GNWT. We have that inventory now. And this is what we need to take the next step that is critical is to determine what is working well, put money into what is working well, and stop doing what's not working. But then we can take the resources that are in those other programs and put them into the ones that are, in fact, working well.

And aligned with that third point, we are often chasing federal dollars where everyone's always happy to get the federal dollars but that doesn't mean they come without our own ties. So if we're going to have a new program or service being proposed, ask ourselves what existing program or service is being replaced, is being improved upon, so that we're not just adding new positions; we're actually taking what we have and doing better with it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Rodgers.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're all aware of how important childcare is for every community in the Northwest Territories. I've heard from several daycare organizations that are concerned with the impacts of the bilateral agreement signed by our government and the Government of Canada and how it can potentially affect their funding. My question is would the Premier-elect agree to have a review of that agreement, and how would they look at ensuring that we have sustainable daycare in our territory? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Rodgers. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. I have two small children, a 3-year-old and a 1-year-old, so daycare is very much a part of my life. And I understand the challenges that a lot of families are going through. I had -- our day home closed last year unexpectedly, and we nearly had to take my wife or I out of the workforce to care for children. Luckily it worked out. But that's something that affects far too many parents. And I understand that struggle. But I also understand how important \$10-a-day daycare is. That was a life -- a game changer for our family and for many families in the Northwest Territories. But what we've set up is not sustainable and we know that because daycare, the daycare associations, the daycare providers, are telling us that. So we need to do -- we need to renegotiate that bilateral. It's not a -- that's not a nice to have or it would be great to do this. It's something that has to happen if we're going to maintain the spaces

that parents depend on and so we can keep them in the workforce and keep their cost of living low. That means going to Ottawa and having that discussion and finding -- and looking internally to see why didn't we make that ask in the first place, because I'm sure they're going to say well, you signed it, what's going on here. And that's going to take a bit of time, but I think that should be part of the first discussions we have with the Prime Minister when we take the Indigenous leaders to Ottawa as well. And I think when it comes to this, though, it's so important we can't just afford to wait for Ottawa to open the cheque book. We need to make these resources available as well. And we need to do it quickly, so we don't hit this crunch that we're being told about. I think we've all gotten correspondence that on April 1st we might see a complete collapse of our daycare industry. So this cannot happen. We need to provide the funding until we can fix the bilateral agreement. But that is a priority for me, and it's a priority for parents across the Northwest Territories. And I understand your struggle, and I'm going to do my part regardless of what role I play in the House to make sure we have sustainable, affordable daycare for generations to come. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This challenge of childcare is one that impacts our labour market here in the Northwest Territories and obviously the quality of life for residents in the Northwest Territories. It's a question not only of the costs of childcare which are high but also the availability of the spaces. So there really are -- in my view, there are two parts to what's at issue. The agreement, as far as committing to review, it seems clear that the agreement doesn't seem to be sufficient given the concerns that are being raised. So certainly a review can be done but there are immediate concerns rising before we hit April 1st, which is coming fairly quickly. There has been a review done, I understand, of the salary grids of what it is that people are being paid for childcare. I think we need to understand what that review is at, what are those costs, what are those salary grids so that we are bringing in properly trained and qualified individuals to be caring for the youngest Members of society. With that information, then we can look at what the actual operating costs are of daycare associations and day homes and determine what the gap is. If the gap is of a nature that can be indeed funded by the GNWT, that may be a choice that this Assembly and the next Cabinet may want to make. If the gap is too significant and too great, then certainly there may be short-term funding that can help bridge that gap so that

facilities do stay open but then the long term is responsibility on Ministers to be going to Ottawa to say that what is not working with the agreement that we have, but let's begin by understanding what that gap is, do that quickly to make sure, again, that residents know what their options are going to be in the immediate and the short-term future and make sure that that issue is resolved. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. I can assure the House that the idea of asking for more money was our first idea. The way the deal was structured, the money is the money. It's the same formula used across Canada and so the federal government is not willing to have a one-off deal with one jurisdiction in Canada and leave all of the other jurisdictions on the same formula. So what needs to happen is this government needs to put more money into early learning and childcare if we want to see more spaces, if we want more professionals recruited and retained in childcare centres. That's the bottom line. I don't think there's any better investment than in early learning and childcare. And I think that it's -- you know, we talk about where we are going to find the money to implement our priorities. Well, I think this should be one of the priorities. I wish I could have gotten the money in the last government as the Minister of ECE. Unfortunately, I took all the money for new initiatives for SFA and income assistance enhancements and there was none left over. So that has been, you know -- this has always been my priority, to get this money in the life -- early in in the life of this Assembly because we need to expand the spaces that we have -- or create more spaces. We have been working with -- we created an infrastructure fund, because in many communities there is no space for a childcare centre. We worked with a number of organizations who have actually built more spaces; however, the number of organizations now who have that capacity has diminished. They've all built their spaces. So we're taking -- the government is now taking a different approach and trying to be more proactive in terms of developing spaces. The federal government has committed more money for infrastructure and so hopefully we're going to be receiving that soon as well. So there are things that we can do, but I think that this is one area where we actually need to step up and do what other jurisdictions are doing, like the Yukon who spends an extra \$10 million relative to us. So that's what we need to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next I have Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, in the Northwest Territories in the small communities, we have 65 percent of 25 and under in our small communities. We have a population of 43,000 people. My experience over the years shows that we have about 10,000 homes short, and also about 12,000 homeownership repairs we urgently really need and in between about \$11 billion to fix up these two urgent issues. The current housing budget right now we have \$200 million, and the problem with that is that our policies doesn't work in our small communities. And right now we also have housing corporation in April of last year made application for \$60 million to address the housing crisis but they end up fixing up their own housing assets. Housing corporation has been created in 1972, 52 years ago now, and yet we still having housing crisis as we know today. I have a client in Lutselk'e who is going on seven years has taken out 16 buckets of raw sewage out of her bathtub. And we can't get that fixed because of the policies. So my question is to the Premier -- potential Premiers here, my question going forward, what are your plans as Premiers to address the current housing crisis to address new homeownership and homeownership repairs that's much needed to keep up with growing young population and urgent housing crisis we're in? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Edjericon. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there is a housing crisis happening across this country and across the territory. That has been raised across I think every one of our constituencies we have heard it, meetings with Indigenous leaders we have heard it. We need housing across the spectrum. It is impacting -- we can't even build new houses. We can't, because there's nowhere for people to live to build the houses while they're building them. There's nowhere for teachers to live. There's nowhere for nurses to live. It's impacting aftercare. Housing is something that in my view is going to be impacting every single priority that comes out of this Assembly and is going to have an impact on those priorities because we can't deliver them if we can't house the people to do the things we need them to do.

So number one thing we've heard it from Indigenous governments, Mr. Chair, is to better involve them in what money is available to us. There are significant funds available to Indigenous governments and to municipalities. The Housing Accelerator Fund from the federal government is not available to provinces or territories. Why is that money not flowing to the Northwest Territories municipalities and to Indigenous governments? Are there things that

the GNWT can pay for that will allow them to access those funds. There -- again, that money, they want that money to flow so let's make sure it's flowing to the Northwest Territories, and we have a responsibility to remove any barriers that may be here.

Let's make sure that the land is available, whether it's to Indigenous governments or to municipalities so that they can access it quickly and efficiently and make it available for development so that housing can be built to it. If we can look to having our Indigenous -- having Indigenous governments take responsibility, which they want to take to build their housing for their communities, then it's not going to be counting towards the housing numbers that are -- or the housing allotment that seems to be constraining the GNWT's housing corporation. So, again, empowering Indigenous governments with the ability to spend the money in their own communities and in a way that is respectful of the housing that they want will not only get the housing faster but it won't take away from the housing stock numbers that we have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. Territory wide, this is the issue that we hear about the most. I would be surprised if this Assembly doesn't determine this is our biggest issue in the territory. And so it is one that we need to address. We need to focus our efforts on it. And, you know, we've heard a number of ways that it can be addressed. Again, partnerships is the biggest way forward, I believe. Partnerships with the Indigenous governments who have seen lots of money flow into the territory to assist them with helping their Members. We need to work closely -- and this has been expressed by the Indigenous governments, they're open to working more closely with us so that we can coordinate our efforts, so that, you know, if they are focusing on repairs, we can focus on new builds. So that is something that needs to happen. And some of that work has already begun through the Council of Leaders. There was a housing working group that reviewed policies. And so we need to continue those efforts. As well, we need to work with the municipalities to help them develop land. Sometimes it is a financing thing. They might need some assistance to build their roads, put in the sewer infrastructure. So how do we make that happen? And we also need to work with private industry because we can't just build social housing. We also need market housing. We need it across the territory. I know in my community it's -- we have an older population. We have many seniors living in three-bedroom

homes that they raised their families in. They don't need those three-bedroom homes. They want seniors housing. And so by focusing our efforts on developing housing in communities in participation with municipalities, we open up additional housing. So by building one house, we're really getting two houses. So there's lots that can be done, and it's just going to take a concerted effort by this government in partnership with Indigenous governments and municipalities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. This is a great example of the GNWT needs to get out of the way and to empower small communities for success. And when their designated authorities, or First Nations, and they can have access to different funding streams, there's already a built in pathway to bring more resources into the community for that. Where I worked, YKDFN, they're building -- they have an ambitious housing project as well. It's taken a while to get off the ground but the funding is their own funding. The project is their own project. And how they've established it, how they're going to run it is really innovative, unique, and it's going to I think replace their social housing in Dettah and N'dilo. So that's one example I'm very familiar with. I'm sure -- and I know there's other examples across the territories where that's a proven model of success. So we need to support that as a government, and that's part of that relationship building that's so important. And, you know, the Member was talking about policies that aren't working in small communities. Well, that's why we need to regionalize our policies. And when I say regionalize, I also mean Indigenize because when it's a small community in the Northwest Territories it's an Indigenous community as well. And that's what we need to ask ourselves, does this policy work and if there isn't -- and if we're hearing all these complaints, why are we maintaining it? And we need that chain -- that kind of food chain where we ask ourselves that question. Like, is there any point in maintaining it if it's not serving the people -- if it's not serving the people of the Northwest Territories. So we can continue those partnerships that have been so fruitful. We can continue to support bilateral funding agreements. And I think we -- again, we just need to get out of the way. I think we even need to look at the housing -- the NWT housing, former housing corporation, and see if that's the structure we really need to deliver housing in the Northwest Territories. If there's a better way to flow that funding directly to municipalities and First Nations and make sure we can get

housing built quickly, effectively, and locally. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mrs. Yakeleya.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mahsi. How will you as Premier -- my question is how will you as Premier respond to tenants conducting illegal activities in housing corporation units? Secondly, ensuring our residents that this government is committed to safer communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. So this is an issue that has come up time and time again for years. And as we're seeing more drugs in communities and more housing units being used as the base for selling those drugs, there's action that needs to be taken. And I'm very familiar with this situation as this is occurring in my community. There's a number of things that can be done. You know, the RCMP do what they can. They've had a number of their tools taken away over the years by changes to the Criminal Code or by decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada. And so I put thought into what can we do as a territorial government to give them more tools or to give communities more tools as well, it doesn't just have to be the RCMP. So some of those things are things like the SCAN legislation, safer communities and neighbourhoods, which allows, after an investigation, for a premise to be shut down. So we're not going through the eviction process. We're shutting down a building that is causing a public harm. So that's one option. There are also changes that can be made to the housing policies. I often hear concerns that there's been, you know, half a dozen eviction orders issued by the rental officer for a building that is a known drug house, but it's not acted upon until the seventh eviction order. And so we need to figure out what are we going to prioritize here. We don't want to make people homeless, but we can't put up with certain types of behaviour, and that's one of the types of behaviour that we can't put up with. So there are things that can be done, simple changes to our policies as well as additional legislation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Member for the question. Public safety, as I said before, is paramount, and I think a lot of people in the Northwest Territories are feeling unsafe in their home communities right now. And that has to

change. And for me that's an important priority for the next government but it is something that we all have to decide on how to move forward with that. We have to balance personal liberties and a humane way to treat people with the need for enhanced public safety, and that's a fine balance we have to strike when we roll out new legislation, especially around things that can take people out of their home. But I think we need to start with the Residential Tenancies Act. It hasn't been updated in a very long time. It's unclear where the rights and responsibilities of tenants lie, and far too much is left up to the rental officer to make decisions, which means we're depending on one individual to deal with a lot of these cases. And I think we can find some -- there's a whole bunch of areas that we need to change in the RTA anyways and that's a good place to start with that. We've heard the need for trespassing legislation from municipalities, from Members of this own House. That's something I support, and I think we need to move forward on. And, you know, we need to use our existing resources. We have a policing services agreement with the RCMP. We kind of leave it alone and don't give a lot of direction to the RCMP through that, and I think that needs to change. We need to have some service standards that are set up so we can actually direct the RCMP on the kind of results our communities are looking for. And we also have territorial sheriffs who are peace officers who could be empowered to do more work in our communities as well. So if the RCMP can't do it, we could be funding bylaw, we could be enhancing the powers of the sheriffs office. These are all options available to us on the table. So we have a way -- a path forward to solve these -- to create safer communities. And I think that starts by creating a department of public safety and emergency preparedness that can develop these options for this Assembly, and we can make informed decisions that are evidenced based and we'll get the best results for our communities and make people feel safe in their own homes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I was also going to mention that there's tools such as SCAN legislation available that puts what would normally be a much higher standard of probability down into one that is a balance of probability and allows the process of eviction for someone who is suspected of drug dealing to proceed more expeditiously, look also at our landlord and tenant office, the speed by which people are able to seek an eviction for illegal or suspected illegal activities on their land and whether or not that process can itself

be made more easily accessible to landlords. But also then on the other side with respect to community safety, a couple of important things.

