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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, March 3, 2022****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 219-19(2):
CANADA-NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING
BENEFIT

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, one of the very important values in the new Northwest Territories Housing Corporation mandate is partnership. Partnership is how we are most effectively going to address the housing needs of residents across the territory. It is critical that we work in partnership with Indigenous governments, the Government of Canada, community governments, and other stakeholders to reach our housing goals.

As we work towards improvement within the Housing Corporation, I would like to highlight one of the areas that supports addressing core need.

Prior to 2021, the Housing Corporation delivered a program called the Transitional Rent Supplementary Program. It was 100 percent funded by the GNWT and at that time of sunset, it was funded at \$250,000 per year and supported approximately 50 clients across the Northwest Territories. In our current bi-lateral agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, provisions were made for the Housing Corporation to join other Canadian jurisdictions in delivering of a new Canada Housing Benefit Program. The current Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation bilateral funds this program from 2021 to 2028, and over that time the Housing Corporation is expected to receive a total of \$9.6 million, which the Housing Corporation must cost-share.

In 2022-2023 our main estimates showed an annual budget of \$2.5 million towards this program,

up from \$1.7 million in 2021-2022. With that level of investment, the Canada Housing Benefit is currently supporting approximately 250 households across the Northwest Territories, and we anticipate that will increase with the additional investment starting in April.

The Canada-NWT Housing Benefit, a rent subsidy program, is designed to help households that pay more than 30 percent of their income on their rent. In place since April 2021, this benefit provides qualified households with up to \$800 dollars per month for rent and is a 50/50 cost share between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada. As part of the National Housing Strategy, The National Housing Strategy is a federal government initiative to address housing needs and chronic homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide this House with an update on the good work being done through the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit.

Right now, the benefit is supporting approximately 250 NWT households. This benefit is making a tangible, positive difference in their lives. When the benefit was first offered, the Housing Corporation received 50 applicants. Now the Canada Housing Benefit is oversubscribed by 20 percent, with more NWT residents expressing their interest in accessing the benefit as time goes on. The Housing Corporation is currently looking at ways to address this demand. The benefit is clearly meeting the needs to provide assistance in making rent affordable for private market units where they exist in communities.

What all this means, Mr. Speaker, is that someone who worried about being able to pay for childcare next month, now has more room in their budget. It means that someone can cope a little bit more better with the rising costs of food and fuel. It means that someone whose work hours have been cut back can still pay their rent at the beginning of the month. This benefit also helps the government address the core housing need across the territory, in this case by helping program partnerships address affordable issues.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we continue to look for ways to support our residents to secure safe homes

and maintain housing stability. I am pleased that we are able to work with the Government of Canada on this initiative.

Partnership is a theme I have spoken about in this House many times because it is the best way to address the housing needs of the Northwest Territories. One government alone cannot solve the territory's housing issues. And despite the success of the program like the Canada Housing Benefit, there is still a lot more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, as responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, I will continue to work hard to build and maintain these partnerships so that we can see more and more successes like the Canada Housing Benefit.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Housing Corporation for meeting with the federal government as well as we continue to find creative and innovative approaches and partnerships as we continue to meet the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories. Mashi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 220-19(2):
EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE
STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, this Legislative Assembly has made it a priority to advance universal childcare for residents of the Northwest Territories. Today, I am honoured to share the highly anticipated results of our work with Canada that will help us achieve this priority.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I announced that effective retroactively to January 1st of this year, the average cost of licensed childcare for children five years of age and younger will be reduced, on average, by 50 percent. We will work with childcare providers to ensure families are reimbursed for their costs incurred since January 1st. Families can expect to see further cost reductions each year, until 2026, when we reach our goal of an average of \$10 per day childcare.

Mr. Speaker, advancing universal childcare is about more than covering costs. It is about improving access to childcare, and that is why we have committed to creating 300 new childcare spaces across the NWT. It is about supporting the recruitment, retention, and training of early childhood educators. That is why early childhood educators will see their wages rise and reflect the importance of the work they do, and why we are expanding educational and training opportunities for NWT residents.

To support this important work, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has released its 2030 Early Learning and Childcare Strategy, along with the five-year Canada-NWT Canada-Wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement and two-year action plan. The strategy provides renewed priorities for improving the quality, affordability, accessibility, and inclusivity of early learning and childcare in the NWT.

Through our federal agreements, the Government of Canada is expected to provide \$67 million for the NWT's early learning and childcare system over the next five years. Guided by the strategy and action plan, this funding will help us transform the NWT's entire childcare system.

I would like to thank the Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, communities, non-profit organizations, licensed early childhood programs, and early childhood educators. Their suggestions and recommendations helped develop the 2030 Early Learning and Childcare Strategy, creating a vision for early learning and childcare that will benefit all NWT communities, families, and residents.

We will continue to support our partners as they continue to create welcoming and inclusive early learning environments that incorporate local cultures and languages and support the developmental needs of all children in their care. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to providing a strong foundation for NWT children in their early years of critical growth and development, making life more affordable for families with children, and strengthening the NWT economy by creating jobs and enabling parents and caregivers to enter the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, these investments and actions will lead to lifelong positive impacts on children's wellbeing, learning, and development. We will see the long-term benefits of these investments for years to come in all communities across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 981-19(2):
K'AMBA CARNIVAL

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to announce that K'amba Carnival, celebrating its 40th anniversary, is back on and starts today with a fire feeding ceremony. It is hard to believe that I was only 25 years old when it started. The Minister for

Education was one years old. And Rylund, well I'm not sure.

And as we now see COVID restrictions begin to lift, with more anticipated for April 1st, this event is a great reminder that we should cherish every moment we have. Enjoying events such as K'amba Carnival with family and friends is a good start, especially which temperature predictions are for single digits.

Mr. Speaker, to pull this event off it requires ingenuity, dedication, and countless hours by a dedicated community and group of volunteers. The impact K'amba Carnival has on the Katl'odeeche First Nations spills over into the town of Hay River where it generates much excitement. The people of Katl'odeeche First Nation and Hay River look forward to this event as not only great entertainment and fun for all but recognition that spring and warmer weather is just around the corner.

Mr. Speaker, this year's events will include a children's talent show, crowning of the K'amba Carnival Queen, Prince, and Princess, the \$10,000 bingo, drum dance, adult talent show that includes singing and jiggling. And, of course, the highly coveted dog races.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself, the MLA for Hay River North, and all Hay River residents, I would like to send a big shout out to the Katl'odeeche First Nation, the K'amba Carnival committee, and the many volunteers that are making this year's event a reality. I encourage all of you here to drive or fly to Hay River this weekend and enjoy some of the events taking place. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 982-19(2):
RCMP

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my statement last November about the Territorial Police Service Agreement, I talked about an aspect of that agreement called the contract management committee. The Minister of Justice explained that the contract management committee is a national-level group that supports information sharing and collaboration among provinces and territories, the public safety, Canada, and the RCMP.

The NWT is represented on that committee by the assistant deputy minister solicitor general branch of the NWT. While that may sound good on paper, this is not what I was hoping to hear.

Mr. Speaker, there are some innovative ways that jurisdictions have developed to make the RCMP more accountable. For example, in 2010 Yukon's government initiated a review of the Yukon's police force, which took several years, but the outcome was very positive for their citizens and it helped restore some trust in the RCMP. Among the recommendations are the establishment of the Yukon Police Council consisting of seven members, three of whom are nominated by first nations and is chaired by the deputy minister of Justice. Another was to change the RCMP staffing process to incorporate community participation in the selection of the detachment commander. Another recommendation was for the RCMP to create and staff a position titled "professional standards" who assists RCMP to provide a thorough investigation of complaints and timely resolutions for all complaints.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the commanding officer of the NWT RCMP is doing enough to connect and communicate with community leadership. From what I've heard and experienced in my past role as Chief of the Salt River First Nation, there does not seem to be a strong working relationship between the RCMP and the community leadership.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the other day in answering one of my questions, the Minister of Justice stated he did not have significant concerns about the transparency and accountability of the RCMP. I find that statement concerning because I know of many people across the NWT who feel differently. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

There are people who feel intimidated and unsafe when engaging with police for various reasons. People of colour and Indigenous people are routinely racially profiled for crimes they haven't even committed, yet they are always the suspects by police. Victims of sexual assault are re-traumatized, undermined, or simply not believed by police when they report crimes. There are people who don't bother calling police in actual emergencies because they either simply don't come or they arrive late after the situation is over.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on but, clearly, there are major gaps between policing and both average citizens and community leadership alike. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 983-19(2):
ARCTIC SECURITY

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the invasion in late February, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has not only dominated the news but the hearts and mind of many people within the Northwest Territories and worldwide. Our prayers go out to the people of Ukraine who are caught in the crossfires of this conflict.

Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing a global response to the crisis from economic sanctions, air traffic directives, sporting bans, protests responding to Russia's actions, and at the same time donations, volunteers, and an outpouring of support towards the Ukraine.

A few days ago, the NWT Liquor and Cannabis Commission removed products of Russian origin from its shelves while the federal government just announced an intention to ban imports of crude oil from Russia. Why does this affect us, Mr. Speaker? Two words: Arctic security.

Mr. Speaker, we all know we share Arctic waters with Russia. They are our circumpolar neighbours. Inuvik has the most northern military base in the Northwest Territories. With full federal support, Inuvik has even increased the airport runway for the use by CFA teams to support Canadian sovereignty in the North and NORAD obligations.

Recently, news articles have shown Russian interest in Canadian jurisdiction. There are reports of submarines in the Arctic Ocean and, just recently, a plane was grounded with Russian nationals in it.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the GNWT does not manage Canada's Arctic border security or the national defence but the GNWT does have a responsibility to liaise with the federal government and convey information to the public. I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 984-19(2):
WORKING CONDITIONS AT YELLOWKNIFE
SOBERING CENTRE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year Cabin Radio reported on allegations of unsafe conditions and mismanagement at the sobering centre. I asked then WSCC minister about the centre's inspection frequency went and how the allegations would be

addressed. Minister Thompson responded that there had been seven contractor-initiated inspections since 2019 in response to incident reports, and that there were no outstanding issues with the sobering centre.

Mr. Speaker, this was in stark contrast to what a then employee described after contacting my office. It was surprising to me that the centre was only being inspected when the contractor identified a problem as it's across the street from WSCC. Private companies are subjected to random inspections yet an operation serving our most vulnerable during a pandemic doesn't warrant the same attention?

When asked about measures being taken to investigate the allegations, the Minister put the onus back on minimum-wage employees to raise issues under the Safety Act to their employer. One year later and the RFP to operate the centre has been issued late, causing a six-month gap as the current contractor declines to extend, something HSS says they learned of recently, with no explanation for such poor planning.

Last year it was asked if the issues raised by the whistleblowers would be investigated and at that time Minister Green said, and I quote, "I want to assure you that this matter is being taken seriously and is being actively investigated by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority." However, a year later, we find out from media that the authority in fact did no such thing and instead asked RCMP to investigate the whistleblowers against whom no charges were ultimately laid.

The Minister knew we wanted the concerns investigated but looked to punish those brave enough to speak instead. This government talks about informed decisionmaking and change but instead chooses to punish those who raise the alarm. My own time in Cabinet is a good example.

Mr. Speaker, how much is this reactive response going to cost us? How much is it going to cost our vulnerable sector as services are disrupted and shifted?

The Minister says that service levels will be maintained and monitored with the ability to expand capacity if required. But how will she know if the onus is on employees to come forward with issues to their employer? WSCC doesn't think it's their role to proactively monitor but only react when the operator reports something. And now that the operator is the WSCC Minister's colleague, how much will they be really held to task again when issues are raised? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 987-19(2):
COMMUNITY RESIDENCY POLICY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are always talking about connection - connection between economic and social success, culture and climate, and people. Small world stories with roots in the North are my favorite, and I love to learn of the familiar connections between colleagues, constituents, and Northerners. The North is vast in land but small in personal connection.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is frustrating that the government upholds a policy that dismisses the connections that exist across our territory and our reliance on one another. The Housing Corporation community to residency policy requires an NWT resident to live in a community for a predetermined number of months before they can add their name to the public housing waitlist. A waitlist, Mr. Speaker.

If implementing the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, the MMIWG Calls for Justice, and the TRC Calls to Action are a priority of this government, then they need to flip policies and ask if the unintended consequences are justifiable.

The community residency policy violates the TRC's section 1 Call to Action, To enable aboriginal communities and child welfare organizations to keep aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments regardless of where they reside.

MMIWG's Call for Justice 1.1, We call upon all governments to ensure that equitable access to basic rights such as employment, housing, education, safety, and healthcare.

Call for Justice 4.1, All governments must immediately ensure that Indigenous peoples have access to safe housing.

Call for Justice 12.4, We call on all governments to prohibit the apprehension of children on the basis of poverty and cultural bias.

In the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 21, Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I speak about this policy often in the House. In response, the housing Minister identified the following reasons for maintaining this policy:

1. People from across Canada will come sit on our waitlist.

People are not going to flood the NWT to come join our housing crisis, Mr. Speaker.

2. Our waitlist will be skewed.

Mr. Speaker, the government demands people who do not need housing put their names on a housing waitlist to access income assistance. So this issue of the housing waitlist is irrelevant.

3. Housing needs need to be addressed by specific community.

Housing is a NWT crisis. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apparently have a lot to say on this one.

3. Housing needs need to be addressed by specific community.

Housing is a NWT crisis, Mr. Speaker, not a community crisis, and if someone wants to move to self-determine their health, economic, or social sufficiency, then let them.

4. And finally, Mr. Speaker, the most popular response, is we have to be fair.

This policy is not fair. It keeps people from jobs, family, and autonomy. But even more jarring, Mr. Speaker, it prevents Northerners from accessing resources, prevents parents from leaving violent relationships, and jeopardizes a parent's ability to keep their children out of the child welfare system.

If the Housing Corporation needs to amend the point system it uses to allocate housing, then do that. But stop upholding a policy that limits a person's self-determination in health, economic, and social sufficiency through housing, because that is not fair. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 986-19(2):
MINIMUM WAGE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are some conflicting views on raising the minimum wage and what the minimum wage should be established. These views were well sought out in the minimum wage committee report, and if that was a public document people could see that debate but it's not, Mr. Speaker.

