



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

19th Assembly

**TERRITORIAL LEADERSHIP
COMMITTEE**

Friday, October 18, 2019

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Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Mackenzie Delta)

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(Deh Cho)

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(Kam Lake)

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(Sahtu)

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(Range Lake)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, October 18, 2019****Members Present**

Mr. Blake, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Ms. Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Ms. Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Mr. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Ms. Thom, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Wawzonek

Call to Order

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Good morning, Members. As Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to call this first meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee to order and to preside over the nominations for Premier, the subsequent candidate speeches, and question period. Please rise as Elder Paul Andrew leads us in a prayer and contemplation.

Prayer

---Prayer

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Elder Paul Andrew. Members, please be seated.

Members, before we begin, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a number of people in the visitors' gallery today. First, Mr. Norman Yakeleya, former Member, former Minister of the Legislative Assembly, currently National Chief of the Dene Nation; and also, Ms. Wendy Bisaro, former Member of the Legislative Assembly. Welcome to you both.

Review and Adoption of Agenda

As mentioned, this is the first meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee for the Members of the 19th Legislative Assembly. All Members have a copy of the agenda in front of them. Are there any additions or deletions to the agenda? Seeing none, is the agenda adopted?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Agreed? Thank you, Members.

Opening Remarks by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Members, and those following along in the public gallery and at home, you have previously confirmed a process to select a Premier that varies somewhat

from the past. Your predecessors from the 18th Legislative Assembly divided the process for the selection of Premier from a one-day process to a two-day process. As you have agreed, the process for selecting a Premier for the 19th Legislative Assembly will be divided into two distinct stages. Today those Members wishing to allow their names to stand for Premier will each identify themselves publicly and make a speech of up to 20 minutes. Following these speeches, each Member will be entitled to ask up to two questions to each candidate for Premier. Your questions should be addressed equally to all candidates, and I ask that you keep them short and specific. Likewise, I ask that candidates limit their responses to no more than five minutes.

Following this question-and-answer exchange, the Territorial Leadership Committee will adjourn for roughly one week until Thursday, October 24, 2019, at 9:00 a.m., when you will first select a Speaker. Following this, each Member will be provided the opportunity to ask one final question to the candidates for Premier. This final exchange will be followed by the secret ballot election of the Premier.

Later that afternoon, you will proceed to identify, hear speeches from, ask questions to, and elect Members of the Executive Council according to the 2-2-2, or north-south-Yellowknife, custom that has been used by previous Assemblies.

Now, with regard to technical matters, Members should be aware that you are not required to turn on your microphones when you rise to speak. That will be done automatically for you. Also, in front of Members and built into your desks are the timing mechanisms. When speeches are being made, the clocks will count down the time available to you, and you are asked to be mindful of the time limits that have been set and agreed to by all Members.

I wish to make Members aware that today's proceedings are being broadcast live on the Legislative Assembly Television Network and on social media. Our proceedings today are being simultaneously translated in the following languages: in booth 2 on channel 2, Tlicho; in booth 3, Chipewyan; in booth 4, South Slavey; in booth 5, North Slavey; in booth 6, Inuvialuktun; in booth 7, Inuktitut; and in booth 8, French.

I would also like to remind Members that, although this is a less formal committee than the House itself, Members are please asked to stand while speaking.

Nominations for Premier

The next item on the agenda is item 5, nominations for Premier. The Premier nominations and candidate speech guidelines are in your packages on your desks in front of you.

As per the guidelines, my first duty is now to ask all Members who wish to allow their names to stand for the position of Premier to please rise in their places. Thank you. Nominated for Premier, then, are Mr. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Cochrane, and Ms. Martselos. Thank you. You may be seated.

We will now proceed to the speeches by the four candidates for Premier. Each candidate is permitted to make a 20-minute speech, and the speeches will be made in alphabetical order by surname. As such, I will first call upon Ms. Cochrane for her speech. Ms. Cochrane, you have the floor.

Candidates' Speeches

MS. COCHRANE'S SPEECH

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today I am seeking this Assembly's support for the position of Premier of the 19th Legislative Assembly. I believe my background provides me with the insight, experience, and education necessary to consider all needs of the Northwest Territories and guide this Assembly effectively as a consensus government. As a Minister who held seven portfolios over the last four years in the 18th Legislative Assembly, I also gained a perspective on the operations and procedures within government, especially what worked and what didn't work. I believe I have the experience and commitment to lead this government within the true spirit of consensus government.

My heart is in the North. My family moved to Yellowknife 56 years ago, when I was a small baby. My partner, Rory, moved here in his early teens, and together we have a blended family with children and a grandchild living here. My commitment is to the long-term prosperity of the North, its people, and its programs and services that people need to live a healthy and prosperous life.

I am also a proud Metis woman, and my Indigenous mother and non-Indigenous father have instilled a sense of caring for all people.

Like many, my life was not always easy. I experienced the hardships of family addiction, violence, and homelessness. As a single parent of two young children, I understood that education was the key to not only my future, but also for theirs. I returned to school and obtained a degree in social work.

Before entering this Legislative Assembly, I dedicated 20 years to supporting the needs of our most marginalized populations. I understand from a personal and a professional perspective that we need to weigh in the needs of all sectors in defining our priorities, direction, and actions. As we move forward, I have confidence that you will find that I have a balanced perspective; I am open and honest; and, above all, I consider the needs of all people and all communities.

On October 9th I listened to all MLAs who spoke on the needs of their constituents. I heard the need to consider the sustainability of the earth and the impacts of climate change; the need to consider the housing, health, and education wellness needs of our people and our communities; the need for addressing the economic crisis that the territory is facing; and the need to work together as we address these concerns.

The Premier and Cabinet are responsible for developing a four-year mandate that meets the priorities outlined by this Legislative Assembly. Collaboration within the consensus model is important to its success and, if elected Premier, I will ensure that Regular MLAs are included in the finalizing of the government's mandate to meet these priorities. I will also ensure that the mandate will have realistic outcomes and that all actions will include department leads and timelines to ensure accountability. As Premier, I will, with your help, make our vision a reality.

As Premier, I will also hold my Ministers accountable through public mandate letters that will outline the priorities of each department. Ministers and departments will be directed to work closely with Indigenous governments, NGOs, and service providers to provide comprehensive programming and supports.

I will not stand before you and tell you which priorities I think are most important, because they all are. I also believe that, if we are going to work within a consensus system, the priorities that need to be addressed will be defined together by all 19 Members. However, I want to take some time to discuss the priorities that I feel are important to me.

The Economy

Our economy is in trouble. Small businesses are struggling to survive, diamond mines are slowing

down, and large, non-renewable resource businesses are slow to start. We need to act fast and we need to act now to ensure jobs for today and jobs for tomorrow.

As Premier, I will work with Ministers to develop a 10-year strategic economic plan that will include Indigenous government engagement; departmental and stakeholder needs; a review of potential supports, including federal funding sources; royalties; investor potential; taxes, recognizing the already high cost of living; export potential and a review of trade barriers; tourism; knowledge economy; a risk management plan; and standing committee engagement.

I will also work with relevant Ministers and standing committee to develop a four-year action plan based on a strategic economic plan that includes measurable actions and timelines. The plan must be flexible to match any funding possibilities that may arise, and be reviewed or revised on an annual basis.

Recognizing we have almost 45,000 residents and 33 communities, prosperity for all must be a guiding principle. Economic planning, infrastructure allocations, procurement, and investments must be done with this in mind, and our economic strategy must consider the needs of the larger and the smallest of our communities.

All residents want to know that prosperity, jobs, and property values are secure for the long term, and we must work together to meet the needs of all.

The mineral resources sector provides 40 percent of our gross domestic product. It is, and will continue to be, an important part of our economy. However, we need to build on the successes of previous governments to meet our economic needs.

As Premier, I will:

- Give direction to bring together industry and environmental experts, Indigenous and community government representatives, and Regular Members for a summit on the current and future state of resource development in the Northwest Territories and how we can find collaborative solutions to move forward together in a sustainable manner.
- Develop the regulations for the Mineral Resources Act as a priority, to be done collaboratively with Indigenous governments and in consultation with all stakeholders, including the Chamber of Mines, Chamber of Business, and community governments.
- Increase investment in mineral exploration and consider strategic infrastructure investments

that can extend mine life and help reduce exploration costs for future mining investments.

- Support diversification by expanding the tourism market internationally, with a focus on promoting the smaller communities.
- Continue investing in green energy and renewable technology, farming, fishing, forestry, biomass production, tourism, culture, arts, and film, and the Indigenous traditional economy.
- Growing the knowledge economy by creating a polytechnic university that will bring additional research funding to the North, maintain the knowledge in the North, and allow us to become leading experts in addressing climate change, maintaining and revitalizing Indigenous languages, and development of environmentally friendly renewable and non-renewable technology.
- Continue to support the Small Community Employment Fund and the Small Community Committee to oversee the program design and funding distribution, and to better support the range of needs within our economy, change the name of Industry, Tourism and Investment to the Department of Economic Diversification and Development.

At the same time, we need to do more to support local businesses and strengthen our procurement policies. We have to invest in our people and focus on getting our own residents to work, which will help increase our revenues, provide pride in our people, and lessen the reliance on social programs. As Premier, I will ensure that this is implemented through developing infrastructure projects in partnership with Indigenous and community governments, with the goal of having economic development opportunities in all regions of the Northwest Territories.

Working in partnership with Indigenous and community governments to lobby the federal government for large-scale projects such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway, Taltson expansion, and the road into the Slave Geological Province that will create good jobs and support sustainable development.

If chosen as your Premier, I commit to work with Cabinet and Regular Members and meet with all Indigenous and community governments to develop a territorial-wide economic strategy and work in partnership to pursue funding from the new federal government. However, we must ensure that we are fiscally responsible and working in a strategic, sustainable manner. We need to look at how we

can deliver quality programs in the long term, so we have to think differently about how we do business.

We will need to make some hard decisions and look at our programs and services to ensure that they are still meeting their intent and look at ways that we can provide them in a more efficient, effective manner.

Protecting our Environment

We're at the forefront of climate change. The sustainability and future of the Northwest Territories for future generations needs to be a priority of this government, and all actions taken by the GNWT as we move forward.

If elected Premier, I commit to:

- The establishment of a climate change working group made up of Cabinet members, Regular MLAs, and community and Indigenous leaders to help advance the territorial climate change priorities, and a full review of the 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework and the 2019-2023 Action Plan to ensure that they are meeting our needs.
- Supporting small communities in their efforts to get off diesel and develop cleaner sources of energy production.
- Increasing funding to Arctic Energy Alliance to allow improved programs and services across the territory; and
- Changing the name of Environment and Natural Resources to Environment and Climate Change.

The work the Government of the Northwest Territories is doing to combat climate change needs to be given the recognition and the focus that it deserves. Any new infrastructure needs need to reflect our changing climate and incorporate measures to lessen the need for non-renewable resources.

The polytechnic university can be a leader in working with Indigenous knowledge keepers in climate change adaptation and mitigation research. This includes becoming leaders in contaminated site remediation.

If selected as Premier, I will also focus on international relationships that not only to look to their best practices on climate change, but also to share our own.

Investing in People

While resource development makes up a significant part of our economy, our greatest resource is our people. I will not stand here and say that we can

make a significant dent in the cost of living in the NWT. However, what I can say is, by investing in our people and giving them the foundation that they need for success, we can stabilize the cost of living.

As our economy changes, and with our current debt limit, we must be creative and strategic in our expenditures, while at the same time trying to meet the needs of our residents. As Premier, I will:

- Give direction to look for innovative practices to address the CMHC housing funding, which will end in 2038. This could include placing a higher priority on homeownership and lease-to-own options for residents who are able to maintain their own homes, which will allow us to build more homes.
- Amalgamate the Department of Lands and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs as a more cost-effective and efficient way of delivering the services needed by Indigenous and community governments.
- Place a higher emphasis on senior residences to meet the growing demographic. In communities where able, senior residences should be based on a cost-recovery model by incorporating market and subsidized units.
- Develop a model for affordable universal childcare across the NWT, whether it be at a reduced cost or free. We will have to explore the options and work toward this in the long term.
- Place a higher focus on pre- and postnatal and parenting supports to assist in increasing the number of children developmentally ready for school.
- Increase support and focus for the JK to 12 education system, recognizing the critical developmental milestone periods, with the goal of supporting our youth to successfully graduate.
- Make a reality the polytechnic university by building on three strong communities, three strong campuses, and at least 21 strong community learning centres.
- Increase focus on rehabilitation and restorative justice and partnerships with educational and wellness support and Indigenous governments and organizations, with the goal of successfully reintegrating offenders into society, housing, and employment options.
- Study options for specialized courts to better suit the needs of vulnerable residents with addictions and mental health issues.

- Add supports to Health and Social Services, as well as focusing on a stronger recruitment and retention strategy. Training Northerners for these roles also needs to be a key priority.
- Pilot a guaranteed income model with long-term income support clients. This will assist people in having sustainable income, which promotes accessing additional employment options and reduces the administration time and cost for the Government of the Northwest Territories.
- An increased focus on children in care to ensure they are provided the same standard of care we expect for our own children. We must also explore options with Indigenous governments for them to take the leadership role for our children in care.
- The use of an equity-based and gender-based analysis in any new program or service delivery to ensure we are truly focused on services that meet the needs of our residents.

We also need to revisit our decentralization policy to ensure the benefits of decentralization can be felt in the regions.

Modern Treaties and Self-government

The settling of modern treaties and providing supports for self-government are critical, both for the wellness and prosperity of Indigenous people, but also to help restore confidence to potential investors that the Northwest Territories as a place to do business. I believe a core component to completing these agreements is trust. I have made it a personal priority to be honest, fulfill my commitments, and foster good working relationships with Indigenous governments, and I believe this will be an asset as we continue this process.

It's time to focus more on collaboration and partnerships, and that means changing the way we interact with Indigenous governments. If elected as your Premier, I will meet on a regular basis with the leadership of all Indigenous governments that are in negotiations, in an effort to advance negotiations and address any obstacles.

We must advance our shared goal of a strong and sustainable future on the foundation of respect, recognition, and shared responsibility. We need to conclude the outstanding agreements in order to bring increased certainty to land and resource management and economic opportunities for communities and regions. It's about relationships. It's about working together. Let's get these agreements completed so we can move forward on

building our economy and building strong communities and people.

Intergovernmental Relationships

I said relationships are key to success, and, as such, it's imperative that we work with our Member of Parliament so we have a strong voice in Ottawa. We need to work with our Indigenous and community governments if we are truly going to represent the needs of all residents.

As Premier, I commit to the development of a strategic federal engagement plan that takes into consideration the needs of Regular MLAs and Indigenous and community governments so we have a shared message and approach to lobbying Canada for what we need. These meetings will be the basis of a strong lobbying effort and bring representatives from all governments together in Ottawa to meet with federal ministers and bring forward our common concerns.

We must also build strong alliances with our territorial and provincial counterparts to ensure everyone is aware of our exceptional challenges in the North. The three territories working in partnership on issues, when applicable, has been extremely beneficial, and we need to foster these partnerships as we go forward. As a consensus government, we must all work together. The non-partisan political structure we have provides us the luxury of being able to work collaboratively with any federal or provincial or territorial government. We must utilize the strength that we have in our consensus government to build strong, nonpartisan relationships with all governments.

In conclusion, my message today is built on experience and our past efforts as a government. I believe we must learn from our past to determine our future. We will have many challenges ahead. However, if we work together within the true spirit of consensus government, we will be able to tackle these challenges together and achieve ultimate success for this Assembly, for all communities, and for all residents of the Northwest Territories.

I will work within a philosophy of inclusion, transparency, and accountability. I am committed to fostering a working environment that is centred on engagement, collaboration, and innovation, and I will carry the ultimate goal of providing the best programs and supports to all residents of the Northwest Territories within my heart. I would be honoured to serve as your Premier in the 19th Legislative Assembly, and I respectfully request your support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Members, I would like to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Grand

Chief George Mackenzie from the Tlicho Government, as well as Mr. Henry Zoe, a former Member of the Legislative Assembly and a former Minister. Members, next we have, in terms of alphabetical order, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Lafferty, the floor is yours.

MR. LAFFERTY'S SPEECH

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. [Translation] I would like to acknowledge that we are on Chief Drygeese Akaitcho Territory. I would like to acknowledge that, in this House and in the Northwest Territories, we stand on the land of Dene, Metis, Inuvialuit, and NWT Cree.

Congratulations to all the newly elected MLAs. I look forward to serving in the 19th Legislative Assembly with all of you. Masi cho to the constituents of Monfwi for their confidence in me as their representative in the Legislative Assembly. It has been a privilege to serve the Tlicho people for the last 14 years and an honour to continue serving for the next four years. Masi to my wife, Dianne, and my children, Jayde and Jesse, Cheyenne, Sahara, Denae, Ty, and our grandson, Ares, for their love and support.

I am Jackson Lafferty. My father was Maurice Lafferty. He spent much of his life on the land. He was a trapper, a dog musher, and provided for us what he harvested. He was adopted, too, and raised by Mary Adele Lamouelle. My grandmother also had a hand in raising me, as I was the oldest grandson. My mother is the late Dora Marie Lafferty. She was a Tlicho interpreter for the Behchoko Health Centre. Her parents were Pierre and Margaret Mantla, who raised their children on the land. To this day, I look at my uncle. [End of translation]. It is the Dene way. Introducing ourselves in this way allows us to situate ourselves and gives context to relations we have with each other. It shows our history. Where we came from, and paves the way for the future. This is the way I would like to see the Government of the Northwest Territories working. With an understanding of each other and our people. Knowing where each of us comes from and building a relationship from there so that we can move forward together with common understanding.

We need to serve in the spirit of Dene Nawo: with good intentions. We need to serve within a culture that values respect, listening and cooperation. I have been involved in governance for half my life – 25 years. As a young adult I got involved early in local and regional politics. I served 14 years at the Legislative Assembly, in the administrations of three different premiers. I served as a Regular MLA and I served as a Cabinet Minister for 8 years. In the last Assembly I was entrusted with the

Speaker's chair. I understand the roles and responsibilities of all those various positions.

[Translation] I have also had the opportunity to work among some of the great leaders among them. [End of translation]

[English translation not provided]

The late Pierre Beaverho, a very well respected Elder from Whati, gave me some advice when I first began politics. He talked about the importance of promoting our languages in all our day to day events and gatherings. Our language, our way of life, our culture make us who we are. We must never forget it. Pierre told me if I was going to be a leader, to do it in my own language. His advice to me as kawi (or leader) was to stay true to yourself. To always do what you believe is right.

Pierre Beaverho also spoke to me about the Dene drum and its meaning. The beat of the drum is the heartbeat of the people. Its shape stands for harmony and unity of all people. It is not by chance that our Legislative Chamber is circular, like a drum. Pierre told me to carry the message of the drum forward in gatherings and meetings. To share the meaning of unity. Masi, Pierre, for these words. As a rookie band councilor, in my 20s, these were very powerful words.

I have held these close to my heart and they have led me since. I often returned to Pierre for his advice. So, as we serve in this House, let's never forget the drum, and all it stands for. That includes a consensus style of government that recognizes, regardless of our disagreements, that all ideas and opinions matter and have worth. Working collaboratively, in a consensus system strengthens and unites us in a way that party politics never can.

But have we always worked in that spirit of consensus? Have we displayed unity and strength? From my perspective as Speaker, as Minister, and as an MLA, I don't think we have. That is where this Assembly, under the right leadership, can make a difference. I believe it is possible for the Executive and Regular Members to generally work together to achieve a common cause and a collective vision. Northerners demand it. For the sake of our youth, our education system, community wellness, decent housing for all, economic diversity, climate change, caribou, and many other challenges that confront our territory, we need a leader that will work with all 18 Members in the spirit of servant leadership, one who is open-minded and a good listener, and one who explores all sides of issues and opportunities before making a decision; a leader who has respect for different perspectives, one who will collaborate and work with all levels of government in order to get the job done; a leader who looks beyond their own interests for the greater good of all, who

inspires others to do the same. A leader who leads to serve. I believe I am that leader.

During the 18th Assembly, there were no small communities represented on Cabinet. Ministers were only drawn from Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith; large urban centres, very different from the 33 small communities that make up the rest of the territory. This was a barrier to consensus in the 18th Assembly. It cost the Executive a proper understanding of the challenges of life in the small communities where most of us live, places without all-weather roads, banks, daily air services, hospitals, full-time policing, or even decent food. I am pushing for an Executive that represents all parts of the Northwest Territories so we can truly represent and serve our people in a generalized spirit of consensus.

The October 1st general election has given our territory much to celebrate. It was conducted in a spirit of fairness and efficiency that nine-tenths of the world's voters can only wish for. Most remarkable of all, women today occupy 50 percent minus one of the seats in this Chamber. This milestone will have a lasting impact on policy decisions and outcomes of this government. It is an outcome that I welcome with all my heart.

Finally, the election has delivered a crop of bright and committed MLAs representing incredible diversity, skills, talents, and experience. Among us, MLAs are experts in Indigenous governance, engineering, healthcare, media, law, climate change, business, social issues; each and every one ready to make a difference in the lives of our constituents.

The NWT deserves a Premier who, through collaboration, can incorporate these diverse perspectives and experience into Cabinet decision-making and lead us to serve the people of the Northwest Territories to the best of their needs. I am up for the task. I know that each of you is equally committed to collaborative tasks at hand, as well.

That is not say that it will be an easy road. The challenges are very complex, critical to the well-being of our constituents. The challenges far outstrip the fiscal resources available to us. Furthermore, the GNWT does not have exclusive jurisdiction over the Northwest Territories. We share governance with municipalities, the constitution entrenched with Indigenous governments, and other Indigenous governments seeking settlement of their claims. The federal government also is a crucial partner and primary source of revenue. The consensus principle applies to our dealings with these important players. With trust, patience, hard work, and the right leadership, it can succeed in the most difficult circumstances.

In our priority-setting around the table, MLAs discussed economic prosperity. We all recognize that there is a need for economic diversification to build a northern economy. There are many opportunities and tools to encourage development in our territory. This is just one key objective that we set for ourselves.

All my experience in government administration and all my hard-earned political skill, I dedicate to delivering those priorities. I pledge that to you now.

On specific issues, I pledge the following as Premier. I will ensure the GNWT supports, with respect and integrity, those Indigenous governments seeking settlements of their outstanding land claims agreements. I pledge to collaborate and cooperate with Indigenous governments to establish meaningful, equitable, and model relationships. I will use my intergovernmental experience to strengthen our relationship with the federal government and to move them to a better understanding of our unique realities in the Northwest Territories.