We right now have community policing priorities which four years ago really were not particularly engaged. It was something that was set and communicated at an official's level but not necessarily one that was really involving the community. I think this is an opportunity to involve communities at the front lines about what their priorities are for the police for enforcement activities in their communities but also then to have them follow through upon, so ensuring that once we have those community police priorities, that they're made public, that people know them, and that the RCMP have an opportunity to say how they will achieve them, how they can achieve them, and how the community can be involved in seeing them achieved. What do they need, what can be done, and what role can the community play in terms of achieving those community police priorities.

On that note, there is the community policing pilot that's been taking place in Fort Liard. This is an opportunity to involve community level -- community level individuals, not so much as an enforcement role but as a role to be involved in defusing situations, to be involved in situations early on, to have a better handle of what's happening within a community. And it's an opportunity to look at what has worked within that pilot and what can we do to actually make it even more successful and hopefully expand it to more communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Morse.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, healthy and constructive conflict is an essential component of consensus government. When guided in the right direction, it can strengthen both decision-making and relationships. How do you, how do the Premier candidates view the Premier's role in building capacity for constructive conflict in the Legislative Assembly and their role in managing conflict when it arises?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. I am no stranger to conflict in this House as I'm sure anyone who's been following me knows, but I have always approached it, you know, what you bring to the table -- or what you bring to the floor to represent the interests of your constituents or the interests that have been agreed upon by government and then the personal conflicts that

can get out of hand. And I don't want to see any personal conflicts in this Assembly. You know, I want to see us all pulling together as one team that moves forward into the future with a clear mandate for our government and clear priorities for our constituents. So I think there's already a number of tools that are built into our conventions that have been tried and tested over the years. There's fireside chats which allow Members of the Assembly, Regular Members of the Assembly, to pull the Premier aside and say here are some concerns we have that we'd like you to address. I think there needs to be a strong relationship between the chair of the accountability and oversight committee and the Premier. The chair should be seen as the political leader of the Regular Members, and just as the Premier is a political leader of the territory, and they should be working together to figure out where those pressure points are and where we can move forward. And fundamentally, people have to have a thick skin. You know, you're going to get criticized if you're a Cabinet Minister. That just comes with the territory. And we need to know that it's not personal and know the difference and the line between that, and I think the Premier can be a good coach for that because oftentimes the Premier is not responsible for the service delivery that's going to be the number one concern of constituents. You know, the health Minister is or the housing Minister is. So the Premier can be a good quarterback for the Cabinet and make sure the Cabinet is feeling supported and knows that it's not personal; it's just part of the territory. And I think that's a really important tone to set here, and I think regular communication with the Regular Members is crucial. And that's why I also propose using caucus more fully to discuss these things where our hats are left on the door, and we can come to terms with where we find those pressure points. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, one of the big things I think the Premier's office can embody is having better trust in our leadership. We're only going to have that trust if we build that trust, if we take the time to build that trust. And that means communication, doing what we say we're going to do and when we can't do it -- because you cannot possibly do everything that is asked within a political role -- to explain when you cannot, being able to come forward and have the willingness to come forward and explain when something can't be done or when it can't be done the way that a Member is looking for it to happen but always leaving that door open that maybe there's a way to compromise going forward.

And so that, in my view, would help build that trust in our leadership which can help defuse a conflict rather than simply saying no.

With respect to the communication, in my view again, Premier, as well as Ministers, need to appear more regularly in front of committees with their deputies alongside them and prepared to answer questions, so we're not updating one another only on the floor of this House but we're doing it within the committee processes, whether it's a briefing that's offered, whether it's on a bill, whether it's part of our budget session, our business planning process, but more often than just waiting until the business planning.

When I was appearing more and more regularly as a result of my role in Department of Finance, I saw the relationships build over the course of time even when I was there to deliver bad news. The fact that I was there to actually deliver that news and engage helped build, I think, trust and understanding on both sides.

Premier can certainly lead Cabinet in terms of expectation and having that expectation that Ministers are there in front of the Regular Members and in front of committees with their deputies is an important thing -- important piece of leadership in my mind.

And last, but by far not least, would be more leadership training. We come in here, and we're elected here because our communities saw something in all of us, and every one of us, that led them to believe that we could be here to represent them and to advocate for them, but that doesn't necessarily translate to being to knowing what to do in terms of how to do that. And I think there should be ongoing leadership training and coaching throughout the life of the Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the last government, we did see a lot of conflict. I wouldn't call a lot of it constructive conflict. It was just conflict, and it had negative implications. So the best way to deal with that is to -- is preemptively and avoid conflict where possible. You know, we do have a number of returning Members now. We have more capacity, I think, going into this government than we did in the last. We only had one returning Minister and a couple returning MLAs in Cabinet. And so I think there was a -- there could have been more mentorship had we had more experience in Cabinet. So I think mentorship of Ministers is a very important aspect of helping them avoid conflict and deal with conflict if it arises. I think that we also need

to acknowledge the role of the Regular Members committee. It was called AOC in the last government. You know, that committee also needs to ensure their Members are getting along to the greatest extent possible. And so there needs to be rational voices in there. We also need to work with the Speaker. What happens on the floor of this House, it can sometimes lead to conflicts outside of this House. You know, I've had good exchanges back and forth as a regular Member with Ministers, and we're still friends afterwards. That's not always the case. And so if we're in this House and there are comments that are out of order and the reason certain things have been ruled out of order is because they create conflict, they create negative feelings, we need the Speaker to deal with those. And I have full confidence that that's going to happen. So I think there are, you know, a number of ways to help build our relationships, and some of those have been discussed. Regular meetings between the Regular Members and Cabinet and dealing with things early on as well. If there is a conflict that arises, we can't just let it go and go and go until it's boiling over. We need to deal with it. And it's not always fun, but it's -- you know, these jobs aren't always fun either, and so it's incumbent upon us to deal with things as they arise and not let them fester. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. MacDonald.

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Northwest Territories Power Corporation is designated as an entity that is at arm's length from government, and a number of years ago the board of directors was replaced with six deputy ministers. As we move forward and you being potential Premiers of the Northwest Territories, what would be in your plan to address the issue of the board of directors with the NWT Power Corp and putting the control of that board back into the hands of the citizens of the Northwest Territories?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation right now certainly is run in a way that people feel disconnected from it and feel that it's not responding to their needs. It comes back to the bigger picture of people being unheard or feeling unheard. And, really, with the power corporation cycles back into the fact that we have extremely high rates of power and seemingly unable to catch up with that reality. I think we want to look -- in my mind, I want to look at what the actual problem here is. And that problem is the fact that we can't get a handle on our electricity use and the costs and

the lack of alternatives here. So I'd like to first of all go back to the power corporation and ask them what they are doing to solve this problem. I know that one thing for certain is that if we can't get more commercial consumers for power, then we will never see meaningful movement in terms of our residential cost use because we don't have the cost -- we don't have the consumer base. If there was more consumers from an industrial perspective or from the industrial side, that will bring the cost of power down for everybody. So what do we need to do to do that? Right now, industry is looking for greener alternatives, for alternative energies. Most consumers are aware of the need for this. And obviously diesel is very expensive. What is their plan to make sure that we are bringing about having more high needs consumers to bring down the cost of power? What is the plan, then, to take these new forms of power, whether it's renewables, whether it's Taltson, whether it's micro grids in small communities, and make sure it's disseminated into people's homes? What is the plan to connect people into that, and what is the plan to update our infrastructure? These are huge questions. And the question that I want to make sure is that we have a plan to address every single one of those questions, that it's timed out, that we understand what opportunities are for Indigenous governments to have an equity stake in it, and that we get moving on finding those solutions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the question was about the governance of the power corporation. Right now there is a board of deputy ministers and, you know, there's been much discussion about whether this is the appropriate way to go or whether it should be a fully public board. What we need to consider is the fact that, you know, the power corporation, they're there to keep the lights on. They're there to generate power. Sometimes it costs a lot more to generate power than we would like. And there's instances where the Government of the Northwest Territories has to chip in 10 or 20 or \$30 million to keep those rates down. So there needs to be some level of accountability to the government if that's what's happening. And if an independent board comes and asks for \$30 million, there's going to be a lot of questions. And so having some sort of insight and line of -- some sort of connection into that board I think is still important. There's obviously, though, a public desire to have public representation on a board. So there are options for some sort of a hybrid situation, but I don't think that we can just stand back and say okay, power corp, you go ahead and do your thing.

It's too important, it's too fundamental to our territory to not have that level of accountability at a government level. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the question. When this decision was made, it was in, I believe, the 18th Assembly because I remember speaking to it often, and the decision to put public servants in charge and also to bail out the power corporation to the degree where it essentially has become a Crown corporation or public corporation in name only, it still doesn't change the fact it is a public corporation. And this is not a question of energy policy. This is not a question of infrastructure. This is a question of how we govern our public agencies and our Crown corporations. And we are not doing it right. Crown corporations need to have independence. They need to be arm lengths of government, and they need an independent board. All the guidance that is given through the federal treasury board, through various provincial treasury boards, through industry standards, says this. This is not a way to run a public corporation, and I don't support what that -- I don't support the continuation of this decision. It was supposed to be short term, and it's now de facto, and that definitely needs to change. I'm sympathetic with the speaker -- with the previous speaker's last point around the government holding the reins a little bit. And we can still do that. The board's appointed by the Minister. It's not an election, right. So we have the opportunity to work with that board, to put the right people in place who are going to drive competitiveness, who are going to drive innovation, and who are going to drive efficiency. And if we expect a cadre of deputy ministers to do that, I think we're going to find -- we're not going to find the results we're looking for. This needs to be run like a corporation and not run like a department. And how we are running it is not following best practices. And if Premier, I will change that and return it to a public board while we determine the long-term future of our electricity system in the Northwest Territories working in collaboration with all Members. But this is a matter of governance, not power. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. My next question is with respect to the systemic challenges many of our municipal governments are facing, specifically with respect to their access to land and them being underfunded. As Premier candidates, I'm sure this won't be new to you so I will ask you specifically if you're

elected as our Premier, will you put in the departmental mandate letters to the Ministers responsible specifically the direction to close the municipal gaps with respect to effective funding and the transfer of land that have been identified, such as Commissioner's lands, without delay and so that we can empower our municipalities and to service our constituents, which we share, much better? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, you know, it's been talked about for many years that municipalities are underfunded. Frankly, when it comes to our infrastructure, the GNWT is also underfunded. And I think that's where that big disparity is. We just don't have the funds as a government to do everything we need to do. And so at our level, at the municipal level, everyone is doing their best with the resources that we have. There are things that we can do in terms of land. I think we can make a lot of progress on land claims and settling those and freeing up land. I think that we have spent far too long in the territory talking about land because there's these ongoing processes that have been going on for generations in some cases that we can deal with; we can address those. And so by doing that, by putting our focuses there, we will get past this ongoing conversation about land. But we need to realize that, you know, this is an Indigenous territory. These are Indigenous lands. And we can't do things contrary to our treaty obligations or to the bargaining in good faith that we're doing with negotiating the agreements. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. This is a live issue. I don't think it's a land claims issue, though. I think the question was about public land that the GNWT already has and why we're not transferring it to municipalities. This was a priority of the last government. Progress was made, but there's still sticking points around more of the technical side of things. And that's holding back the whole process, and we're at loggerheads again. This is just much like the municipal funding formula. We don't have all the money in the world, but we have a formula that says this is how much we as the GNWT give communities. And we're not meeting those commitments. So why have -- how can we do that as a government, have a formula that we're not meeting those commitments? It says because we're broke. Well, we're not broke. We have money for other priorities. We're just not prioritizing our own

policies. And that's fundamentally wrong. And that's why I'm so committed to close that because this -- I mean, if the priorities of this Assembly change it, fine. But right now, the GNWT has a commitment to fulfilling its policies, all of its policies, and it's not doing the job. So I'm committed to closing that or amending the policies so we can actually meet within the fiscal framework, but I'd much rather close it and give the communities the \$55 million they need.

And as for land transfer, I think we need to take the public lands we have and transfer the administration -- not just the land, because if you transfer the land, you still need to assess it, you still need to do all the zoning work and all that. If we transfer the administration down to the municipalities, then they can get started, get to work doing what they want with it right away without additional costs. And the last thing we need to do is put more cost burdens on the land to make it useable for development. Because that's our goal at the end of the day, is to spur local development and create more room for affordable housing, more room for business development, more room for growth and jobs in our community and local infrastructure. And that's, again, goes back to empower regions, empowering local communities to be successful. And I would direct the Minister not only to do that but bring this forward in an omnibus bill without delay that could get all this done at once so we're not waiting for multiple legislative reviews and multiple pieces of legislation. Action, not planning. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just first of all, I am quite pleased to hear that this is being referenced back to our mandate letters because, really, that will be a significant role of the Premier not to necessarily go and try to do each and every one of these things but to be putting into mandate letters. And on that note, I want to say mandate letters are something that when you put something in there, it needs to be followed through on. You meet regularly with the Ministers and their deputies. You meet regularly on a timeline, and you make sure that what's in these mandate letters that's going to reflect every one of our priorities is actually getting done in a meaningful way.