Some economists feel raising the minimum wage brings inflation while others say it actually helps the economy by increasing purchasing power of citizens.

However, Mr. Speaker, there's one thing we can all agree on, that the cost of living in the Northwest Territories is way too high and living on \$15.20 an hour is more like struggling to survive, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am proud that in this House we raised the minimum wage and we now have the second highest minimum wage in Canada, and I think it is only appropriate that we have got the second highest minimum wage in Canada, considering we have the second highest cost of living, that we try to keep that place, Mr. Speaker.

During the pandemic, we topped all of our workers up to \$18 an hour. We called them heros, and that support has now ended. But I hope that one day we can get those workers their raise back, Mr. Speaker. I propose we tie our minimum wage to inflation.

Manitoba already has inflationary increases. BC and Nova Scotia recently announced they are moving in this direction. The Yukon and Saskatchewan tie their minimum wage to the consumer price index, Mr. Speaker. I think it is the time that the NWT moves to tie the minimum wage to inflation or the consumer price index to make sure that workers don't fall behind once again. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 987-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES BIOFUELS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The GNWT has set a target of reducing its GHG emissions by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. As we know, the NWT is heavily dependent on burning non-renewable fossil fuels to meet our transportation, space heating, and other needs. Switching to a renewably-sourced liquid fuel is an obvious way to lower our greenhouse gas output and, with it, our contribution to climate change. That's a key part of the plan that the Yukon government has developed.

Investigating those possibilities prompted the GNWT to commission a report by the Saskatchewan Research Council on biofuel substitution that was carried out in three phases.

The first phase, the council identified petroleum fuel demand and required specifications, possible sources for biofuel supplies, and explored processes and feedstocks for producing biofuels for use in the NWT. In the second phase, the potential greenhouse gas emission reductions and costs of three biofuel-use scenarios were explored. Finally, uses in other jurisdictions were investigated and the steps required to implement a pilot project in the Northwest Territories were identified.

The study concluded that although there is a significant potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through biofuels, availability and performance in Arctic conditions are an issue. But, if renewable diesel is technically feasible, it could reduce GHG emissions by 541 kilotonnes at a cost of \$62 million per year, more than the 517 kilotonne reduction of the entire 2030 Energy Strategy, and over twice the stated impact of Taltson Expansion at a fraction of the cost.

The federal clean fuel standard will require liquid fuel suppliers to gradually reduce the carbon intensity of the fuels they produce and are designed to support the use of renewable liquid fuels in Canada. The standard could be used to encourage the production of Arctic-grade renewable diesel by providing extra incentives.

So where do we go from here, Mr. Speaker?

The GNWT study recommends two actions. First, a pilot during the summer months to confirm that equipment and infrastructure are compatible with renewable diesel blends. And second, a cold weather test of the performance of diesel fuels. I'll have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure later today on next steps in testing biofuels in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 988-19(2):
OUTSTANDING ELDER VOLUNTEER AWARD
RECIPIENT MARGARET HENDERSON

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take the opportunity today to congratulate Yellowknife South constituent Margaret Henderson on being the recipient of the MACA Outstanding Elder Volunteer of the Year Award for 2021.

It was obvious from the words on her nomination form as to all the reasons she should be the recipient of this year's award, with examples of hard work that she has contributed to the Food Rescue Yellowknife since it began back in 2008.

I'd like to echo the praise we heard yesterday from the Minister of MACA acknowledging Ms. Henderson's contribution from the very earliest days of the organization leading to it becoming the robust organization that Food Rescue is today. So, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Marg, and thank you to her for all the work that she does putting into food security and sustainability for the people of Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize my wife Helen Edjericon. She's also working on her master of education, and she also received a scholarship for her master program. My wife, Helen Edjericon.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Welcome to the House. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize our two interpreters from Inuvik - Lillian Elias and Valerie Stefansson. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. I'd like to welcome everyone in the Chamber today, especially our interpreters, just reminded me, I was asked yesterday to remind Members to speak slowly. There's a couple in here that I won't name but just be mindful of the interpreters. They were struggling the last couple days with some of us, and just keep that in mind. But welcome, Ms. Edjericon. It's always good to have family support for our Members in the Chamber. Mahsi Cho. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Member for Frame Lake.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 5-19(2): PASSING OF EVA HENDERSON

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I rise to acknowledge the passing of Eva Henderson at 96. Eva came here in 1974 with her husband and family. A registered nurse, she worked at Stanton Hospital and helped establish Yellowknife home care services. She was the founding and lifetime member of the Northwest Territories Nursing Association. In later years, she ran a bed and breakfast with husband Eric. Eva's vivacious nature

and ready smile will be missed, while her influence will be felt for years to come. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 973-19(2): RUSSIAN PLANE LANDED AT YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I questioned the Minister responsible for Infrastructure on rumors that a Russian-registered aircraft landed at the Yellowknife Airport. Since then, I've had people reach out to me, not only from the NWT but from across around Canada as well, some of whom were just looking for additional information, clarification, while others provided suggestions on what should be done with the aircraft and occupants, most of which I will not repeat here.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister clarify, in fact, whether or not the aircraft was Russian-registered and where did the flight originate from? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can advise our understanding is that the plane is registered to a company in Austria. The flight originated in Geneva, Switzerland. Until the Canadian Border Service met the plane here in Yellowknife and determined that the passengers were Russian nationals, there were no flags raised. Quyananni.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that confirmation. And with the nationality of the passengers being Russian, I guess what's the current status of both the passengers and the aircraft at this time? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada continues to gather the facts required to be able to make a determination on the next steps regarding these passengers. So Canada will also continue to hold the plane while the investigation is ongoing. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the passengers were looking at going on expedition and given that, I just ask if the Minister's department was contacted by either the group or by any federal government agencies confirming that the plane had Russian nationals on it? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was no knowledge of the expedition or contact with the Department of Infrastructure prior to the plane landing on Tuesday. I was disappointed with the lack of engagement, and I'm hopeful that they at least reached out to the Yellowknife First Nation or the Tlicho when accessing their traditional territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with what is taking place in the Ukraine, we need to talk about sovereignty protections and monitoring northern Canada. I also find it very disappointing that the federal government is not providing timely information that involves Russian nationals.

Can the Minister advise how her department will rectify this communication failure with the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So once we opened the borders to tourists on March the 1st, our ability to be able to restrict access to the Northwest Territories has ended. It is now up to Canada to be able to determine whether the Russian nationals are allowed to stay in Canada. That's -- I can't say anything further as it is really out of our hands, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 974-19(2):
POLICING

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice provide any measurable data or evidence that demonstrates a positive benefit to the people of the Northwest Territories in relation to the increasing costs of policing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the data at my fingertips. I'd be happy to get back to the Member with that information. Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I talked about the government of the Yukon conducting a review of the Yukon police force. That review produced a final report, along with several recommendations for improving oversight to the RCMP and building trust with the public. The NWT could learn a thing or two from that work.

Has the Minister or the Justice department ever looked at the Yukon's police force review, and if so, have any of these recommendations been considered for the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I haven't read the report but when the Member brought it to my attention, I did have a brief look at it. The department is aware of the report, and one of the things about having a national body like the RCMP is that all jurisdictions share information and so the NWT does work especially closely with the Yukon and Nunavut. So that information is shared between the jurisdictions as well. So there is definitely an awareness of that report and its findings. Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if he or the Department of Justice has ever considered conducting a review of the NWT police force like what has been done in the Yukon? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've just initiated that review. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, in 1999, the Yukon government created the Commanding Officer's (Yukon) First Nation Advisory Committee. It was created to foster a healthy and positive relationship between First Nations and the RCMP. That committee meets twice a year.

Has the Department of Justice ever considered or attempted to work with the Indigenous groups in the NWT to create a similar committee for the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The commanding officer of G-division also has an Indigenous advisory committee, and they meet biannually. It's made up of community members and elders.

Of course, people may remember the RCMP is also working with the Dene Nation on an innovative program that is well underway, that was announced last year. And the GNWT, the RCMP, and Salt River First Nation are working together to address some of the outstanding issues out of that jurisdiction. So there's lots of work underway. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 975-19(2):
NATIONAL DEFENSE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, I would have questions for the Premier.

Can the Premier explain how the GNWT liaisons with the national defence in security efforts? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Canada takes the lead on international security and defence, including Arctic security. The Department of National Defence will respond to any military threat in the Arctic. Canada is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which supports security of member nations. Canada and the United States partner in the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) with the goal of defending North America and protecting critical infrastructure in Canada and the States.

Last summer, they committed to modernizing our north warning system, of which we have seven in the Inuvialuit region.

Our security is a priority for the GNWT and for our Indigenous partners. It's a priority in our NWT chapter of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, in fact. So we meet regularly with the joint task force here in the North. They regularly conduct exercises throughout the North that many of us are aware of. It includes the Canadian Armed Forces and Reserve members, including our Canadian Rangers.

We also participate in the Arctic Security Working Group where we share information and cooperation among federal and territorial government departments, including the national defence, the coast guard, the Canadian space agency, the RCMP, the United States military, as well as nongovernment organizations, academics, private sector, and other stakeholders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding of the Arctic Council, that Russia has now been made the chair on the last time that they met. So what role does the Arctic Council, which Russia currently is the chair, have in Arctic security and what tables are GNWT at in this or where any conversations taking place in this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Arctic Council is actually a forum for cooperation and collaboration on critical issues affecting the Arctic, but it doesn't include defence and security.

However, based on what's going on in the Ukraine, member countries, including Canada, have raised concerns about Russia's leadership of the Arctic Council and they're pausing participation on all meetings of the council at this time.

I also want to say that since this has been going on, I've met with the northern Premiers across the three territories. We all have concerns, and we've written a letter to our prime minister to request a meeting with him to discuss the Arctic security.

We've also requested that Arctic sovereignty be included in our next Council of Federation meeting, which happens this summer, and we want to be an agenda -- it needs to be a priority for all jurisdictions across Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think in this House when it was raised yesterday that there was a Russian plane landing, you know, everybody kind of gets excited and we think for a while there, we're just watching it on TV but, you know, it's just over the ocean for us. It's just across the road or, some may say.

So does the Premier expect an increase of military presence in the NWT, especially around the coast in Inuvik now or in the near future, or is any of that discussion been happening? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no doubt that our waters are opening up. We've known that for a while; we're watching it. Canada does acknowledge that the Arctic is becoming an international interest, and we've been having discussions on that and those will continue.

Right now in our discussions with Canada, there's no clear threat. The threat is on Ukraine. But we're going to continue to have the discussions, including the one with the prime minister that we've asked to meet with now. We need to ensure the security of Northerners.

But I also want to reinforce to the people of the Northwest Territories that we're going to have Russian tourists. We're going to have researchers. We're going to have explorers. We possibly will have family members of Russian residents that live in the NWT. The civilians of Russia are not the threat. So people need to realize that.

I've been watching the news, we've all been watching, and many Russian people are also not liking what's going on in the Ukraine. So don't blame all people. But I do want to reassure the residents, again, that the GNWT and our sister territories are aware of what's going on. We're watching closely, and we're working closely with the federal government to make sure that we protect our Arctic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Premier for that. You know, I just wanted to bring it up in the House so that way, you know, our residents know kind of where we are as a territory in discussions or what's the threat and, as you said, there's no threat at this time, which is great news. And I'm glad that you mentioned the part where, you know, we don't -- we will have Russian families and tourists and people coming here. And, you know, I know better than a lot of people, like Indigenous people being targeted for just of who they are. And with COVID we found out -- you know, with COVID, we noticed that Asian-descent people were being targeted, you know, so more of just a thank you for your information, and I'm glad that -- you know, I'm glad I'm Canadian. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. I take that as a comment. Thank you. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 976-19(2):
WORKING CONDITIONS AT YELLOWKNIFE
SOBERING CENTRE

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

What are the ramifications of the six-month gap in the contractors for the sober centre? For example, will there be additional expense incurred by the GNWT? Is the department going to retain the dozens of employees from the centre to minimize the disruption to clients? Any information that we can get would be very helpful so I can reassure my constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member raising this issue so that I can provide some additional information.

The NWT Disabilities Council has been our partner in operating the day shelter and sobering centre for the last three years, since the centre opened in the fall of 2018. And they gave us notice on February the 24th that they did not want to take the six-month extension that we offered, and so they then went through the process of notifying their staff that they would be laid off.

The NTHSSA has already announced that they will be operating the day shelter and sobering centre

from April the 1st onwards. There will be a change in a services where the downtown day shelter, the one that's on 50th Street, will be for sobering, particularly overnight, and that the other day shelter, the one that's located at the visitor centre site, will be for daytime use. So we don't expect any disruption in services there. There will be people to provide it. We're interested in providing opportunities to the disability council staff to work with us if they're interested in doing that. So our priority, of course, is to ensure that the homeless population has seamless services from us during the day and then over to the shelters at night, and that will continue. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually think that's going to help some of my constituents at Norseman who complain of people leaving the day shelter and then wandering into their apartment building at night. So I'm happy to hear that.

Next, can the Minister -- or tell me if her and her department are willing to engage with the past and present employees of the sobering centre to ensure that their experience and their knowledge is being captured and retained in order to inform future operations but also to help with the award of the RFP? I think these are the people that are the most situated to know what maybe didn't work in the last contract, and perhaps they could help to inform the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the day shelter services were evaluated in 2019, and we learned a lot at that point and we were able to implement some of the changes before COVID arrived and turned everything upside down. The disabilities council was able to provide some innovative services, especially in the early going, where they provided a place for people to stay 24 hours a day, and that was very well received.

The employer here is the NWT Disabilities Council on contract with the NTHSSA, and I can certainly mention to the staff that it might be a good idea to connect with the staff generally. But we have to respect the fact that in this situation, the disability council is the employer so we can't just barge in there and start talking to people without their consent. But we are, of course, interested in the knowledge that the disability council and its staff have acquired in the last three years. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister herself said that being in 2019 was pre-COVID, so I do think there is definitely some lessons to be learned and knowledge to be captured by following through on that, and I would ask that hopefully the Disabilities Council would work with the Minister and the department to provide some feedback.