I commit myself to improving the implementation of development strategies and the development of a clear and more efficient regulatory process to encourage further investments and opportunities here in the Northwest Territories. I will support the enactment of mining regulations that respect the environment and our changing climate, doing so in collaboration with all stakeholders, including Indigenous governments and business owners.

To help diversify our economy, I will support business development, especially in small communities and with Indigenous governments. Targeted areas will include tourism, ecotourism, research and development, arts and culture, as well as the development of infrastructure. I will work with communities to dissolve barriers to procurement and contracting and help strengthen our skilled labour force.

I will ensure that the wisdom of our elders is taken into account in planning for climate change and that Indigenous knowledge has the same weight as science.

Under my Premiership, the GNWT will collaborate with the federal government to ensure food security and reduce costs, especially in smaller communities, and that communities will be involved. Food security includes agriculture and traditional harvesting.

I promise that the Northwest Territories will continue to lead the country in reconciliation initiatives in the wake of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the federal Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

I have already led the way by creating mandatory modules teaching the history and legacy of residential schools as part of the school curriculum. I will be a strong ally in language revitalization, including research and the encouragement of youth to speak their Indigenous languages.

I pledge to work in close collaboration with communities and with Indigenous governments, the federal government, and non-profit groups to find viable solutions, such as Housing First, to the housing crisis that we face, especially in small communities and especially with respect to displaced and homeless people.

I pledge my support for a polytechnic university on par with institutions in the South. I want to encourage our post-secondary students, the graduates, to continue their higher education here in the Northwest Territories and to pursue their careers here in the Northwest Territories, instead of taking their talents south.

With respect to health and wellness, I want to make sure that no Northerners are left behind. This means strengthening reconciliation efforts and supporting individual wellness in culturally relevant ways. It means better communication between departments, communities, and Indigenous governments.

Ensuring no one is left behind means integrative wraparound social services. It means supportive, innovative approaches, like the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation, FOXY, and SMASH. It means restorative justice options, connecting with elders and with the land.

Ensuring no one is left behind means a greater focus on accessibility and affordability of early childcare. Finally, ensuring no one is left behind means ensuring that services are in place for our seniors, for addiction treatments, and for our mental health clients. I pledge my heart to ensuring that no one is left behind.

It is not possible to catalogue my responses to every issue that we face. Time doesn't allow, but I am an excellent listener, and I have respect for different perspectives. If elected Premier, I commit to working as a team to explore all sides of issues or opportunities before making a decision.

As we serve the people of the Northwest Territories, we are reliant on the expertise of those who work in the public service. Our public service is a resource to be cherished and honoured. It is the professionals skilled and dedicated to the people of the Northwest Territories. This also applies to the unions who work diligently to protect workers' rights and workers' welfare.

As the Premier, I will provide the leadership necessary to keep our senior government staff focused completely on the priorities set by this House. Under my Premiership, senior staff will engage more with the people of the North in their communities. The same goes for Indigenous governments.

I pledge to take our excellent, high-calibre civil service and, within four years, make it even better. By better, I mean a tighter ship and greater efficiency. Deputies and assistant deputies will be required to search out and eliminate duplications and overlap. There are no other ways, if we are to find the dollars needed to fund the priorities that we have set.

The next four years present an opportunity to both build on good work done by many people before us, as well as an opportunity to work together to tackle the issues that we know our residents face today; the cost of living, health and wellness, education, employment, homelessness, food and income security, the need to support the many northern families living with the legacy of residential schools, and the results of the loss of Indigenous language in our culture.

It is my goal in the next four years that people will be able to look back at the 19th Assembly as a government that put collaboration and cooperation first, a government that worked together for the good of all of the people of the Northwest Territories. It will be a government of strong, productive relationships, working with communities, Indigenous governments, and the Government of Canada. It will be a government in which Cabinet and Regular Members found a way to work closely together to produce the best programs and services for all Northerners; an NWT united behind a collective vision that leaves no one behind.

If elected Premier, I promise that every Member's voice will be heard in this House. Every community will be represented. My priority is to build upon our elders' concept of consensus government, to work together in the spirit of Dene Nawo, good intent for the betterment of our people in the Northwest Territories. I believe that we will work together in the spirit of collaboration. With all levels and departments within the government, we can work in the true spirit of the drum, that we can achieve a better future, and we can be a united voice and vision for the NWT.

[Translation] If I am Premier, I promise every Member's voice will be heard, and every community will be represented. My priority is to build upon our elders' concept of consensus government. We are all here today with the same vision for the North. Let's all work collaboratively together and achieve our common northern goal. We will be like one

people. We are all here to work in this Chamber. Each one of us will present what we will be working on. Thank you. [End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next on the list, we have Ms. Martselos. Ms. Martselos, you have the floor.

MS. MARTSELOS' SPEECH

MS. MARTSELOS: Mahsi. Members of the 19th Assembly, I respectfully and humbly put my name forward for your consideration as Premier. Although this is my first time here as an elected representative, I feel like our territory is at a crossroads, with high levels of uncertainty about our economic and social future. I believe it is our duty as Members of this Assembly to provide that certainty, some hope for all residents, that they have a secure future, no matter what they do for a living, no matter which community they live in, and no matter what their personal circumstances are.

I am here today to ask for your support because of my father, Frank Laviolette. After my mother passed away in 1995, I began spending more time with "Big Frank." I was a businesswoman, and my husband and I were at a point where we were contemplating our own future. I had been a witness to my father's transition from bison rancher to politician. He established the first Aboriginal political organization in the NWT, attended Dene nation meetings, and was instrumental in the political evolution of the Salt River First Nation. He started talking to me about Salt River affairs. I originally wanted no part of it. As my sister pointed out to him, I was there to spend time with him because he was lonely, but my persistence comes from him. He was not going to stop suggesting I get involved.

I started to see politics as part of my future, and, in 2007, I got involved in the Salt River First Nation. In life, business, and politics, I have overcome adversity and challenges, realized opportunities, suffered loss, and experienced success. I always believed in what I was trying to do. I believed in my vision of where I was going. I believe now our territory needs a vision, building on the accomplishments of previous governments but doing things in different ways. While there are proven ways to develop, implement, and evaluate government policy, I believe our residents want us to do new things in new ways. They do not want the status quo. We have elected 12 new MLAs, including myself, as proof. They want positive changes to move our territory forward with healthy people, a safe and pristine environment, and a thriving economy and business community.

Earlier in our deliberations, we outlined our priorities for this Assembly. We have all been entrusted with looking after the people, the

environment, and the economy of the NWT. If chosen to be Premier, I believe one of our first priorities should be our Aboriginal people. The NWT is a leading jurisdiction in our country for recognition of Aboriginal rights, so I believe it's time for the Government of the Northwest Territories to fully endorse and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is also time to settle outstanding Indigenous land and resources negotiations for the Akaitcho, the Deh Cho, and the NWT Metis as quickly as possible. We should also fight to have both reserves in the NWT recognized by Canada as federal reserves. We have heard from many leaders across the territory: the Government of the Northwest Territories is standing in the way of outstanding land claims. We have an obligation to truly walk the talk and seriously support the settlement of these claims in order to move forward. We should not be an obstacle to settling these claims, and we should be actively moving to remove other obstacles to settling these claims.

Settling Indigenous lands and resources negotiations will provide certainty for Indigenous governments to begin to draw a jurisdiction down on self-governance, bringing programs and services closer to the people they serve and economic opportunities if they choose to develop their lands and resources. We have all heard of the potential income and the huge positive impacts these agreements have on resource exploration in the NWT. The completion of these agreements would only bring certainty to industry, whether they are exploring on Indigenous lands or lands that are retained by the government.

The health system in the NWT compares very favourably to that of other jurisdictions across the country. However, we need to make improvements by having doctors who live in the NWT and not simply dispense medical services as locums. In my home community, I have benefitted on and off from seeing the same physician for extended periods of time, but we do need to do more to offer that level of service consistently to our residents. We must work together to support our healthcare workers and instill continuity in our health system so that our sick and elderly feel that they have a doctor who is their doctor, a doctor who knows them, who knows their medical history. Continuity will ensure that our health system develops an environment of prevention. As statistics show, millions upon millions of dollars are spent on treatment. Monies could be saved by promoting healthy lifestyles for all residents. Money spent on prevention has huge returns on the health system and our society.

I believe one of the wisest and best investments we can make as a government is in our children, setting the stage for their journey through life. We

have all spoken about the importance of childcare to help our residents work and the positive impact this may have on our economy. Creating a universal subsidized childcare program is a must if we are to set the table for the people to work. Investing in early childhood development is the first and most essential building block in ensuring wellness and increasing our graduation rates.

Offering post-secondary education opportunities in the NWT by supporting the plan to develop a polytech university/University of the North is vital. When I was a child, there were many tradesmen in my home town, the majority of whom obtained their journeyman status right in Fort Smith. Currently, our territory suffers from a lack of qualified trades personnel. I believe it's time for us to re-examine the model that produced so many qualified tradespeople. A polytech university would go a long way in filling this void.

We have an opportunity through the Aurora Research Institute to be a leading jurisdiction for the use, study, and sharing of the polar satellite data. Can we support and revitalize our connection to Aboriginal languages and traditional lifestyles through our university? We must work to ensure this is a truly unique university where people across the North, Canada, and other parts of the world will want to come to study.

We have to work to improve how the Government of the Northwest Territories addresses Child and Family Services. Previous governments have examined how other jurisdictions provide services to children in care and looked at what is successful and what is not. Implementation of the recommendations is essential if we are to improve the lives and the future of our children and families. Supporting our social workers and foster parents are important elements of working towards better services for children in care, but our goal should be to keep families together and reunited. We need to do everything we can to achieve this, avoiding children in care becoming statistics in the justice system, giving them better chances of becoming productive members of society.

As Premier, I would like to look closely at the mandate of the NWT Housing Corporation. I see great potential to resolve many social housing issues we face across the NWT by allowing people who can afford to be homeowners to become homeowners. Only people who find themselves in a permanent unfortunate situation should remain in social housing. We need to encourage and support others to transition into homeownership. In addition, the Housing Corporation should work to improve market housing across the NWT by providing incentives and programs, which encourage homeowners to maintain and upgrade their dwellings.

Pilot projects that support homeownership by leveraging third-party resources should be expanded. We know homeowners take pride in their property. Providing better housing overall for NWT residents should be the mandate of the NWT Housing Corporation.

Across our territory, investing in infrastructure may be one of the most important investments the Government of the Northwest Territories can make. Infrastructure has to be built in order to maintain our territory in good working order. However, we must look at each infrastructure project through social, economic, and environmental lenses in order to ensure positive impacts on our communities as we build our roads, schools, and health centres.

We must plan to manage our debt to safeguard the next generation from the burden of unmanageable finances. We need to work with the Indigenous governments and the federal government to increase the speed in which money flows to our territory and to explore project funding models that leverage resources to get more projects done to support our communities and our economy. We hear lots of announcements of federal funding coming to our territory, but with very little impact on our infrastructure deficits. Federal fundings are scheduled far into the future and are spread over many years. As your Premier, I would address this issue with the federal government as soon as possible.

Expansion of the Taltson river dam is vital to the entire Northwest Territories. It will create a climate of new opportunities, countless new jobs, lower the cost of living and doing business in the NWT, and provide new training opportunities to the trades, giving new hope to the people of the Northwest Territories. We know that Aboriginal governments want to be involved in the Taltson expansion from regulatory, environmental, and business opportunity perspectives.

Let me touch briefly on the conservation economy. Recently, Thaidene Nene was established in the east arm of the Great Slave Lake. This park, along with other parks and protected areas, offer many opportunities for our people to participate in the conservation economy. These new parks differ greatly from those of the past as, although they are there for all to enjoy, they guarantee traditional pursuits by those who have made use of the lands since time immemorial.

Continued support of the tourism industry is essential if we are to remain competitive with other jurisdictions and grow to encompass our new policies and other initiatives.

Land managements must be done in a partnership with our Indigenous people, which they share the

land, and work together so that our Indigenous partners don't see it as a government encroaching on their land.

As your Premier, I believe we should place a heavy emphasis on supporting small business. Incentives provided to small business, such as tax breaks, business incentive policies, no collateral access to funding, and technological support will help small business exceed. We need to work together to expand tourism beyond the territorial capital and make sure our own northern operators are the ones benefiting the most from tourism. Small business is truly the way we can turn our economy around and put our people to work.

The cost of living in the NWT is continually on the rise. Many of our families struggle to put food on the table. Energy costs can be staggering. Energy sources that reduce the cost of power can be an incentive to families to make their homes more energy efficient while reducing their carbon footprint.

In addition, we in the NWT will be doing our share to combat climate change, which has harmful impacts on us. We only need to drive our highways and see the shoreline erosion in communities like Tuktoyaktuk to see the serious impact it has had and continues to have on our territory.

My intention as Premier would be to visit all your constituencies, so that I can hear firsthand what your constituents need to make the North a better place to live and improve their lives. I will ensure that Ministers and deputy ministers visit your communities to meet with you and your leadership to raise their awareness about the issues currently facing you and collectively develop a plan to address concerns in the spirit of cooperation.

Today, I have risen to ask you to give me an opportunity to be your Premier. I feel I have the personal qualities required for a Premier of a consensus government; strength, compassion, and perseverance. Together, we are choosing political leaders for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the next four years. No matter what the outcome, we are all the same team, doing what our residents want us to do, making the NWT a better place to live, work, and do business.

I hereby commit to forming the necessary partnerships with all levels of government, Indigenous governments, local and federal governments, as well as the private sector, and also with all of you from our deliberations. Since we were elected and here in this Assembly today, I see a passionate group of MLAs who care. Solutions and decisions made here in the Legislative Assembly affect all people of the North. We have an obligation to the people of the Northwest

Territories to set the stage for hope, cooperation, and equality. The people of the NWT deserve a government which is accountable and transparent, working collaboratively in their best interest.

This is my pledge to you to give me the opportunity to lead our collective efforts to make things better for all Northerners, from Sachs Harbour to Fort Smith. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Finally, I will turn the floor to Mr. R.J. Simpson. Mr. Simpson, the floor is yours.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON'S SPEECH

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Over the past couple of weeks, a number of people have asked my opinion on this new Assembly, and the word that always comes to my mind is "refreshing." There is a sense of renewal in the air and a sense that we have the opportunity to finally start making the kind of changes that the voters in the last two elections have clearly demanded.

In order to do that, we must first begin to address some fundamental issues that are at the heart of our ability to govern and our legitimacy as a government, including accountability; the functioning of consensus government; a relationship with the public service, the public, and other governments; and the relationship between the capital and the rest of the territory. These issues are the foundation of our decision-making process and, if we wish to make progress in the territory and advance a bold, long-term vision, then we need to start with a strong foundation. These issues, all of which lie squarely within the purview of the office of the Premier, are what I will be discussing today.

There are also a number of very important issues that I won't be discussing; economic diversification, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and so on. While I have definite opinions about what we need to do in regard to those areas, the priorities and goals of the next government will be determined by the Assembly as a whole when the elected 19 Members meet next week. I am not going to presume what those will be. What I am going to talk about today are the changes that I think need to come out of the Office of the Premier in order for this Assembly to achieve those goals.

For those watching who may not be familiar with our system of government, the role and powers of the Premier in our consensus style of government differ from those in a party-based system. In a party system, the party's platform is developed independently from the legislature and, once elected, the Premier is given broad powers to

implement that platform, including the power to appoint and remove Cabinet Ministers.

In our system, the Assembly as a whole sets the priorities and has the sole discretion to appoint and remove Ministers. This means that our Premier has less coercive power than provincial Premiers and must therefore focus more on ensuring that there are strong working relationships between all Members of the Assembly in order to get things done. In fact, relationships are central to the role of Premier; relationships with Ministers, Regular Members, Indigenous governments, the federal government, communities, industry, and the public. These are all interrelated and, if the Premier cannot maintain positive relationships with all of these entities, the effects are felt across our entire society.

I have become quite familiar with these effects over the last four years; the union negotiations, the red alert, the pettiness seen in this Assembly, the discontent of Indigenous governments that we heard yesterday in our meetings, and so on. This is what spurred me to put my name forward for Premier.

I don't want to disparage our current Premier. I believe that he has always acted with the best intentions of the territory in mind and, if I had an issue, I knew that I could always walk to his office or pick up the phone and he would be willing to talk. However, I think that the territory will benefit from a new approach. People have lost faith in our system. They have lost faith in our ability to deliver results, and many people believe that the system is no longer fair. I can tell you that that is how I felt, knowing that my vote never once mattered in the last Assembly. Everything was a done deal before it ever hit the floor.

I don't always need to get my way. In life, you win some and you lose some. That's fine. I can accept that, if the system is fair. What I won't accept is a situation in which a vote that is meant to represent the will of the people of Hay River is meaningless. That is unacceptable. We can do better. We need to restore people's faith in our system by ensuring that everyone's vote counts and everyone's opinion is considered.

There are lessons to be learned from the last Assembly and, regardless of who the next Premier is, they need to be addressed if we wish to serve the people of the Northwest Territories to the best of our collective abilities. The first issue that we need to address is accountability. This isn't just my opinion as a political insider. I hear this from members of the public all the time. We can start with the relationship between Cabinet and Regular Members.

As I stated, in our system of government, only the Assembly can appoint and remove Ministers. In other jurisdictions where the Premier has this authority, it is clear that the Premier is ultimately responsible for the actions of Ministers. However, in our system, the distribution of this authority could end up in a diffusion of responsibility, meaning that, when everyone is responsible for keeping Ministers accountable, no one is responsible.

I know that, at times, I am hard on the last Assembly, and perhaps I give the impression that it was all bad, but it wasn't. There were definitely some successes. There were some collaborative efforts that yielded excellent results. Unfortunately, if Ministers showed no willingness to collaborate or displayed ignorance or arrogance or incompetence, there were no consequences or remedies available to us, and we all knew it. That is what needs to change. The power to remove Ministers may lie solely with the Assembly, but that doesn't mean that the Premier may wash his or her hands of that responsibility. The buck has to stop somewhere.

If the leadership of this Assembly is lacking, it is up to the Premier to fill that void. I don't mean that the Premier should be able to remove Ministers; I mean that the Premier should work to ensure that we never reach a point where we have to consider removing a Minister. If there are problems with the Minister's performance or attitude, the Premier needs to address it immediately. The Assembly and the public should expect as much and stand for nothing less. The responsibility that Ministers have to the people of the Northwest Territories and their power to make decisions that can affect people's lives on a daily basis mean that we must be vigilant in ensuring that they are performing their duties in accordance with a standard that the public finds acceptable.

Of course, we don't live in a perfect world, and sometimes issues can't be resolved. If there are votes to remove Ministers, such votes should never be subject to Cabinet solidarity. If I were to become Premier, I would certainly do my best to hold Ministers and the government to account, but what happens when I am gone? It is not enough to put some new faces in the same old system and hope for the best. We will never be able to design a perfect system that ensures accountability at all times, but we need to start implementing changes, codifying conventions, and creating expectations that will last beyond a single Assembly.

For example, in the report entitled "Lessons Learned," the Special Committee on Transition Matters recommended that there be no less than three fireside chats per year. These informal meetings between Regular Members and the Premier are intended to address concerns before they become problems and have been proven to

work well in the past. I think that we had three in the past four years, and by the time that we did, it was too late.

During session, there should also be weekly meetings between the Premier and the chairperson of the Regular Member caucus, known in the last Assembly as the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning. These are the types of practices that need to become conventions. Although there were obvious personality conflicts in the last Assembly, I believe that most problems resulted from a lack of communication. We need to open those channels, both formal and informal.

I have to say that I was astounded to learn that, in previous Assemblies, the Principal Secretary, the Premier's right-hand person, would regularly walk up and down the halls and speak with Regular Members and Cabinet Ministers to discuss issues or just get a sense of how everyone was doing. We never had that, but it should be an expectation.

There is also room to improve the relationship and increase collaboration between Cabinet and Standing Committees to the benefit of all of our residents. We need to adopt the recommendations in the Lessons Learned report that would require the Cabinet to consult with standing committees, as well as the public, at the beginning of the business planning and budget development process in addition to the process that already exists, whereby standing committee is consulted when the documents are virtually complete and the opportunity to have any substantial impact on the government's plans has long passed.

We must also adopt and codify some of the new collaborative methods of discussing potential policies and addressing issues with legislation that were pioneered in the previous Assembly. It might not sound novel, but by replacing protracted letter-writing campaigns, in which each side would wait days or weeks for responses, with actual face-to-face meetings, we were able to get better results in a day than we otherwise would in a month.

The Premier must also commit his or her government to working more closely with committees in regard to the timely introduction of legislation. The work that committees do is invaluable and directly affects the public's daily life, in many cases. We must ensure that the committees have adequate time to do that work. Such coordination could also create time for more special committees to be struck. It was only late in the last Assembly that the potential for a special committee to examine the health system was discussed. Allowing for such work could have far-reaching impacts for the people of the Northwest Territories and is another example of how Cabinet

and Regular Members can collaborate for the benefit of the people

No discussion about accountability would be complete without a discussion of the bureaucracy. We all hear many complaints about how the bureaucrats are the ones really running the government and that the elected Members are just along for the ride. We hear that from the public service; we hear that from the public; we hear that from MLAs and from former Ministers and Premiers. I will say it again: the buck has to stop somewhere. If the bureaucracy is running the show, the Premier must take responsibility for that.

Maybe the most powerful tool that the Premier has is to appoint and remove deputy ministers. Either use it if you are facing problems, or step aside for someone who will. I am not saying that the next Premier has to start handing out pink slips left and right, but he or she cannot stand for any obstruction or subversion of the public will as expressed to public representatives.

That said, I don't look at the bureaucracy as the enemy. I figure that I have met most of the GNWT senior management, and I have a lot of respect for them. I honestly think that they work for the benefit of the North, and I think that I have a good relationship with most of them, although sometimes there is a weird dynamic between MLAs and senior management, but I think that we get along.

Ultimate authority and responsibility lies with the elected representatives, and I am not going to use the bureaucracy as a scapegoat. Instead, I argue that we must better utilize the public service. As an MLA, I am not supposed to talk to members of the public service about their work; however, we are a small jurisdiction and it is often unavoidable. I am always struck by how often I hear the same few complaints over and over again across departments and across regions.

The first is that issues identified on the front line are rarely addressed. When policies are developed in Yellowknife, they might be well-intentioned, but they don't always roll out smoothly on the ground. When our front-line staff raise concerns about policy and recommendations to improve service delivery, we need to listen. We need a robust feedback loop that not only improves the service that we offer, but also shows respect to our front-line staff.