With respect to this particular request for mandate letters, I know there was a review done this spring involving the NWTACR, the Association of Communities and the Municipal and Community Affairs, I'd like to see what the outcome of that review is because there's been much complaint about the funding gap and the

funding formula. What was the review's outcome, what did they mutually come to agree upon?

With respect, then, to policy changes, well, again, there's been some policy changes right at the end of this Assembly or of this last Assembly. Are they going to be effective? Why were those policy changes put into place? And before we go and make yet more changes, I'd like to ensure that we are maximizing utility of what we just finished doing before the ink's even dry.

And I'm also aware that the building communities' fund -- this is formerly the gas tax -- communities across the north are advocating for an increase to what they get as northern communities. We can lend our power as the GNWT to their voices and try to increase that money that does go directly to our municipalities from the federal government.

With respect to the transfer of lands, this is an issue that I have been following really with my hat on as a Yellowknife MLA, and so I can give an example more from my experience there but knowing that this is an issue across the territory. And that is that there have been an effort to have an MOU signed between the GNWT and our municipality and for some reason still we wind up with one saying that they're waiting for some piece of paper from one, and the other saying that they're waiting for some piece of agreement from the other. I brought everyone together right near the end of the last Assembly, and I've already committed that I would to bring everybody back together, lands and city, and let's figure this one out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, in my campaign speech for Premier, I talked about designated authorities. There are nine designated authorities in the Northwest Territories and the federal government -- are created by the federal government. We don't get a lot of funding from them. The Municipal and Community Affairs does provide funding that gives them to provide services on our behalf, but the federal government only gives them between 120 to \$180,000 to run the chief and council, their administration. And in my riding, I have four designated authorities that keep on asking where are the supports going to come from? This is a responsibility of the federal government, Indigenous Service Canada. What are you going to do as the Premier and Cabinet to help address this? This is a long outstanding issue. They don't even get access to have land. And so how are you going to be able to help them? We're talking very

small communities. And we need the support of this Cabinet and the Premier moving forward. So what are you going to do and how are you going to address this? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Member. Congratulations to the Speaker-elect. This is something that, again, my work experience over the last two years has shown me is a real challenge. There's this murky gray area called the designated authority that isn't really -- that's designated by policy but not designated by statute. And that creates this challenge of where -- of how to fund it and where the authority comes from. Does it fall under some things? It falls under federal legislation, like band council elections, and sometimes it's territorial legislation. So we probably -- like, there definitely needs to be a way to come forward that involves working with the community and figuring all those things out. And I think one of the first steps is really getting an inventory of authorities and responsibilities that a designated authority has that's understood by both parties. I'm sure MACA has that information, but I'm not sure if every designated authority understands that clearly as well and every employee of that designated authority does as well. And then we need to go to Ottawa and say we need to solve this problem. We have this bizarre relationship with the federal government that the territorial governments are responsible north of 60, and the funding pots that they develop for on reserve funding is only south of 60. And we have reserves up here that are underfunded that don't get access to that. We have Indigenous communities that don't get access to that. And it's this mentality that's been in place, and it's a very colonial mentality, that we already have these federal creatures up North, we don't need the federal bureaucracy. But that's changed. We've evolved. We've grown. And it's time for the relationship with Ottawa to change as well, especially around these gray areas. So I support the Member's communities. I'd like to do what we can as a government to change that. And I think we need to bring this issue to the table with the Prime Minister, bring the grand chief of the Deh Cho First Nations, the other chiefs of the Deh Cho forward, and the other designated authority chiefs, to really talk about how we can move forward on their terms to meet their needs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is an issue that requires some

significant attention from the federal government but a better understanding from within the GNWT as well. The first step, though, just to begin, as I think we want to go forward, is to make sure that we go to meet with the communities who are impacted by this issue directly as well as with the regional governments of those communities. Certainly don't expect the GNWT should be speaking for communities without having those communities wanting us to speak for them. And perhaps what is more likely -- I hope would be more likely is that we are speaking together and that we are sharing our role as leaders with the communities and with the regional governments who are impacted by this issue.

The Northwest Territories is 50 percent Indigenous. Many of the communities outside of the regional centres are Indigenous communities and many of them are living very traditionally. But they are not treated like that by the federal government. They are treated like a rural centre anywhere else in Canada. But that is not the reality of who and what these communities are. I find it frustrating therefore that they are not recognized as that under the federal system. And it does have a direct impact on the ability for funding that they would have access to. Just an example, to give people an sense of what's at stake here, is in terms of what's available for disaster funding and disaster response funding, there's a very different situation that faces communities depending on upon the way in which the federal government is recognizing them. So it's a live issue, and it's one that's having impacts right now.

Once we are able to identify and speak with the communities themselves, going to Ottawa is the next step. But it's a matter of -- this is going to take some educating. It is not something that is I think well understood, as I said, even here within the territories or certainly within Ottawa. But this needs to be something that has serious profile being raised to it. It speaks to who the communities are, and it speaks to their ability to raise their own -- to raise themselves up and to be more effective in what they do. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. And I think it's all been said. This is an instance where we need to work with the people on the ground, the communities, Indigenous governments, and we need to go to Ottawa. And, again, we need that infrastructure in Ottawa so that once we show up there, the people on the ground have been briefed, they know what's going on, they understand the issue. Because this is not a simple issue. I mean, I've talked to the now

Speaker many times about the governance in the territory, and it is a tapestry of different systems that as Minister of MACA he was aware of. And this is also an example of how we need to work with the MLAs, because although the Speaker doesn't stand up in the House and wag his finger at the government, nonetheless he's an MLA, and he does work for his constituents, and so this is one where I would rely on his expertise in this area and work with him to make those connections in the communities. So there's lots that can be done. It's just a matter of putting our mind to it and having the infrastructure in place so that we can work with the Indigenous governments, the communities, and Ottawa. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, in NWT, we are in housing crisis. We see a lot of people on the street and in small community as well. Many of these -- some of these people in small communities are living in tent with their families. Our colleague from Nunakput have said that many times speaking about Paulatuk. So -- and many of them are living in overcrowded houses. That's -- it's all over the North. We see that. So therefore I want to ask the Minister -- the Premier candidates that what are -- I want to ask them what are their plans to work with Indigenous government to increase housing with operating and management funding? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is coming back to a theme that I think we've spoken about many times today already, which is the relationships that we have with Indigenous governments, ensuring that we maintain those relationships and that they're meaningful going forward. There's a lot of funding that has become available directly to Indigenous governments. And as I had mentioned earlier, there's even more funding now being announced by the federal government that cannot be accessed by provincial or territorial governments and only by Indigenous and/or municipal governments.

So going firstly to Indigenous governments directly, we have the Council of Leaders. There is the housing forum that came from the Council of Leaders, which is a place where we can make sure we are making these connections between GNWT and all governments across the Northwest Territories. There, of course, are bilateral meetings that take place between GNWT and Indigenous governments, and

there's the Intergovernmental Council. While there's a land and natural resources rule there, but there's the point simply that there are multiple forums where we are all interacting. So what has come out of the housing forum, what plans are in place coming out of there, if there's not yet a plan I'd like to know why and what steps need to be taken to ensure that there is. For the governments that do have money that have come in, can we work directly with them to ensure if there's anything on the GNWT side that is creating a barrier to moving forward with the funding that they have, that we are removing those barriers. And with respect, then, with the housing corporation, what else can they do, then, to fill any gaps that may remain after the projects that have been undertaken by Indigenous governments directly are completed.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, the housing strategy -- or the homelessness strategy that was released just towards the end of the last Assembly is something that needs to move forward. There's an opportunity. One of the first things within that is to actually create a space where groups can come together, governments can come together, non-profit sector can come together and make sure, in fact, that everyone is, indeed, working towards the goal of reducing homelessness. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And we've spoken about housing a number of times today and, again, it all comes down to partnerships. And the Member asked about working with Indigenous governments. And that's exactly what we have to do. The idea of just, you know, transferring money to an Indigenous government for O and M, that's not really in our budget. I mean, we can transfer money and responsibility but just to, you know, cut a cheque and keep it ongoing isn't really something that we have the fiscal capacity to do. What we can do, though, is work with Indigenous governments and go to Ottawa. This is an area where everyone in Canada knows there is a need for this. And so I think it's a place where we can get a lot of traction, and we can make advancements by working together. And we also have to look at different types of housing as well. Not everyone is ready for a home. Maybe people are in need of transitional housing. Maybe they're in need of, again, aftercare, we spoke about earlier. Options for facilities like that. So there's no doubt, though, that this needs to be tackled. This is an issue in the territory. If you don't -- if you have no privacy in your house, if you can't study, you know, because there's ten other people staying in one room, I mean, it impacts

every single aspect of your life if you don't have adequate housing or you don't have housing. So I don't think there's any doubt that it's something we won't deal with, it's something we must do, and we must do it in partnership. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. And I thank the Member for the question. Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and thank you to the Member for the question. I think this is a sneak preview for our priorities, honestly, because the common themes here are very clear, and housing is one of them. We have spoken at length about it. I told you about my -- I told the House about my experience working with this file with the Yellowknives Dene. And, you know, that's -- again, this is a proven success model. We're seeing this take place across the Northwest Territories. And I think to the question directly about operations and maintenance funding, I think now is the time to actually look at the housing -- NWT Housing and its LHOs and whether or not we should be transferring LHOs to Indigenous governments and potentially municipalities as well. Have we outgrown the need for a centralized housing corporation, or should we be looking at a more regionalized model? I think that's what we're hearing. And I think that's something we should definitely consider. And especially where we have a treaty relationship with a self-governing nation, or nations that are soon to be self-governing, once we complete negotiations around those treaties and around land rights, so I think we should be really considering that. And if they don't have the capacity but they want the funding and they want the capacity, then let's find a pathway using the Council of Leaders, using those other intergovernmental forums. But I don't think we need to start there. We already heard that. I've heard that. We've all heard that in this House. We know what the issue is. We know what the ask is. So let's figure out how to get that money to them. Let's figure out how to get that responsibility to them, whether it's a bilateral deal, whether it's a wholesale change of policy. So I'll say this to the House, let's put that in the mandate letter for the housing Minister to actually explore and look at how we can move more money out of the GNWT and into the hands of First Nations and self-governing sovereign territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Testart. I only have one person left on my list, Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, I have one last question for

each Premier candidate. And it's a quick question, I promise, because I'm guessing some people want to go for lunch up there. So I'm looking for a yes or no. If a candidate is not successful today in their bid for Premier, will they still put their name forward for Cabinet? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): We'll start with Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I told my constituents I would put my name forward for Cabinet if I wasn't successful. And so if I'm not successful, I will be putting my name forward for Cabinet. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. I too have told my constituents that this is where I'm headed or where I would like to be. I think it's the best way to get results for Range Lake. So I will be putting my name forward for Cabinet if unsuccessful. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Mr. Clerk, I also did have an opportunity to go door to door notwithstanding being acclaimed, and my residents also were asking if I wasn't the Premier that they had asked that I would consider being a Minister, and it is my intention to run for Cabinet if that's where I find myself. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Seeing no further questions, we will move to the voting for Premier.

VOTING

Before Members come up to collect their ballot and vote, I'll just -- the ballot box is empty. So, Members, you'll proceed to the clerk's table based on the side of the table where you currently sit. You will receive your ballot, then you'll please go to the back area where you'll then mark your ballot. And please come back and drop it into the ballot box at the centre. After that, you're free to leave the chamber. We will clear the chamber when voting is done and ring the bells when we do have a result.

Thank you, Members.

--- SHORT RECESS

RESULTS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Members, it is my duty to announce that there

is a need for a second ballot for Premier. In alphabetical order, the candidates on the second ballot for Premier are Mr. Simpson and Mr. Testart.

VOTING

Members, please come up and select ballots from our sides for the next round of voting, please.

---SHORT RECESS

RESULTS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Members. Your Premier-elect is Mr. R.J. Simpson. And thank you to the candidates for Premier for putting yourselves forward and going through this morning's session. So it certainly helps move the territory forward for that kind of dialogue. Please note that the unsuccessful candidates in the position for Premier remain eligible to seek election to the Executive Council.

I am going to adjourn the proceedings of the Territorial Leadership Committee until 1:30. We'll resume at 1:30 with nominations for the Executive Council. Thank you.

--- SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Members, I'll call this meeting of the Territorial Leadership Council back to order.

Confirmation of Process for Election of Cabinet

Members, the next item on our agenda is the election of Ministers to the Executive Council. In accordance with the process you've agreed to, the procedures are as follows: Six Members for the Executive Council will be elected by ballot. Members of the 20th Legislative Assembly will use the two-two-two system for geographic balance in the Executive Council. This will govern all aspects of the selection process.

Election of Ministers

NOMINATIONS

The nomination process for the Executive Council will be done on a geographic basis, beginning with the northern constituencies. All candidates who wish to stand for Executive Council, please stand now. This is just Members from the northern constituencies.