My next question is it would only seem to me to be a retaliatory measure, why did the Minister ask the RCMP to investigate the whistleblowers? The Safety Act enshrines a worker's right to a safe workplace. How can this be honoured if workers are afraid to speak out for fear of RCMP investigations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I didn't review the information that was released, but I understand that it breached the privacy of the people about whom the information was collected and as a result of that breach of privacy, the matter was referred to the RCMP. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned if -- or confused, actually. If the Minister is open to hearing feedback and response, then I'm quite surprised to hear that she never actually read what the whistleblowers had to say about the sobering centre. I did, and I actually spoke with them, and what was said to me was quite concerning.

So does the Minister commit to ensuring that her colleagues with WSCC have a more proactive inspection going forward with the new contractors such that we're not in this situation again in a year? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the service provider going forward until the summer, when the new RFP will be awarded and a contractor in place, is the GNWT. So certainly Members are welcome to hold the GNWT to account for the operation, both of the temporary day shelter at the visitor centre site, and the one that's downtown. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 977-19(2):
HOUSING

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of the Housing Corporation. I'm wondering if the Minister of the Housing Corporation will remove the community residency policy? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And currently with our strategy and our renewal and the review of the whole Housing Corporation, we will be looking at all policies within the corporation.

But looking at removing the residency requirements, I want to say that, you know, we have 33 local housing authorities that are operated by community members. Most of the hires are from the community as well too. They do have the authority within those local housing organizations, the boards, and the chair, to look at lifting those residency requirements depending on if they see that as an issue in their community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have the opportunity to go and talk to all of the different LHOs and let them know how this policy is inadvertently affecting residents of the Northwest Territories. So will the Minister have that conversation with LHOs and remove the community residency policy from the Housing Corporation's policy network? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in respect to the local housing authorities and how they manage our service contracts at the ground level, I'm in full support of whatever they decide. Myself coming from a smaller community, I see that, you know, residency does become an issue. I've had where I've experienced some residents moving back into the community that were out of the community for X number of years that decided to return. I've had people within -- that were sitting on the waitlist for seven years, three years, and the number goes on. We need to maintain fairness and consistency when delivering our programming. We also see the effects with our students returning back to the communities, incarcerated people returning back to the communities, and we have to be fair when we're allocating these units. But in respect, we do have residents that have been sitting on that waitlist for quite some time that end up with -- that do have medical issues as well. The applicants come with different needs throughout the Northwest Territories, and we try to work within the local housing authorities and supporting them when making these decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd love the opportunity to respond to each of those points, but I think you'd cut me off.

It sounds to me like what needs to happen is a reassessment of the priority point system that's allocated to residents whose names are on the waitlist so that all of these issues, that the Minister is stating that add to fairness, are the ones actually being evaluated.

So will the Minister remove the community residency policy and instead look at revising the point system? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm open to a lot of different changes throughout the corporation. The Member has raised an issue that I see throughout the territory as well. And it could be something that's brought back. I'd like to bring that back to my department and look at that as well because we are under review of all policies throughout the territory. But like I had said, we need to maintain the fairness and consistency in our smaller communities respecting our service agreements that the boards and the chair people do provide for us on our behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I've been bringing this policy up in this House since February of 2020, and so I appreciate that the Minister's willing to go back and talk to the department and bring it back to me but after two years, my patience is wearing thin. So I just want the policy, really, to be reevaluated for what it is, because it isn't fair.

So I guess my next question for the Minister is how is it fair, then, if the Housing Corporation cannot stipulate how a waitlist is used however ECE can stipulate that anybody who wants access to income assistance must put their name on a housing waitlist even if they don't need housing? So I'm wondering why the discrepancy and when Housing Corporation can step in and when they can't. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have the conversation with my colleague as well in looking at that waitlist for income support. But I really want to stress that, you know, I hear what the Member is speaking about and it is an issue throughout the territory. But we have 2600 units throughout the Northwest Territories. We have a significant waitlist. The last number that I got a couple of years ago was 900 people on our waitlist. We don't have enough units to house every single person in the territory. That is why we need to maintain fairness and consistency with the policies that we do have.

But I will have this conversation with my department and really look at that point rating system as well too and how we could further accommodate people of the Northwest Territories. But I really want to emphasize one community, we could have 25 people on that waitlist, an additional 10 people coming back into the community -- I will bring that back to the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 978-19(2):
BIOFUELS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure who has lead responsibility for the 2030 Energy Strategy, and her department commissioned a recent research on biofuels in the NWT.

Now that we know the promise and the challenges that biofuels present, I'd like to know from the Minister what are the next steps and proposed timeline? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT recently commissioned a study on liquid biofuels, such as ethanol, bio diesel, and renewable diesel. The study found that there are significant challenges with ethanol and bio diesel in our old climate and our long-term storage requirements. The study did find that renewable diesel could be used as a diesel substitute in the Northwest Territories if the formula is right. However, right now, there is a limited international production of renewable diesel, and what is being produced is being sold under a contract and cannot be brought into open market. Once we get the renewable diesel that meets our cold climate requirements, we will attempt to get some -- perhaps to do a trial study. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. It's my understanding that there's quite a bit of unallocated money remaining from the federal Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund but that there's some conditions that prevent its use to fund trials.

Can the Minister tell us how much money is left to be allocated and whether her department will ask the federal government to permit use of these funds for trials of biofuels? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now, and this is subject to change as we have our yearend numbers, there's approximately \$2.7 million available under the GHG grant program for buildings and industry until March 2024.

Under our federal rules, LCEL funding cannot be used for operational expenses such as biofuels. We have asked the federal government if there's any flexibility, and they have responded that there is not.

We do track federal funding programs, and we will continue to look for a program that might find funding for this type of project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I'm happy to work with her to put some pressure on the feds.

So a significant portion of the carbon tax paid by large emitters goes to fund installation of greenhouse gas reduction infrastructure but switching to biofuels doesn't really require any infrastructure. And it's not clear what -- whether the retained carbon tax money set aside for GHG reductions can be used to purchase biofuels.

Can the Minister confirm whether any of the GNWT-retained carbon taxes and/or the large emitter trust funds can be used to purchase biofuels for testing and use in the NWT? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance administers the Large Emitter Grant Program. However, I do want to perhaps, with my colleague's permission, speak a bit about the program.

It is an application-based program that allows large emitters to receive grants up to the amount in their individual account for projects that reduce their GHG emissions at least 5 percent from the baseline business as usual. If a switch to biofuels from regular diesel will reduce GHG emissions by 5 percent on an ongoing basis, then the large emitter may apply for a grant for those costs of the switch. The cost of the liquid biofuels itself would not be an eligible cost.

The Large Emitter Grant Program does not include grants for research. However, if the research is applied and produces a 5 percent reduction in GHG emissions from the baseline, then large emitter may apply for a large emitter grant.

Retained carbon taxes going to general revenues and are allocated based on government priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. That's probably some of the best reasons I've ever heard to change the large emitter trust account and the policy around that. I talked to the Minister of Finance about it. She committed to review it. Nothing's changed. Nothing.

But I want to turn to the report on biofuels identified that 75 percent of the territory's emissions come from industry. I understand that De Beers is a large emitter, as a corporation has committed to carbon neutral by 2030. Yukon government is relying on biofuels as part of its climate change work. The feds are working on clean standards. There's a lot

of things working together here. We just need to get our own government on board.

So can the Minister tell us whether there are any plans to partner with industry or other governments to conduct a trial of biofuels in the NWT? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would gladly partner with industry for such a project. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, the availability of Arctic-grade product is a challenge. We understand that there are several renewable diesel refinery projects that are under development in Canada, and we hope this will lead to Arctic-grade renewable diesel becoming available for purchase soon. You know, when this happens, we'll be able to look to partners to be able to trial this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 979-19(2):
MINIMUM WAGE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last minimum wage report was never made public, and I understand the Minister's position and he told the committee that the work they would do would remain confidential. But I understand that we're now looking at reviewing the minimum wage again. And I just don't want to be standing here at that time asking that question once again.

So can the Minister speak to what the process is going forward for the next minimum wage review? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Generally what happens is every two years the minimum wage committee is struck, and it does a review of the environment in the territory and produces some recommendations for the Minister in regards to the minimum wage. The department mentioned to me that they were embarking on that process again and I said, just wait. I'm not sure if that's the route I want to go.

The committee does a lot of great work, and I appreciate the work the members put in but, you know, given the criticism by the Members about that process, I might be taking a different approach. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure the Minister will keep us apprised of his different approach.

One of the things I would really like the Minister to look into is tying our minimum wage to inflation. I know we have the second highest right now, but we're kind of in a tie with Yukon and BC and it looks like Yukon's going to pass us on April 1 when inflation goes up. And so we're kind of in this constant battle where we have a political choice to raise the minimum wage as opposed to many jurisdictions who just automatically raise it with inflation. Is pegging the minimum wage to the consumer price index or an inflationary measure something the Minister is willing to do? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We haven't done that in the past, and I don't want to speak for the previous Ministers, but when I was elected, that year minimum wage was \$10. I've only been here six years. So it went from \$10 up to \$15.20 in a relatively short amount of time. So we far outstripped the rises to CPI or inflation. And so we haven't been in a position where we would want to do that. You know, if this is seen as adequate right now, this minimum wage, then it would make sense to tie it to the CPI. But I'm not sure if this is adequate. You know, there needs to be a bit more analysis. So am I willing to look at that? Yes, we always look at that. The minimum wage committee has traditionally looked at that. But it's just one factor that we have to consider. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spoke earlier that we lost the wage top-up program which brought many workers up to \$18 an hour, and then I think this year we are going to see one of the highest inflations Canadians have seen in years, and the cost of living is not getting any cheaper in the North. I just worry that, you know, we in the NWT are heading down a path where making a living wage is just getting harder and harder for other people.

Can the Minister speak to what plans the department has to ensure that NWT workers are making a decent wage that, you know, keeps the pace of the cost of living and inflation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that responsibility is not mine alone. That is -- really all of government needs to work to ensuring that. We need to ensure that we have an adequate housing stock so that the rents are affordable. We need to ensure that, you know, our economy is robust so people can find jobs. So the minimum wage, people have to remember, it's a minimum standard. You know, this is an employee's market in the Northwest Territories. Our wages, on average, are much higher than the minimum wage. It's a very small proportion of the population, and a young portion of the population, that is making

minimum wage. So minimum wage is not the tool to get to a living wage. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Member for Thebacha.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 584-19(2):
SHARING COMMON GROUND – REVIEW OF
YUKON'S POLICE FORCE – FINAL REPORT ON
IMPLEMENTATION, MAY 2014

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table Sharing Common Ground - Review of Yukon's Police Force - Final Report on Implementation, May 2014. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 23, 29, and 38; Minister's Statement 202-19(2); Tabled Document 561, 567, 578, 579-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

---SHORT RECESS

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madam la Presidente. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 561-19(2): Main Estimates 2022-2023, with Education, Culture and Employment and Justice. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and start with the first, ECE.

---SHORT RECESS

I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 561-19(2): Main Estimates 2022-2023,

and we are on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses in?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, Madam Chair, thank you. I do wish to bring in my witnesses.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in to the Chamber. Thank you.

Welcome back, deputy minister MacDonald and ADM Mr. Saturnino. And we are going to continue on where we left off yesterday under income security.

Member for Monfwi, I had cut you off due to the time. You still have five minutes left. Did you have questions under income security, or? You did, okay; I just got to fix the clock. There. You ready?

Member for Monfwi, you can continue on under income security.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Okay, yesterday I was saying about the income support and, okay, the Indigenous students, they get -- they're eligible for basic and supplementary. And I was saying there, I said a lot of students are saying that the funding that they get, it's not enough. So a lot of them are saying they're going -- they're applying for the repayable loan. And so when they do that, they are -- they were told that they have to pay, like the full amount. And it's not -- they don't like it. They would like -- some of them were saying that it would be nice if it was the same as the remissible loan where they can pay half, because a lot of them live in outlying communities, in the small communities. And if they don't get a job right away, then what SFA or the ECE does is they send their file to the collection, to the collection department. They didn't even start their life or doesn't even have a job, now right away at the beginning when they're just starting their credit is already ruined because of the collections. So lot of them -- is there any way that we can change that within the policy or the SFA can -- the department look into that by, you know, part of the renewal policy?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, thank you. Yes, as we look at SFA and, you know, how we want to improve the program, we can look at things like that. You know, there's always considerations. You know, we have to follow the rules in other legislation and there's other financial-related legislation that might be requiring us to do certain things but, you know, with the review, I want to ensure that we are developing a program that is responsive to the needs and the circumstances of all residents. And if those residents are in small

communities and they have different circumstances that require perhaps some -- a different way of doing things, then we want to look at that. So I appreciate the Member bringing it to my attention. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Another one too is that there are some students that took -- because they use up their basic and supplementary grant, which is equivalent -- which is 12-semesters, an equivalent to \$60,000. So some went on the -- because of that, they're not eligible for the remissible loan. So they have to go on the repayable loan and some are saying that -- well, some of the students that -- or the people that I talked to, they're close to 60 years old and they're saying we don't have a job. Government is not going to do a write off of that loan. They would like to see that write off.

Is there any way that can -- can SFA or ECE review those outstanding student loan for those people who are close to 60 years old or over 60 years old, those who have used up their basic and supplementary grant? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And again, we do have to follow the rules in other financial legislations. So there are processes in place to request forgiveness if you get to the point where you, you know, you're having collections called on you. So there are some processes in place but we don't want to have a program and have some people, you know, have to follow that program and others not. So what we might need is to perhaps change the program so it's a little more responsive but I don't want to, you know commit to, you know, just treating some people differently because, you know, they have different circumstances than other people might have but those other people might be following the rules, so. Short story, we were going to look at all of these things as we review the program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any other further questions? Member for Monfwi, just wait.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Oh, my five minutes is up? Okay.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under income security from Members?

All right, so just going to Education, Culture and Employment, income security, operations

expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$60,121,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we will now turn to page -- we've already done JK to grade 12 so we're going to skip that.