The second complaint that I often hear about is that bold ideas and out-of-the-box thinking are stifled instead of encouraged. This has to change. We have lost a number of very good public servants for this very reason. Our vast educated and competent public service is the GNWT's greatest resource, and it is time we treat it as such.

We must also strive to make the GNWT's senior management more representative of our people, and this is an issue that, during the business planning process, we dealt with every single year. There are charts that show the number of Northerners in the senior management, the number of Indigenous people in senior management, and the number of women... well, not the number of women, but we can see them in those committee rooms. There is a clear underrepresentation of both Indigenous peoples and women in the senior ranks, all the way up to the deputy minister level, and this Assembly needs to change that. Not just talk about changing it, but I want to see real results. I want to see real equal representation of women and Indigenous peoples at the deputy minister and senior management levels by the end of this Assembly.

One other important change I want to mention, and it may not resonate with any of the new Members or members of the public, but it's a change that I believe will finally break down departmental silos and allow us to implement policies with more responsibility to our people and transfer the policy development power from the public service to the elected representatives. Those of us who have been Regular Members are aware of how invaluable committee support staff are. In particular, our research advisors have the seemingly impossible task of reading and analyzing all the documents received by committees and being able to provide Members with information about how a particular policy or piece of legislation will play out, or how it interacts with pieces of legislation from other departments or even other governments. I am not exaggerating when I say that Regular Members could not do their job without that assistance. This staff works directly with, and takes direction from, committees.

I was genuinely shocked when I learned that Cabinet does not have a similar body to support them and aid in the development of policy. Where there are policy positions within the departments, they are accountable to their deputy minister, not to Cabinet. There is no single body that can develop cross-departmental policies or strategies.

The other day, during a briefing, one of the new Members asked a question that exemplifies why this is a problem. They asked about the immigration file, and why it was split across two departments. The answer is because one department was focused on attracting investment, and the other one in bringing in workers. That put an end to the conversation, as it would have at the Cabinet table. Instead of a single immigration policy, we have two that are independent from each other. End of story.

Now, imagine if we had a policy development unit that could actually look at this issue holistically, not

from within a departmental silo. We could even include Health and Social Services by once again looking at the possibility of attracting foreign physicians. We can include the Executive so that they could help lobby Ottawa to increase the Northwest Territories' profile in Ottawa as a destination for immigrants. We could engage Aurora College to help address language or education deficits.

This is just one example, and this is one of the critiques of consensus government, is that we don't have a robust way to develop policies the way party systems do, and this would help address that. Real-world issues rarely fit neatly into government silos, so we must address the structural issues within our own government that prevent us from breaking our little silos in the program development, and to maintain a bureaucratic barrier between policy and the elected representatives of the people.

Earlier this week, the 19 of us met with Indigenous leaders from across the NWT. As was noted by many participants, it was an historic event, the kind that is virtually unheard of in other jurisdictions. Despite the fact that our government has a much more progressive relationship with Indigenous governments than do the provinces, it was clear from discussions that there is still much frustration, and understandably so. The finalization and implementation of land claims and self-government agreements have stalled. The entire territory, all of us, will benefit from concluding unsettled claims and implementing agreements.

There is a general consensus that a new approach is needed to move forward. What does that approach look like? I'm not sure, but I'm sure that, whatever it is, it will have to make people uncomfortable. The GNWT has spent far too long in its comfort zone. Nothing should be off the table. We want to go back to the table with fresh eyes, and without the preconceived notions that have held us back.

One of my colleagues made a comment yesterday that I thought was interesting. Instead of the GNWT and Canada presenting offers to Indigenous governments, perhaps, the GNWT and Indigenous governments should be presenting offers to Canada. That's the kind of relationship we need to strive for. We need to work together in partnership because, as was said time and time again at the meeting, we are stronger together.

We also need to begin discussions about the future of the GNWT, and I've had this discussion with many of you. The GNWT is only 50 years old. What is it going to look like in another 50 years? We are a very unique jurisdiction. As we settle these claims and as we continue to implement self-government agreements, what will the role be for the

Government of the Northwest Territories in 50 years from now or 100 years from now? As communities begin to draw down programs, what should those programs look like?

We need to start having these discussions because the programs that we design right now will be administered by Indigenous governments in the future. We need to implement the recommendations by the Standing Committee on Economic Development about the drafting of legislation and the inclusion of Indigenous governments. That report was specific to the devolution legislation, but, as we heard yesterday, we need to possibly expand that to include other legislation that will affect the communities. Legislation would help the social services.

This won't be easy. This won't be an easy sell. It is, essentially, giving up power, and that is not something that people like to do. It goes hand in hand with the next issue I want to talk about, regional empowerment. It is something that has been called "decentralization." I don't like using that term, because I've heard that term for a long time now and that term hasn't yielded any results.

When we look at services, when you look at new positions, it's always easy to come up with reasons why jobs, why services should be located in Yellowknife, instead of coming up with reasons why they should be located elsewhere. The immediate cost of keeping the position in the capital doesn't factor in one of the external factors, and that is something we need to change. Going forward, this government needs to focus on how we cannot just put a job in the community, but how we can move decision-making authority to a community.

I know there are certain units where there might be five people in Yellowknife, and a couple are elsewhere. That doesn't really make sense. That's just moving a couple of jobs. We need to take a different approach to this. I found it interesting that a lot of Yellowknife Members actually brought this up, that, when they went to the doors, there is a lot of concern about the economy in these small communities. We all see that when there are low graduation rates, when there is poverty, when there are needs for housing that affects all of us. There is only so much to go around, and right now everything is centred in Yellowknife. Yellowknife has had one of the highest household incomes in Canada for 20 years, and there are other communities where the average income is \$20,000 to \$30,000. Somehow, we have to address this regional disparity.

Finally, I want to talk about focusing on results. One of the criticisms that I've had, that many of us have had, that the public has had, is that the government is good at talking. It's good at producing piles of

glossy documents to talk about what they're going to do, but we see very little action on it. The next Premier, whoever that may be, needs to put an end to this. Creating documents, creating strategies, shouldn't be an industry. This is the public money that we are using, and it needs to be used for the public good, not to keep people busy.

There have been a lot of suggestions today. There have been lots of good comments. There has been a lot of recognition of the need to improve relationships, and I just want to say I hope that whoever becomes Premier listens to all of the speeches today, because there were good elements that need to be incorporated. We need to work together going forward, and so, if I'm Premier, I'm happy to work with the other Members and incorporate their ideas. If I'm not, I hope that we can still work together and make our system of government, make our Legislature, more functional and provide more prosperity for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson, and thank you to all four candidates for Premier for keeping your comments within the timeframes that you agreed to. Very well done, indeed.

Right now, we'll take about a 15-minute break. We'll reconvene at about five to eleven, where we'll commence our question-and-answer period. We will adjourn right now until five to eleven. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Good morning, Members. We will reconvene the first meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee. The four nominees for Premier have now made their speeches, and we will now open the floor to questions.

As you have earlier agreed, each Member is entitled to ask each of the Premiers two questions each. Once you ask your question, I will proceed to put the question to each of the four candidates in no particular order, so I may start with one candidate at one point and bounce it around a bit. We may not necessarily follow alphabetical order. I think we will follow alphabetical order for the first one, and then switch it up for the second one.

I am not going to maintain a list, Members, so after each question is asked, I ask that you please try to get my attention first to ask your questions.

That having been said, Members, I will open up the floor now to questions. Are there any who wish to ask a question? I will start with Mr. Thompson.

Questions by Members

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. Mr. Chair and candidates, as you are aware, the riding you represent have five small communities and a regional centre. Can you please tell me and everybody here how you as the Premier will do a better job of hearing the small communities' voices and concerns and improve their quality of life? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. I will first start with Ms. Caroline Cochrane. Ms. Cochrane, you have five minutes on the clock. Extra points if you finish before then. The floor is yours.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To hear the voices of small communities, and all communities, actually, is critical. One of the methods that we have is actually to be as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. We all carry the opinions and the voices of our people. We need to work better with the Regular Members and work toward listening to them better and working closer together in addressing those issues, but also there was a disconnect. I think that Cabinet in itself as Premier, if elected as Premier, I commit that actually we will be going into communities more often; and not only Cabinet alone, but as a Premier, as well.

I did watch how our Prime Minister Trudeau actually goes in. He sits and has the people around him, and I think that that is the right way, which is actually that we need to reach out more. We need to be accessible to our people. As Cabinet, as the Premier, we represent all people in the Northwest Territories, not only one riding, not our own riding at all, so we need to be accessible and we can't hear them until we're actually with them, so we need to be focused more on providing more visits to every community and to every riding in the Northwest Territories over the next four years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Lots of bonus points for that one, for sure. Next, I will go to Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Clerk. We live in the small communities, and it is very important for us. Our community members have told us many times that we are always doing a lot more for the larger communities, and I have heard this many times before. So when I look at it, if we are to move forward, we have to work closely together.

There are all the MLAs here. We have to all come together and make sure that we express our concern right away and support one another. We have to figure out how we can work together and

solve the issue that we are working on. Whose community are we supporting? We can't just do it alone. If there are new ministers, all the ministers, they have to also come to the communities. The new ministers have to go to the communities. If the people see you all the time, they will come to know the Ministers and how they work, and they can work together with the Members.

We have to collaborate together, which should be first for us. There are 19 Members here. We have to get together and work together and, here in this Chamber, we are going to be here tomorrow. We have to always mingle and work together and have meetings together. We have to ask each other, "How is your community? How are you doing?" We have to have a lot more communication. I know that we are not always going to agree with each other, but we are representing the people, and we have to work on the people's issues. I think it should be that way. The 19 Members have to support one another.

I realize that there is a question here. I am willing to work with all of the Members who are sitting here. I will speak to you, and you are going to end up working with me. I realize in the past sometimes the Assembly before did not work as well. I heard that in the communities. We are going to have to change that and work more together.

I am really glad that that question was asked of me. If we have a concern, we have to put it on the table and talk about it, or somebody else would say, "There is an issue here at this community. Let's all go to the community and support this person." That is what I would do. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Mahsi, Member Lafferty. Next, I have Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I ran on the mandate of stronger communities and stronger regions. The people of the NWT want proper services in small communities, and I feel that we have to meet that mandate. A lot of jobs have been pulled out of regional centres and they have to be reinstated. I feel that, when you have a strong regional centre at that level to serve the smaller communities in your region, everybody is happy.

There has to also be a connection between the government that elected them and the government that serves them. I feel that there has been a disconnect. It is obvious from some of the complaints that we even saw yesterday, and I think that there is a gap. The gap has to be filled, and we have to fill the gap. We are all elected to do that, and that is what we expect. We expect the people who work in deputy minister levels and any part of the bureaucracy to also fill that gap on our behalf. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Finally, Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the biggest things that I realized when I came to this Assembly is that, even though I am from Hay River and we have KFN close by, Enterprise, Kakisa -- and these communities aren't that remote; they are connected on the road system -- I didn't really know that much about them. I was quite ignorant, despite spending so many years so close to them. I learned a lot from the people who I worked with, the Members who I worked with. I think that there are a few layers that you can use in order to hear from people in the communities.

There is no substitute for actually being on the ground in the community. I am not going to ignore a good idea just because it came from some of the other contenders, but getting into the communities is a good idea. There is no substitute for it, and not just in and out on a charter, in in the morning and out in the afternoon; I think that there needs to be some time spent in the communities.

Another way to hear from the communities is to listen to the Member who represents that region. I know that it was frustrating for me, as a Member from outside Yellowknife, to try to get things across to some Ministers. It was almost like they didn't believe you. I understand that we have to take it seriously when these concerns are brought by the Members.

I also talked in my speech about a feedback loop, where the government employees on the ground who are delivering the front-line services, who know communities, can get information back to the decision-makers. How do we hear from the GSOs, from the social workers, from the health nurses, what is going on in the community? We need to establish some sort of communication channel like that. Even meetings like we had yesterday with the Indigenous leaders; more like that.

Even when guys are here in the Great Hall just coming to watch the proceedings, I usually go out and chat with them. If it is someone whom I met in Trout Lake, I ask how their community garden is doing, or things like that. There is an effort on each of our own parts, as well, in addition to the government-wide effort, but we each have to educate ourselves, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. I will open the floor now to another question. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At meetings with northern leaders yesterday, we heard that their priority is finalizing land rights and self-government agreements and implementing existing agreements.

Many advocated for the GNWT to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People; in other words, to adopt a new approach to negotiations. They see implementation as a way to repair what they describe as a broken relationship with the GNWT and complete stall at the negotiating tables. My question for the candidates is: do you support the implementation of UNDRIP by the GNWT? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Green. I will begin with Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: That is a perfect question for me. I was on the Indigenous file since 2007, and I understand completely all of the obstacles that seem to be in the way of an implementation of a claim. I agree with the adoption and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. I really believe in that. It has been 17 years with Salt River, 17 years, and we still don't have recognition as a reserve within Canada. We do not have the O and M capacity and infrastructure that the other reserves across Canada have, just because we are north of 60.

I think that it is extremely important that we do all of the things that came out of the meeting yesterday. I felt that I was part of the meeting, even though I didn't say anything. It is extremely important that each and every one of us pass the -- I keep on forgetting the name because I don't have it in front of me. The Government of the Northwest Territories should fully endorse and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Next, I will go to Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no problem implementing the articles of UNDRIP. My concern is that, while we heard a lot of support for implementing UNDRIP, we also heard a lot of support for certainty. To stand up and say that we are going to implement this blanket international document creates a lot of uncertainty for people.

I think that I would prefer to go to each table, to talk to each leader, and say, "What is the issue? What part of this are we not implementing? What can we do better?" and live up to the actual spirit and intent of it, as opposed to just say, "Okay, let's do it." What does that mean? I am not clear what that means. Legal scholars don't know what it means. I would rather just do the work to actually get the claims settled, to actually live up to the articles of it, than to make a statement like the 16th Assembly did that really didn't amount to much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next, I will go to Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. We heard clearly from yesterday's meeting with Aboriginal leadership across the Northwest Territories, and they have identified the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Obviously, the federal government has it on their [English translation not provided] as Mr. Simpson alluded to, as part of the spirit and intent of such an agreement, I, for one, would like to engage more with the communities and the leaders on where they are going with this. I would like to engage them and hear their perspectives. We just heard the tip of the iceberg yesterday, and I would like to hear more from the communities, and also from the Regular Members, as well. Before we proceed to develop such an agreement from this House, I want to engage the general public on this particular piece of work. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Finally, Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we are going to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, I am in total agreement. In fact, the Government of the Northwest Territories endorsed that move in 2008. However, it is not only the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We have the Truth and Reconciliation also that we need to consider and the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. These are all serious pieces of research that have been done, suggestions, and we need to work towards implementing all of them in a true spirit, not to just say we are endorsing it but actually move forward.

I truly believe in self-determination. I believe in self-government, and I believe that we need to be able to offer our services, not to tell Indigenous governments, "This is how you do it," but to say, "We are here if you need support. We will help you if you need tools, if you need advice, whatever you need to be able to actualize self-determination and self-government." I think it's key to moving forward, to becoming better governments and to actually meeting all the needs of all the people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. You all get bonus points for being well under your time on that one, so they cancel each other out. Next, I will open the floor to questions. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the last sitting of the Legislature, it was apparent to those outside government that the Premier and Cabinet used the model of "Cabinet and three friends" to make decisions for the NWT. This was

further confirmed by the Premier during an interview. This practice not only alienated the remaining MLAs in the decision-making process, but it further excluded the people they represented, which is totally unacceptable when what we need is inclusion and not exclusion.

Mr. Chair, the question I am going to pose comes from a resident of Hay River. The question is: if elected Premier, how would you do things differently to prevent Cabinet from perverting the consensus model of government by using the "Cabinet and three friends" model used by the Premier of the 18th Legislative Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. The order for this question will be Mr. Lafferty first, Mr. Simpson second, Ms. Martselos third, and Ms. Cochrane fourth. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. I believe [Translation] when you look at that, it's very important. As you noticed yesterday and last week, we spoke about this issue, and yesterday a lot of leaders came and talked to us and gave us their own views. Right now, there's not very good communication. Right now, we have a consensus government; it's three people who work together to make decisions, but here, if I am Premier, I will work with all the Members. I know that we will agree on some and not agree on some, but we have to hold on to each other and support each other in order to meet with the federal government and also with other self-government people and also other groups.

Sometimes, you know we do not always agree on things. That has happened in the past, and I wish it would not happen. Right now, one of the Members from Hay River spoke. I agree with him. How can we work more together and move forward? I know we cannot always agree on everything, but we have to listen to each other. When someone is speaking, I want to listen.

I realized yesterday there are a lot of people who spoke, wanting us to resolve a lot of these issues from the past, and they want us to work with many different governments. I want to support that. If there is some issue, we have to go to our MLA or our elected Member and say, "This is my issue." We have to listen. Even though we do not always agree on the same issues and we have different opinions, we have to listen and try to resolve, especially when we are sitting at table with the federal government. We have to listen to each of our concerns, and that is the way we can move forward. Thank you for the question. [End of translation].

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This was the crux of my speech earlier. I spoke about a number of things. First of all, there is always going to be an element of benevolence in any form of democratic system. You know, you have to trust that the leader will not take the easy way out. I put a lot of thought into how can we completely eliminate that, and you cannot, so you do have to trust your leader.

I think there are some things that we can do, though, like I mentioned: codifying having fireside chats so that issues do not become problems; requiring regular meetings between the chair of P and P and the Premier so that issues are not left to fester. Communication is the problem. There was a communication breakdown, and one side did not know what the other side was doing, and people thought the worst, and people decided, instead of having to deal with that, let's just not deal with that.

I think that we need to create an expectation on how we are supposed to govern, and that is what I was encouraging all of the Members here today to do, expect something from your Premier. We need to go forward with an expectation that the "plus three" model does not work. In Parliamentary systems, if something happens long enough, it becomes taboo, and that is what we need to make happen. We need to make a concerted effort so that, every time a new Assembly comes in, the idea of "plus three" is off the table because it is bad governance and everyone is aware of that.

I think this needs to be an ongoing process. I threw out a few ideas, but I would like to see, as we learn things, that we begin implementing those, as well. Consensus government is not that old. It's a relatively new style of government, the type we are using, and it's still growing, and we need to adapt it when challenges arise. This was one of those challenges, and we need to adapt and overcome. If there are changes now we can implement, great. If two years on, we see that, oh, here's another issue, here's another way we can fix this issue, let's implement that, as well. It should not just be the beginning of the Assembly and then we are done with it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Next, Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I strongly believe that a good leader listens and is approachable and also has an open-door policy. Building relationships and making sure that everybody is inclusive is extremely important. We are all newly elected people here. My door will always be open. You do not have to be a Cabinet Minister to come and see me. You know,

we built relationships with other people outside of this House and partnerships that will last forever. We will not agree on everything, and, if we do not agree on everything, we leave it at the door. You've got to be able to leave things at the door. If you are going to take it outside of the door, you have problems. I have been through a lot in my leadership and learned a lot of qualities of good leadership. Everybody should leave the room with a smile and be happy when they leave the room, no matter if we do not agree because we are not going to agree on everything, but I know that building a relationship with all of you would be a priority. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Finally, Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have said many times in this House, and in fact I have been kind of criticized in the media for saying it, and I think I still maintain it, that I am humble enough to say that I am not the expert in everything and that together, as a team, we make better decisions. I believe that better decision-making is not only around the way we operate and how we do our relationships. It's about policy development and how we do legislation. I did not like the three-vote idea. I never walked down the hall and got three specific votes, but I did walk down the hall, and I looked for support from all MLAs, met MLAs who would support me. That is normal practice, and I think that is good practice.

I also feel I worked really well with standing committee, mostly with social issues because that is the standing committee I went to, so I had changed kind of the format and I will talk about polytech for a minute. The usual procedure is that you go to Cabinet, you get authorization, you kind of have a game plan, and then you go into standing committee, and then you accept the changes or not, and then you fight it on the floor.

I worked with our standing committee chair at the time, and we came to an agreement that, instead of doing that, I would go to standing committee first, take their input, change the presentation, then take it to Cabinet for their approval, and then go back to standing committee. I thought that was a great example because the Polytechnic University when I announced to this House was accepted. It wasn't slaughtered all over the floor like junior kindergarten was previous to that.

So I think that we need to stop, as Cabinet, cramming legislation down people's throats. I don't think that is appropriate. I think we need to stand back. If we don't get legislation passed, it means that we as Cabinet did not do a good enough job, and we have to take ownership of that. So we either pass legislation that is agreed on by majority,

because as everyone has said, not everyone will agree, but the majority needs to. If it is not passed, we need to accept that, and work harder at making it. It is about relationships, and we need to respect that all of us have expertise, and all of us together will make the best decisions for all residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. I will open the floor again to questions. Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Cabinet solidarity exists in virtually every parliamentary system, but also in every parliamentary system there are exceptions and free votes are often allowed on key issues. I believe this model of "Cabinet plus three friends" really gets down to the issue of Cabinet solidarity. Are you, as Premier, willing to allow exceptions to Cabinet solidarity, and in what cases would you allow that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Johnson. The order for responding this time will be Mr. Simpson, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Lafferty, and Ms. Martselos. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. As I alluded to in my statement, Cabinet solidarity, I don't think it should be required for votes of confidence in a Minister. I might have to take that as notice and get back to the Member when it comes to other circumstances because I recall, in the last Assembly, there were some times when I questioned why Cabinet was voting as a block when it really didn't seem like it was necessary. So yes, I am open to those kinds of changes. Those are the kind of evolutionary changes that we need to see with consensus government in order to increase the accountability and in order to let the public know that this is not, you know, it is not a dictatorship. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Even though the question has been taken as notice, I am going to continue to put it to the other candidates. Ms. Cochrane, please.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Cabinet solidarity is an issue, but it is necessary in some cases because we can't have anarchy and we need to be working together as a government, but I do think that we need to look at a three-tier system, actually, a system that looks at low risk. For example, things like picking out Cabinet Ministers if they are out for evaluation. Is that a risk to the government as a whole? If not, then we should be opening that vote for Cabinet Minister to have a free vote. We need to look at medium risk. If there is a risk and we are not sure, then I think Cabinet as a whole needs to define, not just the Premier and say, "Can we stand on our own or do we need to vote in solidarity?"