- Mr. Rodgers,

- Ms. Semmler,
- Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong,
- Mrs. Kuptana, and
- Mr. McNeely.

No one else?

Next, we will move to the southern constituencies. All candidates who wish to stand for membership on the Executive Council from the southern constituencies, please stand now.

- Mr. McKay,
- Mr. MacDonald, and
- Mr. Edjericon.

And finally we move to the Yellowknife constituencies. All candidates for the Yellowknife constituencies who wish to stand for Executive Council, please stand now.

- Ms. Cleveland,
- Mr. Testart,
- Mr. Hawkins,
- Ms. Morgan, and
- Ms. Wawzonek.

Thank you. Members, we will start with speeches from the candidates for the Executive Council from the north. The candidates will give their speeches in alphabetical order by surname. Each Member will have a maximum of ten minutes for their speech. At the 10-minute mark, I will stop your microphone if you do make it to that point, and we will begin with Mrs. Kuptana.

Candidates' Speeches

MRS. KUPTANA'S SPEECH

MRS. KUPTANA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, everyone, for allowing me to tell my story today of why I want to sit on the Executive Council. I'll just be reading from notes. I was thinking to do some bullet points, but I think notes are better today.

So my story is a northern story. Somebody finally decided to step into the role and help lead Nunakput and help lead the territory through these uncertain times. And with the grace of God, who would have thought that a little girl from Aklavik, raised in a bush camp in the Mckenzie Delta and Grollier Hall, is now the MLA for Nunakput and vying for a Cabinet

position in the Northwest Territories' Executive Council. A teenaged mother who gained her college diploma in her forties while attending night school. This is a common theme throughout the North as many of us do it the hard way.

I've had a fortunate life guided by my parents, my family and my in-laws, counseled by elders and mentored by those that fought for Indigenous and Inuvialuit rights. When I moved to Tuktoyaktuk at 17 years old just out of high school, I worked for Northern Store. At the time it was called the Hudson Bay. I met many elders at the time who were still so traditional that they still signed their old age pension with an X. I got to know every one of them, so beautiful people. Working at the hamlet office at Tuktoyaktuk, I worked my way to become senior administrative officer for the municipality at 25 years old. This was only possible with the support I had of my husband and my father and mother-in-law who helped me so much in raising my children. And I'm forever grateful for their guidance and support.

I worked with a powerful council of elected elders who never forgot their responsibility to represent their community to the best of their ability. I heeded their words to this day. When something is not right, speak up and don't let your voice be silenced but also learn to listen and listen carefully, trust your gut instinct and use that to your advantage. As Indigenous people, we've had to survive thousands of years based on traditional knowledge and gut instinct. So ancestral memories are there; you just have to trust them.

What I do bring to the table today is respect, empathy, experience and knowledge, the willingness to work hard for the constituents I represent, but also the Northwest Territories, my home where at the end of the day I will be buried. I represent the region that is remote and isolated, that doesn't have the access to proper health care and educational facilities that many of your ridings have. I can be the voice at Cabinet table reminding you of how vast and remote this territory really is.

Recently I have had the privilege to sit as the senior administrative officer for the hamlet of Tuk. I returned to my roots. I have that knowledge of a municipal corporation that financially struggles to provide municipal programs and services for the community but are still so successful, so successful, constantly working and lobbying for their community. Such a powerful council that believes in the betterment of their community, but that's every community. We want to see everyone succeed.

My volunteer work with the Tuktoyaktuk District Education Authority, the Inuvik Homeless Shelter, the Inuvik Community Garden Society and the Northern Games Society indicate the passion I have for the people, culture and community. I've held many roles, including chair of the Arctic Inspiration Prize board of trustee, president of the Inuvialuit Communication Society, chair of the Tuk Community Corporation, director of the Inuvik Community Corporation, director of the Inuvialuit Investment Corporation, but my greatest role is daughter to Tommy and Phyllis Ross, wife to Donald -- excuse me. Mother to Kyle and Scott. And grandmother to Hayley and -- I'm sorry, honestly, I'm tougher than this but I'm a grandma. Good luck and best wishes to all in the running. I have nothing but respect for you all. The whole division of the Northwest Territories improves the lives of all who call this territory their home. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mrs. Kuptana. Now I will call on Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY'S SPEECH

MR. MCNEELY: Good afternoon, colleagues. Residents of the Northwest Territories have spoken on November the 14th. Now we begin the work in selecting our Legislative Assembly leadership. I placed my name forward for Cabinet position. I'll share my presentation.

I'm a residential school survivor entering my early years in politics as a community counselor and participated in the Sahtu regional land claim process, having worked up the chain of command and becoming the first native oil well driller in Norman Wells and witnessed the Norman Wells oil field expansion in the early eighties. Having operated my construction business for several years provides me with experiences in decision-making, a fundamental element in project management and completion. If elected, I'll bring these principles to the 20th Legislative Assembly and the co-drafted list of priorities.

As a returning Member from the 18th Legislative Assembly, I'm quite familiar with government conventions, experiences and values, serving public office, which is now pressured by economical, mental health, housing, cost of living, and social issues very similar in all 33 of our communities.

I support a post-pandemic review approach to our four-year co-draft priorities in collaboration with the Indigenous leadership council. Integral to this Legislative Assembly institution is the leaders representing it. With my previous Assembly experiences, being a lifetime

Indigenous northern resident and my private sector experiences, I believe will contribute to being an effective Cabinet Minister. I feel strongly that my experiences and energy will strengthen stability in both the national and territorial platforms.

On the points of growth specific solutions, I will support transitional efficiencies, reviews of programs, inefficient policies, projects, climate action planning, and other mandate frameworks in collaboration with the Members of this Assembly. This process will fundamentally allow for solutions, availability of resources and capital for common goals of our priorities, including land claim certainty. Higher interest rates also serve to increase associated cost with our government spending.

Releasing all project funds sitting idle is a necessary step towards post-pandemic economic stimulus. Question, Are we effectively managing our physical budget of \$2.2 billion? Can we allow for reviews of capital debt to capitalization?

I will continue to support resource development. This sector is a huge economic contributor to our economy and GDP. I will support preparations for the new emerging reclamation and remedial opportunities; in addition, a review of our 2014 evolution agreement for independence, prudent leadership, healthy families, and that social programs to Saint John critical principles to the NWT stability and growth had descriptive statement on the economy. Our economy went from roadside assistance to roadside repost. One of the many initiatives specific to stimulus is releasing the many capital projects that remain idle such as the Inuvik airport terminal, the extended health care facilities, the Colville Lake school, the Tulita health centre, the Wrigley all-season road extension, the Great Bear River bridge, Stanton long-term chair, critical to economic development and central services. We can no longer sit idle. Growing our economy is not sitting on capital.

I will review and submit NorCan, a readiness training initiative for reclamation of remediation opportunities in our trades' division. A suitable starting point is our Skills 4 Success labour market forecast. This is one element in creating a disposable economy while addressing the labour shortage.

The NWT is at pivotal point. Our government physical position creates limitations on extended programs, services, and capital growth. More importantly, in realizing the limitations of our abilities and advancing relationships at the national and pan-regional levels. Forming partnerships is essential. In the

process of reviews and efficiencies to program services, capital projects will enhance effective governance. Governing means making informed decisions in the better interests of our communities. I look forward to communicating with this Assembly and our Indigenous Leadership Council.

Climate change is inevitable. The Arctic is warming four times faster. The costly impacts of natural disasters requires our immediate attention to strategic adaptation. This reality needs more support in drafting a climate action plan, designed and tailor to include the Government of Canada.

The NWT society is in desperate need of reviews and action planning to address the addictions crisis and designed on the land model for recovery and traditional values and environment.

I support getting our communities off diesel. We need capital to transition however what is the alternative? This is a huge question, one that can be explored by the selected team.

There is federal resources available for transition to a low carbon green economy. We can explore that. As mentioned earlier, developing federal partnership engagements will assist our government for adaptations and solutions. It is extremely important in selecting our Legislative Assembly leadership elections are a process of transitional change. However identifying priorities is showing leadership, and I look forward to being a part of this implementation.

In closing, the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Here is a legacy with decades of discussions, endless studies. The time has arrived to advance on the issue of progress and more specifically recent mile achievements. This government to date succeeded in acquiring 26 percent of the initial project funding, the environmental assessment regulatory process started with DAAR submission on October the 12th, by legislation a timeline of 16 months or sooner. The low water levels of last summer is having community power generations airlifted in. It would be unimaginable if this was the case for fuel resupply. We must resolute this project, and I thank you, mahsi colleagues.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. Rodgers.

MR. RODGERS' SPEECH

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, colleagues. I stand here today as the proud representative from Inuvik Boot Lake, a community both in the Gwich'in settlement area

and the Inuvialuit settlement region and a very diverse community. It's difficult sometimes. Most leaders are, as I know you are, very humble. Normally our career progression is based on our actions and results of those actions versus tooting our own horn, so to speak, but I do look at this as an opportunity to apply for a position. I want to be on your Cabinet, and I want to work for you. So having said that, I think the best way to kind of give you a little idea of who I am and my background is to kind of go through my resume, and I'll make that as exciting as I can, although it's probably not going to keep you on the edge of your seats.

I have spent most of my adult working life in the Northwest Territories. I left a small community on the east coast of Newfoundland when I was 18 years old, and I ended up in Cambridge Bay in what was then the Northwest Territories, now Nunavut. And yes, I was a Bay boy. I spent a little over two years over there with the Hudson Bay Company, traveling through Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, Ulukhaktok, and Kugluktuk. I then spent about a year in Yellowknife life working and living as well. Then I decided to go back south for about four years to continue my education. And then in 1994, I moved to the community of Inuvik and I immediately knew that's where I wanted to live and spend the rest of my career.

My resume in Inuvik, and there's some overlap between the governance and the working side, I'll certainly go through the working side first.

I started there with the town of Inuvik and worked under the finance department for a couple of years. After that, I did hang my own shingle out up there. I had a small accounting firm where I mainly did personal tax, bookkeeping, small business bookkeeping, and my largest client was the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation where I spent time in all the communities in the ISR setting up standardized chart of accounts, working with the community corps, dev corps and HTCs, to train local people to do that work themselves.

After that, I decided to go to work for the local housing authority where I spent years ten years as the finance manager for the local Inuvik housing authority working in all aspects of finance there, including monthly and annual financial statements which were subject to audit.

After that I was actually ran for mayor so I spent kind of the overlap with my political side, I did spend eight years on town council in Inuvik during that time and then three years as Inuvik's mayor which is a full-time position in the Inuvik as well. When my term ended as mayor in 2012, I went to work for the Inuvialuit

Development Corporation as their VP of operations for northern operations, and I spent 12 amazing years working there. I've also, on the governance side, I've been the chairperson of three Crown corporations for this government dating back to the 15th Assembly I believe, over that time - the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, the Business Development Investment Corporation, BDIC, as well as recently public administrator for Aurora College up until about six months ago.

During those times I've worked exclusively with the OAG, the Office of the Auditor General. Two of those organizations actually went through an organizational review while I was chair of their boards and certainly spent a lot of time working with the OAG's office as well.

I've been involved in several major projects in the territories, both as in my role working with IRC as well as my role as mayor. One significant project that I was fortunate enough to work on was the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. There was much work had been done prior to me coming in there. I was fortunate to be part of a committee or group that helped kick it over the goal line so to speak. We actually, as mayor, we secured some funding from CanNor. We flew Yellowknife Films up, we flew the proposed route. We produced a DVD that showed the proposed route and what we would like to build there. We got testimonials on there from the incomparable Nellie Cournoyea and other leaders in the region, and we actually took that DVD down to the Calgary stampede. At the time, it was a Conservative government, and Mr. Harper had a barbecue down there and we took that down there and we shopped around like a deck of playing cards, this DVD. And then we took it to Ottawa where we purposely took it to Infrastructure Canada, to INAC, the PMO, and we kinda shopped it around and said look, we -- myself, and the mayor of Tuk at the time, Brendan Bell was the former Minister who was on that team as well with Nellie, and we were delighted when Mr. Harper did a speech from with throne and gave us a \$150 million dollars to start that project. So, again, much work was done before I got on board but certainly something that it was an honour for me to work at that.

Other projects in the region, the Children First Society. As I spoke earlier today, daycare is so important to the entire territory, not only as mayor, providing some funding, some support, but also down here meeting with Ministers to get support and funding for that as well.

So the reason I'm running for Cabinet I guess, as my resume speaks to, is I think I have the experience. I certainly would enjoy the opportunity to sit with the leadership committee.

Everything I have in my life, everything I've done in my career, in my personal life, is based on my ability to create relationships with mutual trust and respect. It's what I do and it's amazing what you can get when you start with that as your base. And I will say that if you do decide to hire me, to elect me, to put me on your leadership committee, you will always get that from me. I always work on an open-door policy. You'll never feel disrespected. I'll make up decisions, as I have, some will do. We'll have some debates, some serious debates, but at the end of the day you'll always feel respected and you'll always have your voice heard for whatever portfolio I shall be fortunate enough to get. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Rodgers, Members I direct your attention to the presence of Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty in the gallery, former Member, Minister and Speaker from 2005 to 2022. Thank you.