Labour development and advanced education, page 53, with information items on 54 to 57. Questions. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just looking at the trades and occupation wage subsidy, can the Minister I guess give me a breakdown, roughly, between the trades and I guess occupations, I suspect it's two different things, what the breakdown would be? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So just for clarity, what's the question; a breakdown between what?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Hay River South, did you want to clarify?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. It just says trades and occupation so I expect that there's two different parts to it; is that correct? And if there is, what would the breakdown be or what would be the difference between trades and occupations? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. They're not separated in the budget but perhaps Mr. Saturnino can provide a bit of a description about what a trade is versus what an occupation is. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Saturnino.

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there are 54 designated trades and 25 occupations that are laid out in some of the orders attached to the legislation. And the budgets, in this case the trades and occupations wage subsidy program, can fund either/or however I would state that predominantly the budget is spent on trades and not occupations. And that's just how things historically have operated. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'd ask the Minister if the program is actually fully subscribed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't believe so. Perhaps Mr. Saturnino can provide some of the break down on the numbers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Saturnino.

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. Over the past few years, it has not been fully subscribed. However, we've recently made changes at the end of January to expand the program to support more apprentices, so opening it up to third and fourth year apprentices and also providing additional support for women in trades. And with those changes, we're hoping that the program will now be fully subscribed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, you know, since you opened it up, what's the uptake been with the third and fourth and women in trade? Do you have any numbers or anything that you can provide us with? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'll ask the deputy minister to answer.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister MacDonald.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. As of now, that change -- that data would be a little bit too new to be able to report. That change was only announced in January. But in terms of the current breakdown, there are 298 registered apprentices in the territory. Of these, 44 percent are Indigenous and 6 percent are women. So that 6 percent is what that change to the program is meant to address, to try to increase that percentage. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And communicating I guess these changes to the, you know, to businesses and people that may be interested in the trades or occupations, how is that achieved? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. For some of the details, I'd like to hand it to Mr. Saturnino.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Saturnino.

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We did put out a news release at the end of January. In addition to that, we would use most of the normal communication tactics that the GNWT uses, so which would include advertising, website, social media. We also are communicating that directly to employers and making them aware through that way. And for those employers that currently employ women in trades where the subsidy was increased, we're following up directly with them to make them aware that the subsidy has changed and making the changes and providing them with additional support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is any of this communicated to the schools? Because, you know, we are talking about trades, I guess to say specifically, just to give an option to people instead of going post-secondary route? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. With the current education advisers that are quite recent positions at ECE, they have been communicating this type of information with schools. We have some people on that team that have trades experience, and they've really been champions of this.

We now have I believe nine positions, and the majority have been moved out into the regions. Their work has been hindered by COVID and the inability to really, you know, meet face-to-face with a lot of students. But there is definitely a push to get exactly this type of information and trades-related information out to students so that as they are planning out their careers, starting with their school career, they have some guidance and some direction and they know how to get where they want to go. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'm pleased to see that, you know, that this is expanded to third and fourth years and also to women in trades. I think, you know, it's so important with the amount of work and the houses that we need in the territories and other things as well. So, you know, what I'm hoping is that, you know, if this -- this line item, if it's fully subscribed now and,

you know, I'd look to -- like, I'd like to see us throw more money at it at some point and really push it because it's meaningful to people in the Northwest Territories.

The next point here is I just want to go to the workforce development agreement, and I just ask the Minister maybe give me an idea of what that really is and, you know, it's grants so, you know, subscription to it, you know, how many businesses or individuals or whatever were looking at it? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a large list of recipients here. So perhaps for a more comprehensible breakdown, I'll ask Mr. Saturnino to speak to it.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Saturnino.

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. The workforce development agreement provides supports. We have actually a suite of eight programs that are available, a couple of them for individuals to do skills development and self-employment, a few to employers for wage subsidies and training, and some larger initiatives for community organizations to do larger community training projects. In 2021-2022, and understanding that we have the workforce development agreement and we also have the labour market development agreement, which is a separate agreement, collectively those programs provided a direct support, financial support, to 317 individuals and employers. And we also supported 1300 program interventions for clients through our third party funding contributions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line item literacy funding, one thing I, you know, that I noticed, you know, being in business is that you do get a number of people that, you know, that can't read or write that well. And one thing we tried to do was, you know, to provide them with a few hours a day or a week to, you know, and pay them for that, to -- and to take some courses or have somebody tutor them. And there's always a cost associated with that. Is that something the department provides funding for above the wage and occupation subsidies? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That may be something that the workforce development

agreement could help out with but I'm really not sure so I'll ask Mr. MacDonald. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister MacDonald.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. So when it comes to literacy funding, ECE generally tends to utilize that through contribution agreements to third party partners. So there are an array of those across the territory. I'll use the literacy council has an example.

So sometimes that funding is for delivery of -- or development of resource for literacy. Sometimes it's for delivery of training, things of that nature. So there are a host of different ways in which we utilize those dollars. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one quick question, and it is I'd like to know I guess what the uptake is in the communities outside Yellowknife in like the trades and occupation wage subsidies and workforce development versus I guess in Yellowknife? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There's a pretty good uptake across the territory. I'm not sure if there's a regional breakdown that departmental officials might have. I'll send it to Mr. MacDonald. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister MacDonald.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay, I'm just looking through my notes if you have a second.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Just provide that to us in writing, that's fine. Okay, thank you. Labour development and advanced education, Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of questions for the Minister. One of them is about financial assistance to medical students.

Is there any financial assistance to medical students after four years? You know, because I had a constituent from Fort Smith who is going to be a surgeon, and she had a lot of problems in the last couple years getting financial assistance for graduating -- I mean, she's going to graduate but she had to get loans. And I just want to make sure that is there any program for our own students of Indigenous descent that decide to go to medical

school and to advance to that level and this person is going to be trying to -- or will try to get a job at Stanton. That's her ideal situation. And so I'm just wondering, do you have -- they had those programs years ago because we used to hear about it but we don't hear much about that anymore so I'm just wondering, Madam Chair, if the Minister could answer that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So after the 12 semesters of SFA, we have loans available and I know that there's also a number of scholarships available, and we compile a list of that. There's a significant amount of third party funding that people can access, especially once you get into things like medicine. And I know from experience that if you are pursuing a professional degree, the banks will also throw money at you in the form of lines of credit. And so you do have to pay that back but, you know, physicians, I mean, in the territory, make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. And so if you actually, you know, complete that, those studies, I don't think that that would be a -- you know, too big of an issue. So we don't have it in our program but there is a number of other avenues, and some of those avenues you do have to pay back. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Further to that answer, I still feel that, you know, we pay a lot of money to locums that are not -- they're not guaranteed residents of the Northwest Territories. Every community does. And when we have someone who is of Indigenous descent and who is a Metis person and going in to be a -- I don't know if she -- she is going to graduate, with honors from the University of Saskatchewan, and is going to be a surgeon, and who's willing to come here, you're telling me that she has to go get lines of credits that are payable back and yet we're putting all these other students through school and you're not getting the surgeon or a doctor. And that kind of is -- we have to start thinking out of the box and look after the people, because we have such a shortage of doctors and nurses and anybody in the medical field. So I just want to see the Minister's opinion if he would consider it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the SFA program is -- you know, it provides basic funding for university students. You know, there could be instances where departments want to provide

scholarships or bursaries to students, and that's done for different things. I know ECE provides additional bursaries for people going into certain -- or, you know, taking -- studying certain fields. But that's not something that SFA is doing at this point.

I mean, we could look into it but as the Member said, we need lots of doctors; we need nurses; we need trades people; we need teachers; we need virtually every profession here in the territory. So that's why we have such a large population of people who move up from the south and work for a few years and then head back down, and then someone else cycles up, because we really are lacking a lot of qualifications in the territory. So it's hard to say yes for this and perhaps no for other things, and I don't think that ECE is the department that should be doing that. It should be, you know -- if another department feels as though they need to boost a certain, you know, level of professions in the territory, then perhaps they can have some targeted measures to do that. But our program is more general in nature. I'm very sympathetic to what the Member's saying, we do need more doctors, but the program at this point is a general studies program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to switch around now to the commitment of Indigenous languages, and I want to ask the Minister if there is going to be an interpreter language translator course in a two-year diploma or a four-year program with a degree in the future? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, there is work, and this is under the budget of a previous section, but there is work towards developing a languages program, a two-year diploma which could then lead into something like an interpreter-translator program or perhaps a bachelor of education. So that work is underway. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, could this also be cross-referenced with the teacher education program? Because it would be nice that the teachers that would graduate from the teacher education program also have access to some of the courses that would be offered in the language translator course. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And I think the idea right now is to have this two-year course and perhaps it could lead to another bachelor of education degree after another two years. But I think that's a little too far off in the future for me to say one way or the other and by the time those decisions are ready to be made, the Aurora College will be making its own decisions without influence from the Minister in terms of the programming. But I'm on the same wavelength as the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at the line item around Skills Canada. I note there was the -- and it's quite small. But it's important to me. I've been a power up mentor before for the programs, and I think they do a lot of really great work. I know it's been a struggle for them during COVID because a lot of their stuff is going in to schools and dealing with children and youth and not being able to do so has been hard.

So I guess my first question is the extra \$20,000 or \$21,000 that was there in the 2021-2022 Actuals, was that a COVID bump-up?

And then could the Minister speak to whether or not we could be investing more money here in order to help Skills Canada become a bit more virtual which in the long run would help the trades programs in our smaller communities where maybe they can't travel to, say, a workshop or lab? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So as for the \$20,000 difference, I will pass it over. But we do fund Skills Canada \$70,000 in here as well as another, I think \$85,000 to labour market agreement. And, yes, I agree. I remember when they used to go to the regional centres and have their competitions outside of Yellowknife. I think it was great. So I'd like to work with them to make that happen again to -- you know, to get more kids, students interested in the trades. But on some more of the detail, I can ask Mr. MacDonald. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy minister MacDonald.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe for the 2021 year for Skills Canada, we provided them \$91,000. That was a little bit more than our typical allocation. We provided some additional federal funding to them during that year. So the difference is just going back to the typical amount. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Yeah, and that's what I thought it probably was. Again, I know it's a small line item but definitely one that I think is important.

I may have this a little bit mixed up so maybe I'll just ask for an explanation. But with this language proficiency testing, is this the testing that immigrant -- immigrants or people who are coming to the Northwest Territories that have to -- that are going through the immigration process need to take, their English proficiency, and is that offered here in the territory, and why is it no longer -- there any money there? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, that is the language -- that is, as the Member described it, it is offered here provided by College Nordique. Perhaps on how that is funded, because I know that we did provide a significant amount of funding to ensure that the backlog of, you know, applications for this program were dealt with. I can ask Mr. Saturnino for some more information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Saturnino.

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have entered into a three-year agreement with College Nordique Francophone to offer the CELPIP program. The \$46,000 you're seeing is showing on its own line is the first year funding. The remaining two years, it would actually show under the immigration budget itself. So it's buried within the labour market program's budget line. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, I'm going to maybe make the advice that any of these campaign schools being run include some accounting training in them, because it is really hard sometimes for us to figure out where the money has gone. So I'm glad to hear that it hasn't disappeared. And I just want to confirm that that now means that that test can be offered here in the North and they do not have to travel, and I see the deputy minister and Minister nodding their heads

yes. So that's great, because I have heard that has been a problem in the past.

I guess the next one I just wanted to maybe talk a little bit about, so I'm not duplicating too much, is the small community employment fund. I do see that we have had -- we have more money here than we did in the 2021-2022 Actuals, which is great. Again, I feel that this is a great way to get employment and money into small communities and into the hands of our residents.

So can the Minister speak to the plans for this work, and do we see ourselves looking to increase that in the coming years? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I'm not aware of any plans to increase it at this point. But it is a very -- I think it's a successful program. I like programs like this where they're community-driven and, you know, local communities or businesses have an idea on how to employ people and we give them money and they employ people, and that money flows directly into their pockets. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Yeah, I completely agree with the Minister. I think there that there's an opportunity here for us to mind the data of this -- these programs to see what -- to inform our work around the regional economic development plans. And I see the Minister nodding his head, and I'm assuming that that is being -- or that information from this is being fed into that.

But maybe the Minister could speak a little bit to how that actually works, and are we really taking a full advantage of those resources in order to inform the future plans for us as a territory? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and yes, there's a lot of -- a lot of information that's flowing into the different departments around labour markets, around local economies, and departments are working together to amalgamate it all and make sense of it all. For some information on how that works, I can ask the deputy minister to explain. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister MacDonald.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the small community employment item is a mandate item for this Assembly. So with that in

mind, there is an interdepartmental working group that works to pull together information from each of the departments about what they have been doing, what they're doing now, as well as to look at what can be done better going forward. So part of that work is inventorying of programs. There's been the development of a new resource to provide to communities about the various opportunities that exist across government, as well as mapping to look at programs and how they can be approved, combined, things of that nature. And it's my understanding -- well, I should say that ITI, as well as ECE, are co-leads on that. So with reference to some of the regional economic development planning, that information is being utilized by ITI in that context. So I think the plan is to provide a bit of an update on that item shortly in the coming days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I appreciate that. And I've heard earlier today already some talk about women in trades, etcetera. I guess when it comes around to these economic plans, you know, when I was first started to run for this Assembly, I heard about ridings where, you know, no women had ever put their name forward before or, you know, being told that there'd never be women elected there. And so I guess given that it would be community leadership that's sort of running these programs and designating, what's being done to kind of ensure that the gender voice or the gender lens is also being looked at as we somewhat have a bit of a patriarchal history in the North and if the leadership -- you know, and we've lost one of our great female leaders to the Assembly from one of the Indigenous organizations. So I would be concerned that maybe that voice isn't maybe always reaching regional leadership, and how does the department ensure that it is? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And so these are -- the Member's correct, these are community-driven decisions and it's, you know, community-driven application process. So really, she's touching on, you know, something that is very difficult for us to get at through a program like this. That's why, you know, even with the women in trades subsidy for the -- the Trades and Occupational Wage Subsidy, increasing it for employers who employ women in trades, that was an area where we had money and we thought we can put it towards this. But even that doesn't get at the -- really the root cause. So I don't really have a good answer on this one. This really is a community-given program and we are responsive

to the communities, and that's where decisions are made. I'm not sure if -- I don't think the deputy minister has anything to add either, so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Yeah, I don't know that I blame the deputy minister. And I am trying to be respectful in how I phrase this, having obviously -- there's no secret to anybody that, you know, where my passion lies for women and representation. So you know, I think just being live to it is probably a big concern. And then I guess my other suggestion would be that there's some way to engage with small community -- with women in small communities. And perhaps that's, you know, something to look at a different Minister for but, you know, getting -- having maybe some specific female focus. And again, I guess I shouldn't even say female or women in that it should also be people that are not gender conforming. There's the binary and the spectrum. So, you know, more of a comment, but I would like to see some sort of input to the department on these programs from that sector. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you, I'll be mindful of the time today. Yeah, trades and occupation wage subsidy, can you give us a breakdown of the success rates in the regions and what trades? And Tlicho is not part of North Slave, okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So we might be able to provide some information on where that money was distributed to.