At the highest risk, if there is integrity, if it jeopardizes the integrity of this system, of this institution, at that point I do believe that Cabinet solidarity has to be in place, but I do think that, instead of it being ad hoc and decided at the moment, which I experienced, we need to decide that as soon as we sit as Cabinet Members and decide at what point we would be looking at solidarity and when we can't. Because I do think that there were a lot of times that open vote would have been appropriate, and it was hard to not have that option. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. Cabinet solidarity exists for a reason. There are times where a very sensitive issue is brought up, or how it is going to benefit the North. Obviously, in the past, it has been case-by-case, but a majority of the decisions that were made in solidarity, a lot of the decisions were made forming solidarity.

I think as we move forward, Mr. Chair, we have Members in this House with bright ideas and expertise going forward. Obviously, we need to listen to them and have an open communication dialogue.

There is a motion that is coming down, and they feel that it should be open vote as opposed to solidarity, then I will listen to them and say, "Okay, well, we can probably pursue it," but at the same time there will be repercussion at the government level, so I have to be careful on how to deal with that. Those are the discussions that we need to have.

In our former government, we didn't really have that from what I have seen in sitting in the Speaker's chair. I for one will be open to listening to the Members and accepting if there needs to be a free vote. If I get the support from Members, then I will do that, but at the same time, there will be solidarity votes on certain programs and motions. There is a reason for this. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I think Cabinet solidarity is important, but I also feel that transparency and accountability is also important, so I think that there are always exceptions to the rule. In every case, no matter in which life you live, there are always exceptions to the rule or to policy. I would make sure that the MLAs are heard, and I would listen to them and then go back to Cabinet and discuss that concern and come back with a decision of Cabinet. If we are going to have an open vote on a particular item, that is the way I would handle it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Next, I will go to Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: I am going to ask about infrastructure; no shock. Our debt is currently sitting at a \$1.1 billion, and we have a cap of \$1.3. That doesn't really leave us a lot left. I have sort of a two-fold question: how do you plan to raise the necessary capital to conduct the proposed infrastructure projects, such as the roads in Taltson, if that is the way that we move forward as a government? As part of that then, too, I would like to know: what you are going to do to ensure that that work and those projects, including the Giant Mine Remediation Project, that that work goes to northern and Indigenous businesses as much as possible, and is used to build capacity within the territory?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Nokleby. The order we will follow this time will be Ms. Cochrane, Ms. Martselos, Mr. Simpson, and finally Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I stated in my speech, we are going to have to make some tough decisions in this government. We are opposing the \$1.1 billion, and our cap is at \$1.3. It is a serious issue.

We have programs that we have to evaluate. We need to look at if they are still efficient, if they are still meeting the needs and priorities of this government, through this government, but we also have programs that we need to bring in to be able to address people, and we do have capital needs. Traditionally, the federal government actually, on large infrastructure projects, actually gives up to 75 percent dollars, 75 cent dollars, and we have to come up with 25 percent.

We have used our short-term borrowing and are looking at monies and trading in to do that. It is in the best interest of people and so we move forward with that, but working in the North is critical. I have seen that with many of our infrastructure projects, so why would we even bring infrastructure projects into the Northwest Territories if all of the work is going south because all the spending goes south then. That does not make sense to me.

I am not sure if it is about the projects are too big and the capacity of northern businesses, but if that is the issue, then maybe we need to break up those projects and look at smaller projects so that northern businesses can have an advantage with that.

I also think our business, our bid process, is not working for people, and we need to look at that. I know it is 30 percent. I know it sounds really good when you say "30 percent advantage," but

something is not working. We need to have flexibility within that business incentive program, and we need to actually revise it so that the jobs and the resources and the monies stay in the North. Otherwise, we are just wasting our time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I bring a very strong business acumen to this House. I have been in business for the last 45 years or more, and I think that there are other creative ways of looking at the deficit. I think that capital dollars are not being used and could be put to use in a different way. We are dealing with a lot of Aboriginal communities that have access to different means within the federal government way, but also within our own Aboriginal organizations that have been developed across Canada.

There is one in particular that I want to give you an example of; the first finance authority that has been developed that uses leverage for building capital expenditures at a 2-percent rate over a period of time. You are able to get the dollars on 2 percent, and that is unbelievable. You are able to do it over a period of time. If you go into an agreement with them, for our communities that are mostly Aboriginal, there are lots of creative ways of using those capital dollars in a different way. We have done in that in Fort Smith with Salt River.

There are other things that I think have to be looked at. We have to evaluate all of the departments and see where the overlap is. I think that we have to start doing things creatively.

I think also that it is extremely important, very important, that all of our businesses in the North have to be considered first, before any of the contracts, tenders, or anything else is ever considered to go south. We have to be able to look after the business community and all of the resources in the Northwest Territories the way that it should be, because it is not. That is why people in our communities are upset, because they are not able to access many of these larger contracts.

We should also make sure that the Indigenous communities that have corporations that do this type of work are also considered. It is extremely important that we also make sure that the whole community and the whole business area of it is looked after together, because it is extremely important that we all benefit from that.

When our own communities are benefitting, the whole community benefits, the whole Northwest Territories benefits, and that is the way that the economy has to flow in order for us to get out of this deficit.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and thank you for the question. I have spoken on this issue a number of times in the house, the \$1.1 billion debt that we have. We were approaching the limit, and we need to go to Ottawa and make the case that we need that increased. We need to make a compelling case. The case that I always try to make is that the Government of Canada built the Trans-Canada Highway; they built the railroad from east to west; but they never came north. We still need those nation-building infrastructure investments, and we need the money to do it. I understand that they are hesitant to up our limit. They are the backstop. Nonetheless, those funds are needed.

In terms of keeping money in the North, another thing that is close to my heart, I have spoken about this a number of times, is P3 projects. We have the hospital. That was being built when we started our term here. We were given a presentation, and we were shown a list of all of the different local businesses that were benefiting from it, and then you run into one of those local business owners in the street, and they say, "Well, we didn't get anything," or "We got a couple of bucks here or there," but there was no real money to stay here. You hear stories about people flying in to do the drywall and then flying out. There needs to be northern content in P3s. There are no two ways about it. These are massive infrastructure projects using public money, and they have to benefit Northerners.

In terms of smaller infrastructure projects, there are a lot of ways that we can increase northern content. Sometimes, in the South Slave especially, and I assume in Yellowknife, as well, there are some contracts that might be \$10 or \$15 or \$20 million. Maybe a northern company can't do that. Can they do \$4 or \$5 million contracts over a longer time? Maybe. We need to start looking at things like that, as well. This is low-hanging fruit when it comes to keeping money in the North.

I know that myself and one of the other Members always point out the \$12 million contract that went south for 3 percent, 3 percent total, and that money just flowed over the border. That is unacceptable. This is something that the Standing Committee on Economic Development looked into, procurement, because we weren't getting any traction. I think that that is a good starting point to start looking at how to make changes in the next Assembly.

There are other interesting ways to do it as well. I think that we need to do a better job consulting with industry on how to keep money in the North. That is one thing that we just don't do. You know what? It is hard sometimes to talk to small business owners

and industry. They are busy. The last thing that they want to do is talk to the government, especially when the last 50 times that they talked to the government, nothing happened. We need to make sure that industry and small businesses know that they are being heard and that they can see results from those consultations. There is a lot that we can do, and it is one of the things that I look forward to doing in the next Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Clerk. [Translation] There is major development in the Northwest Territories. Everyone talks about it, especially capital. Whether it's a hospital or a school, it is up to the government. As a government and with the federal government, we need to work together. There is some responsibility that falls under the territorial government and federal government. We need to work together in that way.

The Member from Hay River also mentioned this. We need to open our doors to each other, and we need to also take their advice. That is the only way to go forward. Not only that, but yesterday, when we met with the northern leaders, there were some elders who were there, as well, and they did say to us, "As small communities, we don't benefit in a lot of ways." As the MLAs around this table, we need to make that a priority. We were starting to talk about it last week and this week, as well.

We need to submit this to the federal government. Whoever is the Premier will take that message to the federal government. If we don't talk for ourselves, we won't get anything done. There was a person from the Sahtu region who said that, when they wait for the government to make a decision, everything falls behind. They said that finally they have decided to start to go ahead with business on their own.

When we look at all of this in the Northwest Territories, a lot of Aboriginal governments, we need to open our doors to them and work closely with them. We have federal government funding, territorial government, like the P3 projects. We could work well together easily in that way. When we look at the Northwest Territories, we need to take a good look at our resources and how we can all help each other and work with each other. Today we have a new hospital that we spent \$300 million on, and we need a lot of our people working there.

Even right in Behchoko, my community, we need more of our people working in these positions. We are always hiring from the South. When we look around, we see a lot of non-Dene people working in our communities. We need to change that as well and the way that we handle the contracts. We need

to hire our people, and train our people. We need to include that, as well. Also, the BIP program is not working well, and when a contract is given, they are given a certain percentage. The Member from Hay River was on that, and I am thankful for him for giving that information. He does not agree with the BIP program, as well. We need to change that policy. I think that is the only way we're going to see changes in the Northwest Territories.

It is up to us as individuals, as a government. We need to change those policies. What are we afraid of? This government is going to change after today. We need to change those policies. What are we afraid of? This government is going to change after today. We need to face our people and get their advice, as well. I think it's important that we hear the communities, as well. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. [End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question to pose to all the possible Premiers here. Once elected as Premier, how will you ensure that our economic chapters of our Gwich'in and Inuvialuit land claims are honoured when it comes to negotiated contracts? Over the last number of years, it seemed that some departments were reluctant to negotiate certain contracts with my constituents, while in the past, our government used to negotiate up to 50 percent of the total cost of contracts in my riding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Blake. The order we'll follow this time will be Ms. Martselos, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Cochrane, and Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: If it's in your agreements, then it should be honoured. I really believe that, many times, there are certain things that are put into agreements and the actual implementations by any government, whether it be territorial or federal, are never honoured. I truly believe that they should be honoured.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi. [Translation] We have, as a government, we are the government, and if you settled with a self-government agreement, you are considered a government. I am sure that we can review that. We have a lot of economic development and businesses in our community. Sometimes, those contracts are not given to the community, but we also have negotiated contracts, as well. We have to give opportunities to the communities, and we're not doing that. Sometimes our departments, when they look at all the

paperwork, even for example, the Tlicho self-government, they are considered government. Chapter 26 states this in their Constitution. It also states in there how negotiated contacts will be in place. When we talk about this, they always say that we're not able to do this and that. When you take a look at it as a whole, we need to review some of these policies that are in place that were already in place. Since 1992, 2005, some of them have already a self-government in place, some have an Aboriginal government in place, and they have these in their agreement.

As the Government of Northwest Territories we put our name in there on that agreement, and we are in agreement, but now, we're saying no to their agreements. We need to have an open mind and fresh eyes to review this, the agreement that is already in place. Even here, my friend, what is he talking about? We need to take a good look at it carefully. As Ministers and MLAs, we all need to take a good look at it. I am sure that we can review this. Right now, I am seeing there are no changes, but the administration tells us that we could do this and cannot do this, but we, as the elected MLAs, need to listen to our communities.

I am thankful for his question, and he knows what is going on in the communities, and I see that myself in my community. He's speaking up for his community. We need to make some changes for things to change in the community. We have four years that we can make changes, and we are supposed to be giving our staff directions, not the administration telling us what to do. Thank you. [End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Mahsi, Member Lafferty. Next, Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: I will start by saying, if we have agreements in place, we need to honour our agreements. If we are not honouring our agreements, then we should be held to task for that. That's not okay.

It is more than just the agreements for me. I know that, in the last four years as a Cabinet Minister, we have talked about negotiated contacts quite a bit. Some Ministers said no negotiated contacts is fair, and other Ministers said, as many as possible. We need to be careful with that.

I don't believe in negotiated contacts with private businesses, in all honesty. I believe, though, in negotiated contacts with Indigenous and community governments because I believe in community development. It's not only about the Indigenous governments that have agreements. It is about building the capacity of all Indigenous governments so that they can actually become on the path toward self-government, and it stays in the

community. If you support a negotiated contact with an Indigenous government, that money stays within their community. It stays in their region, and they tend to hire their own workers. I have seen exceptions when they didn't have the expertise and they had to go inter-jurisdictional, but they tried to keep as much in their community as possible.

So, again, if we're really taking this truth and reconciliation, about UNDRIP, about self-determination, about self-government, then we need to be willing to open the doors to support our Indigenous governments so that they can succeed as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. It's patently wrong to ignore an agreement. We had meetings with Indigenous leaders yesterday, and one of the comments was that the employees of the GNWT, at least the senior management or the people who deal with Indigenous governments, should be familiar with the agreements and the content of the agreement, and I think that's an excellent policy. I think moving forward, it's something we need to implement because to just ignore something that is written and so obvious, that's just plain wrong.

Negotiated contracts have fallen out of favour in the last government, it seems. The government was very concerned about their bottom line. They didn't want to spend a penny more than they had to. It didn't matter if that meant that the money would flow out of the territory. I know, in the South Slave, when there is a negotiated contact, what often happens is that, if there was work to be done near a community, the company will go to the community and talk to the Chief and Council and say: what can you do for this project? Are people looking for work? What can you offer?

It's more than just a company getting money. In many cases, even when it's a private company, we need to start looking at the benefits of keeping money in the territory on a larger scale in terms of negotiated contacts, but when it comes to following the letter of an agreement, that's a no-brainer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. We have time for one more question before we take a lunch break. I'll offer the final question of the morning to Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think over the last two weeks, almost everyone in this room has recognized the importance of our vastness and our different geography, and how important it is that we see ourselves as united. It is clear that, if one region or if one community is

failing, that we are all going to be struggling. I'd like to ask this morning where you see our capital city fitting into your vision for the future of the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Wawzonek. The order this time will be Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Simpson, finishing with Ms. Martselos. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi. Mr. Chair, we service 33 communities in the Northwest Territories, and the City of Yellowknife is part of that, and the regional centres in the communities and also the other isolated communities. We have to include Yellowknife, as well. There is the City of Yellowknife that we need to work with. There are the Dene communities, YK Dene, that we have to work with. They are our neighbours in Yellowknife, as well, so those are important groups that we need to work with and other communities, as well.

As we heard yesterday, clearly, from Aboriginal leadership, they want us to focus on infrastructure in their communities. We have to prioritize where there is infrastructure much needed. Where there is a school burned down in one of the communities, obviously that will be a first priority; where there is a gymnasium being built in Yellowknife. That does take time to negotiate with the federal government. I have been through with the Education Minister of the day. Some projects take time, but sometimes we have to balance all communities as much as possible.

At the same time, we heard from leadership yesterday that everything funnels through the City of Yellowknife, but, at the same time, we have to be open-minded. Any projects that come to the table, what is the benefit of the communities, not just the City of Yellowknife but surrounding communities? I have a community that is close to Yellowknife, Behchoko. How is Behchoko benefitting from a major infrastructure such as Stanton Yellowknife in Stanton and Yellowknife, and that also serves the communities, as well? We have to be open-minded, and we serve 33 communities; not 32 communities, but 33 communities.

When it comes to infrastructure programming, I am a firm believer that we should discuss all projects that are before us and make decisions on our priorities and our mandates coming from these Assembly Members. There will be times that we have to make tough decisions, where a project, let's say, instead of going to Yellowknife because there is a major issue that is happening in the Sahtu region, then we should seriously consider it, but it should have input from the Members, as well, before we proceed with that. With that, Mr. Chair, masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have often stated in this House and in public that a society is judged by how we treat our most marginalized populations. However, I also have stated in this House that I come from a family of eight children. At no time did my parents give the youngest child all the food. Every child in that family of eight was provided food enough to live.

I have heard here today that we need to support our Indigenous governments and our small communities, and we absolutely do. However, we also have to be conscious that half the population is in Yellowknife. I have a special gift, Mr. Chair, in that I am Metis and that my mother, like I said, is Indigenous and my father is non-Indigenous. That taught me from very young to be able to take care of the needs of all people. We are not only Indigenous people in the Northwest Territories. Half of us are Caucasian and non-Indigenous, as well. We have an obligation to take care of everyone. However, we need to be just within that. In my speech, I talked about having economic development plans for every region, and that is critical, but when I said "every region," I meant every region. The capital is part of our community of the Northwest Territories, and we cannot forget their needs, as well. It's not one over the other. It's everybody gets a piece of the pie, in a fair way.

The polytechnic university is a great example. I know that some people are saying, "Do not build in Yellowknife." However, Yellowknife campus is bursting at the seams and, in Fort Smith and Inuvik, student housing is needed. Do I just say one or the other? I have not said that. I have said right through: three strong communities; three strong campuses; and at least 21 strong community-learning centres. Every decision that we make in this House has to have the interests of all residents and all communities, not favouring one over the other, but not forgetting one because of the other. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I stated earlier, Yellowknife for decades has had one of the highest household incomes in Canada. It has been a very wealthy city, but times could be changing. The three diamond mines are facing closures within the decade. That would result in hundreds of millions exiting the city. There could be a possible population drain. There are challenges that Yellowknife is facing, and we need to prepare for those challenges. How do we do that? Well, that is why I am looking forward to the priorities meeting that we are having next week, because, you know, I

spend a lot of time here. I try not to spend too much, but I am not the expert on Yellowknife, I am not the expert on mining, and I would like to hear from the rest of the Members.

However, we do need to prepare for the future. I have said many times that it seems like every Assembly is just scrambling to catch up with whatever disaster is currently occurring. You look at the Slave Geological Road. I think Diefenbaker brought that up in 1952 or 1956. The Mackenzie Valley Highway, I mean, you know, before I was born is when people were talking about that. So we need some sort of long-term vision. We need to have a plan. I think that we always need to play to the strengths of communities or regions.

In Hay River, I talked about there is potential for growth, so the government needs to support that. We need to support the potential for growth in Yellowknife. Tourism is big here. It could be much bigger, but there are limitations in terms of hotels, in terms of facilities, and all of that kind of stuff. We need to look at the prospect of a university. Are the headquarters going to move to Yellowknife? I do not think so, but is there a potential for growth? This is a city where people from outside of the territory want to move. It's attractive in a lot of ways, especially for young professionals, so I could see parts of a university thriving here. Those are the kinds of things that we need to be talking about, and I look forward to having those conversations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Finally, Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I believe that Yellowknife will exist within the Northwest Territories, and we are all here to make sure all regions are treated equally, but, you know what, the concentration of the wealth in Yellowknife has got to be spread to other regions. With the new priority of the polytech university, the two main campuses have got to be Fort Smith with its headquarters in Inuvik, because I think that is where it has to be. I am not saying that you are going to close down the campus here in Yellowknife, but it's much easier capital-wise and dollar-wise to build the new residences that are required both in Inuvik and Fort Smith than it is in Yellowknife. It only makes sense. The regional development of this campus is necessary so that we start spreading the wealth a bit.

I firmly believe that, that the regions have also got to exist within the whole Northwest Territories. I respect all the people of the Northwest Territories, no matter where they come from, what walk of life they come from, and I always will remember that Yellowknife is part of that. I appreciate the question, but I also have to remember that the small communities and the regions are not up to the

same standard of living as you have here in Yellowknife. I think that it was pretty obvious yesterday that it came out very clear from the Indigenous leaders that we have to do things differently, and I think this government has got to ensure that that mandate is kept. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. We have reached the noon hour. As such, we will now take a one-hour break for lunch, and we will reconvene here at 1:00 p.m. this afternoon. Thank you, Members.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Good afternoon, Members, and welcome back to the first day of your Territorial Leadership Committee. We are currently in a question-and-answer period, where each Member is able to ask two questions to the candidates for Premier. We will resume the questioning, and I would call on Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today I am going to bring up something near and dear to my heart and the people back home, my elders. We have to start taking better care of our elders in regard to long-term care facilities. We have elders in all regional centres. We have elders from Nunakput in Hay River, Inuvik, and Yellowknife who need to be brought home. It's decentralizing our elders. That is what has to be done.

I am asking here today, working in partnership with our potential Premiers here: how can we bring our elders home and make partnerships with our community corporations in each community that I represent? To train our local people to take care of our own, it is a rippling effect to families. You never see your elders when they leave the communities because of the cost of flights. Sachs Harbour return flight to Inuvik is \$1,500; Ulukhaktok, \$2,008; Paulatuk, \$1,260, return flight to see our elders. The only time you will see your elders is when you are going on a medical or if something comes up. It is not right.

I want our elders to be brought home and to build a four- or six-bed facility in Tuktoyaktuk, Ulukhaktok, and Paulatuk. Now, please, help me help you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The order for answering this question will be Mr. Simpson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Cochrane, and Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you for the question. I am very familiar with long-term care centres. My nana has been living in one now for 12 years, and she is lucky. She has a big family in Hay River, and she gets visits all of the time, every day. It is strange if someone doesn't visit her during the day,

but there are people in that same facility from a few communities away, and they don't get any visitors. You can tell that that weighs on them. It is a big impact on your quality of life.

As to building a long-term care centre in those communities, I am not sure what the requirements are. I know that they always say you need a doctor; you need a doctor present. I am not sure if that is the case, but one thing that we can do is fill that gap between people living on their own and people entering long-term care. That includes things like homecare.

If we have much more homecare in the communities, you could have years, five or 10 years more, in your own home. If we have better programs in terms of housing, people can get ramps in their homes. In Hay River, there was a couple, I think, 92- and 93-years-old, where Housing said, "No, you can't get a ramp to your house." We are trying to keep people in their own homes, we are trying to keep people out of long-term care, and we are making it difficult for ourselves.

Those are the kinds of things that need to happen. A commitment to build three long-term care centres, obviously, I can't do that, but I am sympathetic to this, and I realize that there is value beyond the dollar value in keeping people in their own homes. There's the cultural value. It is not just the elders who are missing their families; it is the family who don't get to see their elders, talk to them, learn from them. This is an issue, and it is one of those big issues facing the territory that we don't seem to have a plan for, other than, as one of my colleagues from the last Assembly said, "seniors warehousing units," which are essentially the big long-term care centres.

I look forward to working with everyone. I look forward to discussing this at the priority-setting meetings and seeing what kind of solution we come to. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I am very sympathetic to the cause, because it is our elders who paved the way for all of our journeys, and we have to respect that. I know that there are situations throughout the territories, and not only with long-term care, because we have a situation like that also in our own community. We have a person here in Yellowknife who has been here for dialysis, and it is such a long way for his family to come. It is a major, major problem. There is dialysis in Hay River, and there seems to be a problem for him to move from Yellowknife to Hay River. At least, then, the family

could come to visit on weekends or spend time with him.