Ms. Semmler.

MS. SEMMLER'S SPEECH

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. Colleagues, today I stand before you seeking your support for a Cabinet position. I have put my name forward because I believe that I have the skills and the experience to be a strong and effective Minister in our next government, to bring the necessary change to the people of in the Northwest Territories that are calling for and that what they deserve. I have spent my entire public service career as a registered nurse in the areas of acute care, obstetrics, public health, and then in the end of my public service career I was the regional manager of acute care services. This is where I led a team of many wonderful health care staff in the following areas: the emergency department, the operating room, day surgery, endoscopy, CSR, acute care, and obstetrics. All of these departments within the Inuvik Regional Hospital. I had a great working relationship, and I still talk with a lot of my staff today and they still ask me to come back.

I have worked for the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation as their NIHB and health navigator. As part of my work, I sat on other regional Inuit-focused health files such as the Inuit TV elimination, Inuit midwifery, Hodaceda, and many other health files. I collaborated with all the staff within the department. One of the main issues that we did deal with a lot was the dental file. So that is one of the areas that I know that has been raised many times from all of our constituents outside of Yellowknife because of the lack of dental care.

I was the chair of the Beaufort Delta Education Council and chair of the Inuvik District Education Authority, as well as a Member before I became into those positions. I voiced many concerns at the territorial level, at the Minister council meetings, on many issues that affect our residents, especially outside and from the small communities. As the regional representation, I represented the voices of all the small communities in the Beaufort Delta. Their concerns were from inclusive schooling, which we call social passing, attendance. And at the time when I was there, it was ensuring that junior kindergarten was being fully implemented and not taking away funds from our other students. We were successful in that, getting that funding.

My home is Inuvik I've always -- that's where I'm from. That's where I'm always going to go. I'm always back and forth. Everybody knows me to be on that next flight home. I grew up in many different communities though. I started my life here born in Yellowknife and as probably three months I think my grandfather said I was laying on his store, in his general store, as a baby. I had the privilege to be also raised by my great grandparents who taught me the values of community. You know, they took care of the community, they took care of the region, and they always taught me to be respectful to that.

I attained my high school graduation diploma with a six-month-old child, attended the nursing -- I attended the nursing program in the Aurora College shortly after. I truly believe that we have to invest in our education system from early childhood right through to our polytechnic in order for us to be successful as a territory. So that is my commitment as Cabinet, that I would always fight for that.

During the last four years as an MLA, I believe I was effective in being able to bring people together to make positive change in a number of different areas, not only for my community but for the people in the Northwest Territories. I've had the opportunity as well to expand my experience and knowledge of other pressing issues facing the NWT. One of my things that I am most proud of is advocating to ensure working with the Indigenous partners in our community for work on the airport runway project. That was not my comfort zone, but I sat with the men, I was briefed, I was able to lead in this House on that topic, and we were successful on getting that stuff moving. So I'm a strong advocate even when I'm uncomfortable in areas where I'm not familiar with.

The housing shortage and affordability issue is a -- is having negative effects on many areas of our residents' lives. It's one of the biggest

issues that we as a territory have to tackle. We need to have -- we need people to have a home and be able to afford their homes so that we can have healthy communities. And we must be creative and work with our communities' Indigenous governments in Canada so that we can get homes built and people moved in.

The importance of our business community cannot be forgotten in our decision-making process. They have been hit hard over the past few years, and we need to be able to support them by enhancing incentives to keep our jobs in the North. We must do our share in providing opportunities to our businesses, like advocating for projects like the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and finding new opportunities in our resource sector. We can also review some of our policies with the intent to continue to reduce red tape.

Regional decision-making, in my view, should also form part of our vision as a government. Coming from a regional centre, I'm a strong supporter of decision-making in our regions by people that live in the regions. In my view, there are decisions that can be made in the regions that will also better support small communities. This can be as simple as ensuring staff with decision-making powers are situated in all the region. Time and time again, we have heard of the delay and decision-making as regions wait for final say from Yellowknife. This does not need to be the case as some decision-making capabilities can and should be delegated to the regions.

The cost of living in the North continues to rise and it's to the detriment of our residents. While we cannot control global forces, there are some things we can do to look toward lowering the cost of basic needs like heating our homes and lowering our power costs. We need to continue to advocate for exemptions such as government on -- as our government on taxes on heating sources for our communities until there are more reliable alternative energy sources of available. We cannot be punished because where we live.

Health and well-being of our residents are crucial to having a healthy territory. Working with our Indigenous governments to create regional wellness specific to the needs of each region must be a priority. We must find ways to ensure that our medical travel processes are being implemented through the lens reducing stress for our residents and not adding to them. And in order to achieve this, we need to allow for regional decision-making on programs and services in the region.

Each region of our territory is unique, and we should be flexible and adaptable to those circumstances. And I am committed to working

closely with Indigenous governments to incorporate cultural healing methods into our health care system, respecting cultural diversity, and promoting holistic well-being for our residents.

Finalizing self-government and land claim agreements is an important step forward for our government. Not only is it beneficial for Indigenous groups of our region, it can be beneficial for all the people in the Northwest Territories. Finalizing these agreements can bring new opportunities for all the residents of the North, including economic ones. This, with the addition of decision-making through the lens of UNDRIP, can lead to a prosperous North for all of us.

If selected, I will ensure that communication with all Members is regular, open, and honest, and that Regular MLAs have access to me as a Minister. I believe this is important, and I will ensure that I have an open door policy for all MLAs or an online or a phone policy that you can call me for all MLAs so that we can work together to find solutions to issues that each of our ridings face. I believe this is the only way that we ensure that we are successful to meet our priorities that we all set as a Legislative Assembly. I will work with all Members to ensure they have a voice as we work together to make positive change for all our residents. As you consider me for a position on Cabinet, I am a team player but I am also an independent thinker by nature, and I can tell you that I will bring integrity and strong work ethic, experience, dedication, along with the compassion, that our residents need. While we are all aware of the financial constraints, we are under during this next term, I am optimistic that we can still meet the needs of our residents. We need to hit the ground running, so to speak, and I believe that my experience will assist us in moving forward as a territory. I do believe that we cannot wait or be slow in actioning some of the problems that we all know need to be addressed.

As with the rest of you, I want to strive to help make life easier and better for all our residents and that we have a prosperous territory for the future, And I ask for your support in helping to achieve that vision. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG'S SPEECH

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you. I am very grateful to be standing here seeking a position in Cabinet. I was born and raised in Behchoko where I still reside today. Behchoko is the home of my family. My

parents are the late Edward and Melanie Weyallon. My dad, Edward Weyallon, was a provider. He spent much of his life working for the community as the school custodian and cultural foreman. He worked closely with many Tlicho chiefs and grand chiefs. And my mom, Melanie, was the foundation of our entire family. She used to say to us because she loves her children very much, she stayed home and kept the family together. My parents were traditionally and culturally strong. Like many people of my generation, even our grand chief, we were raised -- I was raised in a simple log house built by my family. We had no running water up until 1991. We had an outhouse. We cut, split, and hauled wood to keep our home warm. My family, like so many other families in NWT, they worked hard to survive. It was hard work to get through the winter season but by working together, taking care of one another, relying on each other, made it possible. Further, many of my generation in Tlicho region and in other region as well, Tlicho region is our first language. It is well documented, when we speak our language we are living and breathing our Tlicho and Indigenous way of life. Language is our connection to our culture, heritage, knowledge, and our traditional stories.

Mr. Chair, I received most of my formal education in NWT. I attended Sir John Franklin and resided at Akaitcho Hall, and I took secretary arts program. At that time, it was -- you know, those were a few courses that were available at that time. And I -- through Aurora College. And I took social work program, diploma program, through Aurora College in Fort Smith. And then in between that time, I moved to Calgary to attend Mount Royal College to take child and youth care worker program. And I made a major shift when I attended to the University of Saskatchewan, I took political studies. But all those, my education were all completed and graduated from -- I graduated from. I decided to pursue higher education to improve my future. And this is what we tell our young people, to become a better person, to help our people and make change. I always intended to bring the skills back home and which we tell the young people who are leaving high school.

After finishing my education, I returned to the NWT and resumed working for the GNWT. I spent most of my career working at Chief Jimmy Bruneau School at residence program with students from Behchoko, Whati, Gameti, Wekweeti, N'dilo, and Dettah. For many years, I worked closely with children and families in the education system. I have a very clear understanding of the challenges within our territorial education system.

Prior to being MLA, I was president of the NWT Native Women's Association. Collectively, with the other board members, we advocated for actions on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people. We advocated to improve support for Indigenous women in general. Today, the lives of Indigenous women are still not valued or respected, and this is an issue I will continue to advocate and address as a Minister.

I have experience in the non-profit sector and understand the challenges faced by NGOS who provide such critical services for the NWT.

Mr. Chair, prior to becoming an MLA through a by-election meant I had to learn quick. In my two years in the 19th Legislative Assembly, I advocated strongly for Tlicho constituents, but I have also advocated for changes that would improve the lives of all people in the small communities across the NWT. This includes advocacy for large policy changes across the whole of government. With the collaboration of all Regular MLAs, I advanced and passed two motions to improve the housing crisis. One to increase homeownership of Housing NWT units among long-term tenants for a nominal fee. The second one, to pause garnishment of elders and Indian residential school survivors' pensions to pay for Housing NWT arrears. During the wildfire crisis, I brought forward a private Member's bill to require the emergency management organization to coordinate activities with Indigenous governments and organizations.

Colleagues, as each of you can see from the work that I have advanced in my short time as MLA, I prioritized building strong relationship with Indigenous communities. I also speak one of our official languages, which is an asset. All of this provides me with a strong and direct connection to our elders and knowledge-holders.

Mr. Chair, small communities have been my home all my life, and I am aware of the struggles and opportunities for small communities. I know that it is critical for a Minister to understand the reality facing small communities. Our decisions as a government should improve the lives of all people but especially of those in small communities, and we need to be accountable to this. It is also critical that our Cabinet be resilient in addressing the many problems facing the NWT.

Reconciliation is crucial. We need to move forward and prioritize settling land claims across the NWT. By settling land claims, communities will be empowered and resourced to respond to the challenges they face. The NWT has faced some tough times recently.

COVID, floods, and wildfire were major challenges for the 19th Assembly however we need to shift our focus back to the things that will make life better for NWT residents. We need to simplify what we're doing as a government, to focus on the things that matter most. We need to set realistic and achievable project work plans, reduce delays, and cost overruns. We need to be more efficient in how we operate so we can deliver on what matters more.

I commit to making -- as a Minister, I commit to making progress on the high cost of living, to address carbon tax, housing crisis, challenges with medical travel, and improving mental health and addictions. I just push it here; it's two minutes.

We also need to take action that will improve the cost of living in the NWT. The diamond mines made a difference in the lives of people, of our people. From the diamond mines, people earn a good wage. They could buy a house. They could earn a pension and were able to retire. We need to extend the life of mines. We need to ensure that NWT is a place for investment. We need to keep industry going. We need to keep the Mackenzie Valley Highway as a top priority. All-season roads are becoming more and more important in the North as climate change is affecting our ice roads. Our winter roads to communities are becoming less reliable. All-season roads open up opportunities and support economic development. Also, we have no workforce if our people are not educated so we need to commit investment into schools to build a generation that is capable of taking advantage of economic development.

As an Indigenous person who has intimate knowledge of the struggles in small communities, I commit to finding collaborative solutions to all these challenges. I commit to an open-door policy where I work with residents and elders, with Cabinet, with Regular Members, with community governments, and Indigenous governments. I commit to respectfully listen and respond accordingly.

From my early days raised in Behchoko in a small log cabin without running water to the elected official I am before you, I bring all my education, life experience, work experience, my language, my culture, and my love for the people of the NWT to the table. I wholeheartedly commit to working in unity for the betterment of all NWT residents. We are not doing this for us but for the NWT and for future generations. Whether I sit over here or over there, I will still strongly advocate for the people who do not have a voice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON'S SPEECH

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Clerk, I'm proud to rise today and stand for the seat at the next Cabinet table. I ask my colleagues in this Assembly to consider the strengths and skills I'm offering, as well bearing in mind about my outlook for the future of the GNWT.

I was born and raised Fort Resolution by my grandparents, raised by Ernest Paulette and Mary Paulette. I also lived in Hay River and eventually relocated to Yellowknife to attend Akaitcho Hall and Sir John High School, then moving on after high school to work for DPW as an apprentice carpenter, then went on to attend Thebacha College in Fort Smith where I obtained my journeyman certificate in carpentry. I reside in N'dilo with my beautiful wife Aleda Edjericon, our children and our grandson, and my fur babies.

I'll bring the next Cabinet a specific perspective for change that I know will complement many other priorities this Assembly shares regarding change on how we work with First Nation governments and the smaller communities these nations call home. This kind of change is solely needed now more than ever as we reach critical moments in our territory's history. Without better relationships between the partners of the North, we will continue to face the same problems every year's election.

Mr. Clerk, I believe all of this is to be true. As we look forward together and speak with change, it is important to remember that we are not trying to be divisive. There has been some good work done here, but not nearly enough. There has been decisions made and unfortunately ill-considered. They are in the conversation we have to have. Many of us would not be sitting here today if the people did not vote for us to have these conversations.