In terms of success, I'm not quite sure what is meant by that. It's a little hard sometimes to measure success because you might have someone who is stuck in a first-year apprentice because there is no one to, you know, mentor them for their second-year apprentice. So there are some issues there.

But noting that Tlicho region is not part of the North Slave, I will see if we have a list of where this money has gone, with that breakdown. If it doesn't, we will do our best to provide that at a later date. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Oh, just wait. Did you want me to pass -- deputy minister MacDonald.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really appreciate the opportunity. I do have a list of recipients for that funding. I can read a couple of examples perhaps for the Member's benefit, but it may be best to provide a list in writing.

So some examples, you know, Arctic Canada construction, Fort Simpson Housing Authority, Inuvialuit Development Corporation. So it really is a fairly comprehensive and wide-ranging list of Indigenous governments and organizations, private sector, across the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. So we'll -- Member for Monfwi, if we can get a list or a breakdown for her region, that would be great. I think that's what she's asking. Thank you. Member for Monfwi, did you have further questions?

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you. Career development and training, the number is really low in this one. It says 30. Well, there was nothing in 2021. I think we know why. But it's budgeted for 30. Why the number is so low when in many of the small communities because there's career development, a lot of people benefit from this position. So I'm just wondering why it's low?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And in fairness, most of this \$44 million is for career development and training in one way or another. But for that specific item, I can ask Mr. Saturnino to chime in. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Saturnino.

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister alluded to, there's a lot of funding in this budget that goes towards career development, and a lot of it is spread out throughout the regions.

This particular line, \$30,000, is actually funding that is currently earmarked to support programs through the Mine Training Society. And they have, in 2021-2022, were not actually -- did not deliver a number of programs however the funding still remains there. And we use it typically for supporting participant costs, where the majority of their program is funded through the federal government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there other Members who wish to ask questions on labour development and advanced education?

Seeing none, Members, please turn to page 54. Education, Culture and Employment, labour development and advanced education, operations

expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$54,215,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. There are additional information items on page 58 through 64. Did the Minister wish to switch out witnesses?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And for the record, it's been Mr. Michael Saturnino who's been here, and I'd like to switch him out for Mr. Sam Shannon. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you please escort the witness out and the new witness in.

Welcome back, Mr. Shannon.

All right, Members, we're at the end of the Education, Culture and Employment section. And there are information items, as I mentioned, from page 54 to 64. Does any Members have any questions in regards to any of those information items? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. On page 58 is the Students Loan Fund, and, you know, I guess I'd like to ask during the COVID pandemic of the last couple years, I had heard that some students lost, you know, a year or two of education or started, you know, maybe classes in person and then when they switched to virtual, that didn't really meet their learning needs.

What, if any, flexibility or extension to, you know, student eligibility periods or anything like that has been -- or were loan payments put on pause or whatever; what accommodation was made during the pandemic with regard to the student financial assistance? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So in the early days of the pandemic, yes, student loan payments were put on -- repayments were put on pause. Students were continued to be funded even if they had -- you know, there was issues with their courses because of school shutting down in early 2020. So there have been steps like that taken. In this last fiscal year, though, I don't believe there have been any additional measures such as that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. And thanks to the Minister for that. As I understand it, students have sort of a period of time in which they are eligible once they start a program. Is the Minister

willing to look at providing some flexibility in terms of eligibility for students if they lost a year or two during COVID? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And there is some flexibility already built into the program but like I said, there's students every year who start attending post-secondary and for one reason or another, it doesn't work out; it's not for them. Perhaps it's mental health issues. Perhaps it's, you know, family tragedies. There's a number of reasons why students don't make it through a school year. And we don't have exceptions in, you know, the majority of cases although there are some exceptions. And this is, you know, in the -- we don't want to start making exceptions for students who, I guess, knew that, you know, there was a possibility that things could go online. You know, a lot of cases people knew what they were getting in for. I don't want to sound, you know, discompassionate, but we are not looking at making any sort of -- taking any of the measures the Member's speaking of. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Hay River -- Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I love Hay River but I'm from Yellowknife but thanks, Madam Chair.

Can the Minister tell us whether any jurisdictions in Canada have looked at providing some flexibility in terms of student eligibility for financial assistance, given COVID, post-secondary education students? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We shouldn't have sent Mr. Saturnino away. I don't have that information. We can provide some information back to the Member, though. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, okay, thanks, Madam Chair, and thanks to the Minister for that. So can the Minister just -- not having been a post-secondary education -- or a student for many years, what is the process of somebody who needs or wants to get an exception or extra consideration? Do they write to their, you know, their SFA officer and get some sort of waiver, or how does that process actually work? And, yeah, thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So most exceptions are really tied to medical issues, so if a student has a medical issue. And they would call their SFA, the SFA officer or their SFA contact person, that would be the first point of contact. And if the Member would like, we can provide information on, you know, what that process might look like. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'd like to get that information from the Minister. I think several of -- or some other MLAs would be interested in getting that as well.

And while the Minister's putting that together, could he also put together statistics in terms of how many were granted or how many were rejected for the last couple of years? I just would like to get a sense of that, because if there are a number of students that have -- and if that, you know, we have an increasing number over the last couple of years and more of them are getting rejected, that's grounds for changing the eligibility requirements or providing for some better way of recognizing the stress that COVID has put on our post-secondary education students. So can he compile those statistics pre-COVID, maybe a year or two, and then during the pandemic and provide those as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So there's a lot of work going on right now with the SFA program review. I think it -- I mean, ideally, it would be great if we could compile that as part of the program review and then we could put our efforts towards that, if that's the information that's being requested, we can, you know, redirect staff efforts towards that and see what we can put together. But I'm not sure that the Member's going to get an accurate view perhaps of what he's looking for. If someone calls their SFA officer and, you know, has a conversation about, you know, wanting to, you know, not have to pay back their SFA because of some issues and it's clearly not something that is within the regulations or within the ability of the officer, I'm not sure if there's a process to, you know, log that and track that. So we can see what we can do but I'm not sure it's going to be everything the Member hopes it will be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. And not knowing enough about the system and how it works and whether statistics are tracked or not, I'm happy

to get whatever the Minister can provide and then we'll go from there. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any further questions? No? Okay. Are there any further questions on the information items? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I just have a couple of short questions, Madam Chair. On page 58, what is the northern bonus? I'd like the Minister to answer that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The northern bonus is funds that are provided to students who return back to the Northwest Territories who have repayable loans, and I believe it depends on where you live, you are eligible for different amounts each year. I believe that comes into effect -- I know that if you live in Hay River, you can get \$2,000 a year up to a maximum of \$10,000. Thank you. And that goes towards repayment of your loan. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: My second question is on page 59, the South Slave Divisional Education Council, I see that there's a decrease of \$143,000. Was there a program that was let go, or how did they come to that figure? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So these numbers are based on the funding formula, our best estimates on the funding formula. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So it's based on a formula. So the formula is based on programs, or is it based on per capita?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I apologize, I realize how inadequate my answer was as soon as I said it.

So the funding formula takes into account many things but the biggest driver is enrolment. And so generally, the more students you have the more money you get. The less students you have, the less money you get. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: That is a bit concerning because the statistics that came out, we had about 11 percent, 294 people that decreased in our population count in the community of Fort Smith. And, you know, I'm always much about education and I want to ensure that the level of funds in education is -- and the programs for the students are there. You know, there's lots of things happened during this pandemic, and this just happened in the last couple years. I know things will pick up in the next little while. But that shouldn't be a deterrent to ensure that the programs and the education that everybody receives is on the same level, because I'm very protective of the schools in my community of Fort Smith. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. And there's no further questions? Any other questions for the information items from Members? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 59, I'm just curious in regards to the school in Dettah, I don't have the capital plan in front of me but I would like to ask the Minister where in the capital plan is they're planning to build a new school in Dettah? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): This action item is just for the O and M of the school boards. So capital is usually discussed in -- I think we went through capital in the fall. But if I -- you know, I mean if you want to give a response if you know any information on anything that's going on, I'll give the Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I can speak briefly to this. There isn't a plan. There's no plan for a new school in Dettah. There are 49 schools across the territory and they are looked at each individually. And the factors that they're taking into consideration are, you know, the safety of the school, the structural safety. You know, the mechanical safety. Is it nearing its end of life in enough ways that it's cheaper to build a new school than to continue to maintain a new school? And, you know, in Dettah I know there is a desire for a new school. I think, you know, talking to leaders from that community, there were -- it sounds like there were commitments they were aware of from years ago about a new school but the fact is the school's still in good enough shape that it's not slated to be replaced at this point. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just -- I have another question on the capital plan but I'll do it another -- another time I guess.

I want to go to page 60. In the authority allocation, it talks about full-time positions. Here we got a 1047 positions. I'd like to ask the question in regards to the Minister in terms of what percentage is Northerners, southerners, and Indigenous? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I will say that these numbers here don't actually reflect the actual numbers of people employed. These numbers reflect the positions that are funded by ECE. But that being said, we can fund a school board for a number of positions and they can do whatever they want with that money. Generally, they -- if we fund them for a principal position, they have a principal. But there is a lot of flexibility.

I can get that information in terms of the number of northern -- or at least Indigenous teachers for the Member. We did provide that to the House not long ago in the form of a written question. But as I've stated before, the vast majority are not Northerners; they are from southern Canada. Thank you.

I will also say that the Yellowknife Catholic School Board and Yellowknife 1 do not keep affirmative action stats and so the largest number of our teachers, we don't know whether or not they're Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Well, no, I -- thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just wait for his rely on that statement that was made in the House here. I have other questions but I can wait another day to get that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right, so with the information item pages, does number else have any questions?

Seeing no further questions, we will now return to the departmental summary found on page 29. Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditure, total department, 2022-2023 Main Estimates \$358,318. Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 194-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 561-19(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2022-2023 – EDUCATION,
CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT – DEFERRAL OF
DEPARTMENT,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Education, Culture

and Employment at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. There's a motion on the floor. The motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you. So thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may please escort the witnesses from the Chamber, and we will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 561-19(2): Main Estimates 2022-2023. Does the Minister of Justice have any opening remarks?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I am here today to present the Department of Justice's main estimates for the fiscal year 2022-2023.

Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$3.3 million, or 2.5 percent, over the 2021-2022 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives while continuing to meet the GNWT's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include:

- Forced Growth funding totaling \$2.1 million of which \$252,000 is to establish one court officer and one legal aid electronic disclosure position. The remaining \$1.9 million is additional funding for the Territorial Police Services Agreement of which
 - \$657,000 is for additional RCMP members to better serve NWT communities with two additional constable positions in Behchoko and one additional constable position in Tuktoyaktuk,.
 - \$809,000 for the increased housing costs for RCMP members; and
 - \$390,000 for additional resources for the internet child exploitation unit of the RCMP.

- Initiative funding of \$190,000 to establish a judicial legal officer position;
- Other adjustments totaling \$1.8 million mainly for the collective agreement increases;
- Travel reductions in the amount of \$160,000;
- Sunsets of \$820,000.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly and support the vision of budget 2022 by working to keep our residents and communities safe and support vulnerable populations.

This concludes my opening remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Do you wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We have Ms. Charlene Doolittle, deputy minister; and James Bancroft, director of corporate services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, welcome. Committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail in the contained tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Oh, just wait a second. All right, so committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity beginning with community justice on page 279, with information items on page 280 and 281. Questions? Are there any questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the community justice committees line on 280. I notice last fiscal's actuals were \$1,658,000, and we have the same budget of \$2 million. So there's, you know, there's about \$500,000 there that's not being spent. Can I just get an explanation why, and is the reason because we just are not always having community justice committees operate in all of the communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'd like to ask Mr. Bancroft to answer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the downturn there that you see in the 2021-2022 Actuals is actually in response to communities struggling to operate certain programmings during the COVID pandemic. We offered a lot of different options to those communities of altering the delivery of those programs, but ultimately some of the programs weren't able to be expensed. Thank you, chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Does the Minister have an update on whether all of our community justice committees are up and operating? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Not every community has a community justice committee but those that do, I believe are operating. Some are operating at a higher capacity than others. I'm not sure if deputy minister has more information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. There are 26 communities with funding agreements in place and another five agreements are coming in the months for the communities of Fort McPherson -- Fort Good Hope, sorry, Colville Lake, Wrigley, and Sachs Harbour. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I would just -- you know, I think these community justice committees are just a long way away from where we would like them to be. I -- you know, I know many times they've struggled to retain members and retain staff which has made diversion, you know, difficult. Even here in Yellowknife when, you know, there's been times where we've been unable to divert files because the community justice committee just is not operating. And I think this is an area where we really could be a leader. You know, there's sentencing circles happening in other jurisdictions. There's, you know,

all sorts of alternative measures and diversions well beyond what we're doing.