It is a major issue, and I think that, as a government, we have to look at these issues and try to resolve them, because our elders gave so much, and then we take them away from the family. They have so much knowledge to offer to the cultural aspect of the family and the community. It is a major problem. We seriously, as a group, have got to look at that. It is not only an issue for the family; it is an issue for the community, and it is an issue for all of us who are sitting around this table.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Long-term care is an issue. Taking care of our elders has been an issue. My degree was over 20 years ago, and when I went down south for my social work degree, they were telling us at that time, over 20 years ago, geriatrics is the way to go. Our population is aging, and we need to start taking care of them. Twenty-some years later, we are still in this situation where we are not doing it appropriately.

I stated in my speech, and people that know me know, that I am brutally honest sometimes, and the reality is that I would love to be able to promise and say that, in every small community, we will have long-term care beds in this Assembly, but that would not be a reality. I apologize for that, for not being able to stand up here and lie. No, I am not apologizing; I am just being realistic.

We have shortages of healthcare staff in every region, so we need to look at boosting up our staffing at the moment, what we have, before we can even expand and move any further with that. I said in my speech that we need a stronger recruitment and retention strategy to deal with that.

The other thing that I heard in the Member's comment was also working in partnership. I have to say, in that region, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is really progressive in working towards actually training their people in stuff. I think that there are options. We are moving into the polytech university, hopefully. We will be looking at training our own northern people, and I think that, if we work in partnerships with our Indigenous governments, we will actually be a lot more productive and we will be more successful. To train a nurse, you're looking at at least four or six years, depending on the specialization, maybe longer. We don't have that time. We need to work in partnerships together to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi. Mr. Chair, we need to be proactive on this particular subject. I totally agree

that we need to bring our elders and seniors back home. How do we do that? That is a question that we need to work out. I have been through that so many times visiting hospitals over the last 14 years as a Member. Elders just want to be home with their family. They just want to die peacefully at home, not in a hospital. Due to that fact, we have built regional seniors' homes, particularly in my region, Behchoko. That services the outlying Tlicho region as well, but we need to go beyond that.

I believe Mr. Jacobson raised the issue: why couldn't we partner with the community corporations? They have brilliant ideas. They can come to our table and say, "This is what we can build for you. Can we lease it back to the GNWT?" Those are just some of the options that we can certainly work with. Partnership goes a long way, Mr. Chair.

Promoting and investing more in homecare, we can do that immediately. Infrastructure will take some time, but we have programs in place already. Why couldn't we invest even more? We are investing in our people, in our elders and seniors. That will go a long way, and we are going to have happy faces on the elders in their communities with their families.

Mr. Chair, this could be an easy solution as part of the programming. With infrastructure, obviously, we need to discuss amongst ourselves, but we already have some facilities in the regions, care centres in the regions, and also, to some degree, some in small communities as well, but we do have programs that we can enhance in the small communities. Masi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next, I will call on Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My constituents have trusted me to be accountable and in turn expect me to hold our leadership accountable. Therefore, how do you feel MLAs should measure personal performance excellence of a Premier and, if you personally fell short, what would you do about it? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cleveland. The order for answering questions this time will be Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, and Mr. Simpson. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first order of actually holding your Premier to account is, in my opinion, we are making speeches today, and so if we are making speeches and we are saying that we are committed, then we better be committed. I would be looking back on the speeches on a regular basis and seeing if we are doing it.

There are other things that won't be in the speeches, and it is about the behaviours of Premiers, of the other Cabinets. I said in my speech, as well, that we need to meet regularly with MLAs. MLAs, we need to work together, so if we are having what is called "fireside chats" or informal meetings, then issues should be brought to the Premier's attention. If the Premier is not doing their job, then they need to be held accountable, as well. Hopefully, the Regular MLAs or Cabinet would actually talk to their Premier first and say, "I have concerns." I have said communication is the key, and we need to be able to do that. We are accountable to the people, so it is not okay that people turn a blind eye to their Premier, to their Cabinet, to other Members. We have to hold each other in check.

In our duties, we have talked about changed governments. Everybody has said that. People are expecting better from us. They are expecting us to work better and to be professional in our duties. If we are not, then there are mechanisms in place to actually take the Premier out of the place.

I say that, if a Premier, whoever it may be, is not doing their duties and not fulfilling the speeches that they have made, then I would be the first one to say that MLAs should discuss it, all MLAs, including Cabinet, and should be looking at putting the Premier on the spot or taking the Premier out of the spot. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Next, I will turn to Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. Obviously, accountability should be a forefront of our day-to-day business that we do, whether it be Executive or Regular Members. If there are performance issues, whether it be the Premier or the Cabinet or even a Regular Member, we should share about it immediately. If the Premier of the day has to deal with a Minister who is not performing, or vice versa, then Regular Members need to deal with that, as well because, the Regular Members have the power to take out the Premier in a Cabinet. At the same time, if there are issues with Cabinet, that Premier needs to deal with it. Obviously, there needs to be communication and dialogue constantly.

The fireside chats that we have had two Assemblies ago, and we didn't have much of that in the previous Assembly, unfortunately, but we should have, almost every session, there should be a fireside chat with the Premier; a heads' up to the executive that there are issues with some of the performance of Ministers, or whatever the case may be. That needs to be acted immediately.

If, let's say, a Regular Member is having some issues with a Minister, then I would like to know immediately right away so I can deal with it. If it is Executive as a whole, then we need to discuss it as a Caucus and come up with some solution there.

We have dealt with those kinds of situations in the past, where a Minister has been taken out in the past through Caucus, all 19 Members, so there is an avenue there. There is also a code of conduct that we follow, as well, we signed when we got elected as MLA, so we do have procedures that we need to follow. We do have strict guidelines when going to Office of Executive, as well. There are rules and procedures that you have to follow and your performance, as well.

Mr. Chair, I would look to Members because accountability is a huge factor for me, as well. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Our whole leadership has been about accountability, and I think that we had a code of conduct that we have to follow. We also have to ensure that we keep a high standard because we are the role model for all of the Northwest Territories, not only the people who are running for Premier or Cabinet or the Members of this House.

I think that conflict of interest is extremely important, and we have to know that there are certain things that we can and cannot do, and we must make decisions that are completely ethical.

Ethical decisions are extremely important, and I think part of that leadership has to be that, if you see something that is not quite right and if you are a leader, you have to call them on it. Sometimes, it could be, you know, you have to be able to call them and tell them that this is not a correct way of behaving, if it is behaviour, or your performance is not up to par and your expectations, and, if you have to share it with Members of Cabinet and all the rest of the MLAs, I think it is up to a leader to do that. That is the way it has to be handled. Thank you.

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

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We have spoken extensively about this issue this morning, about how the Premier needs to take the role to keep Ministers responsible or to keep Ministers accountable. It is the entire Assembly that is tasked with that, but like I said, when it is everyone's responsibility, it is no one's responsibility.

In terms of the Premier keeping themselves accountable, I think that is where opening up the lines of communication comes into play. I

recommend regular meetings with the Regular Members, like fireside chats, regular meetings with the chair of P and P to discuss any sort of issues that are arising. If there are corrections, then they need to be made. I mean, if the Regular Members tell the Premier that he or she needs to do something differently, then you have to do something differently.

You know, this is all about relationships. The Premier is not the Minister of Infrastructure. The Premier is not the Minister of Health. At the centre, the Premier is the Minister of relationships, when it comes right down to it; relationships among Members, between government, and with the public. All that comes down to is communication.

Earlier, I was also advocating, and I think this was yesterday, I was advocating to some of the Members. I said that, you know, you don't fall into the trap that we did in the last Assembly where we had a mid-term review and then you want to wait two years before you deal with accountability issues. You know what Nunavut did. They took their Premier out right at the beginning of Assembly, almost.

In addition to the Premier having to regulate themselves, I am encouraging the Members to take control of the power they have to ensure the accountability of the Premier, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Next, I will go to Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. During roundtable we heard a pretty loud chorus line, or concert, if you will, about getting our land claims settled. We didn't hear just from any one. We heard it from a lot of different organizations. We have heard from our business community in the North to get our land claims settled. They are not just saying it. They are screaming it. Our economic health in the North as a whole is dependent on this, so my question to our Premier candidates is: what specific commitments can you put in place to ensure that our outstanding land claims are settled during this Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Norn. The order for responding to this question will be Ms. Martselos, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Lafferty, and then Ms. Cochrane. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: That was one of my priorities in my mandate, because being a former chief and realizing how important the Indigenous community contributes to our government and our Northwest Territories, and without settling land claims, and it is an issue all the time. They said that there were a lot of obstacles that were placed before them by the

Government of the Northwest Territories and by Canada. We have to ensure that those land claims are a top priority so that this government can move forward for economic growth.

The land claims will also bring wealth to the Northwest Territories in their regions, and it will give the Indigenous people a chance to be on even par with everybody else in the Northwest Territories and Canada. I firmly believe that the faster that we deal with this file, the faster that the Northwest Territories will be able to move forward in the agenda of economic growth. Thank you.

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

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. This is sort of a difficult question to ask. I am not familiar with the specifics at any of the tables. I can imagine what some of the outstanding issues are, but it is hard to make a specific commitment. What I can commit to is to bring a different attitude to the table. Like I said earlier, we need to become uncomfortable. The government doesn't want to release power. Maybe even to us, it is uncomfortable to have that thought, but we need to get there. We need to bring a different mandate. If we need to meet leader-to-leader and not through the lawyers to get things done, maybe that is what we have to do. I think that nothing is off the table. We are closer with some negotiations than others, but to take a generation to negotiate a deal is unacceptable.

My commitment would be to take nothing off of the table right off the bat and figure out how to get to "yes." The government's response, I find, is often a "no." That's the default response. Take that off the table. That is no longer the default response. Instead of a "no," it's, "Okay, how do we get to that point?" "We understand what you want. How do we get to that point?" as opposed to, "No, we are not going to consider that." Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. Clearly, we heard from people yesterday, Aboriginal leadership, Indigenous leadership across the North, have told us to settle the outstanding land claims. All of us were there. We need to start listening to those grassroots people. In my view, they are the experts when it comes to grassroots discussions. We have our own staff who deal with them. I feel that we need to come to the table as elected officials, whether it be, if I become the Premier, sitting down across from the grand chief or the chief to say, "What is the real issue? What is outstanding? Let's put our backpack on the table and deal with it, and give direction to our bureaucrats to fix it, to finalize our claim." In my view, it is supposed to be going

that way, but it is not. There are stumbling blocks along the way.

We heard clearly yesterday that some of the groups want some breathing room. They want to deal with their own self-governing negotiations for the time being, and then bring the GNWT to the table. We should respect that, too. As the Member for Hay River alluded to, we need to come clean slate. This is a brand-new government, and what has happened in the past, well, that is in the past. In our language, it is [English translation not provided]. It means "we need to move forward now."

We are going to have a new mandate and a new action plan. We have been talking about land claims for the last 30 or 40 years, especially those Deh Cho and Akaitcho. It is time for us to take on the action and move forward. We have four years to do that, Mr. Chair, and I am a firm believer that we can successfully achieve that if we work in partnership with our Aboriginal partnerships across the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Land claims are a priority, and self-government is a priority, as well. The land claims will bring prosperity to all governments. It is going to bring pride to Indigenous people, and it is going to bring investor confidence back to the Northwest Territories, which we need.

What I have heard through all of the candidates today, and I really appreciate, is relationship, relationship, relationship. My experience as a Cabinet Member over the past four years with the Indigenous governments was that it was very structured. We would only meet once or twice a year, very structured agendas, no time for free talk. I like to bring it back to myself as a person. If somebody comes to my house and shows up at my door, and says, "I'm here, and I have a reason here. I'm here," I am going to deal with them quite differently than if they come and say, "Let's have a cup of tea and sit down and talk," and then a relationship builds, and you can actually build that trust and talk.

I think it goes beyond just the negotiations. I think it is about building that trust and confidence within Cabinet as a whole with our indigenous governments and how we relate with them, how many meetings we have. Just because agreements say that we will meet twice a year, it is not acceptable that we only do that. We need to go out of our way to build those relationships with our Indigenous governments, and we need to think out of the box.

If we are sending in our departments, and what I am hearing is that they are not working, things are stalled, people aren't building the trust, they are not feeling confident, then, at that time, Ministers and the Premier need to get involved. We need to go sit with them and meet with them, talk to them in frankness, put our concerns on the table, and think outside the box. We are very structured. We are saying, "This is it. These are our offers." Sometimes those offers have to change.

I think that we need to make sure that we are fair to all Indigenous governments. We cannot be giving to one and not giving to all. We have conditions to deal with that, but if we are struck with saying, "This is all we are willing to put on the table," and we have been stuck for so many years, then it is time to bring more to the table. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. I will now call on Ms. Thom.

MS. THOM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yesterday we collaborated with Indigenous groups within the Northwest Territories. At this time, we heard from most of the groups the importance of partnership and dialogue. Will the candidates for Premier tell us: what were the top three priorities you heard yesterday? The second question is: how do you go about honouring these priorities?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Thom. The order for responding will be Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Simpson, Ms. Martselos, and Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi. [Translation] Mr. Chair, yesterday when we met with the northern leaders, they discussed a lot of things, a lot of issues, and how well we can work together. That word is trust and relationship-building. How well can we work together? Especially from the smaller communities, a lot of their issues are not addressed. This is what we heard a lot.

As the government here, the MLAs and, also, later, the Premier and Executive who will be in place, we want them to be honest to the people. That is the kind of advice that we have gotten from the northern leaders, to have trust and honesty amongst each other and have respect. Today we don't have that.

Another thing, in the English language, we call it "decentralization." When we look at Yellowknife, it is getting bigger. When we come from smaller communities, we have less things to work with. It seems like we are just getting a little bit of trickle of funding, and that is what the chiefs in the smaller communities have been addressing.

I would like to put that as a priority. If we put the smaller communities first as a priority, everybody

will flourish economically. When we look at it, we have a lot of issues, drugs and alcohol problems, housing issues, and that is what we call poverty. If we address these issues, we will solve a lot of problems.

The third item, we have housing issues. There are a lot of concerns, and it seems the administration doesn't really understand our situation in the communities, and they seem to be hiding behind policies. They don't look at the community or travel to the community to have firsthand information and to connect with the community. We need to review the policies and maybe make changes to suit the way our communities' situations are. If one person is having difficulties, we need to help that person. This Member is asking, we have a lot of other questions that are still coming. We're here to address some of these questions, but I think these three items are the most important ones. These are my priorities that I want to put in place. Masi. [End of translation]

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

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: I believe the question was: what are the top three priorities we heard yesterday at the meeting? I think we are all going to have very similar ones. Relationships was the biggest issue that we talked about, and that goes to the relationship between the government and Indigenous governments in terms of negotiating these land claim settlements. There was a lot of love around the room yesterday. It was a little different than some of the meetings I have been to with Indigenous governments over the past few years, but it was good. Everyone was very positive. Everyone saw a lot of hope with this Assembly, and everyone, every single government there seemed to genuinely want better relationships with the territory. I think what we need to do is keep that going. That is the number one priority that came out of that.

Implementation was the other one that was discussed quite a bit. Once a claim has settled, once a self-government agreement has been settled, then there's the implementation. There are funding issues. There are all sorts of things surrounding that that need to get dealt with. We need to have the conversation about what the GNWT's role is going to be in this territory in the future. From there, we can start designing programs and start pushing programs out to the communities, or have the communities set the programs. We need to be able to design services and programs for communities who are going to be receiving and delivering those. That is based on what the government's role is going to be in the future. We don't know. Once the entire territory is settled and there are self-government agreements

that are being implemented, what's the role for the territory? We need to figure that out so we know how to proceed.

The other thing that I found came up almost as much as anything else was education. I wasn't surprised because there has been a groundswell of support across the territory for reforming education, because people see that it is an unfair distribution of education in the territory. Yellowknife and Hay River, we both have excellent results. I spoke with a grad not that long ago, well, a while now, and there were students going to pre-med. There were physicists. We are graduating a lot of high-quality students in the regional centres and in Yellowknife, but students in the communities aren't getting those same opportunities. That's just not fair. There is nothing more basic than education, I would say.

We have had diamond mines for decades in the territory. Yellowknife has done well. If we get more diamond mines, Yellowknife will continue to do well, but how does the rest of the territory benefit from that? Then, I think it's education, and I think people see that that's the way to go. We need to reconsider how we deliver education in this territory. I know there are some initiatives that are happening, but I truly believe that the one thing that is similar to very affluent and successful societies is education, and we need to make that a focus of not just this Assembly, but of the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years.

I always think: why don't people around the world look to the territory and say, "We want to be like that." We talked about education in Norway. We talk about all of these things. We can be that. People can say, "Look what they've done. They've had graduation rates of 60 percent, 40 percent in these communities, and they've turned that right around. Now, they are the most well-educated territory in Canada, or one in the world."

Sorry, I went off on a little tangent on there. I'm just passionate about education. The people we spoke with yesterday were also passionate about education. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Having the dialogue since 2007 with the people around the table yesterday, for people to understand the day-to-day operations of people in the communities and the leaders and what they have to deal with, with very little. I hope that it was an education for everybody in this room to understand that we need stronger regional centres that have the money to make sure that our communities are looked after.

What happened in the last eight years or so, the regional centres, they have been pulling our staff out of them, so they are not serving not only the regional centres, but the smaller communities. We have to realize that there is a bigger place than this place. That was very clear yesterday. There was a lack of trust, and the trust has to be reinstated. We have the opportunity as a group around this table to give back that trust to the Indigenous people of the North. They are the majority, and we have to listen.

I have great respect for every leader around that table because, as one of those leaders in the past, it is very, very difficult to move your mandate when you are dealing with child poverty, you're dealing with people who are having problems in the medical system, or you're having other problems and you don't know how to deal with it because your regional centre has been broken down so that you can't deal with it. If you make a call to Yellowknife here, the central office, it is very difficult.

There was also a sense that they want the claims settled. That was very, very clear, and they also want their agreements in place to be honoured. There are many agreements in place, self-government agreements, and we're not honouring them. We have the Inuvik region. Dwayne Smith, he was very clear on some of the things that he said, and we have to listen and change the way we do things and build those relationships, because those are really precious relationships, very special people. I sat with him since 2007. Some changes in leadership, but it always comes down to the same thing. We have an opportunity to make a difference, and we have to make that difference, not only in Cabinet but as a group. We're all building relationships, and that's the most important thing, is to build our relationship of trust with the Aboriginal people. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There were many things spoken around the table the other day. I am going to talk about ones that hit close to me, in my heart. Of course, we heard about trust and building relationships. We've been talking about that the whole day.

Another one that I heard is they kept saying, "This is a historical meeting." This government's been in operation almost 50 years. I've heard that. We've been trying to sell these negotiations for over 30 years, and this was a historical meeting? That's not okay. That, for me, was a priority. I think that we need to take ownership and apologize and do better, because we can do better on that one.

The other thing I heard: is their offer willing to help to deal with the social issues? Again, I try to see,

whenever I hear stories, I try to think how that would make me feel. Twenty years ago, like I said, I went and got a degree in social work, and I made a conscious decision as a P1 candidate not to work for the GNWT but to work for non-profit organizations, because I felt that non-profits needed my support. They do a lot of support, a lot better services in all honesty than sometimes the government can because they are not stuck in those boxes that say, "You have to do this" job description.

Many years ago, I came. I left the Northwest Territories, and I took a job for my own career in Salmon Arm and was a minister in a family support centre. A couple of years into that, I got a call from the Yellowknife Women's Society, our homeless shelter for women. Women, some of our most vulnerable populations. They said, "We are going to close the door, Caroline. Please come back and help us." They were in debt \$300,000, so I left my job in BC because my commitment is here and my heart was with those women and I had worked many years with them. I came back to the North.

I spent a couple of years, actually, and I brought them out of debt and they are doing well now. I had gone to the government for many years before I left here and said, "Please, you are trying to make us survive off \$30,000 for funding. We are losing women. We don't even have food. We are not paying our staff. We are picking choices and saying, 'Who gets paid today? Who has children and needs to get paid?'" We were feeding them hot dogs that we were throwing out because we didn't have the food security programs in Yellowknife. People were bringing food. Staff were bringing food from their own freezers to feed the women.

I tried a different tactic, and I went to the government and said, "Okay. I have been crying for 20 years. Arlene Hache has been crying. Everybody has been crying to help us, and you haven't heard us. How about if I help you? I don't want money. Let's work together." And still the government said, "Thank you, Caroline. Thank you very much." We do that very well. "We will call you if we need you," and they never called us.

I heard yesterday the word "colonization," and you know what? That is exactly one of the priorities that I have, because if we are going in there and we are saying that we are going to work with Indigenous governments but it is on our terms because we know better, then we are starting the relationship on the wrong foot to start with. We need to sit down at the table and say we are all equal here, because none of us is better. Self-government is not about us telling them what to do. It is about them defining their own future to be the best for all of us.

We need to stop, and sorry if I offend Members, but sometimes we are very colonistic in our approach, and we need to stop doing that. We need to sit down at the table as equals, as equal governments, government to government, not one government over the other. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Members, I direct your attention to the presence of former Members in the gallery: Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Moses, and Mr. Nakimayak. Welcome back to the Chamber. Next, I will turn the floor over to Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I just want to take a moment to congratulate the four candidates who have put your name forward. Thank you very much for doing so.

As we go on, it is getting harder to get new ideas and questions out, but the Auditor General of Canada concluded in October of 2017 that GNWT efforts on climate change had failed. We did make some progress in the last Assembly, but I think we still have some way to go. I would like to ask each of the candidates: what specific policy, legislative, and/or structural changes would you propose to ensure that the GNWT can meet international greenhouse gas reduction targets? Once again, policy, legislative, or structural changes. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. For this question, we will start with Mr. Simpson, then Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Lafferty, and Ms. Martselos. Mr. Simpson, you have the floor.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a big question in the territory. When we talk about climate change, we often talk about adaptation because, as everyone knows, we are feeling the effects more than the rest of the world, essentially. There definitely need to be some strides taken to address that issue.

You know, we met with the Association of Communities, and the communities have been suffering greatly from this. I know Inuvik has been hit harder than anyone else in terms of the costs of keeping up with climate change, in the tens of millions of dollars. We need to utilize our expertise in certain areas. Right now, and unfortunately, this is going to become our expertise. This is an area in which we can build capacity, you know, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

It is tough in terms of reducing our greenhouse gases. I know that the carbon tax came in, and the whole point of the carbon tax was to reduce use by increasing costs. We are already at the point in the territory where our costs are so high that there is not much to give, you know. How much less are

you going to drive? How much colder are you going to keep the house? This is a difficult issue, but there are steps that we can take. I know the government has been taking some in terms of installing biomass heaters, but there are additional things we can do, as well. There are interesting things happening with energy and heat production. I know that SSi Energy in Fort Providence has a project that they are getting off the ground to reduce emissions. There is the opportunity for converting diesel generators to biomass. There might not be a massive reduction in greenhouse gas. I don't have the numbers on me, but it would also create jobs as well.