We heard from our voters across the territory that this current relationship is not working. Previous governments have problems with these changes and offered meaningful progress, but their approach did not change yet. Yes, we will improve that hard work done by previous Members. This time we need to take a new approach to bring the progress we made over the years to the finish line.

Mr. Clerk, this new approach means treating Indigenous governments as equal partners and staying true to the vision through and through. This means enforcing the Canadian Constitution section 35 on Crown consultations and accommodations, upholding current

treaties, negotiating the outstanding claims to a fair conclusion. It also means a better exchange of information, making decisions together and trusting new ways of delivering services, enforcing laws. Previous governments have made these commitments and then stepped back. These steps -- sorry, that step back leads to mistakes, confusion, and many missed opportunities. It leads to poor decision-making. At the worst, it can even lead to repeating the disastrous policies of the past like the recent raid on Timber Bay Culture Camp.

One of the last things the previous government did was passing the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous People.

Mr. Clerk, the key word is implementation. We now must implement those laws, and that will take a big group effort. We will launch a government that sees reconciliation through. To do that, we need the Cabinet Member with proven experience and working knowledge of the subject. As a former leader in my community, I bring into this Assembly decades of work that has made the North fair. I have worked towards this goal whether it was through my efforts working with the housing corporation on multimillion dollar projects or through my many roles I had with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, including head chief, where I signed off the political accord participation agreements, joint venture agreements between governments, corporations. As YKDFN, I signed off the efforts to work with industry, ease boundary disputes, eliminate bidding conflicts, and forged new relationships. I've also done important work as chairman for the Mackenzie Valley Impact Review Board for six years and also the spokesperson for the Akaicho Territory government and have been an effective voice for the riding of the Tu Nedhe for the last two years.

During my time as elected leader advocating the lobbyists, I acquired the skills necessary to mend old relationships and build new ones. I gained a thorough knowledge of public policy and economic development. These skills gave me a stronger understanding and a broad range of interests in the territory, what they need, and how can we come together. It is crucial that our government can understand the different voices of the North and unite them.

Mr. Clerk, this is what I had spent my entire life working towards, is to build relationships. Working together is key.

Mr. Clerk, we all know when the relationship between the GNWT and Indigenous government improves, we all benefit. We know that great unfairness of the relationship

between the First Nations and the federal government is the root cause of most of the problems we face today, and some of this continued unfairness carried on through the GNWT prevents us from solving them. This unfairness is our greatest barrier to success on many different fronts. Until we settle claims, we will struggle to attract investment. Without empowered self-government, we won't have effective culturally relevant services. Without an equal partner, there will be continued division and conflict. We will waste time and miss many opportunities to tackle our problems and grow as an economy. With our poor economy and shrinking population, we will only come to rely on the federal government more and more as expensive problems build up while we lose the income for our territory.

Mr. Clerk, if we had the Cabinet that was committed to do this better relationship, a Cabinet empowered by Members with a wealth of knowledge and experience, we would just be chipping away at the many barriers we face to success little by little. We could be making the progress as we are sent here by our communities to deliver on by addressing the root causes. There is so much talent and opportunity in our communities, so much to be proud of, but they are held back by seeing their full potential. We have a vision of a bright future where our communities have adequate housing, access to treatment centres and infrastructure we are behind on. We need good health care, social services, clean environment, and an ability to practice and teach the culture. Let's unlock the potential by taking a bold action towards greater trust and a stronger partnership.

Mr. Clerk, I hope Members will support a role for me in Cabinet where I can help us pursue a more collaborative approach. I would also look forward to the partnership I will build on as a Cabinet Member with Regular Members as well with leadership and Indigenous governments and community governments. Together we can take a real action on reconciliation that would also give us the tools we need to take on much of our struggles. With my voice added to the Cabinet table, we will help our team stay true to our principles and priorities and make the changes we are here to accomplish.

I want to thank my constituents for giving me the chance to represent them in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding here in the 20th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. Mr. MacDonald.

MR. MACDONALD'S SPEECH

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I stand before you today, I seek your support in being a Minister in the next Executive Council.

I was born in Hay River in the Northwest Territories to John MacDonald and Irene Bouvier Etkins. The North where I grew up has always been my home, playing a vital role in shaping my identity as both a northerner and an Indigenous Metis. My family's roots run deep, connected to many parts of the Northwest Territories. My grandfather, Gabriel Bouvier, known as Pop, was born in Fort Providence, NWT, and stood as a central figure in our family's history. Pop led a rich and traditional life combining roles of a hunter, trapper, and a long-time career as a river pilot up and down the Mackenzie. His guidance and wisdom, along with the traditions and stories from his parents, Jean Baptiste Bouvier and Marie Lafferty, have helped shaped the person I am today. On my maternal side, my ties to the North strengthen through my grandmother Violet Bambi McLeod-Bouvier, born in Fort Liard, affectionately known as Bambi. She traces her roots back to the Beaufort Delta and her parents, Frederick McLeod and Marguerite Firth. Bambi was a traditional homemaker with a profound impact on our family's well-being. Her nurturing extended beyond conventional caregiving as she showcased exceptional talents as a seamstress and an artist. Bambi's creative integrity brought a vibrant cultural dimension to her responsibilities, evident in her adeptness at crafting garments from moose hide and engaging in the interactive art of canning and meticulous beadwork. Her prowess was also underscored by her dedication to preserving and transmitting traditional skills beyond the immediate practicalities. Bambi's contribution resonated deeply, becoming a testament to the preservation of cultural practices that our family's history was strengthened on. My connection to the land, as well as the people of the Northwest Territories, were because of this deep connection to my family.

Being raised by my single mother Irene Etkins taught me an invaluable lesson about the importance of hard work and contribution. In a household where my mother shouldered the responsibilities on her own, I quickly understood that success and progress required the dedication and a willingness to actively contribute to one's endeavours. The experience instilled in me a strong work ethic and a sense of responsibility, shaping my approach to life and inspiring me to actively engage in the journey of personal and collective growth.

My family has been a huge part of my life. My wife, Karen, my three children, my five

grandchildren, are my rock. They're my foundation, and without them I would not be standing here today.

In my work history, I have a very diverse career, and I think that is one of the attributes that I bring to the table in asking for your support for Cabinet. I started out as a small engine mechanic. I managed a snowmobile dealership, and I was a mechanic there for 13 years. From there, I went on with my wife to be house parents for students from Lutselk'e for five years. From there, we went on to a 12-year career working as house parents/program coordinators at the Western Arctic Leadership Program where we cared for and provided leadership and support to over 180 young people from all across the North. I have created relationships in almost every community that I still have to this day. And I think that that really provides me with an understanding of the North and many of the needs and the challenges of the small communities and what is required from us as a government to meet those needs and create and reduce some of the challenges that those communities face.

From my career as house parent/program coordinator, I've spent the last 13 years working with environment and climate change, or ENR as they were formerly known. In my role at ENR, I spent much of my time as a mechanic early on and I slowly worked my way up the ranks and eventually to a management position as a manager of forest management services. Through that role, I managed many capital projects for the entire Department of ENR, not just forest management. I have an extensive background also in -- I lost my train of thought -- sorry, in crisis management and working on many different incident management teams at different events from the onset of the COVID crisis to the recent fire season issues over the last season.

As I stand here today humbly seeking your support and trust for a ministerial role in the 20th Assembly, I want to express my unwavering commitment to a collaborative approach to governance. I recognize the importance of listening to the Members of this House and the Indigenous governments and the citizens of the Northwest Territories. In the spirit of inclusivity and cooperation, I pledge to work tirelessly to understand and address the diverse needs and perspectives of the entire that enrich our community. Together we can build a government that reflects the voices of all our constituents and fosters a shared vision of the future of the NWT. I am eager to engage in open dialogue, learn from each other, and create policies that genuinely serve the interests of the NWT.

The challenges confronting the 20th Assembly are complex and demand a collective approach. No single government can tackle this in isolation. The Government of the Northwest Territories has made substantial investments and reviews and research and accessing information on the many various issues that have faced the government over the years. Now is the time to capitalize on this wealth of information and translate it into actionable items. By fostering cooperation among all stakeholders, we can leverage the insights gained from these reviews to formulate effective strategies and create new policy. This collaborative effort is not only essential for overcoming the multifaceted challenges we face but also aligns with the principles of inclusivity and shared responsibility. Together we can harness the knowledge at our disposal to enact meaningful change and address the pressing issues that impact the well-being of our communities. Now is the opportune moment to turn information into action through an united and collective effort.

A ministerial role is a testament to effective leadership. It goes beyond personal attributes, focusing instead on actions and behaviours. Successful leadership involves active engagement with colleagues and stakeholders, fostering an environment of mutual respect and collaboration. It requires the ability to listen attentively, consider diverse perspectives, and make decisions that benefit the greater good. Ministerial leadership inspire confidence through transparency, accountability, and commitment to the public interest. It is a role that demands continuous dedication to service, putting the needs of the community at the forefront. Ultimately, leadership is not defined by title or status but by the positive impact and meaningful contribution made to the service to the people of the NWT and the collective goal.

I seek your support and trust in my pursuit of the ministerial role, and I commit to tirelessly working for the greater good, not only for the constituents of Thebacha but for the entire Northwest Territories. With a focus on collaborative transparency and a dedication to serving the needs of the community, I aspire to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of our regions. Your support will be instrumental in shaping a positive and impactful future, and I'm eager to embark on this journey together. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to serving the people of the NWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. McKay.

MR. MCKAY'S SPEECH

MR. MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, colleagues. I have a two-page speech, and the reason why is last night I walked around my apartment, and I was pacing. I couldn't even watch the Oilers play. And I was wondering what was going on and I couldn't help but think something was missing. And late last night I finally decided I needed to put my name forward as a Minister. So after I decided that in my head, I went to bed and slept a good solid six hours. So I'm standing before you all to put my name in this Cabinet not because of what transpired today, but because of what I felt last night. I feel it was the right experience -- I feel I have the right experience and the knowledge to offer this House and help take us forward in the right direction.

I'm a Metis person born and raised in Hay River. My mother and father both came to the Northwest Territories very young as part of the commercial fishing industry. Both my mother, Delphine Coutoreille, married my father in Hay River, and she had a career of being a mother and also working at one of the local stores. My father spent a couple winters commercial fishing and vowed he'd never do that again. And he took a career with NTCL for 35 years, five of which he actually went to work for Beadrill up in Tuktoyaktuk for five years. My mother passed away, and my dad is still with us today.

I spent 30 years in emergency services from firefighter to medic to deputy chief to chief to back down -- I've been in every position in there to kind of help out our town and our community. I've seen everything. I've been on the road at 40 below. I've done everything on the fire service and emergency services has to offer. 26 years in the public service, around eight of those as a corrections officer, five, six years of shift supervisor, deputy warden, acted as warden, been in many acting roles. Most recently, I was the director for the investigation standards office which was a position -- a new position to Hay River. I spent 15 years on town council as politics with, you know, a good mayor, good council, and I think as a politician and in our local government, I think I did some good things. At least I hope so.

I'm involved in the community. I've been involved in the community, and I don't think that's ever going to go away. I've seen what a community can do when we all get together and work together. I've been involved in many organizations. You know, I took over the Legion and I ran in and took over the legion because it was at a deficit. It was going to close its doors. It was for sale. And as a community, you don't want to start losing these nonservice -- or these service groups. And that's because if you do, it starts impacting the

community. When I stepped in, it was over \$300,000 in the hole. To this day, it has many good employees, a good manager. It doesn't owe any money to anybody, and it usually pays its land taxes well in advance. It donates on annual probably almost \$90,000 a year to the community. I take pride in that organization because it's something that I committed my life to, to bring back, and now it's running on its own where I don't need to be there.

I know the issues facing our territory. I know the issues facing our government. I feel that I'm a good fit as a Minister to jump in a role where I could be an asset to some of the decisions that have to be made.

I believe we need to fine tune our government. We have a good government. We need to work with what we have and fine tune it.

I will not forget as a Minister, the Regular Members. I will work with the Regular Members. I will work as a team. I'm a team builder. I've always been a team builder. I've done it in everything I've done with the fire departments -- with the fire department, with the Legion. I know less hands make good -- sorry, many hands make less work, and I believe in that philosophy. I believe we can do that here.

I can work with the Indigenous government organizations, the non-profit organizations. I believe I have the strengths to do those.

I also believe in stimulating the economy from within. I think we can do that as a government and keep our local people working and provide work for our local businesses. I know with great leadership and a great team, we can start doing some of the things that everybody's talking about, like closing the funding gap.

We're all passionate about health care. So am I. I did, you know, 20 years working on the ambulance. I've seen firsthand what everybody's got to go through, and I still am passionate about health care. I'd listen to the stories. I've seen what happens firsthand. I know the drug crisis we're going through. And as the thing tends to flow from the south to the North with everything else, I know what's going on in Hay River. I don't want to see that in Norman Wells. I don't want to see that in Tuktoyaktuk.

You know, I want to see a treatment centre. I want to see a trauma-informed treatment centre. I want to see our communities getting taken care of, and I want to see on the land programs in regional centres so that we can start taking care of our people. You know, I want to work with the Aboriginal groups and the government and the Regular Members and

everybody else to get the settling the land claims.