Have we done a review about perhaps whether the way we are funding this and the current model can be altered to kind of get this going in the right direction? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of ECE -- or sorry, Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So as I mentioned before, there are some community justice committees that are operating at a very high capacity, and it's because they have someone who was, you know, very committed and very good at what they do and were very experienced. And there's others where there is constant turnover, and it's often just because, you know, that's who was in the community at that time and maybe someone who would be good at it is doing something else. And so it is tough in a small -- in a very small population like ours to have so many committees, you know, functioning at a very high level all at the same time. That being said, I understand what the Member is saying and in many ways, we are a leader. We've been doing this longer than most jurisdictions in Canada. For some information on the types of reviews or evaluation or how we keep track of how things are going, I can ask the deputy minister to expand. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. We currently don't have a review underway. That's something we can certainly look at. We did do the victim services review. So as the Minister stated, there -- each community has different capacities. We have 26 communities, and I would suggest that's pretty good. Two communities have opted -- have not opted into justice committees, and that's Jean Marie River and Nahanni Butte. We do work with the community justice committees and their coordinators to provide training and even during the pandemic, we've done some individual training and webinar opportunities through Alberta restorative justice, crisis and trauma; Canadian domestic homicide; and Canadian restorative justice in the International Institute for Restorative Practices, so we are trying to build capacity but there is burnout in some of the communities. There -- you know, some of the volunteers are often -- you know, the regular and main volunteers. So we will take -- look into perhaps doing a review and of course trying to improve our programs. Thank you. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, deputy minister. Just a reminder to slow down a

little bit for the interpreters; they're still with us. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I think this is in need of a review. And, you know, I like the idea of getting as many community ones as possible and, you know, for some of the smaller liquor infractions or probation infractions, please divert them, do it at the community level. But I'll note most jurisdictions have some sort of higher up diversion. You know, Alberta alternative justice, where you can refer someone from anywhere in the province and they run, you know, weeks on-the-land programming. They run really elaborate diversion programming that I just don't think any one of our one community programs could run. So in doing that, have we looked at perhaps creating a higher territorial-wide alternative justice or diversion committee? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. No, but there -- we do have the wellness court and the domestic violence treatment options court. So there are some other options. But no, we don't have a super committee in mind for community justice committees. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I note that this is the area where money that is provided to the YWCA for the -- I believe the emergency protection orders, and that is what they meant by "as designate" under the act. This number stayed the same, and I get that this is one area that must be quite difficult to forecast. But given everything that we've been hearing about the pandemic and the affects on the domestic violence situations and mental health, do we anticipate that we're going to need to have more money here? Do we know if the YWCA is busier than they had been before? What sort of analysis and work is being done around that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So we do have information on how many EPOs have been issued. I have probably the last the year but I don't have any further back than that. So I'm not sure if deputy minister can provide a bit more information on any trends that she might be aware of. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. So I believe we're all familiar with there was a -- yes, we

contracted YWCA. EPOs are a tool, Madam Chair, and not the only tool. They're intended -- we also look at -- they're not intended to be the only tool. We also look at safety planning as well. Over the 2020-2021 year, a hundred cases were filed and 89 of those cases were judicially confirmed. So far in 2021-2022, the YWCA has submitted a total of 69 EPO applications which have all been judicially confirmed. So on target, maybe a little under actually, compared to the previous year. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is one where, though, it's hard to say that just -- yeah, because maybe a number a little less or, you know, that doesn't mean that things aren't happening behind the scenes and just aren't being reported. As people are not socializing outside the home so much, there's probably less opportunities for them to have conversations with friends and family to maybe identify and be encouraged to go. I think everyone's aware of my situation in this last week, and I have been reached out to by the RCMP and by being offered victim services. It took me a bit to realize what had happened to me was something that actually, you know, needs to be reported and talked about, etcetera. So I feel that there are many that maybe don't realize that they're in a situation where they need help.

So if the YWCA were to express that there is more of a need here, and perhaps not necessarily just around the EPOs but in general, is there more money available to provide them to continue with that service, or will this be a firm number? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So in addition to the YWCA, and as the Member is aware, she just mentioned, we also have victim services. And that recently was reviewed and there were some changes made to that, and there were -- you know, we were able to redirect some funds to enhance those supports as well. So this is just one area.

In terms of the funding, there isn't a plan in this fiscal year to increase it. I'm not sure if the deputy minister has anything to add on that one. I don't think she does, but there's no doubt that this is a serious issue and we, you know, implement -- and develop and implement the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Action Plan. We are going to make determinations about how we can, you know, better utilize the resources we have and perhaps make decisions about additional resources. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I should probably know this but if we don't have some of that work that the department has been doing around the victim services and the action plans coming out of that, I would really like to see that information. I'm a big firm believer in collecting of statistics. So again, I just want to really stress that I think your partners there at the YWCA and victim services could be, you know, obviously providing a lot of feedback to the department.

I guess my next question or my next category I just wanted to talk about was the guns and gangs strategy. I'm really happy to see an increase in funding here but one thing I do hear is that it perhaps is not enough. We have a crack epidemic in our territory and that has been largely due to the infiltration of gangs. It is my understanding that the jail itself has now -- or the corrections program itself has become somewhat of a way for infiltration. As gang members from the south are incarcerated with Northerners, they are able to then influence and permeate into our communities.

I guess maybe I can ask, do we expect that in the next several years that this funding will increase? Is this federal money that we can get? Is there another program we can look for that money from instead of our own? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And to the Member's earlier comment, there is a victims services review, and that has been provided, but we can package that up and provide it again, as well as our response to that, because it did make a number of recommendations, and we have followed through on a number of those.

This guns and gangs strategy funding is federal, and there's interest, not just from us but from all of the jurisdictions from what I can tell based on my recent meetings, in not just maintaining but enhancing this funding. So there is -- all of the provinces and territories are putting pressure on the federal government because they do see the need to enhance this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: No, I'm good. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under community justice? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think this is where the integrated case management program is found, but there's no line item; there's no -- nothing. It's hard to know what expenditures there are on the program. Can I get some detail about that and whether the budget is increasing, decreasing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So we have one associated position, and that position helps coordinate with other departments. But the ISD program -- or ISD, integrated service delivery, is more than just a position or a program; it's an approach that not just justice is implementing but we are trying to implement across the GNWT. For more information, I can hand it over to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. The integrated case management program has a 2022-2023 annual operating budget of \$830,000, the majority of which is dedicated to salaries, including four pathfinder positions and one intern pathfinder position.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. And any changes then from last year? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Changes from last year? I'll hand it to the deputy minister. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. There were collective agreement increases. That's it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks for that, Madam Chair. And thanks to the Minister and his staff. Can we get that split out somehow in next year's main estimates? Like, we're spending \$6 million on community justice and it's like two lines in the program detail. Community justice is a big lump sum of \$5.6 million. Protection against family violence is 500 -- come on. Can we get some more program detail, a better breakdown next year? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And I used to express the same frustration about \$165 million one line in ECE's budget so I understand where the Member's coming from. I'll work with the department and with Finance but there could be rules related to how this is organized that are, you know, beyond my ability to influence. But we can provide committee with a breakdown, a more detailed breakdown. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: No, thanks, I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. And I think that subject's going to come up in one of the other activities that we're going to get to.

But on integrated case management, I understand that this is a program that's largely centered in Yellowknife. And I think a while back, we did have a return on social investment study that was done that was very complimentary of the program and the assistance that it offers to the clients, very successful.

Are there any plans to expand this program outside of Yellowknife, perhaps into some of the regional centres? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are no plans to expand the program as is. It is a Yellowknife program right now, and it is adapting itself to Yellowknife and I don't think it's a program that you can just transplant into a different community, even if it's a regional centre. But that being said, the goal is to figure out how we can offer more integrated services in other communities as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I would hope that the Minister would be a little more flexible there. Look, you can't transplant what is being done here to regional centres but there's lots of lessons learned, and so I guess the Minister's answer is that integrated service delivery's going to subsume what's happening with integrated case management and somehow that's going to roll out across the Northwest Territories? Is that what I'm hearing the Minister say? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That's the dream, that we find ways of delivering services in Yellowknife and in outside of Yellowknife in a way that is meeting people's needs. This program, ICM, is meeting the needs of a small group of people in Yellowknife, and it's very tailored to their needs in this community. We need an approach that's going to work everywhere. You know, these one-off programs are great but they don't -- you know, ICM is not going to transform how we deliver services. ISD is going to deliver -- transform how we deliver services. And so that's the work that we have to do. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not going to hold my breath forever but, yeah, I look forward to some results. Thank you. And that's all I've got, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under community justice? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The community justice committees and projects, when you look at the active positions, it says two in headquarters and 12 in North Slave and yet it's covering -- I'm sure this is also covering South Slave. Very confusing the way it's brought forward here.

I think there is a community justice committee in Fort Smith, and I want to say that the people that run the community justice committee in Fort Smith is very productive, and I think that the way things are put forward by Justice is not very clear. Clarity must be very -- it must be -- when we're going to vote on this budget, I think clarity is very important, and I want to see if the Minister agrees with that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Similar to comments I made earlier, yes, I've been saying that for years. Unfortunately, this is an accounting document for the most part and that's why we're here, just to parse out this information and provide additional information to committee as requested. You know, I wish this document was ten times its size and we could have information about all of the programs. But the fact is that I have two binders here that together are probably two feet high, and that's only my two departments. So I'm happy to provide information as I can but what is in the main estimates is what's there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: The Minister also says integrated services cannot be put into regional centres or communities, and that is very disturbing because if that's the case, then everything is just for one place. I'm considering voting against this budget because I think it's high time that the Members, the Ordinary Members from small communities and regional centres have got to take a stand. I think very clearly that, you know, we're always doing this and it's always from the same place, and I don't take anything from the people of the capitol, but I think that small communities and regional centres have got to be looked after also and I wonder if the Minister agrees with that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And just to correct the record, I never said integrated services cannot be put into communities outside of Yellowknife. I said integrated services can be put into communities outside of Yellowknife, and that's exactly what we're working on.

The integrated case management program is a Yellowknife-based program designed for Yellowknife. And the idea of case management is you have a clientele -- or an integrated service delivery is you have a clientele, and you cater to them - what are their needs? And so I can't put a program to cater to the needs of the people in Yellowknife into Hay River. That wouldn't work. We would need something catered -- to cater to the people in Hay River. So how do we do that? We don't take a Yellowknife program and transplant it. We figure out -- first of all, we make sure that the program we have now is working in Yellowknife, and we learn from it. And we are learning from it. But there's still a ways to go. We're trying to integrate the entire GNWT system of social services that are provided, and it's difficult, and there is a lot to -- a long ways still to go. This program is great. There's still a lot of work to be done. And so we need to figure that out. At the same time, how do we roll this out elsewhere. So yes, we need to have integrated service delivery in all communities. This ICM program as it is, I don't see it rolling out outside of Yellowknife. That doesn't mean something else doesn't happen, though. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the community justice committees and projects, could you give us the allocation by community, please. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the community justice committees:

- The hamlet of Aklavik receives \$53,000.
- Inuvik Community Justice Committee receives \$129,500.
- Fort McPherson receives \$82,000.
- Paulatuk receives \$45,000.
- Tsiigehtchic \$41,500.
- Tuk \$56,000.
- Ulukhaktok \$56,000.
- Colville Lake \$41,500.
- Deline \$75,000.
- Norman Wells \$56,000.
- Tulita \$49,000.
- Fort Smith \$71,000.
- Fort Providence \$53,000.
- Fort Resolution \$49,000.
- Hay River \$78,500.
- Katl'odeeche First Nation \$45,000.
- Kakisa \$41,500.
- Enterprise \$20,000.
- Fort Simpson \$63,000.
- Wrigley \$41,000
- Fort Liard \$49,000.
- Somba K'e \$41,000.
- Behchoko \$78,000.
- Gameti \$40,000.
- Wekweeti \$40,000.
- Whati \$45,000.
- Lutselk'e \$45,000.
- Yellowknife \$129,000.
- Dettah-N'dilo \$45,000.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, this is a really important line for our Indigenous people of the North. It keeps them from getting -- there's alternative -- it's alternative justice, and it keeps them out of getting a criminal record. This is a really important line in the overall file on justice. And with those numbers, it's very little. So the alternative to that for Indigenous people is that they plead guilty and they go to -- they have to be incarcerated. To me, that is the wrong approach, that we should be making sure that our communities are funded properly so that our Indigenous people and people who get into problems the first time are -- there's a different alternative. And I look forward to change in the future on that, and I hope that the Minister thinks of change, of thinking out of the box, in keeping our -- so that our Indigenous and others don't get a criminal record and don't use the other alternative of having to be incarcerated by the RCMP and the justice system. Do you agree with that, Minister? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, that's my goal. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right, any further questions under community justice?

All right, so please turn to page 279, Justice, community justice, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$6,168,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now move on to corrections, beginning on page 283 with information items on 284 and 285. Questions from Members on corrections? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're spending 30 -- about \$40 million on corrections here under -- can I just get an explanation of what the difference between community corrections is and corrections administration and facilities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So we have probation services. We have the correctional facilities. And we have corrections administration. So for some description of those, I can ask Mr. Bancroft. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the break down for corrections administration is the headquarters of corrections service as well as the training fund for corrections, which runs the CRTP, correctional training program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. During I believe it was the capital budget, we were talking, and our corrections are at an all-time low. Part of this is, we suspect, due to COVID and the courts have been shut down but also just a number of other factors. I was just wondering if the Minister had an update of whether we're seeing any trends that the number of inmates is going to go back up? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Since the last update I gave the House, the number has remained relatively stagnant. The last number I saw last week was somewhere around 75 inmates in the entire system. I suspect it's somewhere close to that. It's between 75 and 80 today. We did -- you know, the idea of -- the discussion around is this a trend; is this something that we can expect to see for years to come or will we see numbers go back up, is something that we are looking into. It wasn't that long ago when all the correctional facilities were full - busting at the seams - and now we have the exact opposite issue.

So no one wants to make rash decisions about what we're doing, how we're moving forward, because this is a relatively short time period that we're looking at where we've seen these low numbers. But the department has put together a working group to examine the numbers and try and determine why is this happening. There's assumptions about why it's happening but we need to know why it's happening and go from there. So I'm not sure if the deputy minister has anything to add. Yeah, I can hand it over to her. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Yes, the total count today is 74 for adults physical count, and the total physical count for youth today is three. So that's 32 percent of the adult count and 12 percent of the youth capacity. And the Minister is correct, there's a senior management working group that we've created to explore driving factors of the decrease, we're trending down, and if there are any

ways to anticipate the trends. We will have to make some assumptions, you know, and why this is happening, but that work has started and it is a little too soon, we feel, to anticipate what the numbers will be post-pandemic. Thank you. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was wondering if we could get a breakdown of how many would be in the Hay River men's facility, Fort Smith men's facility, and North Slave men's facility. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, I can get that for the Member momentarily here.