We are in a tough position because we are feeling the effects so much more than the rest of the territory, but it doesn't mean that we get to stand by and claim that, "Well, since we are feeling the effects, we don't have to do anything." It is a hard reality. You know, not a lot of people want to hear that, but it is the reality of life in the North.

I look forward to the discussion next week in terms of our priorities to see what this Assembly wants to do going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Next, we shall go to Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Climate change is serious, and it is affecting not only us, but it is affecting the whole world. We often stand here and talk about how we are making changes for our children, for our grandchildren, for future generations, and yet we are not moving ahead as fast as we need to on climate change.

One thing I would like to do is I do think that, and I said that in my speech, we need to have a group, a working group, not just a token group, but a real group that maybe stays focused for the whole four years that is comprised of Cabinet Members, Regular MLAs, and Indigenous leaders, and we need to look again at our 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework because, although it is a good document, I don't believe that it was done in proper consultation and I think it could be a way stronger document. I would like that working group to actually take that on.

The big thing for me, it is not about legislative changes and policies and structural changes; we have talked about that. We need to look at green energy in our buildings and moving policies to incorporate in anything we do, our building, et cetera.

The bigger thing is this is an international issue. This is not a territorial issue. We need to be willing to put our name forward on behalf of the NWT nationally and internationally. We have a duty to

bring awareness to the whole world on what is happening. Some countries aren't being affected as much as us, but they will be. We need to be internationally seated so that we can actually learn best practices across the world. Many countries do things better than us, and we are kind of hesitant to take them. We need to find out what is working and adapt them into ours, and we need to bring our own issues on a world basis and talking to them about what we are experiencing in the North, because people are not taking it seriously enough. If you don't see it, often you don't deal it with. We need to bring this to their face, to their attention internationally, and say this is affecting our whole world.

It is one thing to deal with the social program or make a legislation, make a policy, but this is our future, and this is something that we need to, from this day until the end of time, we need to take this seriously. Thank you, Mr. Chair

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. Climate change has such a huge impact for us here in the Northwest Territories. We are experiencing it, and also experiencing a rapid warming. Significant changes, obviously, in our wildlife. The caribou are a prime example for our jurisdiction, and fire, and others. It does have an impact on the communities' infrastructures, and health, and also their safety. We have heard yesterday from the mayor of Paulatuk, Mr. Ruben, about his travels with family members, and they lost two machines. That is a real life, Mr. Chair, and we obviously need to do better with our own initiatives.

We do have some strategies in place within the GNWT, the climate change framework 2030 and 2030 energy strategy. Those are just some of the documents that we have created. I am a firm believer that we need to have our own northern solution, northern package, that has the voice the North, the people the North, and so they can have their handprint on the actual legislation that goes through this House to deal with the climate change, the global warming, carbon pricing.

So those are just some of the areas that we have been hearing from the federal perspective, federal coming down on us and saying, "This is what you are going to do." We stood against that, and now I feel that we need to do more in those areas. We need to have our own. We're crafting up our own legislation that meets the needs the North. Let's reach out to the elders. Let's reach out to the communities. Those community harvesters are the experts. They deal with this day to day. Us, sitting around the table, we do not. I am a hunter myself, but I am not as expert as those elders are who are

80, 90 years old, who can tell us stories similar to the one yesterday. We need to hear more of those, those stories, and the sharing.

Elders have always told us, "Share your stories, and plant the seed within your Legislative Assembly." One of my elders, Pierre Beaverho, is a prime example. They want us to move forward with their ideas and share in their stories. So, Mr. Chair, there are a lot of areas that we can tackle, climate change and carbon pricing, but we do have some strategies in place. I believe we can expand on that, as well, but it has to be a northern solution. Masi, Mr. Chair.

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Well, I have a northern solution for climate change. I think that the climate change solution should be integrated into the polytech university and it should be situated in Inuvik because of the eroding shore, and the Arctic is there, and we should have a place of study so that all people of the world would want to come, Canada and all of the people of the Northwest Territories, because I feel that it's such an important issue that we should have specialized people who would be teaching specialized courses on how to accommodate the issue of climate change. That should be part of the polytech university/university of the North.

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Just a reminder to all Members to please do ensure the red light is on before you start speaking, just to ensure that those people who are watching at home are able to hear. I will now go to the few Members left who have yet to ask a question. I will go to Ms. Chinna, first. Ms. Chinna.

MS. CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like to comment on our meeting yesterday with the Indigenous groups. Yesterday, I was observing to hear all of the comments made around the table and the need for government to start engaging with the Aboriginal groups the settlement of land claims and working with the self-government negotiations and trying to work together to support them to finalize.

I wanted to elaborate on the Sahtu region because I feel that there is a lot of success that has happened in that region. They are dealing with climate change. They have started to work and install their solar panels and also working towards ensuring the K'ahsho Got'ine District is that they are installing wood stoves for each of the community membership and also working towards and looking at the Great Bear River bridge and the opportunities that come with it. I think that it is imperative that we start recognizing these successes within

Indigenous groups and working with them, and not acknowledging them as clients, acknowledging them as partnerships.

With these success stories, I think that we should elaborate on them, and I think that going forward that it's imperative that we meet with them regularly and on a consistent basis. I think that we could actually learn something from them through their successes and through their own initiatives in working with the federal government and the money that they are actually accessing in becoming independent on their own. I think, going forward, my question is: how will the Premier ensure that the Indigenous and self-governments and local governments are supported and to be encouraged to work with them as partners and not clients?

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Chinna. The order for responding to this question will be Ms. Cochrane, Ms. Martselos, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am starting to feel a lot of the answers are kind of being restated all the time. Again, it's about relationships, and it's about taking a different approach. It's about not thinking that we know the best solutions for everything, and that the only way we will build partnerships is if you listen to us or you agree to our terms. Taking down those walls is one of the big factors.

The other thing I spoke about in my speech is actually meeting with Indigenous governments and community governments on a more regular basis and building, with Indigenous governments, regional economic plans. If we actually work with our governments, all governments, and sit at the table and say, "What would help you in your communities," not saying we know but, "What would help you in your communities? What would that look like? What do we both have to put on the table?" I think that we would actually work better, and we would get better services for our people. That is what we are here for, is to provide better services for our people.

Again, like I say, it's about being willing to meet more often. I like the idea, and I put it in my speech, about a regional economic plan so that every community is flourishing. Prosperity for all needs to be a slogan, a priority, that we take within this government, and we need to pull up our socks and be willing to sit down and be willing to say that we are not the experts; we are not the bosses; we are all, government to government, on equal ground, and never forget that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I have been dealing with this file since 2007, and therefore I feel that my partnerships are built with all Indigenous governments and will continue to build. I have an open-door policy, and they all know that. My door will always be open for any Indigenous government, any Indigenous leaders to ensure that their mandate and our mandate are looked at and mediated in the proper manner. Thank you.

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I find that, when a government has a mindset, that that is from the top down. We could see it in some of the departments in the last Assembly. Some of the personalities filtered down through some of the departments, and I think that's the situation with the Government of the Northwest Territories. There is an idea that the GNWT has the authority, will always have the authority. That is why I have been thinking about what the GNWT is going to be in the future and beginning that transition. In terms of working as partners, that is essential. We heard it around the table so much yesterday, where everyone said that we are better together. We can access more federal money together, as well.

You know, if the Government of Canada sees us working in partnership as opposed to butting heads, as opposed to competing for money, we will have more success, and ultimately that is money coming into the territory. We are all residents of the territory, so the more money that comes in for our residents, the better.

I also go back to something else that was said yesterday, which is that we need to do a better job educating the people who work with the Indigenous governments or with the small communities about the agreements and about the place of Indigenous governments in the territory. We are partners, but when you respond to an ad online, and you move up from Toronto, you might not realize that. You have a different mindset. We have to do a better job educating our people about that as well.

Basically, it comes down to a change in attitude. You know what? We need a change in attitude from the top down. It is going to filter down through the ranks so that we will exemplify that attitude of partnership and cooperation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. I would just like to say thank you to the Sahtu entrepreneurs, businesspeople, and also community members for starting up solar panels wood stove initiatives and other initiatives that they talked about yesterday.

We have to start appreciating those thinking outside of the box and going out on their own initiatives. Those are pilot projects that we, as the GNWT, always look for and explore. I would like to thank the Member for her specific questions about partnership versus clientele.

Clientele, clients, is basically a banking term, my clients. I, for one, see community members as our family, a partnership. We have to get away from this "kwet'ii yatii." Kwet'ii yatii means these are terminology from outside, outside of our Legislative Assembly, outside of the Northwest Territories. We have to start using our own terminology. That is creating partnerships. We have talked about that so many times, how we can work together, recognizing their success and other communities' success. We should be appreciating that they have gone far enough that we should be stepping up to the plate with them. "How can we assist? How can we be your partner? You started something that will benefit the community, the region, the whole Northwest Territories." We should be open to those ideas.

Yesterday, I was kind of hearing, pleading, "Well, we have been waiting on the GNWT and federal government, but we are not getting anywhere, so we are going to go out on our own." Good on them. That is excellent initiative. We should be proactive. As a government, going forward, as a brand-new government, let's be proactive and meet with those individuals, meet with the successful business entrepreneurs in the community, small business owners. They have so many good ideas that can generate our discussions around the table here, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to congratulate the Sahtu region, and other regions as well, for coming out with their own ideas, their own initiatives. Community solutions is an example of a northern solution. Masi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. I will now turn to Ms. Semmler for her question.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have heard from our residents, the other candidates, and our communities that we need to find ways to support our residents who are struggling with addiction and homelessness. This is not a Yellowknife issue. It is not a regional centre issue. It is in all of our communities, just less visible. It has been asked to previous governments for treatment in the Northwest Territories, and it has always been told that this is not the best option. We also know that there is no support for those who do take the option to go outside and return home. How will you, as a Premier, address this, if it is a priority of this government, in all of the NWT communities? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Semmler. The order for response on this question will be Ms. Martselos, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Cochrane, and Mr. Simpson. I will turn the floor over to Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: As you know, every family deals with this issue. No matter what colour, age, gender, whatever, everybody has a problem within the family. There are no boundaries for addiction issues. What I did in my community was, we did on-the-land and had Poundmaker's come in and do the program for six weeks. We did that three times, plus we also brought them in for aftercare.

I firmly believe that a full-service addictions centre is required for the Northwest Territories. What I mean by "full-service" is that you have the proper staff, staff who are trained to deal with all of the different traumas that happen within families and within people's lives that have made this happen to our people.

We can still do the on-the-land programs within the communities, but there are some cases that are past that sometimes and have mental issues. There are mental issues involved, and I think that we need a territorial addictions centre in the Northwest Territories also.

It was a very successful program, the Fort Smith on-the-land program. We had the whole team, including a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and a full team from Poundmaker's that came to Fort Smith and did the six-week program. Everybody was entitled to that in the Northwest Territories with the way that the funds were done from the Department of Health and Social Services here. Not everybody took advantage of it. I don't know how people felt about it, but I know that the programs that we did with Salt River were open to all of the community. We did not say it was only for Salt River; we had members from all of the communities who came to the on-the-land program.

I know that we need an addictions centre in the Northwest Territories, and I mean a full-service one, where testing is involved, because not all addictions centres have that. I know that aftercare is extremely important. I know that we have many problems with this in all of the communities. I know that there is a problem here in Yellowknife. You walk down the main street, and there are problems.

It is a big issue, and it has to be looked at by everyone around this table to correct the situation, to try and deal with the issue, to feel for the people who are suffering from addiction and from mental health issues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Next, I will go to Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] Thank you. This issue is a big one. When we talk about addictions for the Northwest Territories, we have this issue in all of the 33 communities. They are our relatives. How can we help them? Sometimes, even though they talk to us about their issues, we don't know how to help them. There are a lot of issues and concerns about treatment centres. We did have treatment centres at one time, and they closed.

We also talk about aftercare programs, and we don't have enough of that. Once people come back from treatment, they don't know how to be helped, even though they were in treatment for a whole month. They return back to their communities, and the pressure of friends and family is really strong, and they go back to their old ways. We need to have an aftercare program for them, programs for them in the community. I think we need to have everything in place for them once they return from their treatment.

When I made my speech, my Premier's speech, I mentioned about working with elders and on the land. Bringing the youth out on the land is an important one. We also look at homelessness, people who don't have any housing, and some of them have addictions. If we work with the elders, we take them on the land, they are the most skilled people that you can think of, when you take them out on the land, and they are the happiest when they are out on the land. They are respected on the land, because they know the skills.

Once they return from the south, they don't have an aftercare program. I think we need to review this whole issue of addictions and how we can help our people, especially the idea of on-the-land programs. A lot of young people are sleeping on the streets. Let's pick them up. Some of these people are the most skilled on the land. I have a lot of people who live on the street, myself. Fifteen years ago, we never heard of anyone being homeless, but now, today, a lot of the issues, we can see that. It's visible in the community.

I want to bring my people back home, because they are the most skilled on the land. Because of their addiction, either drugs or alcohol, it's stronger, and they have no housing, as well. As a government, I think we need to take a look at this. With the elders' advice, we can create an on-the-land program to help our people. Even in the Sahtu region, they have a justice program that is working. We tried it; it's a pilot project. It was running very well at one time, and when the government changed, that program changed, as well. We can review that program again, and I'd like to thank the MLA from Inuvik for asking that question. Masi. [End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This one is dear to my heart, and so I'm going to take a different turn than the other speakers have taken.

I'd like to be able to say that addictions and homelessness, we can get a treatment centre, we'll get a treatment centre in every single community. You know I can't do that. We'll get a house for every person. Nobody will be homeless. I can't do that, either, right now. The key is that those aren't the answers. It's not addictions. People don't just drink because they like the taste of alcohol. People don't just end up homeless because they have nowhere to stay; they have families, they have other people.

We're talking about mental health. We're talking about self-esteem. My mother started drinking when I was seven years old. She never touched a drop before that. She had eight kids and an abusive husband, and there weren't the supports. I remember sitting down at the table when I was a young child, to this day, and she picked up a bottle of vodka, and she said, "If you can't beat them, join them." My mother never sobered up until all of us children left home; and she lost a kidney before she actually sobered up. It took almost losing her life.

So the answer isn't just getting addiction treatment centres, although we need them. We definitely need them. The answer isn't just getting houses, although we need them. We definitely need them. The answer is early intervention and dealing with people's wellness and their pride in themselves. If we can get more people some early intervention, early childhood development, parenting support, family support, pride in culture, taking them out when they're young, taking them on the land, those things all help.

When I was working at the Yellowknife Women's Centre, and like I said over 20 years and 15 years administrating non-profit organizations, the women that I dealt with -- in fairness, I never dealt with men. I dealt with women, but the women weren't saying, "I drank when I was 20 because I liked it," or, "I'm homeless because nobody will house me." The women were telling me, "I've been molested since I was three years old. Nobody loved me since I was a baby. I was in child protection and thrown out on the street when I was 16 years old." Those are the issues that we're dealing with, within that population.

So we can skirt around the issue and we can say that we're going to get treatment centres in the Territories, which we need. We're going to put people in houses, which we need. Until we deal with people's self-esteem, their mental wellness, we

will always be putting Band-Aids on this. Pride in ourselves, family supports, early intervention, in my belief, is the answer. Thank you.

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

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have to say I agree with much of what Ms. Cochrane said. You know, we all know people who you would like to get help for, but they're not in a position where they want to go get help. You know, it's such a difficult situation when you look at it, when you know those kinds of people. When you walk downtown. So what do we do? Is it the aftercare? Is it the treatment? No, I agree that it is mental health, but how do we provide that? How do we get there early enough?

This is one of those issues that is so broad, that cuts across so many government departments, that it needs the participation of the Indigenous governments and the community, the community governments, families, everyone involved. So, if this is something that this Assembly wants to tackle, I would like to see us do it whole-heartedly. You know, I know there are mental health and addiction strategies, but are those effective? Have we seen a decrease? We still have the worst rates in the country, basically. Probably some of the worst rates in the developed world.

We can't do this by half measures. If we want to go in, we have to go all in. That's why next week is going to be tough. We want infrastructure projects, but we want to help people, as well. Mental health, there are a lot of communities, there are a lot of mental health workers. There are a lot of communities, there is a lot of aftercare. There's a lot of housing that we need.

I commend Salt River with partnering with Poundmaker's. I think they have a great program, and maybe that's something we need to do more of, is going to the people who know how to provide treatment and partnering with them. Because the GNWT, more and more I wonder whether or not we need to rely on their expertise. Sometimes we need to go outside and partner with people who are actually doing this work.

So it's a big question. There are a lot of moving parts, and it's going to take a bit commitment. Do I have a plan? No. Does anyone here really have a plan? No, it's going to take more than just us in the room to come up with a plan and really address this, but just take a walk down the street and you'll see why it needs to be done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. And for, I believe, the final question of this round, we'll turn to Mr. Bonnetrouge.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to my colleagues. I would like to thank the candidates for putting your names forward for Premier. All the best to each of you. My question is related, I guess, to the mental health and self-esteem type of issue. It's basically regarding the workforce, the make-work programs.

The people of the North need work. Optimism is about giving hope to the people for a better future. I'm talking about the immediate future, like tomorrow. For the people of the North, work equals much-needed income. Providing work develops happy people, happy families, and most of all improves a person's self-esteem, which I believe is much-needed.

Providing work equates to stimulating local economies. This is a win-win situation. In the past, funds have been secured from the federal government to create the much-needed work programs for all the communities of the Northwest Territories. It has been done. With that in mind, I ask the question of all the Premier-candidates: what is your strategy to securing that type of funding to stimulate the economy of the communities of the North? Mahsi.

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Bonnetrouge. For this round, we will begin with Mr. Lafferty, then Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Simpson, and Ms. Martselos. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. [Translation] Those of us in the smaller communities, I totally agree with what he is saying, it is very difficult to find jobs and employment, and it is because of that that puts people in a situation. We also talk about mental health and self-esteem. When people do not have a job, it interferes with the way they are thinking. They created these programs in the communities before, and money was flowing to the communities at that time. Maybe it is something, that kind of program, we should take a look at again, those of us in the smaller communities. [English translation not provided.]

[Translation] As I said just a little while ago, on the community employment, if we all work together on how we are going to make more employment in the communities, in our community, we have community friendship centres; we have to work with them in our community. Small community employments in the North are the ones that are helping the communities, to make them thrive again. There are also the security people that work at night. We have to work more for them, try out for them.

I know that Northwest Territories government and the Aboriginal government have to work with each other. I know that a lot of them have that issue in

their communities. I know there are a lot of graduates, grade 12 graduates, even though they have graduated, they are still on the street. How can we help those kinds of young people? What type of work are they looking for? We have to think ahead for them. We have to tell them, "Try this, or try this." If we do not try anything different, it's always going to be the same, so I think we should all work together, sit and work together, to help resolve this issue. Where is the problem? Where is it that we need to help them with funding? What is the gender of people who have this problem? Small community employment is very important to the small communities in order to help themselves with this issue. Masi. [End of translation].

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of things that I think we should be doing. As I spoke about a few times now and in my speech, I talked about developing regional economic plans with our Indigenous governments so that every region has some industry, some infrastructure happening, and that we are conscious that we are spreading out the wealth amongst all of us.

A few things I have not talked about and I am going to bring forward now is apprenticeships. A year and a half ago, maybe almost two years ago, I was the housing Minister. I have had some portfolios. I kind of forget the timeline, but I was housing Minister for two years. My focus was really on getting people the skills so that they could maintain the houses versus pay a rent and get out, but one thing I heard in the back and I never got time to address -- because, foolishly, I thought I would keep that portfolio for four years and I realize that is not how politics works sometimes -- we only had, I believe it was, 15 apprenticeships in the whole of Housing, 33 communities and 15 apprenticeships. That is not okay. We as a government, if we are going to be taken seriously about giving work skills, then we need to actually bump that up and bring in more apprenticeship programs into our own, into the GNWT, before we go outside.

The other thing I will talk about is income support. I know that income support, like I said, we have productive choices now. I have talked in my speech about a guaranteed income so that people who are on long-term income support, instead of penalizing them, we will give them a guaranteed income, and then they can actually have more incentive to actually look for other work and they will not get penalized dollar for dollar from their money. However, the other thing that we need to look at is our productive choices. I heard within income support that, if people have diagnoses like mental

health illnesses, then they do not have to do a productive choice, and I am okay with that.

However, I will share another story because Indigenous people are storytellers. I have an aunt. I don't have an aunt anymore. She has passed, my Aunt Marion. I do not know what her problem was. When I was young, Aunt Marion was older than me, and she had already had a mental illness, and so I do not know what it is. I cannot stand here and say, but she stayed on the farm with my grandma for years until my grandma passed away, and then she went into a home down in Alberta. I worried about her because she was a farm girl, so I went to see her, and Aunt Marion was in this facility. In that facility, they had a little greenhouse, and, every day, my aunt went down and watered the plants. That was her whole job, just watering plants. My Aunt Marion lived until, I think she passed away about 10, 15 years ago. She lived into old age, and she loved her job. She loved the work that she did. So I am not saying that we need to force people. I am saying that we need to open up our productive choices and make it open so that people can make choices based on what their wishes are.

The other thing that I want to talk about is our small employment fund. I believe it was \$8 million I think we had gotten into the last Assembly for that. Again, we had a small community committee that oversaw that, and I was the Minister responsible for that funding. However, I started towards the end talking to the governments, the community governments, the Indigenous governments, because what I saw was that they had \$8 million and they were hiring people to, "Drive that gravel truck into the community," so they were spreading out the money, you know, "Cut those logs and bring it to the elders," people were getting jobs, but they were not sustainable. That is not okay. So, towards the end of it, I had started to talk to the governments, to the people who were accessing that, and saying, "What about moving this into sustainable income, so, instead of just hiring that one person to haul your gravel from the gravel pit to the community for one time and that person gets money, what about looking at ways you can actually start your own gravel pit, that you can actually start a business on it? Instead of cutting wood for one elder and getting paid for that, what about starting it as a business and being able to sell it to other people?"