Just touching base again just briefly with the emergency services, you know, like I think I have lots to offer into what happened with the wildland fires and the floods and the experiences we've gone through, and I think that knowledge and that expertise would be beneficial to our government going forward. I think together as a government, making our public service accountable to the people in the Northwest Territories, we can do great things.

I don't want to reinvent the wheel. I don't think that's necessary. I think there's many reviews and documents sitting on the shelf with lots of dust on them. I think we can dust those off and start looking to see if they would apply today.

So in closing, like I said I believe I'm a good team builder. I believe I'm a person that likes to work with people. I believe that working together will make things go smoother. And as a Minister, if selected, I look forward to working with everybody, including the Regular MLAs, to bring this government in the right direction. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Kim Wickens): Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND'S SPEECH

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. I'm a storyteller. For most of my life, I have painted pictures with words. Sometimes those words make more of a novel. So I have cut my words down today in hopes of gaining a little bit of favour with the clerk that I lost in the last Assembly and painting a clearer picture with moments we have now shared getting to know one another.

We're privileged to be standing here on Chief Drygeese territory, traditional lands of the Yellowknives Dene since time immemorial, home to the Tlicho and North Slave Metis, enriched by all First Nations and Inuit, who today call Yellowknife home. I am forever grateful to this territory. It has gifted me a childhood full of gratitude for the North, its people, its land, and its many lessons.

I started my post-secondary pursuit in chemistry. Science was always what I thought I should do. But this didn't align with my heart. I love listening, learning, reflecting, and writing. So my heart led me to journalism, six years as a public servant in communications and policy, 15 years as a northern entrepreneur, many more as a community volunteer, and finally a term in this House.

I see the role of Minister much like that of a scientist who tests hypotheses thoughtfully and seeing how methods change the results and be willing to shift when the original plan isn't right. I know that the way I come to this table affects the results we can achieve.

The 20th Assembly convenes at a crucial time in our collective history, both globally and locally. Wicked problems are everywhere. Climate change, inflation, housing stresses, and health care tensions strain global communities. Here, wicked problems like to sink their teeth into the North differently, more immediately. The time for action is running out if we are to not inherit irreversible damage.

Regrettably, these wicked problems are not new. They follow us from election to election. As MLAs, Cabinet, and departments, we need to govern different if we are not to continue having these bite us at the end of this term. The 20th Assembly must make a difference, a real and durable difference. MLAs, Indigenous governments, and public government, NGOs, private industry, and civil society must come together to achieve our priorities. The Cabinet must build strong and open bridges between the communities of difference if we are to make a difference. I have high expectations of our capacity to resolve and resolve to achieve what none of us could achieve on our own. Cabinet must create a safe place for all of us to venture into tough conversations, to share our collective wisdom, to encourage us to engage deeply and without fear regardless of how vulnerable we become as we stretch out beyond our comfort zones.

We need three things as we embrace today's wicked problems. The first is resilience. In the face of shocks like wildfires, floods, and pandemics, that stuff like that is unlikely to go away. This is about reliable business continuity, keeping the lights on. We're trying to ensure that business as usual achieves stability, security, safety, and sustainability for the normal lives we yearn for. By building our resilience, we are future proofing and becoming more adaptable to things we cannot control.

Second, and at the same time, we're striving for total system transformation that changes our relationships with nature and each other, moving from a competitive to a cooperative stance where accountability for achieving desired results takes priority over compliance with procedures that don't serve us. We know that society and nature are moving irreversibly to something new. We need to work smart, not politically correct to thrive rather than survive.

Third, in between resilience and transformation is creative innovation where we try a variety of

new things, new technologies based on stronger values of empathy, connectivity, sharing, stewardship, and care. These three pathways are not separate but overlapping. And leading this is our job. Our progress must be tracked quantitatively, qualitatively, and anecdotally to mark our paths and to ensure we are accountable.

Madam Clerk, great opportunity awaits when times are tough. First, we need to dream big. Second, we need real partnership. And third, we must bring the whole system to the table to ensure that no one is left behind as we adapt and transform to a new future.

Making a difference is engaging what is alive and what has soul. As leaders, we all have a big role in this challenge. We're asking ourselves to see the future in this present moment. We're asking ourselves to take confident action with complex systems despite uncertainty. We are asking ourselves to engage multiple ways of knowing diverse perspectives, imagination, innovation, and creativity to push the needle of the status quo. We need to find flexible pathways rather than rigid roadmaps to take full advantage of the opportunities, allow us to learn, be flexible, be nimble, and act so we can find what works and step out of the tradition of studying than shelving.

We need to welcome crucial conversations in this House, in this Cabinet, and with the public service because the issues we face resonate with the people we each serve. Crucial conversations can only thrive where there is neither violence nor silence. We must learn to talk through the tough stuff, let empathy replace judgment, let personal accountability replace self-justification.

So, Madam Clerk, what do I potentially bring to the table?

My approach is creative. The status quo or reacting critically against it only gets us more of what we already have which has proven to be inadequate. More of the same doesn't get you different.

My approach is collaborative. No one is smarter than all of us.

My approach is rights-based. Rights are not an entitlement but an empowerment.

My approach is grounded in a conviction about the central importance of the North.

My approach is people-centered where I listen to learn and understand, not to react and defend. People centeredness exposes our

values. And for me, those include integrity, transparency, deep listening, and curiosity.

My approach is persistently optimistic. That's how you overcome adversity. That's what gives real hope real teeth.

Madam Clerk, we must go beyond our current thinking and act from a deeper collective wisdom. We have work to do. We must always remember why we were driven to ask for the trust of the people we serve, then we must act, learn, and act again to nudge our home to a better place. Colleagues, today I ask for your support for a ministerial role based on your confidence that I will draw the best out of our Cabinet, my department, and the Members of this House to make a durable difference while we help to tell our shared story. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Kim Wickens): Thank you, Ms. Cleveland. Mr. Hawkins, you're up next.

MR. HAWKINS' SPEECH

MR. HAWKINS: Dear friends and Members, we gather here today not just to elect our leadership for the future of this Assembly, but we are also here to inspire hope to all northerners who sent us here. Optimism, I believe, can be infectious. So let's tap into that possibility about the wonderful things we can do, tap into our passion about success, and I know we can succeed as MLAs. However, over the last eight years, I'm going to tell you something about me, that I started a small business. I wasn't always an MLA. So I took that idea about a business. It started to grow. It created employment. I had partnerships. It represents in many ways what we all believe in. It created success. And that's the type of success we want for everyone, including our families, our partners, and even our communities.

At the same time, I worked for a non-profit and I'm very proud of those seven years. That experience firsthand deeply resonated within my soul and to the people we served. I could see that on the faces of other NGO partners working in our community. I learned a lot from them and certainly by doing. Now, I'd like to go back a bit because I want to tell you a little bit about the foundation of who I am.

Now, in my younger years, which, in truth, are getting further away, I was born in New Brunswick and my parents found opportunity in Fort Simpson back in the '70s, a community that I still remember to this day and still deeply cherish because of the important experiences I had. But little did I know or anyone else knew about the impacts that small community would

have on me, the life lessons, the comradery, the friendships. Then in time, like many other students and some of my colleagues here today, I moved to Yellowknife in the mid '80s where I attended Akaitcho Hall, a residential school. And interestingly enough, I was friends and colleagues there with many of the leaders we know of today.

That experience molded me to who I am today. It has left a lasting impression that I think has made me a better, stronger person. It has influenced deeply the way I see the world today and the necessity of how we have to see things at the same time, much of which I think is always for the better, including the lifelong friendships I've gained there.

By coming here during that time, to Yellowknife that is, I met and later married the love of my life, my wife Sue, and together we've raised our two boys in this city, which we're both currently very proud of and are both attending university. Our hopes as parents are just like yours. We hope and dream that they'll bring the next generational skills and talent back to the North and be part of the future here as well.

So now we're here today in this very, very moment. Much is to be done. I can't say that enough. Many the challenges we work on today and tomorrow that we are all working to the same goal about a brighter future for people of the North in all regions. And we can do such wonderful things, but we can achieve even more by working together.

Now, for returning Members, those with some experience, you'll remember the dreaded Minister of all, the Minister of no. And my favorite Minister in those days when I was an MLA for three terms was the Minister of yes. Now we've all had different experiences is why I tell this story, because sometimes for better for worse when you run for Cabinet, you have to be the Minister of no, and sometimes you can fortunately be the Minister of yes. I can pledge to you as a Minister, that I'll work as hard as I can to listen to your concerns. I can't promise I won't say no, but I'll certainly resist it at every chance I get because my job is to listen and understand and trying to find a way to help each and every one of you to achieve common successes. Because lifting up your community and your challenges is my personal goal. It's our collective goal, if we think about it. Deeply, we mean that each in our own way, but we can do that together. So I believe we need to be respectful, kind, and never forget about being caring.

To be fair and honest, I want to repeat again, you won't get everything you want, but it's how

we go about this in collaboration collectively to serve our communities.

I want you to know the issues you face, if I'm Minister, you won't be alone. And sometimes you can feel that way. I've been on those benches. I know what it's like. But I'll give you as much time and latitude and certainly some experience and strength, whatever I can offer.

Now, over my last eight years, I'm going to tell you, frankly, I've grown stronger, more patient, and mentally wiser. I really see you. And I'm proud of the 12 respectable important years that I learned and worked on the Regular Member benches. Without it, I don't think it would make me the person I was today. I remember it was successful in many ways but in truth if I was being honest, I was also a feisty Member at times too. If I'm your Cabinet Minister, I won't forget the energy and the relentlessness that I would bring to the job, because I'll be your relentless partner fighting for you. And I'll ensure every step of the way you won't be forgotten as I've seen in the past. You will have a role in the success of those initiatives and your work will be recognized.

As your Cabinet Minister, I know many strengths and weaknesses of the departments. Sometimes it's their policy issues and how they communicate them. Sometimes it's the communication issues, how they don't communicate them. And at times, they act like silos. Maybe for good reason, but it doesn't always work. The good news is I have experience with these challenges, and I can help be the catalyst that brings better results and because tough choices have been part of my values in life, even when easier ones may have presented themselves.

This time, our system needs leadership in the government, not just a simple reset. We could shock the system, but that's what we'll get. We need stability, vision, and maturity, as well as know-how and energy. I can be that and more. At the same time, the system will require an occasional disruptor. And I'm known for that too. Because I still have fire in my belly, and I'm willing to do it.

So I want each and every one of you, if I'm elected, to hold me accountable because it'll be your job to make sure I'm doing my job. Equally, it's my job to make sure we're working together. So I want to be able to speak up when the time is necessary because I'll be there fighting for your issues to fight against the status quo. If selected, I don't know where I eventually will be; however, I would like to say a few things.

I recognize the urgent need for dental care in our communities. Why can't we have access to that? I recognize that universal childcare, the \$10-a-day program is not adequately serving our families or our communities. I will be there when the communities are facing those tougher questions about rebuild and how do we do long-term planning for floods and fire, improving the relationships of those Indigenous governments that feel put out to the side. I will listen, give them the time, and certainly my energy.

To the carbon tax -- sorry, to the carbon tax on home heating fuel, that needs to be stopped. But I will be relentless.

I'll support you by whatever means to help support our youth in our communities. Those young people that we see as our future need something productive to do. If it means recreation, we should be asking ourselves, would we rather prefer an arena, a basketball hoop, or would we rather them can find their own choices with drugs and alcohol? I say we can support them with rec activities and other arts and cultural programs. Because we cannot give up on them. We want them to be happy and productive and stay in school.

I know and understand some of the historical challenges out there in the relationship with the GNWT, and I'll work for a path of healing. I know infrastructure projects are being left on the ground, and we need the umph and energy to put behind them. I recognize that some communities do not have elder services or even an ambulance, and that's got to be wrong. And I can tell you we have infrastructure projects that have never started, and it worries me that where is the energy and focus of our government.

Colleagues, we have approximately 1,369 days in our Assembly. It's later than we think. We must get to work. But the enormity of the job is manageable in many ways. If I have the privilege of your support to become the Minister, I intend to never misplace that support and trust. If you feel the urgency and the passion as I do, then we're on the right page going in the right direction. Our voices might be different but our hearts and souls for the community are going together and, to me, the collaborative approach is that.

The people sent here for us to succeed together, not as individuals. Please keep that in mind. And together we can do so much more. So with that, I look forward to working with you, for you, always for the northern territory as a whole. Thank you, my friends and colleagues.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Kim Wickens): Thank You, Mr. Hawkins. Ms. Morgan, the floor is yours.

MS. MORGAN'S SPEECH

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Ms. Chair. A Cabinet role is a big commitment and a big challenge, and it's not one that I take lightly, especially as an MLA that is brand new to this Assembly. So thank you for allowing me this opportunity to explain a bit more about what motivates me, what is my background and experience, my vision for an effective Assembly and Cabinet, and why I believe I'm the right person for the job.

So a bit about my background. I was born and raised in Barrie, Ontario, and both my parents were teachers. My father was a high school teacher and my mother was a trailblazer in adult literacy. So both instilled in me a strong desire for lifelong learning and a passion for community service and volunteerism.