So in NSCC, there are 53. SMCC, nine. FSCC female, four. And FSCC male, there are eight. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'll just make some comments here.

You know, Scotland -- I'm going to step out a little. Scotland presented -- passed a presumption of short sentences of three months. They just said it didn't make it sense to jail people for that long. They lose employment. They lose housing. And that was so successful they actually made it for a sentence of less than a year. They just don't put people in jail for less than a year. They use probation, alternative measures, treatment, whatever else. And I think, you know, if we did that we would have no one left in prison. Anyone over two years in the Northwest Territories goes to federal prison. And I'll just note when we go back to the community justice committees, I just really believe, when I look at the \$40 million we're spending on corrections, with a concerted effort we could put that into diversion and we could basically empty out our jails and be leaders in this. So I know we're doing a review of the numbers and what they look like post-COVID but I think -- and I know we got some great work doing -- for government renewal, but I really think that the entire justice system and our spending needs a review here, especially because very serious offences are dealt with by the feds. They're dealt with by federal corrections. But I just -- I question whether the 50 million or so dollars being spent in this, the last two sections, is at all accomplishing what we want. So I'll leave that as a comment for the Minister as these various reviews go forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the majority of the people in the facilities are remanded. So they haven't been sentenced. So there was -- unless no one gets remanded, then we would still have a requirement for a facility. And I hear what the Member is saying as well.

There's also consideration about victims. Sometimes a victim does want whoever victimized them to not victimize them for at least a short period of time. And there are serious concerns about just, you know, not remanding anyone. But that being said, I hear the Member's concerns, and I think he's an idealist and that's -- we need some idealists always bringing those ideas forward. And I think that I would like to keep the numbers low, the lower the better. So I will continue to work down that path, and I think that that desire is shared by the department as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions under corrections? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, again, we've got, like, three activities for almost \$40 million. I'm sure the Minister will work towards getting a better breakdown of this in the future.

But I want to ask about the community advisory boards that were supposed to be set up for correctional facilities and whether they're indeed in place now and are there any costs associated with that? And I'm not opposed to costs associated with that. I think these serve a useful purpose, and they were, you know, built into the new legislation. So if I could get some details from the Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the advisory boards that the Member is speaking about, they were -- they came into existence, I believe October 1st under the new -- when the new Corrections Act came into force.

We advertised for applicants. We received, unfortunately, very few, and so we extended the application period and we enlisted the MLAs to try and -- to help us get the word out and, you know, talk to interested people. I can ask the deputy minister for some information on where we are with that and potentially any costs associated. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. There are small costs associated with that. Yes, we are running another expression of interest in February so we should have the results for that. We've reviewed the applications for each of the correctional facilities and will be establishing a CAB at the NSCC. If not done now, very soon, but we did receive low numbers and applications largely from Yellowknife. So we went out to seek further members and we're hoping to -- that that will be successful. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'm just quickly trying to troll through my own emails to see if I got a heads up about this. But if the Minister or the staff want to send that again, I'd be happy to put it on my own Facebook page and YK Facebook page and so on, and I'm sure others would be as well. So it would be great to get those in place and operating. I don't think I have any other questions about this section, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions under the corrections?

Seeing none, please turn to page 283, Justice, corrections, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$39,419,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Please move to page 287. We're on court services with information items on page 288.

Questions for court services?

Seeing none, Justice, court services, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$15,123,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We'll now move to page 289, Justice, legal aid services, with information item on 290, 291. Are there any questions to legal aid services? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the line item for the Office of the Children's Lawyer, I note that it is more than the 2021-2022 Actuals, which is great. I can't say enough for the good work that this area is doing and have had friends who have utilized the services of the children's lawyer for the benefit of their children.

I think this is an area where we would want to see more money being put into, and perhaps a lot of people don't even realize, or I'm not sure how it's communicated to them, that there is this option for them. And given perhaps what I said earlier about the stresses that COVID has put on people and their relationships, we may see more of a need, unfortunately, for the children to have legal services.

So could the Minister speak to whether or not we will be looking for more money down the line for this, and would he be coming back for a supplement if it was oversubscribed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. For some detail on this item, I can ask the deputy minister to answer. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. There is nothing in this budget but last year, in 2021-2022, there was -- the office did receive an increase of \$99,000 in forced growth funding. So we are watching this office and paying attention to the needs if there are any increased needs. We are looking at an evaluation for 2025-2026, and that should help inform us going forward. I know it's not immediate, but we are paying attention to that and they did receive an increase last year. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is probably an area I don't know a lot about -- sorry, Madam Chair. An area that I don't know a lot about but, you know, we have talked a lot on the social development committee about perhaps a child's advocate. If we were to have a child advocate, does the Minister or the department think that this would then maybe take some of the strain off or relieve the need for the child's lawyer, or am I sort of just -- they're completely separate and not related? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, they serve different purposes. I believe the child lawyer is when the courts require a child to have a lawyer and then the lawyer is appointed to the child through that process where the child advocate serves a different role altogether. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I appreciate that. I guess then again I feel that that is a silo again. You know, we have children that have a need, and it would be nice if we could figure out some way to provide them with the services sort of all around them. But that's more of a comment than anything. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions from Members under legal aid services? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. There's, yeah, three positions that are being lost in legal aid services, and I would just like to know more about why that's happening, especially if we're interested in increasing access to justice. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Because of the timing of these main estimates, we show a decline of positions, but it's because we are -- it's the timing of when we sign our federal agreements. So there's no intention to lose these positions but the agreement was not signed in time to have it printed in the main estimates. So that money will come forward through a SUP, and those positions will reappear through that SUP. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So what are we doing to try to increase access to justice through legal aid services? What changes, if any, are being made in terms of this budget? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There's one position being added. It is a data coordinator, and it has to do with -- perhaps I can just ask the deputy minister to explain it because it's a technical position. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. If I could just have a moment to sort through my papers.

Yes, so this is involving electronic disclosure resources. During the pandemic, the PPSC, Public Prosecution Service of Canada, implemented a permanent procedure by which their staff now

transfer virtually all disclosure for court evidence to the Legal Aid Commission electronically, and this has markedly increased the workload of the Legal Aid Commission staff and is causing significant operational disruption.

They're not set up to receive disclosure electronically both in system requirements and staff resources. Disclosure items include audio files, video, paper records, pictures, and its volume is thousands of individual documents and files. And lawyers also travel on circuit and need to have files readily accessible to both staff lawyers and non-GNWT private bar lawyers who are assigned files. So this position will help receive that and sort and take care of that, those new disclosure -- electronic disclosure files. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I don't have anything further.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe right now, according to my count, there's four lawyers in the territory who don't live in Yellowknife and one of them is a Member of this House.

Have we looked into -- I know we have some positions that work for legal aid in the communities. None of them are lawyers. Have we looked into the feasibility of moving one of the legal aid clinics outside of Yellowknife? I'm a believer that access to justice requires lawyers in places even, you know, just to have someone to talk to in a community. And is that something that the department has reviewed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I believe so. I know I asked the same question in the last Assembly. So I can ask the deputy minister to speak to that a little bit. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. This is something that the department does look at and consider. We do have the clinics here located in Yellowknife and they're set up that way so they can operate -- have clients represented in each clinic that might be opposing each other. So it is something we look at. The lawyers also need to have colleagues available to talk to them, to

discuss ideas, and the court also is set up largely in Yellowknife. They do do circuit courts but having those clinics in the communities, we have had that in the past. There's been one in Inuvik, and the legal aid was moved out of the community. The PPSC, Prosecution Canada, was moved out of the community so it was very difficult to have lawyers -- legal aid lawyers remain in those communities. The private bar is very small in these communities as well so it is difficult for lawyers to remain there and not have the colleagues to bounce ideas off or talk to. But with a move towards, you know, virtual technology, this is something that perhaps that can be considered in the future. But we are having a very tough time recruiting and retaining lawyers in our department, not just legal but our drafters, our legal division counsel, and recruiting them into smaller communities is difficult, to be honest. So we are struggling even just to get these folks to move to Yellowknife or to stay in Yellowknife let alone the smaller communities, so. But it is on our radar and we are looking at ways to be creative and innovative in trying to attract counsel, both government and private bar members, to Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I recognize it would probably take some concerted effort and, you know, I know we lost -- we've really been losing our courthouses outside of Yellowknife, and the one in Hay River is really not doing what it used to let alone Inuvik. So I think it would take a very concerted effort by the Department of Justice.

I'm just curious, we have a remote work policy now and there's a possibility for people in Yellowknife to work outside. And, you know, I suspect there is actually probably a few lawyers in the territory who would be willing to relocate to a community for a period of time and maybe even on the side, do some other practice, you know, that is much needed in those communities. Does the remote work policy apply to government lawyers; would they be able to leave Yellowknife? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't have the expertise with the remote work policy to answer that. I mean, I can see if the deputy minister knows, understanding that that policy might not be fully fleshed out yet. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions. I'll bring it up another time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Did you -- oh, sorry. Deputy minister Doolittle.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. And, yes, it does apply. Lawyers are positions that certainly could work remotely and in our -- I think we would be a happy to have them in any of our 33 communities. And there currently is an application for somebody to work remotely, not in a community but in the city of Yellowknife as well. So this would be something that would totally apply and we would be open to considering. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any further questions? No? Okay. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Okay, according to, like -- according to the GNWT health status report, it says in there that my region has the highest crime rate, and we only have active position. Why is that, when the report -- when your own report -- GNWT report says we have the highest crime rate for Tlicho region? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We can get to later sections in here and the Tlicho will be receiving a number of RCMP positions, and in the past we've added a number of RCMP positions there as well. So we are adding positions, and we have added positions during my time here to that region. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay, thank you. Are there any further questions from Members?

All right, seeing none. Justice, legal aid services, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$7,145,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. We will now move on to Justice, Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, beginning on page 293 with information page on 294. Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So there's a \$700,000 decrease in the budget here for OROGO and two staff are being cut I guess, if I look at page 294. Can I get an explanation as to what's happened here? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I have very little to do with OROGO as it is a

regulator and it is parked in Justice. So what happened was this division -- or this activity, and as it is in the main estimates, what was continuously lapsing, money each year, around \$600,000. So the department contracted somebody to -- or a company to have a look at the operations and work with OROGO and make a determination about how much they would actually need to operate, understanding that OROGO was relatively new and it was provided with the budget before it had done anything. And so it was someone's best guess at what a budget would be.

And so understanding -- based on that review, the decision was made to listen to the recommendation of the review and make a cut to the operational budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the review that was done, has that been made available to the public? And if not -- and if there needed to be some redactions in terms of personnel matters or whatever, I could understand that, but is that a publicly available document? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't believe it is publicly available. I will have further discussions with the department though about that because I'm always in favour of releasing things publicly where possible. So I will see what we can do on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. No, I appreciate the Minister's commitment to make that information public, and I'm one of the Members that actually pushed for a rationalization of resources here because there's just very little, if any, interest whatsoever in oil and gas resources in the Northwest Territories. So why continue to spend money on managing them when there's no activity taking place. So I understand and pushed for that work to be done.

So when the money is cut, where does it go? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And, you know, with recent events in the world's biggest natural gas producer, perhaps there will be an increase in oil and gas activity in the territory. If that's the case,

then we'll have to see what the operating budget would need to be under those circumstances. But the OROGO is funded from the general coffers of the GNWT so it goes into the general coffers of the GNWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. I guess where I'm going with this is that, you know, even in the Minister's opening remarks, and I don't have them in front of me, I can't access them on Lootle. There was not one mention of reductions in the department. And so how was this actual reduction in the main estimates, how does it appear in what the Minister said in classifying the changes in the departmental budget from his opening remarks this morning -- or earlier this afternoon? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So it's a reduction. It shows here as it is a reduction as less money this year than there was last year. So there was a cut to this. That money was then used for, you know, something else, the same way all other money in the territory or the GNWT is used for something else. So it went into a big pot of money and then, you know, it was allocated elsewhere. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks for that. Yeah, I'm looking at this. It's clearly a reduction. That's not the way it's classified, though, by the Financial Management Board. I believe this is classified as an FMB approved adjustment. Can the Minister confirm that, yes or no? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't know if I can confirm or deny what is in confidential FMB materials. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister -- or sorry, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: All right. Well, I don't believe I heard -- and as I said, I don't have the Minister's opening remarks in front of me and I don't have -- they're not available on Lootle. I don't believe the Minister said there was any reductions anywhere in the Department of Justice budget. Can the Minister confirm that there were no reductions according to the FMB classifications, because I

don't think that was in the Minister's opening remarks. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I'm seeing right now there's a reduction to OROGO's budget, and Madam Chair, if we could take a sort recess and we can sort of -- I can speak with the Minister of Finance and perhaps legal counsel and figure out this situation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Let's just take a couple minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

I will turn it back over to Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I think I might have figured out what the Member was looking for.

So the Department of Justice has a budget and the activities within the Department of Justice have a budget. And there is -- there was a budget for OROGO last year, and that budget was reduced this year. That difference of the reduction stayed within the Department of Justice. And so I'm not sure if that's what the Member was looking for, but that's where the money went, and it was used to fund other items in the Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. And so moving forward in this set of main estimates, there's a reduction that was made, and now that I have the Minister's opening remarks in front of me I see basically that there was some forced growth in the departmental budget. There's some initiatives. There's something called other adjustments. There was reductions in travel and sunsets.

So out of those, the five bulleted items here on the Minister's opening remarks, where does this reduction to the OROGO budget actually fit in in these bulleted categories? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the main estimates say these are the highlights, and I guess it wasn't determined that this was a highlight of the budget. But I've stated, I don't know how many times now, that there was a reduction to the budget of OROGO, and I apologize for not stating that in the -- in my opening remarks. But I've stated it numerous times now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Let's stop dancing around here. Look, clearly, there's a reduction made in this activity area which is supposed to be arm's length from Department of Justice, probably even arm's length from our government to some extent. And I just can't figure out where the money that was cut here actually goes, whether it just stays within the department and is treated as sort of money within the department and is picked up somewhere else and used. I don't think that that's a fair representation of what should be an independent regulator. That's not what I think is a fair presentation of the finances of this government. And if this is an independent regulator and cuts are made to it, the money just doesn't all of a sudden disappear and show up somewhere else within the Department of Justice. That's wrong. If cuts are made, they should go back to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. And if Justice needs money for other functions or other activities, they should go to the FMB and apply for that money and get it. The kind of presentation that we're getting here doesn't explain this very well. But I think what it does show is that this government does not respect an independent regulator in the presentation of the budget for the -- what should be an independent regulator. And that's all I'm going to say about this.