So I think we need to think out of the box again with the programs that we have. I said that earlier. We are going to have to make hard decisions. We have to make sure that our programs are meeting the intent. I do not think the answer is just throwing out free money and saying, "Here it is," because we will always be building dependency. Our goal should not be about building dependency. I don't believe in independent either because that is my father's side,

that is more of a Caucasian side, with the white picket fence. My mother's side would say "interdependent." So we need to rely on each other and support each other, but we need to make these employment programs sustainable in the long term, and I think that is the key. We need to look at our productive choices and we need to look in the government and see what we are doing to build the skills and the training. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

DEPUTY CLERK (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you for the question. There has been a lot of talk today about how do we build economies in small communities and in the regions, and I hope that this next Assembly joins me in focusing on regional empowerment. I think that we need to think about how to devolve not just government jobs, but also authority, to regions and communities, because once the people in the regions can start making decisions, they can start making decisions that actually work for them and that aren't just handed down. Some of those decisions might be about who gets funding to start a new business or things like that or who gets funding to Northern Farm Training Institute for training. Don't find a reason to put jobs in Yellowknife. Find a reason to put jobs in the communities and in the regions. It is easy to find reasons why not to do that. We need to task ourselves with finding reasons to do that.

We need to support people in the regions who want to do things for themselves. We heard some success stories from the Sahtu. I know of success stories in other small communities. The government, when they see that, needs to support that. The government doesn't have to do everything. If someone is doing something for themselves, support that.

I think that we have to consider the fact that we may need to reconsider or reimagine what economies are in small communities. There are some small communities where their economy was the fur trade. Well, the fur trade isn't the way that it used to be. What do we do for that community? We are not going to shut it down and move it. Those days are long gone. So what do we do? Is it better to have people unemployed, because there are costs associated with that, or is it better to maybe subsidize a small industry where people are working? They are getting up, and they are going to work, which means that, when they get up, they are taking the kids to school. If they weren't getting up for work, maybe their kids weren't going to school.

I think that we need to start having those conversations, because the status quo isn't working. I think that we need some bold ideas, some ideas that might make us uncomfortable, but

we have to try. The question of how we are going to access the federal funds is, again, partnerships. We need to build better partnerships with Indigenous governments and go together to Ottawa. I think that that is how you do it, and I have seen success stories around the territory when it is done that way. Again, it comes down to partnerships. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I think it is an excellent question, because I think that immediate action has to happen. What I am hearing from the Member is that make-work programs are necessary for employment, not study for another two years, but now. I think that we have to be creative in our thinking at our level to ensure that we accommodate those smaller communities and the regions to be able to actually do what we say we want to do, to spread the wealth to the smaller communities and the regions, to make sure that people have the choice of wanting to be able to be employed, whether it be in a fire smart program, whether it be planting trees, whether it be cutting wood. These are part of the green program, and you can get funds for that from the federal government to access it, but there is also the whole idea of the ITI programs that are under our departments. They have to be shared equally.

I find that, many times, you have Ministers or people in those departments who kind of dictate where the money is going to go. I think that we have to look at those very carefully to ensure that everybody has a fair share. I strongly believe that the smaller communities should have a say, especially the Indigenous governments. That is when they usually knock on the door, when there is no employment, when people don't have any food on the table, and during a crisis situation. Make-work programs are very important to the small communities.

On a larger scale, the regions have to be able to have the staff to be able to do that, to answer the call for help to the smaller communities. Lots of times in the past, at least, eight years now, that has not been happening. What has happened is that the strong central government has taken over and have left us in a bind where we cannot serve the communities. They have taken most of our senior staff away and left everybody kind of hanging. We cannot do that. We have to build those partnerships again. We have to ensure that we are serving all of the Northwest Territories equally. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. That completes the first round. As Members have agreed, Members may ask a second question of the candidates for Premier.

Before we begin the second round of questions for the candidates for Premier, we will take a short break, and I would ask Members to be back in the Chamber in 10 minutes. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Welcome back, Members. It has been a full day. I know some of you have flights to catch this afternoon. If I can just get a sense from Members who has a second question that they plan to ask, if you could just raise your hand. Okay. I think we should be able to accomplish that. However, I would ask both the Members who are asking questions and those who are responding to try and keep your questions as succinct as possible, as well your answers as succinct as possible. I am going to rearrange the clock on the answers to about two and a half minutes. Again, I won't be cutting anyone off after the two and a half minutes is up, but just a bit of a reminder to try and speed things along. A second question. Ms. Green

MS. GREEN: Thank you. My constituency has a large population of intoxicated and/or homeless population, and they are from all over the NWT. They are not only from Yellowknife. This was a huge issue during my campaign. There are a number of people who don't feel safe downtown because of the concentration of numbers. The GNWT and the city have worked together to provide services, but they don't seem adequate to the issue that they are trying to address there.

There has been an evaluation of the centre. It provides a bit of a blueprint for changes going forward, but my basic question is: what is the GNWT's responsibility for resolving outstanding issues downtown? What roles should the GNWT be taking in that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Green. We will go with Mr. Simpson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Cochrane, and Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not quite familiar with the file as it is. I do stay downtown there, so I am very familiar with the situation, but I am not sure what the outstanding issues are and where the GNWT needs to step in, but this is an issue in a lot of places.

In Hay River, we had the high-rise close down, which means we now have people living on the street, a number of people who never used to before, and they are out and about, and there are sort of similar concerns, as well. You know, there is a role to be played.

I honestly don't know enough about the specifics of this issue, but it is a public safety issue, so we should probably be looking at partnerships, as well,

with the City of Yellowknife. I would be happy to speak with the Member and help address this, no matter what my role is. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: We have to realize that these people who are out on the street are members and people of the Northwest Territories. I think there has to be a bit more feeling in how we deal with this issue, because it is a very important issue when you have people on the street. Yes, they may be from mostly from all other communities, but I am sure that there are people on the street from Yellowknife also, right? We have to be more sensitive to the issue. I think that there has to be a solution, and we have to as a government look at the issue with the Member who brought it up and try to find solutions.

Some of these people have never gone back home for maybe many years. Maybe encouraging them and helping them to make that journey home and to reconnect with family might be one of the solutions. I think that we have to look at it in a holistic approach, to see what is best for not only the person on the street, but what is best for the community. I would ensure that we address the issue. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Martselos. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I definitely think the GNWT has a role to play with addressing our intoxication downtown and the homelessness that we are experiencing. However, I want to be clear and say that not everyone that you see downtown is homeless. That is a misperception. I personally have friends who I have known all my life, who actually work for my brother. When they come into town after diamond drilling, they are downtown intoxicated, so it is not only homelessness we are dealing with.

Intoxication is not okay. I grew up in this community. In the 1960s, when I was a young child, I could walk on this street. There was no pavement and no sidewalks. I want to tell people how far we have come in the last while, but there weren't the number of homeless people out there, and people weren't afraid to walk. We left our doors open. We stopped when vehicles were in trouble. We were very community-minded.

Yellowknife has changed. Yellowknife has mostly people from the south, now. There are very few Yellowknifers here. We have lost some of that community spirit, and hopefully we can work to gain that back.

With the public intoxication, that is not okay. That is a safety issue. Children, parents, women, and men should not be afraid to walk on our streets. We have a role. We work with the federal government on the RCMP, and we need to bump that services so that the RCMP are actually doing street patrols like they did many years ago.

The other thing, too, is if we are only building shelters, I have said that many times in Yellowknife, "Build it and they will come." These people, I would say, my guesstimate from 20 years working with the homeless women, probably over 90 percent of them are actually from the smaller communities. People love their children. It is not that people want their children to just disappear. If a person is stuck in addictions or mental health, and you don't have the support, at what point does a parent say that, you know, "My family isn't safe anymore. I need to take care of my other children." It is a hard choice for a parent to close the door and say, "My child has to leave because my other children are not safe."

The other thing is, when those people are ready to heal and stop their addictions, the best support they can have is their family and community to support them, because I have seen women in the shelter who fall off. They say, "I want to clean up," and then their friends say, "Have another drink."

When I was the Housing Minister, I focused on actually building shelters outside of the community. Minister Alfred Moses concluded them, so we had three homeless shelters, one in Behchoko, Fort McPherson, and Aklavik. I think that is quite advanced with wraparound supports. If we only build in Yellowknife, we are missing the boat. We need to build in all communities, so that people have a chance when they are ready to heal, and that the wellness and supports are there for them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Masi. Mr. Chair, this is a particular area that is a high need for this government to deal with. The city and also the GNWT have been working together on this particular file through anti-poverty strategies over the years.

I have recently met with the Mayor Alty share some of my concerns, as my constituents are part of the homelessness in Yellowknife. How can we deal with those matters? She is willing to assess and help and wants to be a partner with the GNWT. Let's open those doors.

Not only that, but there have been transitional homes and safe homes as well. Just down the

street from us, there is a hotel being converted into a home, but apparently the money kind of dried up, so it is kind of on hold, I believe, from my understanding. Those are areas that we need to look and re-evaluate what truly what happened there. It was going forward, and then all of a sudden, it is becoming a money issue.

Friendship centres are another one. A lot of our communities have them. I think that one of the areas that we can tackle is program delivery through the friendship centres to deal with homelessness. Like I stated earlier, bringing my constituents back to my community of Behchoko, I can only speak to that at this point. With addiction, like every community, we have challenges, but we have programs in the community. If we can expand on programs, I think that that is where we can commit as the GNWT, to expand more into program delivery into the communities.

Mr. Chair, just meeting with the Aboriginal leadership yesterday, again, they raised a lot of issues pertaining to addiction and homelessness. We need to tackle this at the forefront. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Mercer): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next question, Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We had the opportunity over the last week to visit with mayors of different communities all the way from the Arctic Ocean down to the border of Alberta and Fort Smith. Community government funding not only pays for water and sewage, but it also funds programs and services that create vibrant, active, inclusive communities. How do you, as Premier, plan to address the community funding gaps, and do you feel that we are costing the GNWT more money long-term by not closing that gap and empowering our community governments? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Thank you, Ms. Cleveland. First up, we have Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe it was the Assembly before the last one, so probably the 17th Assembly, when they did the research, when they did the analysis, and they found out the three categories. Every year, we have been trying to address it. I know that it was pronounced at \$40 million. We have addressed, in my belief, around \$10 million of that. I think that we are sitting at about \$30 million.

The major deficit at this point is in capital. We are pretty close to the other areas that need to be funded. It's just the capital. We have been working diligently. Municipal and Community Affairs has been working with the community governments to try to get capital funding for their communities

successfully, actually, doing that work. It has been actually pretty good.

The community governments do have a gap, \$30 million approximately. The GNWT has a gap of \$101 billion. In my opinion, it would be unattainable to say that we are going to, in one year, or even in the term of this Assembly, address that deficit and start giving \$30 million extra a year. For one, it hasn't been addressed. We haven't set our priorities. If that is one of the priorities, then we should be looking at it, but I have a feeling that we are going to have many priorities, based on the conversations that we have had here, so we have to be working within that.

Instead of saying that we are going to deal with that in four years, what I would like to say is that we have to deal with it on an annual basis. It has to be part of the equation, and every year, we have to be willing to work towards it. At some point, and I know that people might not like to hear this, bureaucrats, we are going to have to redo that study, because if the capital funding is one of the areas, for example, water treatment centres or community arenas, et cetera, and we have water treatment plants now in every single community in the Northwest Territories, is that still on the books? Those are questions that I have.

It might not be a popular thing within the government, but I think that, at some point, we are going to have to redo that study and see where we stand. I think that we all have to work at working together to bring the resources, the financial assets for all of us, the GNWT, the community governments, and the Indigenous governments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Next up, we will have Mr. Lafferty, and then we will have Ms. Martselos and Mr. Simpson. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation] When I was campaigning, I sat with the Mayor of Yellowknife, and she has also expressed her concern. All of the mayors of the Northwest Territories also spoke with us about this issue, about the community funding gap. Why is it that there is a gap? That is why we are here asking questions about it. In the past, when you look at how their concern about it, why are they concerned about the gap? Wellness to be saved in a small community and there is not enough funding, they can't live properly in the community, especially with water. If it's less capital funding, it's no good.

We have to re-evaluate and look at it. How can we do something different? I think that we should revisit that. Why is it there is less funding for that? I know that we can always meet with the mayor, and

we can also express our concern. I know that we can't always fix everything, but we can fix some things to help the people. It seems like we are doing a little bit here and there, and we can't seem to get ahead. I think that we should get together, try to resolve this issue, and move ahead. We need capital funding if we are to do any big projects. That is what I think. Thank you. [Translation ends]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next up, we have Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Communities are extremely important, and I think that we have to have a dialogue with the communities, especially the funding, if there is a shortfall. Obviously, there is, because the report that I looked at last night showed that there are shortfalls. I think that we have to, like other people have answered, evaluate it and set priorities. Part of those priorities have to be done around this table.

It is really important that we keep the channels of dialogue and an open mind and listen to some of the concerns of the community governments, because some of those community governments don't have a lot of things that a lot of other places have. We have to be open to ensure, like I said at the beginning, that the wealth has to be shared. I feel very strongly about strong communities, strong regional centres, and ensuring that the wealth is shared. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Next up, we have Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. This is a concern of mine, and I have already stated in my first speech in this House this Assembly that this community government infrastructure funding gap needs to be addressed in a significant way during the life of this Assembly. The question was asked: is it costing the GNWT money? Well, it is in Hay River.

In Hay River, we need to expand. We need to put roads in, put sewer lines in, put water lines in, so that we can start developing houses so that people can move to town, which they want to do. We don't have enough houses for people to live right now. Every person we bring in is going to be \$30,000, \$35,000 to the GNWT. Two hundred people is \$6.5 million a year in transfer payments that the GNWT isn't getting, because the community can't afford to put in this additional infrastructure. This money isn't even for new infrastructure; this is for placement infrastructure.

Ms. Cochrane said that, when she was growing up in Yellowknife, they had gravel roads. I live in Old Town in Hay River. We still have gravel roads. We

are never going to get paved roads at this rate. This is the case of the GNWT prioritizing its infrastructure needs over community infrastructure needs. Maybe we don't address the gap in its entirety, but maybe the GNWT pulls back and says, "Okay, communities, we recognize your value and your worth and the fact that you need this money in order to grow and grow the economy and lower the cost of living, and so we are going to support you." If we can get this money in Hay River, and we can get this new expansion, there are going to be places to live, which means the cost of rent is going to go down, people are going to be able to afford not just heat but heat and power, afford some groceries. This is a big issue, and it needs to get dealt with, so I want to thank the Member for bringing it up, and it's going to be one of my priorities going forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. Next question, we have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once elected as Premier, will you lobby to ensure the Mackenzie Valley Highway connects all the way down the valley, from Inuvik to Wrigley? Because one of these days I would like to be able to drive from Tsiigehtchic to Yellowknife and without having to go through the Yukon and BC. Within my lifetime, I would like to see this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Blake. The order of responses, we will have Ms. Martselos, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Lafferty, and Ms. Cochrane. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I am in favour of all highways and roads. I think that highways and roads build prosperity and economic growth. I am not only in favour of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, but I am also in favour of the road through the park, the Garden River Road, so that we have access also in Fort Smith for the FireSmart Program. There is no other way out if anything ever happened there, and we have a lot of trees and a lot of things that happen there. You know, if we ever had to evacuate that community, we do not have anywhere else to go. All roads and especially the Mackenzie Valley Highway are extremely important to the Northwest Territories. It's infrastructure. Any roads anywhere are vital infrastructure not only for connections but for families to connect, for businesses to thrive, and for people to be able to come in to visit us as tourists. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Next, we have Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The role of the Premier is to -- sorry, one second. It has been a long day. I am a little sleepy. The Premier's job is to lobby the federal government. The Premier's job is

to build relationships with other governments. However, it is not the Premier's prerogative to set the priorities of the government, so, unfortunately, if this Assembly doesn't choose the Mackenzie Valley Highway as its priority, I don't think it would be appropriate for the Premier to go and lobby Ottawa.

That being said, I think that the Mackenzie Valley Highway is probably the best investment that this territory could make. You know, you see what is going on in Tuktoyaktuk with the tourism. Imagine if, instead of going up and down the Dempster, they come through the territory. Imagine the economic growth that would bring to the communities, thousands and thousands of tourists. Imagine the lowering of the cost of living. I think that it is the sort of grand project that we need in order to really fulfill the promise of the territory, and so I hope that if I am Premier I have the ability to lobby for it because it would be one of the priorities of the Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Members, our interpreters ask that you take short pauses during your questions and responses to give them a chance to keep up. Thanks. Next, we have Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation] Regarding the Mackenzie Valley Highway, as MLAs, once we create our mandate and this is included, we will approach the federal government for funding. They already have this mandate to expand the road, just the same as the Whati all-weather road. We have been advocating for this for many years, and now it's in place. Now we see a lot of our young people employed by this road. We know what kind of prosperity it could bring to the community, and these kinds of jobs are expanding. The MLAs, once we all agree that this will be one of our mandates, we will push for this issue. Once we start pushing this issue, it may become a reality one day if we all support each other. Sometimes pushing this kind of issue is very difficult, and some of us are here only for four years.

Once we put this as one of the mandates, and sometimes the executive and Premier changes, but once they are in place, I am sure that we could put this as a priority. We all know that, once an all-weather road is in place, a lot of the expenses will go down and there will be employment for our young people, so I think it's very important that we push this. Just like we talked about yesterday, I am sure they all think the same as all of us, all 19 of us. We can all push this so, once our Premier is in place, he will push the federal government. That is part of the Premier's job. Masi [End of translation].

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once the Premier is in place, she can push things. I agree that highways are important. The Mackenzie Valley Highway is actually one of the examples I gave in my speech. The Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Taltson, and the Slave geological road I think are major infrastructure projects, but I also said today: hold us to account by what we promise you. In my speech, I actually promised that I would be doing regional economic development plans with Indigenous governments.

I do know that, MLAs, we have a right to and we do make our own priorities, but I have also stated today that we have to stop our colonialist kind of ideal and saying that we know best, we are the answer. We have been talking over and over about building that relationship, so, if we come in with the perception and say, "This is our priority," or, "This is not our priority," we are back-stepping. We will make our priorities in this Assembly. That may be one of them, but my commitment is that, if I am elected as your Premier, then I will meet with the Indigenous governments and work with them to make regional economic development strategies and then, based on that, work with them to lobby the federal government to actually pay for that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Cochrane. Next question, we have Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In my home, everybody wants to talk about shoreline erosion and climate change. In my home community of Tuktoyaktuk, we live it. I have four houses in our community that had to move fuel tanks because the fuel tank was 20 inches away from falling into the ocean and the other one was 18. As the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, sitting on the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk for the last three and a half years, we have been working with our government and had no success. We got funding two years ago from the federal government, \$872,000, and we have been waiting and waiting for meetings, to come and work with the community to get these houses moved. Nothing yet.

On my campaign that I did, I went to every one of those four houses that are affected, and I told them we are not going to move now. The federal government came and gave us funds to try to do it. No help, nothing, so now what we are going to do is this government and you guys, the premiers, I am going to hold whoever is accountable as the Premier of the Northwest Territories to fix my problem for my people who are effected. These are, three of them are elders. Why should we move? We are not going to move. You guys are going to come, and you are going to lobby with me down in Ottawa to get the funds to do this.

You know, it's the little things like that that need to be started in the communities. Our government downloading to the hamlets and the communities, it's got to stop. It's like they said, \$30-million shortfall, can't bring it up, but we will work together. Everybody has got to work together to try to get this done, and it's not only Tuktoyaktuk. We have six other communities up and down the Mackenzie River that need help, so I want to see what can we do to work together to get it done for these people in my home community to stay where they are at and not being able to move. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. First, we have Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Simpson, Ms. Martselos, and Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. The shoreline erosion, in my view, is a safety issue, health issue, that we definitely need to deal with as a government. The federal government's \$872,000 that the Member is alluding to, there hasn't been anything happening there. We have to question why there is a stall there.

The hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, to my understanding, has been working on a plan for some time now to put some sort of a barrier wall, but there are other options that they are dealing with. We need to hear them out. We need to work with them and also to share their perspective, because they will be the experts. They know those areas of challenges that they are faced with. We, as a territorial government, need to meet with the community of Tuktoyaktuk and hear their plan.

The federal government, well, if we wait, I am not sure how long we are going to wait for them, but if it is becoming a real issue for four community households, in my view, it is part of the emergency issues that we need to deal with. If I was elected Premier, I would focus my attention to say, "Okay, what can we do? What has the community done? The federal government contribution, where is it at? GNWT, what have we been doing? Can we move forward on this file, instead of the four houses coming down?" We need to prevent that from happening.

I am not in a position to say that we should move the community members. That should be the last resort, but it's the safety of the community members and the households, so we need to deal with it immediately. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't know much about this issue, but I do know a little bit. I know that people in Hay River, their family has been

affected in one of those four homes, so I have heard a bit about it. This sounds like there are a lot of moving parts. I know that the hamlet is involved. The Government of Canada is involved. The GNWT is involved, but most of all, these four families are involved. This sounds like a constituent issue. If there is one thing that I believe as an MLA, it is that we have to take care of our constituents.

I have always behaved myself as an MLA the way that I would want my MLA to behave. If someone comes to me with this issue, it is one that I would help them pursue to the best of my abilities, because there is a small group of people who are being adversely affected by something that is far beyond their control. These are the kinds of times when the government needs to step up, and if that is not happening, then that is the time when you go to your Minister, you go to the Premier, and you make some things happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you. The Member's concerns are very important, because you have four houses in an emergency situation, and it's an issue. It's a major issue. It affects the families. It affects their lives. I mean, I don't know how they even sleep at night. I think that we are in a position to have a look at all of the possibilities and to bring you a solution.

If I become Premier, I will make sure that the solution is favourable and that it is the right thing to do. You will have to look at the whole shoreline, and you will have to make sure that it is safe for the people there, but there has to be a solution that is favourable to all parties. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is actually quite disheartening to hear that people in those homes have actually been told not to leave, to stay there, and we will find a solution, because I have seen the pictures. Some of those homes only have another few feet before they are falling off a cliff into the ocean. It is an emergency situation. I do know that, when I was in Municipal and Community Affairs, we were working on it. I know that Alfred Moses carried forward that work and tried to get money for it. I have no idea why the federal government never brought it forward. I think that we could be lobbying for that.

I know that we have also looked at, within our own GNWT, the NWT Housing Corporation stepping forward and actually moving those homes, and I think that it should still be on the table. My concern is that there are only a few more feet. We have,

like, pipes and oil drums that are actually exposed now in the pictures that I have seen. I am afraid for these people. I agree with Frieda in saying that I don't know how they are sleeping. These homes are going to fall into the ocean, and it is not just about putting a barricade; they are on big cliffs. I don't think that we have time to wait, and so I really hope that the people in Tuktoyaktuk will hear our pleas and my concern, my deep concern.