When I went off to university, I studied international development. I really wanted to help people overseas who were less fortunate than I was. I spent a year in the Philippines working with a grassroots peace building movement. And while it did spark my passion for learning about other cultures and languages, I concluded pretty quickly that I belonged here at home in Canada. I realized that as a decedent of the British Crown and as a Canadian citizen, I am a treaty person and it's my duty to uphold my responsibilities and better understand those treaty obligations to the Indigenous nations of Canada. So I turned my master's research towards negotiations between mineral exploration companies and First Nations in Canada, focusing on land access during the earliest stages of mineral exploration.

Fifteen years ago I moved to Yellowknife and have come to feel more at home here than anywhere else that I have lived. I love the land. I love this community. And every day I am grateful for the beauty of this place and its people.

After quite a brief stint with ITI when I first moved here, I decided I would rather work independently as a consultant and began doing work directly for First Nation communities outside Yellowknife, first communities across the Deh Cho region and then later on in the Sahtu. I spent time in each region of this territory doing work that spanned from helping communities navigate the complexities of major resource extraction projects and pipelines and building cross-cultural environmental research and monitoring programs that were based in

communities, to planning renewable energy projects in communities, and also housing initiatives.

For four years, I led the northern office of the Pembina Institute, which is -- it's like a think tank but it's focused on renewable energy and clean energy solutions and climate change. Now I spent many years advocating for better policy solutions from outside government, and then I decided I would like to be the one who is making decisions and able to make change from the inside. So I ran for Yellowknife city council and was elected to two consecutive terms, and that was from 2015 to last year, 2022.

During this time I served as deputy mayor, as the chair of the community energy planning committee, and also the chair of the community advisory board on homelessness here in Yellowknife. During that time, in order to make ends meet and also to feed my passion for being on the land and arts and children's education, I also managed my own piano teaching studio and I worked at the snow castle, and I worked as an on the land educator with Bush Kids NWT. I was also a board member with the Yellowknife Women's Society, which houses vulnerable people at the Spruce Bough supportive living facility, the women's shelter. The society also runs the street outreach van and two daycares, amongst other programs. And during the recent evacuation, I worked with the society as we frantically tried to locate and support members of the vulnerable population who were scattered in various cities in Alberta, and I saw firsthand how what we often see as just everyday government dysfunction really became magnified during the emergency despite the heroic efforts of many individual government employees who tried to step up.

Now, the common themes in all of this background are my passion for this community, for the land, and for making positive change, also my ability to learn new things quickly and my ability to think holistically about how all the different pieces fit together at a policy level for creating a healthy land and a healthy community.

My vision for a healthy and effective consensus government involves Regular MLAs and Cabinet pulling in the same direction rather than one side serving as an opposition, as we often hear it called. We all know that we need our small set of really focused priorities with actions that all departments would be contributing to, and we need to negotiate together a set of priorities that we can all get on board with and stay on board with to achieve meaningful change. So in my mind, Premier and Cabinet should be ensuring that the departments are

effectively integrating the work on those priorities and not retreating into their silos. And committees and Regular MLAs would help guide Cabinet and pointing out aspects that require some course correction to achieve those priorities we've all agreed upon. We are here to hold each other accountable, not to shame and blame, but to draw attention to the gaps and things that are being missed and forgotten.

To achieve true and effective collaboration, I think we need a Cabinet made up of consensus builders, people who share a clear vision of what needs to be done but who can also listen and work with others in a respectful and ethical way.

Now, I've never joined a political party, and I don't like partisan slogans or ideology. I simply want to find the most practical and efficient ways of getting things done. I will work with everyone. I will build upon the common ground that we can identify instead of focusing on the differences. I'm someone who never stops listening and learning, whether that's from colleagues or constituents, advisors or staff. I try to hear all perspectives, and I try to choose carefully who I take advice from.

Now, I'm not the one with the loudest opinions or the one who can talk for the longest, but I'm the one who will spend time trying to understand both the people around me and the complexity of the situations that we're facing.

The first thing I did when I decided to run for politics back in 2015 was that I resolved I would not try to be the person that everyone liked. Instead, I wanted to be someone that everyone could respect, even those who disagree with me and my decisions. I want to be transparent, always explain my rationale, and make decisions with integrity. And so that makes me someone who's not afraid to take risks. I try to take courageous decisions even when they're difficult, even if they upset some people if I'm satisfied that I've taken the time to listen and I'm convinced it's the best way forward.

Through my work with Bush Kids, we taught a lot about the Dene laws, and I try to follow them in my own life. One that I think about often is to just be happy as much as you can. And so I try to bring joy to my work. I try to bring a smiling face each day. Because if we can't be pleasant and kind to each other, then what's the point of doing this work?

I work hard. I read a lot. I do my homework. I attend every meeting that I can and in every meeting, I try to give everyone the attention and the respect that they deserve. I ask a lot of questions, and sometimes I have to hold myself

back from asking too many questions because I've learned that sometimes people just need to show you instead of telling you so I should just wait and watch sometimes.

I respond to everyone who reaches out with a question or concern. And one question that people ask often is how are you going to stand up to the bureaucrats who are going to try to control you and control the government? To start with, I have tremendous respect for those who've dedicated their lives to public service, and I try to appreciate the pressures and the risks that they face too. I believe I can foster mutual respect and lead the bureaucracy with determination, integrity, and a spirit of collaboration. If encountering resistance or attitudes like it can't be done or this is the way it's always been done, my first response would be to be curious, understand what can be gained and who stands to lose out if something is changed. So I'll finish it off here. I believe my experience and my positive energy would be an asset to Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART'S SPEECH

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'm sure everyone has heard more than enough from me today, so I'll keep it short.

First, I want to congratulate the Premier-elect on his success today and I would like nothing more to help him realize his 50-year vision for the territory. I think that idea of a vision that moves us forward and using the next four years to set up the next 50 is exactly where we need to head, and I think we're all united here in that direction. We have an embarrassment of riches. I'm very proud to stand for this -- for role in the Executive Council, with so many well qualified people. And I can say that you've heard my vision, you've heard my dedication to change, you've heard my drive to make things different, make things better, and I want to apply that energy in a Cabinet role to make sure whatever portfolio I have is very successful and continues to collaborate and empower all Members of this House. And if -- the promise I'll make -- because this is something I really appreciated as a Regular Member, if there's -- the department says no and committee wants something done, I'll ask is there any really good reason you can give me that I can't say yes to this committee? And if they can't give me one, I'm going to say yes to the committee. And that was something that we learned early on. And some Ministers did that, some didn't. But my priority is making sure the voice of people are heard and the voice and the committee system is successful. So that's my

guarantee to all Members here and also my guarantee to work tirelessly on behalf of my constituents, on behalf of the whole Northwest Territories, and continue to support all of us in achieving our goals of building a territory we can live, work, and play in for generations to come. Thank you.

MS. WAWZONEK'S SPEECH

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you. Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have also spoken a fair bit already today. I'm going to try very hard not to go back over everything I have said today or 20 minutes last week, but I do want to take a few minutes to maybe reformulate some of what I have been saying into the role as a Cabinet Member. It is a different role, and it's one that I do want to make clear what I think I'm bringing to it so that people have that different perspective from me.

I do care very deeply about consensus government and care very deeply about its achievement. If I have the opportunity to return to Cabinet, I want to bring back some of these same considerations to Cabinet that I did before.

When I spoke about vision on many occasions here, that's something that in my view that should apply to every Cabinet Minister, that we all have a responsibility to bring vision within our departments and vision to our responsibilities as Minister. And that means taking the priorities that are relevant to our departments and acting on them and delivering those results for this Assembly. I believe that's what I did to the best of my abilities for the last four years, whether simple or small things, such as instituting the budget dialogues process, to create greater points of accountability and communications into the community, to having employee town halls to, again, have that kind of engagement and dialogue, values I hold dear with our public service. You've heard me speak a lot about the government renewal process because it's one that I believe in deeply. It's about delivering evidence-based information so we can make better decisions and be more efficient with what we have. And changes in our capital. I know I've referenced this too, but it's because it's something that means a lot to me. We've put planning back into the center of it so we have better planning, a better process, something that's more realistic, and by being more realistic it's more transparent. Because these are all values that we often hear about but actually making good on them and acting on them, it can be quite difficult when we're within our departments. But I believe that there are ways to make things more transparent, make

ourselves more accountable, and increase and improve our communications.

I've seen that growth now in the tourism sector, in the agricultural sector. We've seen changes in our procurement process. So anyone that's saying a change in government is not possible, to that I disagree, and I'm asking you to give me the chance to continue to make change in our government on all of our behalves.

How we do that, of course, is sometimes challenging. There are different pathways. There are many different ways of doing it. I feel very confident that we are going to have a positive opportunity with this Assembly in different ways to see change. For myself, I think I'm very practical. I am very solution oriented. I am very driven to create change. And I care very deeply about people, about the people of the Northwest Territories.

I have relied very much on the input of MLAs over the last four years in everything I do. I have allowed this to be an integral part of every budget process, all eight budgets for which I was responsible, and I promise to continue that if I'm returned to Cabinet. I believe in communication and connection. This is truly one of the reasons that I am putting my name forward. It's what brought me into politics. It's what's kept me going through politics. And I expect it's what will keep me going over the next four years in whatever role I may occupy.

I very much believe and follow through. And so when I do make a commitment, I will follow through on that commitment. My commitments generally are not promises that I can't keep. They are promises that I will work for a solution. Because sometimes we don't know the solution at the front end. We have to start by identifying and understanding the problem and then figuring out how we're going to solve it. I will rely on everyone in this room to help me solve problems because everyone here knows their community, their residents, their regions the best. I'll work with Indigenous governments for the very same reasons. They know their regions. They know their lands. They know their people. What either role I would hope to occupy as a Minister is to then translate those solutions into the department so that we are delivering as a government on what people need. I believe in person-centered services. I believe in healthy workplaces with empowered employees. And as I keep saying more than once now, I do sincerely want to ensure that we are maintaining and improving communications at every level with the Indigenous Government of the Northwest Territories. These relationships are foundational. We are all treaty peoples here, and we have an opportunity to

truly be leaders in Canada and Indigenous reconciliation.

Communications to the public, if we don't have those, we've seen that the results can be quite disastrous. And I believe we have opportunities to improve those pathways of communication. Communications to stakeholders, again I have made it my practice to accept meetings, to be available, to listen, to listen actively, to whoever might be coming forward. And I can assure you, within Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, many people want to come and talk to us. But also and very importantly, within government. I have had the opportunity to work on many files that were multi -- involved multiple departments, and finding better ways to integrate the communications between the officials in those departments, between the Ministers' offices, between Ministers' offices involving senior managers, this is how we will truly become a whole-of-government approach to our problem solving.

And last but, in fact, not least, but most importantly, the communications between us here as MLAs and between MLAs and Cabinet. I know there has been a number of discussions in the last couple of weeks of how we might do that, and everyone right now is committed to it. I certainly am, and I certainly intend to stay that way. I believe I have demonstrated myself over the last four years to be open, to be engaged, to be prepared to listen. It's how I've operated. It's how I've operated as a Minister. It's how we've passed our budgets. I believe in dialogue. I believe in discussion. And I look forward to having the opportunity to continue that.

Fundamentally, I believe in consensus government. I believe I've done what I can so far to make it better, to make it stronger, and to make it more focused on consensus. And I'd like the opportunity to continue that work.

I have a deep sense of commitment and responsibility to my constituents. I also have a very deep sense of responsibility, if given the opportunity to be Minister again, to every single resident of the Northwest Territories and to every single MLA here who would be entrusting us with the role as Minister. I believe I've worked hard, as I've said, in the last 19th Assembly, and as a Minister I'd like to continue to uphold values of openness within my office, with my department, to continue to improve communications, to continue to improve transparency, and to be prepared to always be accountable for what is happening or perhaps not happening within my departments for which I may be responsible. I hope you will grant me that opportunity, and I put this in your hands. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. Members, in caucus yesterday you did discuss foregoing questions to Members of the Executive Council. Are Members prepared to proceed directly to the vote?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

VOTING

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Okay. Members, we will follow the same process. So Members will come forward. You'll get your ballots. As you come up on the side, you will receive three ballots. You will receive one ballot for the north, one ballot for the south, one ballot for Yellowknife. And you are able to mark up to two candidates. Thank you, Members. Thank you. Proceed to vote.

--- SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Members. I will call the Territorial Leadership Committee back to order. I would just like to draw Members' attention to presence in the gallery of Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Green, Members of the 18th and 19th Legislative Assembly. Welcome back to the Assembly. I was also negligent in recognizing Mr. Bill Braden earlier, former Member of the Assembly, who has been capturing photos of Members throughout the TLC today. Thank you, Mr. Braden.

RESULTS

Members, your elected Executive Council is:

- Mrs. Kuptana,
- Ms. Semmler,
- Mr. MacDonald,
- Mr. McKay,
- Ms. Cleveland, and
- Ms. Wawzonek.

Thank you, Members. I draw your attention to the presence of Mr. Bob McLeod, former Premier of the Northwest Territories, joined us in the gallery.

Thank you, Members. That will adjourn today's Territorial Leadership Committee. The results of the elections will be formally ratified by motions in the House tomorrow on Friday, December 8th.

The Territorial Leadership Committee will stand adjourned however the induction ceremony for

the order of the Northwest Territories will take place at 4:15 today here in the Chamber. Thank you, Members.

---ADJOURNMENT

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