I've raised this before, and I will raise it again, that when reductions appear in a budget, they should be actually labelled as reductions, and I just don't think that the kind of presentation we've got in the main estimates does that. And I encourage the Minister of Finance to look at this and make sure that it's a fair presentation the public can understand, that we as Regular MLAs understand, and that an independent regulator is treated as an independent regulator, not an arm within a particular department. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member -- or Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So every previous year when the OROGO budget would lapse, that money was then used by the Department of Justice to fund other things. This year, the budget was cut, and what the Member said should happen is exactly what happened. So his complaints really should be focused on the previous years when what he doesn't want to happen was happening. This year, what he wanted to happen is exactly what happened. So I think -- I don't think we're ever going to see eye to eye on this. I think I'm really confused as to what the issue is, because we seem to be saying that the same thing is happening but perhaps it's philosophical differences about accounting. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. While I may disagree with my colleague about the interest in oil and gas in the region, I share his concerns with the cutting of the funding to this department -- or to this regulator.

While I don't want to sit here and split hairs on where the money went, where my concern lies is that with the cutting of two positions, one at least having been technical, I'm concerned that the review did not necessarily incorporate the opinion of technical people. And one of the reasons that I ran was because I felt there was an absence of scientific knowledge in decision-making in this government. And so when I look at this that it's being told to me the reason for this cut is that money continues to lapse yearly, that's an accounting reason to remove this money; that is not a scientific-based reason to take this money away. And if we are going to have a - well, which my colleague from Nunakput who's not here today would very much have a conversation about his interest in oil and gas going forward, I find this to be actually quite appalling that we've reduced a regulator and taking that money and using it elsewhere in the government.

I also look and note that there's a cut to contract service by about half the funding. So that would probably be safety and technical training for the employee that was then removed from his position. So therefore -- their position.

So, therefore, I really have concern here that when it comes time for these projects that we are talking about happening that have very crucial to the Beaufort Delta, that we're going to be having a regulator with no technical experience sitting there any further. Plus, you're overloading the technical person that's still left there, or the few technical people.

I'm not sure that I have much of a question in that for the Minister, just some more colleagues. I guess my question is how much -- who input on this review? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps Mr. Bancroft can speak to some of the technical aspects of the review. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Madam Chair, yes, of course, there was multiple stakeholders' point of views taken into account during this -- throughout this

review. Number 1 being the executive director of OROGO, who was fully supportive of this review. Number 2 being stakeholders within government who were considered experts in the oil and gas industry. And the consultants who were also independent took their expert knowledge and the industry outlook to determine the workload required and the budget required. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: So we often hear that there's no crystal ball in this Chamber. So, you know, to talk to government people about where they think things are going and deciding to cut, again, a regulator, I have concern with that.

The executive director is not a technical person who has not been in that role for very long is my understanding. Where are the technical people within the department of this -- or this regulator? Were they consulted about whether they felt their jobs were necessary? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can't -- I don't have anything to add to what Mr. Bancroft said. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, I'll rephrase. Are one of the stakeholders that the government consulted within the government, were they the employees within OROGO? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. From what I understand, the executive director was the one who was consulted. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Is the director -- executive director a technical person; does that person have a scientific background to understand this? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So there was a budget that was created for this -- this regulator. The budget was created out of thin air with no concept of how much work would actually be needed and what position would be required. There was a review undertaken to look at what work has

been done, what work will need to happen going forward, and a decision was made based on that review. If there is a need in the future for additional money for this, then I personally don't think that we have much of a say because as a regulator, they need -- they have a job to do, and we would fund them according to the job they need to do. According to the job they need to do now, this is the funding that is required according to a third party review. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: So will the Minister, then, commit that when they come back needing more money as projects ramp up in the Beaufort Delta that he'll find that money within the Department of Justice and not come back and take it from our social programs or housing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I don't want to open up a can of worms about where money comes from for regulators, but wherever it comes from it's the coffers of the GNWT is where it comes from. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I would like to request that the Minister work with his colleague in ITI and provide us with a forecast of what is happening in the area of oil and gas such that we can evaluate properly before we get to the point where we need more money and more resources and can't hire those people for the Northwest Territories, that we have some idea of where this is going so we're not playing catchup and reaction yet again. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I'm pretty hands off with this regulator, because it is arm's length. I think ITI probably would have that information. So I can talk to the Minister to see what's going on but I don't -- I don't get too deep into the business of oil and gas. That is the Minister of ITI. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Yeah, I have concern with that answer as well, just in the sense of like, well, then if you have nothing to do with it, why is it in your department? I get that it's Justice. Then I would say perhaps it fits better with the Minister of ITI but then

I know we would have everybody saying there's a conflict there as the Minister responsible for Industry. So I will just take that as I'm going to continue to harass the Minister about this department -- or this regulator and hope that, you know, we will see business ramping up in the Beaufort Delta and therefore we will have need for regulators of oil and gas. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Did you have follow up, Member -- or Minister of Justice?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And this did used to be with Minister of ITI in the previous Assembly, and it came to Justice so that the Minister would have no skin in the game essentially.

But I have started the conversation with my Cabinet colleagues about, you know, these arm's length regulators and how we structure them and what departments they sit in because it is rather ad hoc, so. Maybe somewhere down the line, we can figure this out and have a unified approach. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions to the Office of the Regulator of the Oil and Gas Operations?

Seeing none. Justice, office of the regulator of oil and gas operation, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$1,230,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. We will now go to page 296, justice policing service. Questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister just enlighten me a little about how our police contract works with requests from the RCMP for more staff? We are padding another \$2 million to the policing budget. It's been on a bit of an upward trend. As the Minister noted, we've added officers to another community -- number of communities. I'm just -- does the Minister have to agree to these? Is there some sort of arbitration when the RCMP say they need more resources? I'm just kind of curious how we negotiate with the RCMP the appropriate level of resourcing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, there is a significant amount of collaboration between the Department of Justice and the RCMP before we see a final product and before it makes it

to the Assembly. Mr. Bancroft can provide some detail on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the analysis that's generally undertaken is called a GDPRM, which is a general duty policing resource model review. It's initiated from the RCMP side, but within collaboration with the Department of Justice, we meet semi-annually on business cases, stressors in -- under the TPSA as far as policing operations go throughout the territory. We look at things like, you know, key indicators like overtime costs, operational readiness, occurrences, instances. They are all driving forces towards determining how many police members are required in the community. We take all that information, we track it, as well as the RCMP tracks it, to come with the true need of a detachment, and that's how we determine the requirement for additional officers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the -- there's a number here, other adjustments including \$1.8 million, mainly for collective agreement increases. Can the Minister just provide how much the RCMP's collective agreement increases were specifically?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The RCMP's collective agreement is not reflected in this budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I believe I will be seeing that in a SUP.

Can the Minister provide -- I know there's quite a bit of money coming forward from the RCMP collective agreement, and the big question is the retroactive number. I know this is conversation happening all across Canada. Does the Minister have any update on when and how much we are expecting to see retroactively for the collective agreement?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the RCMP pay their members, and so they've been paying them -- they pay them the retro active pay and they haven't billed us for it yet, so. For some information on this, I can hand it to the...

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Madam Chair, so the in-year pay increases for members below the rank of inspector have already been actioned. They began the retroactive portion of those payments on January 25th pay for officers who are affected by this agreement. That's anticipated to be completed by the end of March. The federal government has indicated that we will be likely seeing a -- some sort of bill for that next fiscal year. To the extent of the details on that, we are not sure.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we're all the eagerly awaiting to see the size of that bill.

There's \$809,000 here for increased housing costs for RCMP members. Can I just get an explanation of whether that's money that then goes to the Housing Corp because they built those RCMP units, or is this a different housing cost? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I believe that's going to the Housing Corp but Mr. Bancroft can provide some detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Yes, the Member is correct. It is going directly towards the Housing Corporation. They building 45 new housing units, 15 already complete and occupied. So the funds flow to the Housing Corp as revenue and we expense it at a 70 percent rate through the TPSA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I kind of get the math here. It makes sense for the Housing Corp to build RCMP units because then we get the 70 percent rate covered under the agreement thus giving the Housing Corp a little revenue. Is this \$809,000 our portion or is this then under the 70/30 split? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Mr. Bancroft, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Mr. Bancroft.

MR. BANCROFT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The 809 represents the Department of Justice's costs at that 70 percent. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I get a bit of an explanation as to what the internet child exploitation unit is? I see there's \$390,000. Are those officers that would be located in the Northwest Territories, or is this a contribution a federal kind of level? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, I believe they're located in the Northwest Territories. That unit -- unfortunately, it does what it sounds like it does. There's a growing issue with child exploitation on the internet, the type of exploitation that can lead to human trafficking. And so this unit works -- focuses on the Northwest Territories and works with RCMP across Canada. And they could be working with law enforcement around the world actually, to address some of the these issues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are there any advancements or talks about increased RCMP presence in Tsiigehtchic?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That has not been brought forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions on policing? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: So on 296, I mean, three lines and we're spending \$50 million there, and we have the added costs of \$3.5 million for policing for the extra whatever, and then you have the \$8 million. It's just well over \$60 million. What does biology case work cover for \$183,000?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That is the cost of the lab work for forensic files.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Okay. So the ratio between First Nation policing and the policing agreement,

that's a -- like a \$49 million difference. You know, and most of the enforcement is with the -- you know, with Indigenous people. And, you know, every time I look at this and see what's happening in the communities, it's -- you know, I've carried this file for -- this is my 17th year, ever since I got elected as Chief of Salt River. I just don't think -- you know, you talked about two meetings a year with Justice. That's what they have. That isn't -- that isn't a lot. Is there dialogue with municipal governments and community governments and Indigenous governments about how things should be done in the community?

They're going to say yes. You're going to say yes to me, I know that, because they come with a form and it's the same form that everybody signs every month. Finally, I told them not to come to the door anymore when I was Chief. It's the same form, same thing, for 14 years. And you wonder why I question what's happening.

Everybody knows who's the drug dealers in the community. Everybody knows who does all the things wrong. And then there's no -- they never -- there hasn't been a drug bust in the community of Fort Smith now for over 25 years, a major drug bust.

This is part of the whole situation with addictions. If the enforcement is not there, yeah, the other day you said oh, they're going to replace them with another drug dealer. Does that mean they don't have to do anything then? It's very confusing for me, because the protection and safety of the young people that are going to high school, and even younger, and they -- and, you know, without proper enforcement and visibility in the communities and dialogue with the Indigenous governments and municipal governments -- they go there once a month to a meeting. What does that mean? You know, there's no visibility within the community.

And \$60 million, they don't even clean their own snow when it snows outside. I didn't know that. But now that there's one of the new duplexes across the road from my office, all they have to do is jump in the car and drive around. And it's very puzzling to me that we have no accountability and no transparency with this file. And yet we're dishing out \$60 million without no accountability and no transparency. And no oversight. And that's why I -- I'm not going to give up on this file until some of those things are corrected for the community.

And I have a lot of people complaining about -- you know, even I went myself before Christmas to the detachment. I waited outside there for an hour and a half. No one answered the door, because I had a complaint. And then I go back down the road to my office and the guy's in uniform hanging up the lights on his -- Christmas lights on his building in uniform.

Very, very -- you know, we've got to have more accountability and transparency with this file, especially when we're disbursing that amount of money.

And I'm not going to say anymore because I'll stay on this file, and I'll keep on asking questions. And, you know, I know you went through the whole -- and they're not serving every community yet. You -- my colleague just asked if there was an RCMP in Tsiigehtchic, and there isn't. So the big empire is here again and, you know, the communities have got to be served to the fullness with their duties.

And when the person at the RCMP station finally arrived and I went in there, so what do you want here and I told her oh, I -- I told her the situation that I came for. And she says well, what do you want me to do with that? That was her answer. And that's an RCMP officer. I said oh, just forget it, I'll just go. So I left. I never identified myself or anything. I just went there for a concern. And if this is what's happening to myself, what is happening to the rest of the people in the community? And that's -- that's a big question.

I know you can't do anything about it today, Mr. Minister, and -- but I want you to think of some of these things because accountability and transparency for that amount of money has got to take place. It's your duty as the Minister of Justice, and I will continue on this file as long as I know that -- whenever I'm here because I think that it has to take place.

Leadership plays a big role in that. If you have the right commander, you would -- you would -- you know, the guy -- nobody knows who he is. I know who he is. But, you know, if they're going to reach out to the communities and reach out to the things -- taking a photo op with the Dene Nation is not serving the communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister, did you have my comments? No? Okay.

Are there any further questions, comments to policing? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Yeah, thank you. Okay, when I asked about the active position, so I heard the Minister say they add more police services in the communities. Okay, police are to keep peace and order, we know that. And to make residents feel safe. But I just want to ask the Minister, I would like to know what is the Department of Justice is doing to reduce crime rate in the community because it's -- okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Few minutes -- I guess I move that the chair rise and report progress, and I'll answer the question tomorrow. Thank you.

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bills 23, 29, 38; Minister's Statement 202-19(2); Tabled Document 561, 567, 578, and 579-19(2), and would like to report progress with one motion, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that Report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Range Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): Orders of the day for Friday, March 4th, 2022, 10 a.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address

11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motions
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 23 - An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
 - Bill 29 - Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
 - Bill 38 - Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2021
 - Minister's Statement 202-19(2): Annual Status Report on the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2019-2023
 - Tabled Document 561-19(2): 2022-2023 Main Estimates
 - Tabled Document 567-19(2): Annual Status Report - 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, February 2021-January 2022 of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2019-2023
 - Tabled Document 578-19(2): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2021-2022
 - Tabled Document 579-19(2): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2021-2022
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Friday, March 4th, 2022, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