If I am elected as Premier, I will commit to actually going into the community and trying to talk to those people. I will talk to the NWT Housing Corporation, and if the federal government isn't going to step up, then we have to be willing to provide homes for these people, recognizing that some of them can't be moved, perhaps, but we have to have a solution. Contrary to what you might want to hear, I do not think the solution is leaving those homes on the edge of a cliff when there are only two feet left. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Cochrane. Next question, we have Ms. Wawzonek.

MS. WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Deputy ministers oversee the delivery and implementation of government priorities by the public service, and by law, deputy ministers are appointed on the recommendation of a Premier. Will you commit to seeking and relying on input from Cabinet, or possibly from the other MLAs, before making those recommendations? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Wawzonek. The order for responses will be Mr. Simpson, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Lafferty, and Ms. Martselos. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. As I mentioned earlier, the Premier of the Northwest Territories or the Premier in the consensus government system has less power than in a party-based system. One of the few powers is to appoint deputy ministers. I think that it is an important power for the Premier to hold. However, as we have seen today, just from the question period, there is a diverse array of expertise in this room, and I think that there is nothing wrong with consulting with Cabinet Ministers about a potential deputy minister. I would be happy to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are certain positions within Cabinet that I believe should be maintained in Cabinet. For example, the principal secretary position is critical to the Premier. It is a person of trust. It is a person who ideally can build relationships. Because that person is so vital

to the working of the Premier, I think that that has to remain within the Premier's perusal.

For deputy ministers, I think that we are open to feedback. I think that it should be, at the least, a Cabinet decision, that is, decisions that are made in Cabinet that we talk about. I think that we should be open to feedback from MLAs as well, but ultimately, it does have to be a decision that is made based on the best needs of all departments versus personalities.

I am open to hearing all Members' opinions, but I also would require that sound reasoning be provided behind every comment and recommendation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. Deputy ministers of the GNWT obviously, as the Member alluded to, deal with the priorities that we give them, the mandate, to implement and rely on Cabinet before making a decision on DMs from the Premier. I believe that it has been done in the past, when I was a Minister, where the Premier of the day would give us a head's up. "There are changes in the deputies. What are your thoughts?" There has been some engagement in the past. Maybe they got away from that in the last Assembly, I am not sure, but I think that we need to continue to have that, because we are all a team, Premier and Executive, the Cabinet and Ministers, so once there are changes coming with the deputies, Cabinet should be informed that there are changes coming down, and they might have some ideas, as well. I think we need to be open-minded, as well. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I think it is really important that the deputy ministers are appointed by the Premier and with input from Cabinet. I think that we always make sure that we have the best, and we ensure that they are there to serve the Members of the Northwest Territories, the people of the Northwest Territories, to the very best of their ability, and to make sure the decisions and the priorities that Cabinet and Members of this House have made as priorities, and they carry out that function. I think that trust with the Premier and the Cabinet is extremely important, and that we make sure that we always make sure that we have the very best to serve the people of the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. The next question, Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. We have even heard here today a number of different competing priorities in terms of large capital

projects, such as Taltson, which will be, if it was expanded to its full extent, over a billion dollars; Slave Geological Province Road, probably over a billion dollars, as well; universal childcare, \$25 million a year. It is what the feasibility study said at the end of the last Assembly. We have a bunch of competing capital projects as well as some programs and services that we can decide on.

I would like to know from each of the Premier candidates how they intend to put in place an evidence-based decision-making process so that we can make the best decisions possible amongst these competing interests. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. O'Reilly. We will have Ms. Cochrane, Ms. Martselos, Mr. Simpson, and then Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Evidence-based process is about best practices, and it is about proper planning. I talked in my speech about doing a 10-year economic development plan or strategy and then a four-year action plan based on that. Within that process, you would be looking at all of the expenditures, all of the potential revenues; and then, from that process, looking at risk management is critical within that. What are the risks? What could happen if the worst happened? And then, from that actual process, we would be able to make an informed decision. However, at the same time, I have also made a commitment to work with regional Indigenous governments to actually look at our economic development plans for regionally.

The reality is that, even when we get to that work done, it doesn't mean that everything is going to start at the same time. It is a matter of defining what would be best for the regions, for the Indigenous governments, for the people, and then negotiating amongst all of us, so it is priority setting about which one comes first, which ones can wait, which ones are critical. I don't think that is a process that should be done exclusive. I think it should be inclusive.

Again, if I am selected as Premier, then we will have a solid evidence-based strategic economic plan and action plan for the GNWT, and we would be building regional economic development plans with every Indigenous government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Cochrane. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is a really good question. I think that, with our deficit the way it is and planning for the future for future generation, the priorities of this House when we

examine them next week and beyond must be dealt with all the Members. Our priorities will be set, and Cabinet will have to lobby to make sure that the federal government also steps up to the plate, which is possible because, in most capital items, such as green energy, when you come to the Taltson, for example, most of that could be paid by the Government of Canada. We are sustaining communities for economic development, and it is a big project that needs to be done in order for us to move forward economically. That is the only way we are going to start moving forward, is when we start ensuring that the funds are going to be there for some of these major priorities.

I am very good at lobbying. I never take "no" for an answer. I always take a half "no" or a half "yes," but I have been there, I have done that, and I will continue to do that when I become your next Premier. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I appreciate the question. My speech earlier today focused on changes that could be made by the Premier, not so much broad changes, but the specific items like this, and I think this is exactly the type of thing that needs to be done. A lot of the times with politicians, we are not experts on everything, so we make decisions based on our gut. I don't think that is a good way to make decisions, especially when you are talking about billion-dollar projects.

I know the Government of Northwest Territories, just looking through the literature, has basically already said, "We are doing Taltson, and here are the steps we are taking to get there," but they haven't found a market. We haven't seen any cost projections or any revenue projections. We don't know what they are going to do, and no one does, in terms of revenue they could receive from any potential future mines. We need to think more about this type of information before we start signing cheques; not that we wouldn't sign the cheque, but we need the information.

We also need to look deeper into investment funding, I guess, is a way to put it: funding that might not pay off in the term of this Assembly. It might not pay off for 20 or 30 years, but it needs to be done. Things like early childhood intervention, early childhood education, those types of things that I wish the governments had done 30 years ago. You know, we need to start doing those types of projections well, so I am happy the Member brought this up.

As I stated earlier, as well, these sort of evolutionary improvements to how we do business won't stop after people are sworn into office. They

should continually be brought forward and, if they need to be implemented, then we implement them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation begins] In our region, there is a lot of big capital investment going on right now. As Mr. O'Reilly mentioned, there are two big items that are being produced, but right now we have to look at it first to see: is there enough evidence to make proper planning for whatever project is most important and regional corporation, what are they working on, and how are they going to be helping?

If we don't have that, can we try something? In another place, how does it look? Like right now, for example, in the Nunavut province corridor, there is a highway, the caribou are going to go on to the road, so we have to think about all the issues of each project and make sure that we know exactly what is required. Then we can make a proper decision.

There are short-term and long-term projects, and then there is another long-term project that would take us up to 10 years, maybe. How are we going to implement all these, and then how are we going to implement and maintain it? After a big capital project is worked on, we have to figure out which one is most important to us. In Tlicho, when we say "billion," we say "million," which is a billion. That's how much money we have to think about.[End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: [Mic not on] ...senior management of the GNWT cannot make them. In turn, once Cabinet positions are assigned, each person is responsible for their individual department. The Premier is the sole Minister responsible for Executive and Indigenous Affairs, and as such his primary responsibility is to work across departments. The biggest issues we are facing in this territory require us to work across departments.

If you are Premier, how will you work to break down the silos amongst our GNWT departments?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Johnson. We will start with Ms. Martselos, then Mr. Lafferty, then Ms. Cochrane, and Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think cooperation in between departments is extremely important. In leadership roles, sometimes you have to make tough decisions, and when we make decisions, we have to always realize the

effects of the decisions that we are actually making. It affects everybody, because, you know, yesterday we had this forum and, obviously, some of the decisions that were being made were not okay. They were not okay to the Indigenous people, so I think not only the departments but also in the leadership role, you have to be able to listen. You have to have an open-door policy. You have to build partnerships. You have to have the necessary contact to ensure that the delivery is done properly.

You have to be thorough, because many times you give direction, and this happens many times, even at other levels of government. You give direction, and the direction was never taken properly. Then your partner that you are trying to serve, who might be another Indigenous government, everything was not the way it was supposed to be in the first place. So we have to make sure that, when we give direction to senior management, the direction is very clear and it's the way it should have been for the people who we serve, whether it be the whole Northwest Territories, whether it be for Indigenous governments, whether it be with the private sector, whether it be other levels of government. We have to ensure that we always understand that the decisions that are made at this level affect the people who we're serving.

I think, if you are able to understand that and be reasonable about it, and keep an open mind and think out of the box, I think that we could be successful. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] Masi, Madam Chair. [End of translation] ... work across the departments. We should not be working in silos. There should be synergy; we need to be collaborating in cooperation between all departments. We currently have a social envelope. We have an economic arm envelope, as well. Those departments should be working hand in hand so they can spread the wealth.

What I mean by that is there is funding available to each department. If they can pool that funding together to service the small communities, other communities, I think that would go a long way. We've been doing that for some time, but I think we need to do more of that.

Like the Justice Department and Education. There have been programs in our schools that we've created to bring mental health into our schools, so the Health Department came in along the way, as well, to deal with issues, and the RCMP obviously took part in that, too. So it's all interrelated, like inter-agency.

There are some inter-agencies in the communities that we need to work with, as well. They consist of RCMP, health, community nurses, teachers, and community members, as well. We need to take their advice, too. I'm not sure if all communities have them, but those, the communities that have inter-agencies, we should continue working with them, because they are the experts, giving us advice and feedback that our departments should be listening to, and then providing some support, whether it be resources, and so forth.

So, Madam Chair, I believe that we shouldn't be working in silos. We should be collaborating and working together. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Regular Members do have standing committees on social issues, the economy, et cetera. Cabinet also has committees, so we have the same. A social issues committee, which I sit on; I sit on all of the, actually. The economy, environment, so we have a number of committees that actually Cabinet Ministers sit on and, just like standing committee, any Cabinet Minister is welcome at any time to attend any committee, even if you're not on the list.

We also have deputy minister committees, with the same social agendas; economic development, environment, economy, et cetera. So those things need to be continued. I don't take credit for that; that's something that the Premier of the day has done, and I think that's a great idea, but I think we're still missing the point.

The big thing that I find, and I found that over the four years, is that our meetings are so structured all the time. They are very agenda-filled. We come into these committee meetings and we've got a huge agenda, and we deal with the agenda, and then there's a place on it that says "mandate commitments" and we all say, "Look at the mandates and make sure you're doing your job," and that's kind of it. Then, at the end of the Assembly, we all stress and say, "Did we meet those mandate commitments?"

So I think we need to bump it up. It's about relationships; I've said that all day. Everybody has said that all day. So, looking at the possibility, if we're going to really work together, should we have more working groups with MLAs and Ministers combined? That's a good question. We have a Minister of Transparency at this point; I don't know if it will stay. Cabinet will discuss those things, but should we actually make it part of that position, that they actually check on the mandates on a regular basis? Does there need to be somebody? I think there might need to be somebody who actually

looks at the mandates on a regular basis and makes sure that the departments, because the mandates are not one department. It's all departments working together to match a priority, so maybe we need to have somebody accountable to that, who actually is responsible for it, so we're not scrambling at the end of an Assembly and saying, "Have we met our mandates?"

Working together and making people responsible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and thank you for the question. Again, I spoke about this at length in my speech today. This is one of the areas that the Premier can affect and needs to affect. The lack of collaboration that often happens or doesn't happen between departments affects the GNWT itself, because one department can't do its job because it can't get information from another department, and it affects service delivery. It affects how people, whether they're dealing with Finance or whatever the case may be, it affects how they receive services.

Some of the solutions I suggested were having a policy development unit accountable and that reports to the Cabinet directly, similar to the model that is used for standing committees, adapted as necessary, though. The other thing I suggest is actually using the deputy ministers as the management tools that they are. You know, utilizing their skills in managing their departments and tasking them with ensuring that their departments are cooperating. Often, the information that comes up to the Minister, it's filtered through a lot of people, and the deputy minister is one of those people, but the information is also filtered through people before it gets to the deputy minister.

That is why I also suggested having a feedback loop where the decision makers know what is actually happening on the ground, they know if people are getting information, because, as a Regular Member, we get a report that says everything is fine. If you talk to someone on the ground, things are not fine, and so there needs to be a way that that information makes it up to the Ministers, as well, so we need to task the deputy ministers with ensuring their departments are breaking down silos, are sharing information appropriately, and are working together. There is legislation that has to be followed. You know, there is privacy legislation that might have to be followed, and the last government actually made amendments to that, to allow that to happen, so we are taking steps in that direction, but it just comes down to doing it and following up on it and knowing that it's actually done. We can't just say, "Let's

break down silos," and months later say, "How is that silo-breaking-down going?" We need to do our jobs, essentially. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. I believe we have two more people on the list for questions. Ms. Chinna is next.

MS. CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Mackenzie Valley Highway will significantly affect the Sahtu region, both positively and negatively. The economic development and access to our natural resources will be also significant, and it will open up lands for development, but also will come the social impacts. The social impacts will also be dramatically seen. Currently, right now, they do exist, but then, once the highway is developed, the bridge is put in, then there are other talks of how are we going to be working towards this project. It's been in the talks for years. Presently, right now, in preparation for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, what are your plans to work towards the forecasted social impacts that may occur in regards to this project?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Chinna. We will start with Mr. Lafferty, then Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Simpson, and then Ms. Martselos. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi. Madam Chair, [translation] once the highway is open to the communities, I agree with what she said. There are a lot of things that come with all-weather roads. We have a lot of social issues that will come into the communities regarding drugs and alcohol, a lot of social impacts once the road is in the community. It also affects the animals, the wildlife, and their food. When an all-weather road is made, before that, we need to look at a lot of things, how the community will be impacted. We've talked about this all-weather road for a long time, and they collected and they did their own research and asked the communities. They talked about how it will impact them, whether it's negative things regarding alcohol and drugs.

Also, with the young people, it increases the social problems in the community. Right now, the Tlicho region is working on the all-weather road, and they did question the young people. I think education awareness is very important and also have certain programs in place to help the communities. Even the road to Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk and also the same as the Sahtu region and Mackenzie Valley, we need to think about these things. Once we have all-weather roads to our communities, we need to do an education awareness way before this happens, so it's important that that happens. We need to prepare and do research before any of these come into place. It's like this. It's like advising each other and questioning each other. This is what happened. Masi, Madam Chair. [End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. In all honesty, that is probably the hardest question I have heard today. The social impacts of any kind of infrastructure are huge. I am from Yellowknife, and I remember when the diamond mines came. Like I said, I worked for over 20 years with homeless people, and I saw the STIs increase. I saw teen pregnancy explode. I saw rapes happening constantly. I saw more addictions happening. I saw violence, women getting beaten, all the time. I do not have the answer. I wish I could say: the answer would be you have all the programs, all the supports, in every community to address them. We don't have that, so I am not going to lie to you.

I think that the only thing we can do at this time is education, education, education. Let the communities know that this is what they are going to be dealing with. Talk to the youth. Talk to the family members. Put it on the radio. Put places: call for help if you are in trouble. However, this is going to take a huge amount of resources, to be able to do that for every major infrastructure project that we did in the Northwest Territories, and it will take time to solve. I am open to more suggestions because I would love to have the answer that is feasible, but, at this point, the best I can offer based on my own experience working with homeless women and low-income families is try to let them know what's coming. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Thank you, Ms. Cochrane. Next, Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I appreciate that, bringing the point up and the question. It's an excellent question. You know, a lot of the issues we have in the territory, they became issues a long time ago and we are trying to deal with them. The social impacts that likely, unless we do something, would arise from the Mackenzie Valley Highway are something that we can deal with right now. We can take preventative measures, and I think that is important, and that is something that, like I said, I have been an MLA for four years, I wish things were done 30 years ago that we are talking about now. So this is our opportunity to do that, and we can learn from the road to Tuktoyaktuk, and we can learn from the road to Whati and what's being done.

I know earlier I said that it's going to bring tourism and industry up the valley, but, with those things come problems, come issues. If you have 10,000 vehicles now coming up the highway, there are issues with that, so those things really do need to be mitigated. Again, it is partnering with the Indigenous governments, with the local communities. It's not something that the GNWT can necessarily take a lead on. The communities know

the communities, but it's something that the GNWT absolutely has to be a part of and support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that is a really good question, the social impacts when you are dealing with major developments, especially the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I think one way of dealing with some of that is the economic growth that will bring and with regards to resources and some of those other that comes with development is the impact benefit agreements. The impact benefit agreements that you will receive from some of the developments in your area or other areas around along the highway should be spent on preventative measures, awareness programs, making sure that the people understand that there is help available, and enforcement. Enforcement is a big, major issue in every community. Many of us feel that, lots of times, even in Fort Smith, the RCMP are invisible. They are not visible. I think that those are some of the things that we have got to address when you do a development of any kind. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Sorry, I missed the question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): For our final question today, we have Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yesterday, when we were at the leaders' round table, we were told by some of the leadership not to forget our small communities. That was important. That kind of hit home, because a lot of small communities feel like they are being left behind by our larger centres.

In this day and age, there is no reason why some of our smaller communities should go without adequate communication systems, i.e., high-speed Internet access. There was recently a new fibre optic cable installed. It bypassed Lutselk'e but connected other communities. This has business and education implications. Say you couldn't teleconference, and then you are forced to fly out, for example, or if you want to take an online learning course, it is a little bit difficult to do that if you have really slow Internet. Even during my door-to-door when I was trying to communicate out to a team or to my family, it was very difficult to communicate. It was very slow.

My question to the Premier candidates is: if elected, what will you do as a Premier to ensure that all of our small communities have adequate communication systems that are on par with our larger centres? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Norn. We will begin with Mr. Simpson, then Ms. Martselos, Ms. Cochrane, and Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Simpson.

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Once again, the Premier can promote items that this Assembly brings forward as priorities, and I hope that that is one of the priorities. I see the value in high-speed Internet in terms of education and in terms of entrepreneurship, and I hope that the Assembly sees the same thing.

There is federal money in order to help expand some of these services to the communities that we should be accessing. There are partnerships available with companies, although we would have to see how those would work out. There are a lot of opportunities to put this fibre in, and we even need to start looking at whether or not communities can start owning that infrastructure themselves and possibly using that to generate income.

I know that it is hard. It is expensive in the territory. Because of our geography, it's difficult to get access on the line because it is owned by a private company, but those are the kinds of things that we need to start looking at, because I am completely in favour of connecting all of our communities and bringing us all into the 21st century. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: I think we ought to look at all of the options. Communications is extremely important. In this day and age, anywhere in the world, and especially in the North here, communications is extremely important. We don't even have cell service between Hay River and Fort Smith. If it is minus 45 outside, we can't phone anyone. If you are travelling at night, it becomes a dangerous situation.

I think we have also a monopoly in the North with Northwestel. I think that we have to have a discussion and bring them into that discussion. They have an obligation to the North, and we pay lots for all of these services that they offer to some of the larger communities. I think that there has to be a discussion on how we can improve to make sure that the communities are served and look at other options if that doesn't work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Martselos. Ms. Cochrane.

MS. COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Like people have been saying, it is important to listen. Telecommunications technology is not one of my strengths. People know that. I work well with computers, but I am not a computer programmer or anything. Luckily enough, my partner is. My partner

actually worked at Northwestel for 30-some years and just retired, so he talks a lot about this stuff.

Basically, the idea of actually being able to put it and communities have an ownership of it, my belief is, based on my learning, that it is not feasible; it is too expensive. Northwestel currently is actually subsidizing the small communities. They are not making money at it. We have to be realistic with that. It is a private business. If we take that on, are we willing to look at the deficit?

However, what I am saying is that it is not okay to have nothing. What I have been promoting, again, I haven't thought about taking on the whole ownership and putting everything full force into the communities, because I don't know if that is feasible or cost-effective or if it will be one of our priorities, but what I can say is that we have Northern Distance Learning going into the communities into high schools. This year, I believe there will be 22 communities that will be linked with our Northern Distance Learning. The GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment pays for extra bandwidth. I don't know what bandwidth is, but I know that we are paying for extra bandwidth to actually get into those schools.

I have asked my partner, I have asked the department, and my understanding of what is feasible is, if we are using that extra bandwidth into the schools, why can't we extend that to our post-secondary using those 21 community learning centres? That's when I talk about strong community learning centres. If it is only a little bit more bandwidth, pay for it, if it's feasible because, again, it's not my strength, and start with that, so that the education is appropriate.

Education, I have heard from all of us, from Indigenous governments, around this table, that it is a priority, so let's start with our children, which we are doing in our high schools. Let's expand that so that people can get more options for post-secondary, and as for developing it for the whole community or taking it onto the community, I don't see it as a social enterprise; I see it as a social deficit. Those are discussions that I am open to feedback on, because I don't know the answers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Ms. Cochrane. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. The fibre optic line that was built along the Mackenzie Valley unfortunately didn't connect to all of the communities, as it should. We need to build on that as a fibre optic line, connecting to the communities along the way.

There are other announcements as well from Northwestel. It was in the newspaper that they are connecting under Great Slave Lake onto the communities. We need to sit down with the head of Northwestel and find out what their plan is. Are they going to be connecting to all communities or just some communities? How can we partner with them? I heard on the radio that, obviously, they will be seeking out sponsor support from GNWT. Well, we are here today. We need to meet with them. Those are discussions that we need to have at the high level.

It has to be comparable and compatible to larger centres. Small communities should not be left out, as we heard yesterday from small community representatives. This is an opportunity for us to connect all communities with fibre optic lines so that we have a high-speed Internet that is compatible to larger centres. I fully support that as well. We need to sit down and talk about the initiatives on the go with the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic, building on that, and also Northwestel. Those are discussions that we need to have. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Franki-Smith): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. I have no further questions on the list for today.

Adjournment

Mahsi to all of the Members. It has been a long and full day. I know that many of you are travelling home this weekend, and I wish you all safe travels. The Territorial Leadership Committee will reconvene at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 24th. I want to remind Members that our orientation program will continue at 6:00 p.m. on Monday evening in the Caucus Room. Monday is also the federal election, so we can keep one eye on the results and the other on our own work. Thank you, Members. We are adjourned.

---ADJOURNED

